

Chapter 26

Family Life of Women Forced to Migrate From Syria to Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This study was performed to investigate the family life of women forced to migrate from Syria to Turkey. The data of the research was collected as a result of face-to-face interviews with 200 women living in Ankara, forced migrating from Syria in 2011 and after, under temporary protection, aged 18 and over, currently married or with marriage experience. In the study, it was determined that women had conflicts with their spouses mostly on “financial situation or unemployment” (42.9%), with their children on “the boy not being docile and obedient” (38.7%), with their spouse’s family and/or their own family on “preventing participation in decisions” (21.3%). As a result of the findings of the study, required recommendations were made to the immigrants and the related institutions and organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Immigration, which is as long as human history and expresses mobility as of its essence, means that people move from their place of residence to another residential area or to another country (Adıgüzel, 2016, p. 12-17). In addition to the movement of a certain population from one region to another, migration, which has a very comprehensive and deep-rooted content, includes many social, economic, cultural, and psychological elements (Sağlam, 2006, p.33-34) and is a long-term process that can encompass the remaining life of the immigrant (Castles & Miller, 2008, p. 29). In short, migration can be defined as the result of a forced or voluntary mobility, the immigrant establishing a life from the beginning and encountering many social and economic problems in this process, and these problems changing their social structure. Migration can create a complex structure with the characteristics of the place immigrants brought from their country and settled.

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In 2011, as the civil war and conflicts in Syria increased and spread throughout the country, the people who saw themselves in danger had to migrate (Özdemir, 2017, p.122). As a result of the war, people become disabled, lose their relatives, their homes, even their homeland, and have to migrate from the land where they were born, in addition to the trauma they experienced. Women and children, who make up almost half of those who migrated due to war, have been the ones who have paid the heaviest price of wars and conflicts, which is the main cause of migration (Küçükşen, 2017, p.2400). Due to reasons based on patriarchal social structure and unequal gender relations (Akis, 2012, p.385), women are affected more than men because they cannot benefit from the migration process and interrelation network as equal as men, as being dependent, having social restrictions and limited employment opportunities (Davis & Winters, 2001, pp. 5-7). The experiences of women may differ depending on many factors such as the cause of migration, the socio-economic status and family structure of the migrant, the place left behind, and the culture and socio-economic structure in the places they migrated (Ak-Akyol, 2008, p.223).

With migration, families are disconnected from social, economic, and natural resources of life and may be exposed to a multifaceted effect that will change basic family issues after the migration (Cesur-Kılıçaslan, 2006, p. 3). This means a heavy responsibility for many women, and women can be expected to undertake primary economic activities in addition to maintaining their traditional roles in the resettlement process (Williams, 1990, p. 104). Lack of language, cultural differences, integration difficulties, financial difficulties, unemployment, lack of adequate shelter and nutrition that arise due to forced migration to another country can affect family life and women's life.

Marriage plays an important role in both man and woman gaining identity as a member of society (Ak-Akyol, 2008, p. 227). Marriage acts as a tool in the establishment and maintenance of social relations in Syrian families, providing the unity of families as well as individuals (International Rescue Committee 'IRC', 2014, p.11). In the Syrian Arab Republic, which is an Arab country, the position of women is determined according to both modern and sharia laws with a mixed constitutional system, and the institution of the family is governed by sharia laws in many aspects (El-Masri, Harvey, & Garwood, 2013, p.9. ; Amnesty International, 2013) and a man's right to marry four women is legally recognized (Agcadağ-Çelik & Vural, 2018, p.334; İnce, 2018, p.256).

In Syria, women are in lower status compared to men both before the law and in practice. Women are at a disadvantage in many issues such as marriage, divorce, custody of children (El-Masri et al., 2013, p.9; Social Institutions & Gender Index, 2014; Freedom House, 2014; Freedom House, 2010; Amnesty International, 2013, p. 4-7), inheritance (El-Masri et al., 2013, p.9; Social Institutions & Gender Index, 2014; Freedom House, 2014; Freedom House, 2010).

Losses as a result of forced migration, cultural and social changes can lead to shifts in family roles, creating inequality in individuals within the family and the family as a whole. State policies and economic aid affect the status of women (Williams, 1990, p.105-106), and in the post-migration period, most Syrian women are pressured to fulfill duties such as motherhood, childcare, and upbringing, as well as having to provide for the family's livelihood (El-Masri et al., 2013, p.13-14). Although there are many studies that examine issues related to the family of Syrians living in Turkey, marriage and family relations have not been examined together in the literature. Determining the family life of Syrian women is important both in terms of maintaining a healthy family life in the post-migration period and facilitating integration. In this context, this research aims to examine the impact of forced migration on Syrian women within the framework of family life.

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