

Peace Education Program Adaptation: A Sustainable Way for Harmony

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Abstract: Peace education has evolved over the past century, addressing various forms of violence and fostering values essential for harmonious coexistence. This research underscores the importance of addressing harmony and creating a peaceful environment through education utilizing Johan Galtung's framework on direct and structural violence. This study explores the adaptation of UNESCO's "Learning to Live Together" peace education program to meet the needs of fourth graders in refugee-receiving schools in Türkiye. The adapted program aims to equip individuals with skills for conflict resolution, empathy, and social justice, which are essential for both local and refugee students. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed to capture the experiences of school components including local and refugee parents and students, teachers, school counselors, and vice principal, providing insights into the challenges and needs within this unique educational setting. As a result of the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with school components, three themes emerged: (1) Aggravating Factors for Unity, (2) Institutional Needs and Issues, and (3) Facilitative Factors for Unity. The needs analysis revealed significant aggravating factors for unity, such as language proficiency, socio-economic issues, and prejudice, necessitating a comprehensive, culturally sensitive educational intervention. However, factors like parental characteristics and a peaceful school environment can serve as facilitator factors. The study's findings informed the development of a 13-session peace education program for 4th graders tailored to the identified needs, emphasizing cultural recognition, conflict resolution, and empathy. This research highlights the critical role of peace education in promoting social cohesion and resilience, offering valuable insights for policymakers and educators in similar contexts.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, phenomenology, needs analysis, displaced populations, peace education

Peace education has evolved significantly over the past century, responding to social concerns about various forms of violence and seeking to advise citizens about paths to peace (Harris, 2004). The historical roots of peace education as a formal movement can be traced back to revealing the ideological tensions within the peace movement during the World War I period (Zeiger, 2000). The Declaration on a Culture of Peace was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1999 and encourages peacebuilding programs in human rights, gender justice, and democratic engagement in educational, economic, and social development (Sommers, 2001).

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Johan Galtung's theory on direct and structural violence, alongside his perspectives on peace, offers an essential framework for comprehending conflict's complex nature and the routes to peace (Galtung, 1969). Galtung (1969), recognized as the pioneer of peace studies, differentiates between direct violence, an overt and identifiable form of violence exemplified by wars, physical assaults, and verbal abuse, and structural violence, a covert form of violence woven into societal structures that hinder individuals' or groups' ability to meet their basic needs and achieve their full potential, often manifested through discrimination and disparity. This distinction highlights the immediate and visible nature of direct violence against the hidden and normalized aspect of structural violence, underscoring the challenges in addressing the deep-rooted injustices within society (Dilts et al., 2012).

By highlighting the importance of creating a society without prejudice, violence, and injustice, peace education has a pivotal role in instilling essential values and qualities for peace (Harris, 2004). Peace education aims to equip individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, and values for resolving conflicts, communicating effectively, and fostering cooperation, addressing themes of peace, war, violence, conflict, and injustice (Harber & Sakade, 2009). Essential components of peace education include establishing a public education system that promotes interaction among students from previously conflicting groups, teaching constructive controversy procedures, and inculcating civic values underscores the role of education in nurturing a harmonious and peaceful society (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Negative peace is defined as the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, involves the elimination of structural violence and the creation of social justice and equality (Galtung, 1969). Positive peace is not simply the absence of conflict but the presence of conditions for equitable and harmonious living.

Peacemaking and peacebuilding represent distinct but complementary strategies for achieving peace, with peacemaking concentrating on immediate conflict resolution through negotiation to halt direct violence, and peacebuilding focusing on long-term efforts to tackle the root causes of conflict, including structural violence. This longer process involves institutional development, social structure reform, and the promotion of justice and equality to establish lasting peace. Galtung's work underscores the importance of understanding the complex nature of violence and peace, advocating for systemic changes and proactive actions to create a more equitable and peaceful world through education (Alger, 2007).

Peace education programs have largely been implemented in conflict, post-conflict, and stable societies to promote peaceful problem-solving and developed by international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and Save the Children (Baxter, 2005; Sommers, 2001). UNICEF defines peace education as the process through which children, youths, and adults are taught the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required to prevent conflict and violence, resolve conflicts peacefully, and establish a peace-friendly environment at various levels, from personal to international (Fountain, 1999). Despite the growing number of peace education programs across formal and informal settings, empirical research on their effectiveness is limited, largely due to the absence of systematic evaluation (Fountain, 1999; Nevo & Brem, 2002).

Schools are also pivotal to reaching structural violence where societal structures can be transformed for a more equal and harmonious society (Galtung, 1969). Peace education in formal schools is vital, particularly in refugee-receiving countries, as it fosters understanding, tolerance, and conflict-resolution skills among students. It aims to develop compassionate, critical, and civically engaged citizens capable of advancing cultures of peace by addressing the roots of violence including inequality, discrimination, and injustice. Implementing peace education requires a multifaceted approach that integrates psychological, socio-political, and pedagogical dimensions, promoting a peaceful school culture and connecting with broader community practices for sustainable impact.

Türkiye hosts the world's largest refugee population, including approximately 3.6

million Syrians with temporary protection status and over 320,000 individuals from other countries, primarily considered as “People under Temporary Protection” (UNHCR, 2024). Türkiye faces challenges in managing this diverse and significant refugee community, amidst increasing anti-refugee discourses. Much research demonstrated the prejudice and discriminatory behaviors at K12 schools towards refugees in Türkiye (Demir Başaran, 2020; Erden, 2017, 2020; Özel & Erdur-Baker, 2023).

Türkiye has recently begun implementing peace education programs at different levels. The exploration of peace education components within the Turkish education system highlights a critical need for more comprehensive peace education programs (Demir, 2011; Özel & Yurtsever, 2023; Yastıbaş, 2020). While different peace education programs are being implemented in Türkiye, each one aims to give skills to promote peace in various contexts, such as problem-solving abilities and resilience building (International Alert Foundation, 2016; Kabasakal et al., 2016; Tapan, 2006). Given Türkiye's significant refugee population, including the world's largest number of Syrians under temporary protection and hundreds of thousands from other regions, the need for harmony is paramount. Addressing social integration, enhancing educational opportunities, and fostering community dialogue are crucial for peace and social cohesion. This harmonious approach not only supports refugees' needs but also strengthens the societal fabric, promoting mutual understanding and respect among Türkiye's diverse communities.

Empirical findings collectively indicate a crucial need for comprehensive peace education programs in Türkiye that go beyond sporadic inclusion in the curriculum. Such programs should aim to systematically address the components of peace education, ensuring that they are embedded throughout the education system to foster a culture of peace among students. There is a clear call for educational policy and curriculum development to prioritize peace education, ensuring that teachers are equipped with the awareness, knowledge, and skills to effectively deliver these programs. Peace education represents a transformative pedagogical approach aimed at fostering a culture of peace and non-violence in educational settings and society at large. It is grounded in the belief that education can play a pivotal role in building a more peaceful world. The integration of peace education into the Turkish education system can serve as a foundation for resolving conflicts peacefully and promoting a more harmonious society.

The peace education program "Learning to Live Together" from UNESCO has hands-on and practical activities for people of all ages. "Learning to Live Together" serves as an umbrella term for themes related to tolerance, peacemaking, human rights, humanitarian law, and civic responsibility (Sinclair, 2004). The essential principles, values, and attitudes of cohabitation are taught in this program. The program has been implemented in numerous countries (i.e., Albania, Columbia, Somalia) regarding the demands and problems unique to each one (Sinclair, 2004).

The "Learning to Live Together" peace education program aims to cultivate harmony in society by nurturing values of respect, empathy, and understanding among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Its objectives focus on empowering learners to act as global citizens, equipped to contribute positively to their communities and the world. Through fostering critical thinking, dialogue, and ethical decision-making, the program seeks to address societal challenges and promote peace and coexistence.

Methods

The needs analysis part of this study adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of participants to understand their needs and issues. The phenomenological design was chosen to delve deeply into the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals, aiming to uncover the essence and meaning of these experiences concerning the phenomenon (Cresswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). By focusing on individuals' experiences, this research design allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the complex and unique ways in which the phenomenon influences and is perceived by those who experience it. The phenomenological analysis of the data then focused on identifying, analyzing, and describing the common themes and essences of the participants' experiences, following a systematic process to ensure the credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the findings.

This qualitative phenomenological research sought to gain a deep insights of various school components within a refugee-receiving school selected for the PIKTES (Promoting Inclusive Education for Kids in the Turkish Education System) project, the most extensive educational project in Türkiye aimed at supporting the academic and educational needs of refugee children. The study focused on capturing the perspectives of teachers, school counselors, administrators, as well as both local and refugee students and their parents, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in this unique educational setting. The insights gained from this research were used for the adaptation process of the "Learning to Live Together" peace education program for 4th graders. Furthermore, these results of the needs analysis are intended to contribute to the broader discourse on educational integration and social cohesion in settings with significant refugee populations, offering perspectives that can inform future policy and practice in similar contexts.

Context of the Study

The integration of Syrian refugee children into the Turkish educational system represents a significant challenge and an area of focus for both policymakers and educational institutions in Türkiye. Amidst a backdrop where Syrian refugees are dispersed across virtually every city in Türkiye, Sakarya emerges as a noteworthy case study due to its substantial refugee population. Sakarya, ranked 21st among Turkish cities in terms of refugee density, according to the 2021 report from the Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration, offers a unique perspective on the educational challenges and initiatives aimed at refugee integration.

The choice of Sakarya for this study was driven by its practical attributes, facilitating a focused examination of educational interventions in a moderately impacted urban setting. The research school is a particular primary school that records the highest intake of refugee students, as identified through consultations with the District Directorate of National Education in Sakarya. This school's involvement in the PIKTES project (Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System) places it at the forefront of efforts to foster educational inclusion and social cohesion.

Administered by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and funded by the European Union, PIKTES operates across 26 provinces selected based on the concentration of school-aged Syrian refugees. The project encompasses the establishment of "Adaptation Classes," designed to bolster the Turkish language skills of foreign students, thereby enhancing their academic and social integration (PIKTES, 2020). Previous research highlights that language barriers significantly hinder refugee students' ability to adapt to schools (Dachyshyn & Kirova, 2008; Miller et al., 2018; Tadesse et al., 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). Studies in Türkiye regarding adaptation classes demonstrate that adaptation classes facilitate language competency, enabling students to engage in play and interaction with their peers

(Bozan, & Çelik, 2021; Çelik et al., 2021; Kalman & Can, 2023). While adaptation classes have some limitations, such as scheduling separate hours for refugee students and their Turkish-speaking peers (PİKTES, 2020), they are essential for enabling refugee students to actively engage in classroom activities, communicate with peers, and foster a stronger connection between their families and the school. By supporting both social and academic integration, these classes help to create a more inclusive, cohesive, and welcoming environment for all students (Bozan, & Çelik, 2021; Çelik et al., 2021; Kalman & Can, 2023). These classes form a core component of the project which not only aims to meet basic educational needs from primary through to high school levels but also enriches the educational settings with additional support resources. These include the provision of Turkish language instructors, interpreters, school counselors, and janitorial staff, thereby creating a more accommodating and effective learning environment for Syrian refugee students.

Participants

The study employed convenient sampling to select participants capable of providing in-depth and relevant insights to understand the needs of the refugee-receiving school (Patton, 2002). After selecting the most-refugee receiving school in Sakarya, the study focused on 4th graders for the program adaptation phase. This decision was made because 4th graders, being older than first and second graders, have a better grasp of cognitive tasks and are in their early puberty years similar to secondary school students. Thus, the fourth grade was chosen as the focal point of the study. Consequently, the 'Learning to Live Together' peace education program was adapted for the refugee-receiving school's fourth-grade curriculum. The study involved a diverse group of participants including school counselors, teachers, the vice principal, and both local and refugee parents and students. This inclusive approach was essential to collecting detailed feedback on the educational needs and challenges at the refugee-receiving school. To specifically address the issues faced by 4th graders and to prepare for the integration of third graders, interviews were conducted with teachers of both grades during the needs analysis phase of the study.

The needs analysis phase included a school counselor who was assigned by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and a school counselor who was assigned by the PİKTES project with Bachelor's degrees and eight and five years of tenure, respectively; two Turkish teachers and classroom teachers from the 3rd and 4th grades, each bringing a rich background of experience and education; and a vice principal with a master's degree and 18 years of experience. Ten students from 3rd and 4th grades, both local and refugees from countries like Türkiye, Iran, Afghanistan, and Syria, alongside four parents (mothers) including two local and two refugee parents, provided pivotal insights. The local and refugee parents' interviews contributed valuable perspectives, emphasizing the holistic approach taken to understand and meet the educational needs within this diverse community.

Instruments

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

The interview protocols for refugee and local students, parents, and teachers were developed by the researchers and focused on four key areas: (1) The Current Status, (2) The Programs, Activities, and Methods in Place to Foster Communication between Local and Refugee Students, (3) The Strengths and Shortcomings of These Methods, and (4) Recommendations for Improvement. This part of the protocol comprised 12 questions aimed at eliciting detailed information on the dynamics within the school/classroom, the interrelationship between local and refugee students, and the experiences and suggestions of school counselors and teachers

regarding these interactions. Following the formulation of interview questions, feedback was sought from experts, and pilot interviews were carried out to finalize the interview protocol.

Program Feedback Protocol

Researchers designed the program feedback protocol to collect input from field and practitioner experts for the adapted “Learning to Live Together” peace education program. It was divided into three parts: a) General Aim and Objectives, b) Content, and c) Evaluation and Assessment. The form inquires about the suitability of the objectives for each week, the relevance of the content to the children's age, and the effectiveness of the evaluation and assessments concluding the program. Alongside this feedback protocol, the entire translated and adapted program was shared with two practitioners (specifically, a fourth-grade classroom teacher and a school counselor) and five academics (including one from the curriculum department, one from the foreign language department, and three from the guidance and psychological counseling department). The 13-session peace education program was finalized based on their feedback.

Data Collection Procedure

Ethical approval for the research was obtained from both the METU Human Research Ethical Commission and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) prior to the onset of the study. The research was conducted at the school in Sakarya receiving the highest number of refugee students. This school participates in the PİKTES Project, which is designed to enhance social integration and educational opportunities for refugee children in various Turkish provinces by providing language lessons, academic support, and resources such as additional teachers, school counselors, interpreters, and technological tools, making it an exemplary representation of the project's goals (PİKTES, 2020). Interviews with refugee parents were facilitated using a translator provided by the PİKTES Project, while refugee students, able to speak Turkish, required no translation services.

From early March to April 2021, needs assessment interviews were carried out at the school. Participants were briefed on the objectives and structure of the interviews at their outset, and informed consent was secured from each participant. Emphasis was placed on maintaining confidentiality. Following the interviews, a needs analysis was performed, leading to the emergence of key themes and issues from the data, which informed the adaptation of the peace education program. Considering both local and refugee needs, this study adapted UNESCO's "Learning to Live Together" peace education program for fourth graders in refugee-receiving schools in Türkiye, translating it into Turkish and finalizing it as a 13-session program based on feedback from two practitioners and five academics.

Data Analysis

The study utilized content analysis, a systematic and objective approach (Neuendorf, 2002), to analyze data collected from semi-structured interviews with students, parents, administration, teachers, and school counselors, without relying on predetermined themes or codes to allow for the discovery of unexpected intricacies (Cresswell, 2013). Transcriptions from interviews with a diverse group of school components were analyzed to identify emerging codes and themes, following a pure-verbatim protocol (Mayring, 2014). This detailed analysis, enriched by the expertise of two academics specializing in Guidance and Psychological Counseling, led to the integration of codes and themes for a comprehensive analysis.

The study bolstered the trustworthiness of its qualitative data, gathered during needs analysis through credibility, transferability, and confirmability strategies, including persistent

observation, triangulation, and reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick descriptions and objective analysis methods further ensured the findings' validity, applicability, and neutrality.

Results

The Results of the Needs Analysis

The analysis revealed a central theme of "Cohesiveness," further dissected into three primary themes: (1) Aggravating Factors for Unity, (2) Institutional Needs and Issues, and (3) Facilitative Factors for Unity.

Aggravating Factors for Unity

Participants highlighted that the interactions between refugee and local students, as well as their respective parents, are complex and often strained. Two main sub-themes emerged under the aggravating factors for unity as follows; (1) Environmental Factors and (2) Individual Factors. Environmental factors consist of external influences that pose challenges for creating a unity for local and refugee students as (a) exclusion by local students, (b) academic issues, and (c) local discourses. Individual factors cover (a) local students' issues, (b) refugee students' behavior, (c) refugee family attitudes, (d) (un)familiarity, (e) socio-economic factors, (f) issues related to migration, and (g) prejudice.

Environmental Factors

Exclusion by Local Students. The phenomenon of exclusion by local students toward refugees is extensively reported across interviews with teachers, parents, and students themselves. Local Student 3 voices their discomfort, saying, "*I want them to leave this class. They are bothering us.*" This rejection is further substantiated by parents and educators noting a tendency for students to be excluded from their refugee peers, creating a division among the refugee students, who are perceived as outsiders.

Academic Issues. Teachers' attitudes and language barriers were identified as critical factors affecting refugee students' psycho-social adaptation with one teacher recounting, "A student...told me that another teacher...did not want him in the classroom and that he beats him." Participants stated that such behaviors not only marginalize refugee students but also set a behavioral model for local students and families, fostering a classroom environment where exclusion exists.

Local Discourses. Local discourses regarding refugee students often include exclusion and mistrust, as highlighted by the testimony of Local Student 3 and the observations of teachers and school counselors. These perspectives shape the school atmosphere, where refugee families are offered help but also face skepticism, with one local parent stating, "We give them a hand, but we experience problems afterward...We cannot see the things that we give away."

Individual Factors

Local Students' Issues. Issues named broken families and socio-economic difficulties are reported as prevalent issues among local students at the refugee-receiving school. A school counselor noted, "*This is a school that disadvantaged students attend in the first place... The financial situation here is reflected in our everyday life*". Such difficulties contribute to behavioral issues, and when combined with the challenges faced by refugee students, can lead to a challenging school environment.

Refugee Students' Behavior. Refugee students exhibit various behavioral problems, from bullying to aggression. A local student expressed frustration by saying, "*They seize the ball, throw it away, and don't let us play. They use dirty language with us*". This behavior is often a reflection of their backgrounds and cultural norms, as explained by a school counselor who emphasized the norm of corporal punishment in some refugee students' cultures: "*These kids have that sort of cultural background. Families ask us to slap their children when they misbehave. We do not do that for sure. However, this recommendation can lead students to believe they can act with impunity when we employ less severe disciplinary approaches*".

Refugee Family Attitudes. Parental attitudes also play a crucial role during the psycho-social adaptation process of refugee students. A laissez-faire approach is often noted, with a teacher observing that, "*The Arabs trust their kids too much. They have this laissez-faire attitude*", leading to independence that can both benefit and challenge the students. Teachers emphasized the influence of parental behavior on the academic and social life of refugee students in school.

(un)Familiarity. Refugee students tend to socialize within their own linguistic and cultural groups. This tendency toward in-group behavior limits their interactions with local students, as one refugee student mentioned, "*I play with the Arabs the most because we speak the same language*".

Socio-economic Factors of Refugees. The socio-economic challenges for refugee families, including broken families and financial difficulties, are significant. A school counselor stated, "*There are kids here who have difficulty meeting even their basic needs*" highlighting the severity of these issues.

Migration-Related Issues. The impacts of migration and the trauma of war mark the refugee students deeply, often manifesting in aggressive behavior as a defense mechanism as school counselors and teachers stated. A teacher recalled a harrowing student experience, "*There was this student of mine whose face was hit by a piece of a rocket*" indicating the profound effects of war on these children.

Prejudice. Lastly, prejudice toward learning Turkish culture and language is prevalent among refugee students, posing additional barriers to their psycho-social adaptation. This resistance is often grounded in their experiences, as one teacher explained, "*I have students who say that they don't like Türkiye and that they are mistreated here*" underscoring the emotional and psychological hurdles that need to be addressed for successful adaptation.

Institutional Needs and Issues

This theme unpacked the institutional challenges and essential needs, including (1) Issues Related to School, (2) Training Needs, and (3) Policy Issues. Issues related to school include (a) teacher workload, (b) classroom density, and (c) registration. Training needs include (a) whole school training, (b) woman training, and (c) practical knowledge for teachers. Policy issues include (a) ambiguity in the resettlement process, (b) difficulties in psychosocial assessment, and (c) issues related to local NGOs.

Issues Related to School

Teacher Workload. The data reflect a consensus on the intense workload for teachers due to the registration of a high number of refugee students. The irregular enrollment patterns due to migration flow place a heavy burden on teachers who must frequently adapt to new students with varying levels of Turkish language proficiency in their classrooms. A school counselor noted, "*Every single day there are newcomers to Türkiye... This robs the teacher of his energy, indeed*". The vice principal also emphasized the strain caused by the mid-year influx of non-Turkish-speaking students, which leads to "*communication problems, behavioral*

issues, and academic shortcomings".

Classroom Density. Participants are concerned about the growing ratio of refugee students to local students in classrooms, which strains resources and potentially impacts the quality of education. A local parent commented on the scarcity of local children in classes, indicating a significant demographic shift: "*There are just a few local kids in both classes – all the others are foreigners*".

Registration Process. Registration practices also contribute to the challenges, as local students increasingly transfer out of schools with high refugee enrollment. The registration requirement to accept students from nearby neighborhoods has resulted in an altered school demographic, with a school counselor noting, "*The problem is that the number of the refugee students has greatly increased, and the Turkish students have transferred to places elsewhere*". The third-grade classroom teacher also observed a decline in local student enrollment due to academic concerns, as families choose not to send their children to schools perceived as having a lowered academic standard due to the needs of refugee students.

Training Needs

Whole School Trainings. All participants agreed on the need for educational programs that guide refugee families and students on social norms and local customs. A local student reflected on this necessity, saying, "*The Arabs could have learned how to behave here, together with their families. They could have learned how to settle here and adapt, and what they could do with their lives here. I think they would be happier too if they did that*". Furthermore, refugee parents expressed a lack of understanding about their children's education, with one stating, "*We haven't been informed about whether the kid can pass his classes or fail them all... We haven't been told if the kids who study in this class will be considered normal students who attend regular classes*". This knowledge gap signifies a barrier to effective integration and underlines the need for involving families directly in the educational process.

Woman Training. The need for training programs specifically for women was addressed by school counselors who noted the unique challenges faced by refugee women, many of whom are single parents due to the war. Emphasizing their role in their children's adaptation, one counselor suggested, "*A supportive initiative for these mothers would be a good idea... Spouses are gone in most cases... so all the burden is on the shoulders of the women*" highlighting the potential of psycho-educational programs targeted at this demographic.

Practical Knowledge for Teachers. The need for practical knowledge for educators is agreed upon by the participants. Despite theoretical training being available, the application of these teachings in the classroom poses different challenges. The 3rd-grade classroom teacher summarized the sentiment, "*The activities offered in training that were conducted are good, but it is different when you actually go into the classroom and see a student from a totally different culture... Being able to reach them is...quite a different experience.*"

The statement thus underlines a clear demand for both theoretical and practical training, focusing on family inclusion and the development of real-world skills to bridge cultural divides and foster a supportive environment for the psycho-social adaptation of refugee students.

Policy Issues

Ambiguity in Resettlement Process. School counselors, teachers, and refugee parents identified the uncertainty of the resettlement process as a critical issue. A refugee parent stated, “*Although our children are young, they are constantly tense because they keep hearing us talk. They keep asking us whether we will be able to get a residence permit, or if we will be able to go back to Syria or stay here*”. This instability has a direct negative impact on students' motivation and academic achievement. A school counselor adds, “*If the families who have decided to live here...will be better able to adapt to life here...Those families that decide not to go back home think that they will always be here and thus they have to assume responsibilities and do what they have to do*” noting the need for a clear path to integration.

Difficulties in Psychological Assessment. Psychological assessment for refugee children includes difficulties at refugee-receiving schools in Türkiye. School counselors acknowledge that while Turkish children have access to psychological services and financial support, refugee children do not have this opportunity in Türkiye. One counselor indicated, “*They (professionals at RAM -Rehberlik ve Araştırma Merkezi, Counseling and Research Centers-) cannot do the assessment but is it because of the language barrier or because they do not have the capability, it is really hard for us to decide*” underscoring the challenge in differentiating between language barriers and potential developmental issues.

Issues Related to Local NGOs. The role of local NGOs is pivotal in addressing the comprehensive needs of refugee families. Participants noted that schools alone might not meet all requirements, stressing the importance of NGOs in offering legal, social, and financial assistance. “*We need institutions like this (NGOs). The local governments do not suffice. Municipalities' efforts are not enough.*” a counselor emphasized, advocating for a multi-institutional approach to support refugees.

Facilitative Factors for Unity

Facilitative factors for unity have two main sub-themes (1) Parent Characteristics, and (2) Peaceful School Environment. Parent characteristics include (a) educated parents, (b) settled families, and (c) involved parents. A peaceful school environment involves (a) student acceptance and (b) teachers' positive approach.

Parent Characteristics

Educated Parents. Teachers, school counselors, and the vice principal recognized the vital role that well-educated refugee parents play in their children's psycho-social adaptation process. These parents are actively engaged in preparing their children for school, participating in school activities, and supporting homework completion. The vice principal observed, “*We have well-educated families, as well, among the refugee families. This is reflected on the kids too... The student makes a difference at school when this is the case*” highlighting the positive influence of such parents on their children's educational outcomes.

Settled Families. Similarly, the benefit of having settled families was noted, with teachers and administrators pointing out that refugee families who decided to live in Türkiye and settled show improved language skills, cultural integration, and a better grasp of social and legal norms. One teacher shared, “*An Iraqi student of mine can speak Turkish better than I do... You can never tell that he is a foreigner, neither him nor his family*” illustrating the positive assimilation of long-term refugee families into the local context.

Involved Parents. The active participation of parents in school processes was stated as beneficial for the psycho-social adaptation of refugee students. A third-grade classroom teacher remarked on the dedication of a newly arrived parent, stating, “*The family of a student of mine*

who has joined us this year is very attentive... He reaches me through someone who knows Turkish. Well, he makes an effort. He tries. I can feel that". Local parents also observed that some refugee families make additional efforts for educational support, including arranging for tutors and enrolling children in weekend courses, emphasizing the value of parental engagement.

Peaceful School Environment

Students Acceptance. Local students' willingness to accept refugee students is pivotal for creating a peaceful school environment. As one local student insightfully put it, "*They are children just like me. All of us are children... We may make mistakes, but we can understand and talk with one another. We continue to play games after my friend apologizes to me for bad behavior*". This statement reflects the understanding and empathy that can be fostered among children, which in turn supports the creation of a nurturing school environment.

Teachers' Positive Approach. The constructive role of teachers in creating a peaceful and welcoming atmosphere was highlighted. The vice principal notes the proactive stance of both teachers and Turkish parents, stating, "*All of them think that they are just kids... I guess now we have a more welcoming atmosphere*". Furthermore, a teacher's recount of peaceful classroom strategies signifies the importance of educators' actions: "*When I nominate students in class, I make sure that I nominate them too... As I treat the refugee students this way, the students tend to start to be more welcoming toward the refugee students.*" The active efforts to include refugee students in classroom activities are critical in their adaptation to the school environment.

From Assessment to Action: Program Adaptation After the Needs Analysis

The adaptation phase of the program involved tailoring UNESCO's "Learning to Live Together" curriculum, originally designed for peace education among 4th graders, to meet the specific needs and challenges of a refugee-receiving school. This modification process drew upon established peace education frameworks, including those implemented in post-conflict regions like the Balkans, and in countries hosting refugees such as the UK and the USA. The program aims to foster community cohesion, enhance awareness of civic duties and human rights, and reduce conflicts across diverse ethnic and social groups (Sinclair, 2001, 2004). To achieve this, the program was translated and adapted for the school's context and the developmental stages of the students.

The original program's contents, structured around peace definition, support for peace, skills for maintaining peace, and conflict transformation, served as the foundation. Recognizing the absence of formal peace education in Turkish schools, the adaptation incorporated introductory activities to familiarize students with peace education fundamentals. Key competencies identified from the needs analysis, such as cultural understanding, behavior management, and inclusion, guided the content creation to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

A 13-session program emerged from this process, encompassing activities aimed at understanding peace, supporting peace, creating peace, and resolving conflicts. Each component was carefully designed to build upon students' existing competencies in peace education, introducing new skills and concepts sequentially and developmentally. Notably, cultural adaptations were made to ensure the program's relevance, such as replacing certain activities with more culturally appropriate ones and introducing new exercises to address specific needs.

Table 1 below presents a structured overview of the adapted "Learning to Live Together" peace education program, illustrating its content elements, associated skills, and corresponding activities. The program components are organized around various themes

identified from the needs analysis.

Three primary elements/skills were identified through the needs analysis: unfamiliarity with the culture of the other group, behavioral challenges, and exclusion. The development of the content adopted the linear programming strategy (Uzunboylu & Hürsen, 2011), paying meticulous attention to the organization of subjects in a sequential manner that necessitates pre-learning and are closely interconnected. This approach ensures the content is goal-oriented and engaging for the students.

Table 1

Summary of the content of the adapted peace education program

Elements (Themes as a Result of Needs Analysis)	Skills	Activities
Introduction	Peace Education	What is peace and peace education?
Unfamiliarity with the other group's culture	Human Rights	Red Alert We are a Family
	Cultural Recognition	We are a Family One Step Forward Listening Exercise
	Tolerance / Education for Mutual Understanding	We are a Family One Step Forward Candy Game What/ Who Can I See? Retelling the Story
	Conflict Resolution	Candy Game Can't We Count to Ten Listening to Each Other The Fox, The Goat, and the Cabbage Principles of Negotiation Let's Negotiate Conflict Resolution
Behavioral Issues	Empathy	One Step Forward Listening to Each Other Feeling Belongingness What/ Who Can I See? Retelling the Story
Exclusion	Inter-group Relations	We are a Family Red Alert Can't We Count to Ten Feeling Belongingness Principles of Negotiation
	Understanding the "other"	We are a Family One Step Forward Feeling Belongingness Listening Exercise

Upon identifying the key abilities from the needs analysis, each associated activity was rigorously assessed. To build a connection with the group and address their initial unfamiliarity with peace topics, the first week introduced three foundational activities: a game for ice-breaking, a session to establish group norms, and an exercise for defining peace. The latter was inspired by the original curriculum. The program begins with tasks aimed at fostering understanding and empathy, with the activities for weeks three ("Rewriting the Story"), four ("Listening to Each Other"), and five ("Belonging") also being adaptations from the original curriculum. The program continued with a focus on developing empathy.

A discussion on essential peace-building skills like empathy and mutual understanding leads to implementing conflict resolution activities. The sixth week's activity, centered on Conflict Resolution, was replaced by a culturally and developmentally appropriate "candy game" due to the original program's cultural misfit. The seventh and eighth weeks' activities, "One Step Further" and "Red Alarm," emphasized cultural recognition and human rights, enhanced with culturally relevant exercises from a Turkish peace resource (Flowers, 2007). The ninth week's Diversity activity, not fitting culturally, was replaced with an alternative from a Turkish tolerance resource (Flowers, 2007). The conflict resolution activities for weeks ten ("The Fow, The Goat, and The Cabbage"), eleven ("Let's Negotiate"), and twelve ("Conflict Resolution") were adapted from the original curriculum. The program's final week featured an activity crafted by the researchers to recap the program and gauge its impact on the students. The table provided below outlines the comprehensive final revision of both the program and its respective sessions.

Overall, this adapted peace education program systematically addresses various aspects identified through the needs analysis, using targeted skills and activities to foster conflict resolution skills among students from local and refugee backgrounds. Feedback from academics and practitioners, including those specializing in curriculum and instruction, and guidance and psychological counseling, was sought to refine the program's objectives, age-appropriateness, and content relevance. The learning outcomes were modified, and the activities were adjusted based on the recommendations provided by the reviewers. Furthermore, the activities were deemed highly educational, primarily because they rely on verbal expressions. Therefore, non-verbal activities and games were included to enrich the experience. An ice-breaker game was included every week. This collaborative and iterative process of program adaptation and review underscored the commitment to developing a contextually relevant and effective peace education program for 4th graders in the refugee-receiving school.

To promote understanding and build closer ties among refugee and local students, several activities were designed to encourage students to share aspects of their personal lives, recognize their unique backgrounds, and celebrate their differences. The activities "*We are a Family*," "*Listening to Each Other*," and "*One Step Further*" were described as examples from the adapted program. In the "*We are a Family*" activity, each student draws their family members—those they live with, such as siblings, parents, and grandparents—and share their drawings with the class. Through these presentations, students learn about the diversity of family structures and gain an appreciation for their classmates' backgrounds, reinforcing a sense of friendship and belonging across differences.

The "*Listening to Each Other*" activity built on the previous exercise by pairing one refugee student with one local student. Each pair exchange information about their families, such as the number of siblings they have, their parents' occupations, and other household details. After a listening period, each student presents their partner to the class, sharing what they learned. This activity fosters curiosity, empathy, and cultural understanding, as students discover commonalities and unique aspects of each other's lives.

Table 2*Overview of the sessions of the Adapted Peace Education program*

Week	Activities	The Theme of the Session
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● Identifying Rules ● What is Peace? 	Defining peace
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● Listening Activity 	Cultural Recognition
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● Whom/ What I Can See? ● Rewriting the Story 	Empathy Education for Mutual Understanding
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● Listening to Each Other 	Conflict Resolution Empathy
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● Belonging Activity 	Empathy Inter-group Relations
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● Candy Game ● Human Twist 	Conflict Resolution Education for Mutual Understanding
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● One Step Further 	Cultural Recognition Understanding the “other”
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● Red Alarm 	Human Rights Inter-group Relations
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● We are a Family 	Cultural Recognition Inter-group Relations Understanding the “other” Human Rights
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● The Fox, Goat, and the Cabbage 	Conflict Resolution
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● Basics of Negotiation ● Let’s Negotiate 	Conflict Resolution Inter-group Relations Education for Mutual Understanding
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● Conflict Resolution 	Conflict Resolution Inter-group Relations
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ice-Breaker ● Termination 	

Furthermore, the “*One Step Further Game*” involves assigning students character cards with brief backgrounds. These roles described fictional classmates, such as an only child who travels with her parents or a student with several siblings whose family has different financial circumstances. Students are asked to imagine and draw the room of their character and reflect on aspects of the character’s life, such as school performance, friendships, and background. Through these reflective exercises, students are encouraged to consider different perspectives and develop empathy, particularly for peers from varied cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. These activities address cultural needs by promoting social integration, empathy, and respect among students, essentials for creating a peaceful and inclusive educational environment.

Discussion

This study aims to adapt UNESCO's "Learning to Live Together" peace education program for 4th graders by examining the current situation and identifying the specific needs and challenges at a refugee-receiving school in Türkiye. Therefore, the study aimed to offer significant insights into creating a harmonious and peaceful school environment for both local and refugee students. It incorporated perspectives reflecting on previously implemented methods and the necessity for future empirical testing. By diving deep into the unique challenges and opportunities presented within a unique context, this research not only identifies critical areas of need but also proposes practical solutions through the program's adaptation. The findings from the needs analysis highlighted the crucial elements of unfamiliarity with the culture of the 'other', behavioral issues, and exclusion as significant barriers to creating harmony and peace within the educational setting. These insights are pivotal in understanding the complexity of paving the way for peaceful societies and underscore the necessity for targeted educational interventions that address these challenges directly.

Creating unity between local and refugee students is influenced by both environmental and individual factors, with language proficiency often being a pivotal variable under aggravating factors for the unity theme. Refugee students have frequently faced multifaceted discrimination from local peers, families, and teachers which may lead to internalizing behaviors and affect creating a peaceful classroom environment. Moreover, the process of creating a peaceful classroom environment can be hindered by the educational system, socioeconomic status (SES) of the area, and lack of parental involvement as indicated by the participants of the study. The previous research indicates a trend where refugee students internalize and replicate the behavioral problems of their local peers, further complicating their psycho-social adaptation (Çelik & İçduygu, 2018; Özel & Erdur-Baker, 2023). This linkage highlights the need to address systemic and social factors to enhance the effectiveness of interventions that foster a peaceful learning environment for refugee-receiving schools. The needs analysis conducted at the refugee-receiving school clearly demonstrated the unique and complex needs as identified by various school components, including local and refugee parents, students, and teachers. It revealed that factors such as socioeconomic status, prejudice, and prevailing local discourses serve as significant barriers to unity within the school environment. Thus, implementing culturally tailored educational programs that address these diverse needs and challenges is crucial.

Educational interventions that are culturally sensitive and recognize the unique challenges refugees face are key to facilitating unity at schools (Fox et al., 2015). The literature suggests a complex interplay between the experiences of refugees in their host countries and their psychological and socio-cultural adaptation to their host countries to create a harmonious environment. In line with the literature, the findings from the needs analysis within the theme of policy issues indicate uncertainty in the resettlement process and challenges in psychological assessment. The previous study conducted by Şafak-Ayvazoğlu et al. (2021) demonstrates similar results where the economic and political instabilities have an impact on the psycho-social adaptation of refugees in Türkiye to create a peaceful society. The existing research underscores the necessity of tailored educational practices that accommodate the cultural needs of refugee students to promote a harmonious and peaceful classroom environment (McBrien et al., 2017; McClearly & Horn, 2023). Building on this foundation, the adapted program specifically addresses the cultural and unique needs of schools receiving refugees, aiming to establish a peaceful educational environment. Previous research conducted in Türkiye has highlighted numerous issues such as behavioral problems and conflict resolution issues that culturally adapted programs can resolve (Çelik & İçduygu, 2018; Özel & Erdur-Baker, 2023; Şafak-Ayvazoğlu et al., 2021). For instance, adapting educational content and methods to reflect the cultural backgrounds and current challenges of refugee-receiving schools can

significantly enhance the overall school experience of school components and pave the way for creating a harmonious school environment. By focusing on these aspects, the adapted program not only contributes to increasing the conflict resolution skills of students but also fosters greater understanding and cooperation among all students. Therefore, the implementation of this program across various schools is recommended to evaluate its effectiveness in different educational settings and to further refine the approaches based on empirical results.

Teachers working with refugee students indicated several challenges, particularly in the areas of language proficiency, workload, and educational resources. A significant concern was the additional burden of teachers due to inadequate Turkish language proficiency among refugee students, which impacts the entire learning-teaching dynamic in classrooms. The increasing number of refugee students might lead to overcrowded classrooms and shifts in school dynamics, with cultural group interactions sometimes posing challenges to peace education goals, which emphasize mutual respect and understanding. Similar results were reported by Başar et al. (2018) stating that refugee student numbers at refugee-receiving schools in Türkiye have impacted the psycho-social integration process. Thus, the education system in Türkiye should adapt to irregular enrollment patterns and provide support for students regardless of the period they join the school system. This necessity places an additional responsibility on classroom teachers, who must then extend extra assistance to help these students catch up with their peers.

As training issues for the refugee population highlighted in previous research (Durgunoğlu & Nimer, 2020), the need for comprehensive training programs for educators is highlighted, which should extend to training refugee parents in understanding social norms and practical knowledge to assist them in navigating their new environment. Gender-specific training was also seen as a crucial element, especially for refugee women who often act as sole caregivers and are pivotal in the psycho-social adaptation process of students. Policy challenges were also significant, with the ambiguity of resettlement policies adding complexity to refugee students' educational journeys. A consistent policy framework, respectful of diversity and individual needs, is necessary for the proper assessment and support of all students as it was stated in the previous research (Schipolowski et al., 2021).

The needs analysis consistently underscored the critical role of parents, especially those who were educated and had a settled status, in fostering their children's psycho-social adaptation within educational settings to create unity under the facilitative factors for the unity theme. Educated parents' engagement with their children's schooling—supporting homework, participating in school activities, and understanding the educational system—correlated strongly with improved academic outcomes for refugee students (Cranston et al., 2021; Kugler, 2009; Ramzy, 2012). The needs analysis results demonstrated that their involvement is instrumental in preparing students for school, which significantly contributes to a peaceful and supportive learning environment that aligns with the values of peace education. The previous research also highlighted the refugee families' role during the psychosocial adaptation process to schools (Isık-Ercan, 2018; Van Tubergen, 2010). In addition, settled families, with their enhanced language proficiency and cultural assimilation, provide a crucial backdrop that aids in their children's educational navigation, reflecting the global research trend that underscores the importance of parental involvement in successful integration (Atalan Ergin & Akgül, 2023; Deng & Marlowe, 2013; McBrien et al., 2017). Therefore, adapting and implementing peace education programs to accommodate the insights gained from these needs analyses is essential, ensuring that they are designed to maximize the positive impact of parental involvement and foster an environment conducive to both academic and psycho-social success.

On the school side, the accepting behavior of local students and the inclusive attitudes of educators indicated a welcoming atmosphere crucial for a harmonious classroom environment. Educators' attitudes played a vital role in reducing discrimination and nurturing a multicultural, peaceful educational environment. Similar findings were also demonstrated in

the previous research conducted by Ekin and Yetkin (2021) and Özel and Erdur-Baker (2023). Positive peer interactions among students, supported by these peaceful attitudes, are transformative, facilitating a multicultural and supportive school environment that is essential for refugee populations (Kaysılı et al., 2019; Osterman, 2000). In line with these insights, it is imperative to adapt and implement peace education programs specifically to meet these identified needs, ensuring that both content and delivery methods are tailored to foster a peaceful and supportive environment for all students. The program should focus on cultural competencies and social skills that are crucial for a diverse classroom setting.

The findings from this study underscore the complexity of creating a peaceful school environment and highlight that merely adapting a single program may not be sufficient. To truly foster an atmosphere of peace and mutual understanding in schools that serve diverse populations, including refugees, a broader, more holistic approach is required. It is critical to consider macro-level strategies that address systemic issues impacting the school environment. Additionally, the educational response should be multifaceted, involving various programs that cater to different groups within the school community. This approach not only addresses immediate educational needs but also promotes the creation of long-term peace and harmony among all students. By implementing peace education, schools can provide students with essential skills that pave the way for addressing complex issues, thereby contributing to the development of a more effective and peaceful educational environment.

The findings from the needs analysis highlighted the critical need for peace education programs specifically adapted to meet the challenges encountered by both local and refugee students, aiming to foster a collaborative and harmonious classroom environment. This analysis led to the tailored adaptation of the "Learning to Live Together" program, designed to effectively address these educational challenges. The program adaptation was informed by a thorough needs analysis and included activities and themes focused on cultural recognition, empathy, conflict resolution, and inter-group relations. These modifications are intended to counteract the factors that hinder unity, as identified in the study. This approach aligns with the theoretical underpinnings of peace education as highlighted by Galtung (1969) and Harris (2004) and also responds to the practical needs identified through the research.

The significance of this study lies particularly in the context of significant cultural and social diversity in Türkiye. As suggested by Johnson and Johnson (2005), the implementation of peace education programs in schools is critical for establishing a public education system that promotes interaction, harmony, and peace among students from diverse backgrounds.

Furthermore, the study's findings and the subsequent program adaptation process provide critical insights for policymakers, educators, and practitioners working toward the integration of refugee populations in educational settings. The identified themes and the structured program content offer a blueprint for developing and implementing peace education programs tailored to meet the specific needs of diverse student populations. This is particularly relevant for countries like Türkiye, which hosts a significant number of refugees, as highlighted in the literature review.

This study encounters various limitations. The study used a convenient sampling method, which later limited its generalizability, as such a sample may not accurately represent a broader population. The needs assessment's restriction to one refugee-receiving school in Türkiye narrows the study's scope, as needs may vary by region. The potential for interviewer bias exists due to the use of semi-structured interviews, although expert review and multiple data sources were employed to mitigate this. Translation during interviews could have influenced communication dynamics.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach to peace education, one that incorporates an understanding of the complex dynamics within refugee-receiving educational settings. The adapted "Learning to Live Together" program serves as a testament to the potential of peace education to facilitate social cohesion, mutual

understanding, and a culture of peace among students from varied backgrounds. Future research should focus on the longitudinal impact of such programs on students' attitudes and behaviors, as well as the potential for these programs to be scaled and adapted to other contexts facing similar challenges. Additionally, after implementation, it is crucial to assess both the short-term and long-term effects of these programs to understand their efficacy and sustainability over time.

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