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Sociocultural Influences on Subjective Well-Being: Evidence from Syrian Migrants in Turkey

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Abstract: We aim to examine the participation of Syrian migrants in social and cultural activities in Turkey and compare the frequency of participation with Turkish respondents. The second aim is to study the role and influence of participation in social and cultural activities on subjective well-being (SWB). Syrians who read Turkish books and visit museums and historical sites, those who invite or are invited by Turkish friends, and those who have Turkish friends are more likely to experience high SWB than Turkish respondents do. The findings also emphasize the critical role of socioeconomic factors, such as education, wealth, and income, in sociocultural participation. Thus, this study shows that integration and social inclusion should not be attributed solely to immigrants but should also rely on the efforts of the recipient societies since financial constraints and income disparities can potentially make it more difficult for migrants' sociocultural participation.
Keywords*:* Cinema and theatrical plays, first-generation immigrants, social and cultural participation, subjective well-being, Syrian migrants

The upheaval and civil uprisings in Syria, which began in 2011, quickly escalated into a civil war involving a wide range of actors, resulting in one of the greatest humanitarian crises worldwide since World War II. This conflict has drastically altered the lives of Syrians, who have lost their lives, homeland, and future. Neighboring nations, particularly Turkey-which shares a 911-kilometer border with Syria-have been significantly impacted. Turkey, alongside neighboring countries such as Jordan and Lebanon, has received a substantial number of Syrian refugees compared to Europe, the United States, and Canada (Government of Canada, 2017; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2019; Yigit & Tatch, 2017).

A systematic analysis of acculturation requires an evaluation of the migration policies in the host countries, as well as the general direction and attitudes of society toward immigrants (Berry, 1997). The Turkish authorities and the Syrian refugees had mistakenly assumed at the beginning that the war would be over shortly, and that Syrians would be able to return home after a brief stay (Alkan, 2021; İçduygu, 2015). Because Turkey lacks a legal framework for granting refugee status, Syrian refugees cannot make judgments about permanently residing in Turkey.

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Despite growing public hostility toward migrants, most Turks acknowledge that Syrians will likely remain in Turkey for the foreseeable future. Although Assad may regain control in Syria, hope for the repatriation of Syrian refugees has diminished dramatically. Turkish citizens tend to prefer segregation over integration and cohabitation despite government efforts to promote integration. When asked, many Turkish nationals prefer that refugees reside in towns and camps designated explicitly for them or be resettled in "safe zones" within Syria. Aside from the financial issues associated with resettlement, including infrastructure, housing, and security, there is also the complication of persuading refugees to relocate to particular "safe zones."

According to Kınıklıoğlu (2020), more than 25% of Syrian refugees state they will not return to Syria under any circumstances, while only 6% indicate they might consider relocating to a "safe zone" in Syria in the near future. The majority would only agree to return if Assad is removed from power (Kınıklıoğlu, 2020). Moreover, Syrians who have integrated into the Turkish labor market, attained higher levels of education, and achieved greater proficiency in the Turkish language are less likely to return to Syria (Kayaoglu et al., 2022).

Although Turks and Syrians share common spaces in cities, they often live separate lives with minimal contact and limited social interaction. Orakci and Aktan (2021) highlight that Syrian refugees, particularly students, face numerous challenges in envisioning a secure future. Specifically, students' aspirations are often overshadowed by long-term concerns about educational and financial obstacles. Many worry about their futures due to limited access to quality education, compounded by language barriers and financial constraints (Segal, 2024). This sense of hopelessness intensifies the already substantial burden of forced migration, underscoring the importance of sociocultural activities that may foster well-being among refugees.

Despite these challenges, Syrian refugees' attitudes toward Turkish society are generally optimistic. Most report not perceiving discrimination and continue to express appreciation and a desire to live harmoniously within host communities. Syrian refugees recognize the Turkish government as a primary source of vital aid, and many are content with living in Turkey (Erdoğan, 2019; Kınıklıoğlu, 2020; Şafak-Ayvazoğlu et al., 2021). It is essential to explore how sociocultural interactions between Turks and Syrians may influence well-being and whether Turkish individuals who interact with Syrians experience higher levels of well-being.

The primary aim of this study is to examine the frequency of sociocultural participation among Turks and Syrians, identifying the key characteristics positively associated with participation. The second aim is to investigate the relationship between sociocultural participation and subjective well-being (SWB) among Syrian migrants and Turkish respondents, as measured by life satisfaction and general happiness.

Literature Review

The literature examined the role of socioeconomic characteristics and social class in shaping sociocultural participation and its impact on subjective well-being (SWB). This section briefly presents the literature relevant to the conceptual framework discussed in the next section. The first part of the study explores how socioeconomic status influences preferences for "highbrow" and "lowbrow" activities.

Previous studies indicate that social class and socioeconomic characteristics, such as education, income, wealth, and employment, are critical determinants of cultural participation. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital posits that individuals from higher socioeconomic classes are more likely to engage in "highbrow" cultural activities, such as attending the theater or visiting museums, as these activities reflect and reinforce their social status (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1981; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020). People from higher social classes

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with high cultural capital tend to pursue such activities as signs of distinction and refinement. Conversely, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to participate in "lowbrow" activities, which are more accessible and financially affordable (Ateca-Amestoy & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2023; Christin, 2012; Gemar, 2024; Jæger et al., 2023; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020; Sullivan, 2001).

Studies confirm that education level, income, and wealth significantly influence participation in highbrow activities. For example, Ateca-Amestoy and Prieto-Rodriguez (2023) found that cultural participation in the United States is heavily influenced by income and educational attainment. Jæger et al. (2023) further explored how cultural tastes are markers of social status, reinforcing the divide between highbrow and lowbrow activities. Conversely, individuals with lower income and education levels often face financial barriers to participating in highbrow cultural events, leading them to favor more accessible lowbrow activities (Ateca-Amestoy & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2023; Estrada-Mejia et al., 2020; Heikkilä & Lindblom, 2023; Kallunki, 2023; Wolla & Sullivan, 2017). These findings suggest that cultural engagement is not only a matter of taste but also raises important issues of accessibility and social inclusion.

The sociocultural participation of migrants is influenced not only by socioeconomic factors but also by their integration into host societies. Migrants encounter unique challenges in engaging with highbrow cultural activities due to socioeconomic status, language barriers, and displacement experiences (Bircan & Sunata, 2015; Giovanis, 2021). Consequently, they are more inclined to participate in lowbrow activities, which require fewer financial resources and are more accessible in terms of social and cultural context. Migrants often engage in community-based, lowbrow activities, such as attending religious events, socializing with neighbors, or watching television (Akar & Erdoğdu, 2019; Alkan, 2021). Financial constraints, limited employment opportunities, and lower incomes exacerbate this preference for lowbrow activities (Caro, 2020). Additionally, Erdoğan (2019, 2020) suggests that Syrians' economic and educational disadvantages frequently limit their engagement in Turkish cultural life. Although there have been attempts to integrate Syrian migrants into Turkish society, their cultural engagement remains limited to lowbrow activities, as discussed in the next section.

The literature on epidemiology, economics, and sociology documents the adverse effects of social exclusion and material deprivation on well-being at both individual and population levels (Cuesta & Budría, 2014; Gilbert, 2009; Smith, 1996; Terraneo, 2021). Despite rational arguments that culture is essential to social existence, inclusion, and quality of life, the influence of culture on well-being may be underappreciated, particularly regarding the implications of cultural capital for migrants. The literature has identified factors of social and cultural capital and investigated its role in SWB (Addae & Kühner, 2022; Cicognani et al., 2008; Galloway, 2006; Gilan et al., 2023; Giovanis, 2021; Kim & Kim, 2009; Laukka, 2007; Michalos, 2005; Reyes-Martínez & Andrade-Guzmán, 2023; Reyes-Martínez et al., 2020; Toepoel, 2011; Wang et al., 2023).

The association between participation in social and cultural events and well-being is also supported by social capital theory (SCT) (Coleman, 1988; De Tocqueville, 1835; Putnam, 2000). SCT is relevant to this study as it aims to analyze and explain various social experiences. According to the literature (Albanesi et al., 2007; Coleman, 1988; De Luca & Lin, 2024: Goulding, 2013; Hampshire & Matthijsse, 2010; Olimid, 2023; Putnam, 2000), social capital contributes to human capital creation, which is linked to cultural and financial capital, as well as civic participation and democracy. Toepoel (2011) found that older adults who are socially integrated and culturally active report higher life satisfaction. Engagement in social and cultural activities enhances social interactions and further boosts SWB (Giovanis, 2021; Hampshire & Matthijsse, 2010; Han et al., 2019; He et al., 2022; Helliwell et al., 2014; Kuykendall et al., 2015; Mak et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). Overall, the literature provides evidence that sociocultural participation plays a crucial role in enhancing well-being, particularly for

migrants, by fostering social integration and providing a sense of belonging in the host society (du Plooy et al., 2020; Gilan et al., 2023; Giovanis, 2021; He et al., 2022).

However, to our knowledge, no study has compared the well-being of natives and migrants-specifically, Syrian migrants and Turks-resulting from participation in social and cultural activities. For example, Alkan (2021) discussed how hospitality and social engagement with the local population improved the well-being of Syrian migrants in Turkey. However, that study did not compare the improvement in well-being of migrants and Turkish respondents. Erdoğan (2019), using the Syrians Barometer, shows that interactions between Syrians and Turks may positively influence well-being. Syrians who engage with Turkish citizens experience a stronger sense of belonging and life satisfaction, while Turkish people who interact with Syrian migrants reduce prejudices and promote social harmony. Thus, this study aims to explore whether participation in various sociocultural activities enhances the well-being of Syrian migrants compared to Turks.

Conceptual Framework

Part of the study's conceptual framework relies on Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) cultural capital theory. Following the literature review, we briefly highlight the hypotheses investigated to evaluate the role and influence of participation in cultural and social activities on well-being. We also outline hypotheses examining whether participation leads to higher levels of well-being for Syrian migrants than for Turkish respondents. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital consists of three categories: objective, embodied, and institutionalized. Objective cultural capital is represented by cultural goods, such as books, poems, and songs, which we examine in this study, while embodied cultural capital is expressed through language skills and preferences. The third type, institutionalized cultural capital, is measured by educational credentials and academic qualifications. Although we account for this last type by controlling for education level in our regressions, our primary focus is on the first two types.

As described in the next section, we measure objective cultural capital through questions on whether Syrian migrants have read a novel or poem by a Turkish author and if they are familiar with Turkish songs. For Turkish respondents, the survey asks if they have read a novel or poem by a foreign author and whether they know a foreign song. To measure embodied cultural capital, we examine various sociocultural activities, as detailed in the data section. Specifically, we distinguish between "highbrow" and "lowbrow" activities. Examples of highbrow activities include visits to historical sites and museums and attendance at the theater. In contrast, lowbrow activities include gatherings for food or drink, praying at the mosque, engaging in sports, and watching Turkish or foreign TV programs and series. Other forms of participation include visiting Syrian friends' homes for Turkish respondents and vice versa (Toepoel, 2011).

Bourdieu posits that participation in highbrow sociocultural activities is closely linked to social class and educational attainment (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1981; Giovanis, 2021; Sullivan, 2001). According to Bourdieu and Boltanski (1981), Bourdieu (1984, 1986), and other studies (Ateca-Amestoy & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2023; Gemar, 2024; Giovanis, 2021; Jæger et al., 2023; Kallunki, 2023; Sullivan, 2001), lower socioeconomic status-characterized by lower income and educational attainment-leads to a preference for lowbrow activities, while those with greater wealth and higher education are more likely to engage in highbrow pursuits. Based on this framework, our first hypothesis is as follows:

H_1: Social class, as indicated by education level, wealth, and employment, is positively associated with participation in highbrow sociocultural activities, while low socioeconomic status is associated with preferences for lowbrow activities.

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Thus, wealthier individuals are more likely to engage in highbrow activities, using cultural practice as a means of distinguishing their social position. Those with higher cultural levels, such as the "cultivated bourgeoisie" (Bourdieu, 1984), differentiate themselves from other groups by expressing refined tastes and avoiding activities perceived as uncultivated. Cultural capital thus serves as an important indicator of social status. Attitudes, preferences, and cultural capital collectively create distinctions in social identity, often marking social differentiation. To measure wealth, we control for household income in our regressions and include education level, which is associated with higher income and wealth (Estrada-Mejia et al., 2020; Glei et al., 2022; Pham et al., 2024; Wolla & Sullivan, 2017).

However, lower socioeconomic status does not necessarily indicate a preference for lowbrow activities due to taste alone; financial constraints may also limit access to highbrow activities if these are associated with higher costs. As indicated by summary statistics in the next section, Syrian migrants in our sample report significantly lower household income, educational attainment, and employment levels. Consequently, our second hypothesis is:

H_2: Syrian migrants are more inclined than Turkish respondents to engage in lowbrow social and cultural activities, while participation in highbrow activities is less common among Syrians.

The study's first aim is to compare the frequency of social and cultural event participation among Turks and Syrians. The second aim is to examine how sociocultural engagement impacts well-being, particularly whether this engagement has a more significant effect on the SWB of Syrian migrants. Based on the literature (De Luca & Lin, 2024; Giovanis, 2021; Giovanis et al., 2021; Goulding, 2013; He et al., 2022; Olimid, 2023; Wang et al., 2023), our third hypothesis is:

H_3: Participation in social and cultural activities enhances the SWB of Turkish and Syrian individuals.

Previous studies indicate that individuals who participate in social and cultural activities are often more educated, self-aware, and better informed, contributing to increased self-determination, health-promoting behaviors, and well-being (Albanesi et al., 2007; Ateca-Amestoy & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2023; Carruthers & Hood, 2004; Chan et al., 2023). Sociocultural engagement fosters inclusive communities that integrate diverse groups, including migrants. Participation in these events promotes and strengthens social bonds, fostering harmony, integration, and solidarity. Studies have shown that participation increases one's social network, enhances the sense of belonging in the host society, and improves well-being (Alanazi, 2024; du Plooy et al., 2020; Elena & Pablo, 2024; Gilan et al., 2023; Giovanis, 2021; He et al., 2022; Jeannotte, 2003; Lizardo, 2013; Rafnsson et al., 2015).

Syrian immigrants may face financial constraints and potential discrimination. Nevertheless, participation in cultural and social events can serve as a bridge, connecting people with similar cultural preferences and values and facilitating interactions with those holding different values, as in the case of Turkish and Syrian interactions. These shared experiences can promote empathy, compassion, understanding, and respect for diversity, potentially reducing prejudice and positively impacting SWB.

Earlier studies have investigated social and cultural capital and the role of participation in sociocultural events in SWB (Addae & Kühner, 2022; Cicognani et al., 2008; Gilan et al., 2023; Giovanis, 2021; Kim & Kim, 2009; Mak et al., 2021; Reyes-Martínez et al., 2020; Toepoel, 2011; Wang et al., 2023). However, this study contributes to the literature by exploring how participation in sociocultural activities affects the SWB of Syrian migrants in Turkey. We

aim to assess whether Syrian migrants participating in various social and cultural events are more likely to enhance their SWB, thereby reducing well-being disparities between Turks and Syrians. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether participation has a greater effect on Syrians or Turkish individuals. Although Hypothesis H_3 suggests that participation improves SWB, it is unclear if this effect is stronger for Syrians, as they may participate more in lowbrow activities, which could have a unique positive impact on their SWB. In contrast, highbrow activities might yield greater benefits due to their distinct nature.

While there is no definitive answer to this question, we hypothesize that cultural participation may produce effects similar to those seen in individuals with varying educational or age levels. For instance, older people with extensive career experience may derive less SWB benefit from a promotion than younger individuals at the start of their careers. Similarly, the impact of SWB on education often reveals that those with higher educational attainment may not experience life satisfaction gains proportionate to their expectations (Giovanis, 2019; Stutzer, 2004).

In this study, we argue that even small events, such as Syrians inviting Turkish friends or socializing, may improve Syrians' SWB. However, these events may hold less significance for Turkish individuals who may have unmet life expectations. Similarly, cultural goods, such as reading Turkish books, singing Turkish songs, and attending Turkish plays, may enhance Syrians' sense of belonging more than they affect Turkish respondents who engage with foreign works. Moreover, socializing with Syrians may reduce prejudice among Turkish individuals, positively impacting their SWB. Therefore, our fourth hypothesis is as follows:

H_4: Syrian migrants who participate in cultural and social activities experience greater improvements in SWB than Turkish respondents, particularly if Syrians have lower life aspirations and expectations. Conversely, Turkish respondents who socialize with Syrians may experience positive SWB changes.

Methodology

To answer the study's main objectives, we estimate the system of regressions:

$$SCP_{ipc} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 M_{ipc} + \beta' \mathbf{X}_{ipc} + r_p + \theta_c + \varepsilon_{ipc} \quad (1)$$

$$SWB_{ipc} = b_0 + b_1 M_{ipc} + b_2 SCP_{ipc} + b_3 SCP_{ipc} \cdot M_{ipc} + b' \mathbf{Z}_{ipc} + l_p + \phi_c + u_{ipc} \quad (2)$$

SWB expresses the well-being outcomes for the individual *i* living in province *p*, born in province *c*. The province *p* refers to Şanlıurfa, Mardin, Adana, Mersin, Gaziantep and Hatay, as we provide more details in the data section. Province of birth *c* includes all the provinces in Turkey and Syria. Sets r_p and l_p are the fixed province effects of residence respectively in regressions (1) and (2), and the sets θ_p and φ_p are the fixed province effects of birth respectively in (1) and (2) to control for potential unobserved area characteristics. *SCP* indicates the frequency of sociocultural activities. We include the dummy variable *M*, taking the value of one for the Syrian respondents and zero if the respondent is a Turk.

We use the first regression to examine whether Syrians participate more frequently in sociocultural activities than Turkish people, thus testing Hypothesis H_2. We also assess hypothesis H_1 to determine whether demographic and socioeconomic characteristics influence sociocultural participation. These characteristics include sex, age, education level, household type, household income, and marital, health, and employment status. Regression (2) is used to investigate hypothesis H_3, specifically examining whether and to what extent participation in various social and cultural activities enhances the well-being of both Syrians and Turks. We

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differentiate the *SWB* regression (2) with respect to *SCP*. As we have highlighted earlier, if the respondent is a Syrian, variable *M* takes the value of one, and zero otherwise (Turkish respondent). Coefficient b_2 shows the association between *SWB* and the sociocultural participation of Turks, and the sum of coefficients $b_2 + b_3$ is used for Syrians. In the next section, we describe the *SWB* outcomes and *SCP* activities explored and the control variables employed in the regressions.

The main interest in this study is the interaction term of *SCP* and *M*. This is expressed by coefficient b_3 and we test hypothesis H_4 to investigate if sociocultural participation raises the Syrian migrants' SWB more than Turks. Both outcomes in regressions (1)-(2) measure frequency and, thus, are ordered variables. Hence, we will estimate a simultaneous system of Ordered Probit regressions. We should emphasize that we do not report the Logit model estimates because the marginal effects are relatively close to the ordered Probit model.

Data

The data were administered, conducted, and collected by HIPOTEZ Research and Consultancy, a reputable research and consultancy firm based in Istanbul, Turkey. Given the company's experience conducting nationally representative surveys in provinces with high Syrian populations, we chose to work with HIPOTEZ to implement our survey. The survey was conducted in six provinces with the highest share of Syrian residents: Şanlıurfa, Mardin, Adana, Mersin, Gaziantep, and Hatay. These provinces were selected based on data from the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) in Turkey[4]. As of January 2021, the Syrian population percentages in Hatay, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Mersin, Adana, and Mardin were 26.6%, 21.7%, 20.3%, 12.1%, 11.2%, and 10.6%, respectively. Kilis has the highest concentration, with 98% of its population being Syrian.

Due to the small number of Turkish residents in Kilis, we did not conduct the survey there to avoid biased estimates. Our sample is representative of the populations of the six provinces with the highest Syrian populations in Turkey and in terms of key demographic factors such as age, education, and employment status. These provinces either border or are close to the Turkish-Syrian border and have experienced a significant influx of Syrian refugees. The settlement of many Syrian migrants in these provinces creates an ideal case for capturing the sociocultural dynamics and integration challenges Syrian migrants face in Turkey. This sampling framework, based on demographic data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT)[5], ensures that our findings reflect the composition of these regions within the broader Turkish society and migration landscape. Our sampling approach aligns with previous studies, such as Schiefer et al. (2023), which target areas with substantial Syrian populations, particularly the provinces near the Syrian border: Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, and Hatay. According to Schiefer et al. (2023), these areas host the largest shares of the Syrian refugee population in Turkey due to their geographical proximity and historical, cultural, and economic ties with Syria. Our selected provinces represent the unique refugee demographics and living conditions in these high-density Syrian communities. This approach enhances the relevance and applicability of our findings to the specific context of migration and integration, as well as to broader discussions on these issues. The sample achieved considerable variation in important observable characteristics, including age, education, income, employment status, and sociocultural participation variables. The main data collection method was face-to-face interviews, with the sampling framework based on data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT). The sample included 1,031 Turkish citizens and 1,067 Syrian citizens.

[4] https://en.goc.gov.tr/
[5] https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=International-Migration-Statistics-2020-37212&dil=2

Baban et al. (2017) and Erdoğan (2019) describe the economic and social vulnerabilities faced by Syrian refugees in Turkey, highlighting variations across provinces. These socio-economic conditions reinforce the representativeness of selecting border provinces with high refugee populations, as these areas encounter distinct challenges related to social inclusion and resource access. Studies by the Turkish Red Crescent and World Food Programme (2019) and the Syrian Barometer surveys (Erdoğan, 2020) compare various demographic and attitudinal measures of refugees across Turkey. These studies support sample-based surveys like ours by providing consistent demographic and socio-economic profiles for high-density refugee regions.

On the other hand, Reichel and Morales (2017) and Erdoğan (2019), emphasize challenges in provinces like Ankara and Istanbul, where the proportion of Syrians in the total population is comparatively low. In these low-density areas, this demographic disparity complicates efforts to study interactions with the Turkish population due to fewer shared community spaces and interactions. Moreover, the Turkish Red Crescent and World Food Programme (2019) indicate that surveys conducted in low-density provinces often struggle to obtain representative samples, as Syrians are more dispersed within these larger, urbanized areas. Thus, our sampling approach draws on these studies, noting that Syrian populations are primarily concentrated in the six border provinces, where Syrians constitute a significant share of the population. This concentration makes these regions particularly suitable for observing patterns of interaction and social integration.

HIPOTEZ obtained informed consent from participants, which was approved accordingly[6]. Data collection began on October 30, 2020, and was completed by November 25, 2020. The field team included eight surveyors, one supervisor, three interpreters, and one field coordinator. As part of the project scope, 30% of responses were double-checked by phone, and 25% of interviews were accompanied to ensure quality control. The questionnaire was structured into three main sections: demographics and socioeconomic status, sociocultural awareness and participation, and questions about income. Specifically, for Syrian respondents, the year of arrival in Turkey was also recorded.

Panel A of Table 1 presents the SWB (subjective well-being) outcomes, expressed as life satisfaction and happiness, along with continuous control variables such as annual household income and age. Panel B displays the proportions of the categorical variables. Life satisfaction and happiness were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The question on happiness asked, “How happy are you in general?” with response options ranging from very unhappy to very happy, coded from 0 (*very unhappy*) to 4 (*very happy*).

Similarly, life satisfaction was measured by asking, “How satisfied are you with your life?” with responses from very dissatisfied to very satisfied, coded from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied). Interestingly, the average SWB scores for happiness and life satisfaction indicators were significantly lower for Turkish respondents than for Syrians, as indicated by t-test statistics and p-values. Specifically, the average SWB scores for Turkish respondents ranged from 2.1 to 2.2, while the averages for Syrian respondents were approximately 2.8.

[6] For more details see http://hipotezarastirma.com/

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Table 1

Summary Statistics for the Outcomes and Control variables

Panel A: Ordered and Continuous Variables						
Happiness	Average	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum		
Turkish	2.208	1.257	0	4		
Syrians	2.831	1.002	0	4		
t-statistic	- 12.578 [0.000]					
Life Satisfaction	Average	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum		
Turkish	2.128	1.297	0	4		
Syrians	2.822	0.998	0	4		
t-statistic	-13.768 [0.000]					
Age	Average	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum		
Turkish	38.992	14.766	18	75		
Syrians	34.406	12.481	18	70		
t-statistic	7.694 [0.000]					
Annual Household Income	Average	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum		
Turkish	48,060.93	37,647.63	7,200	480,000		
Syrians	28,362.05	17,112.29	0	160,000		
t-statistic	15.525 [0.000]					
Panel B: Categorical Variables						
	Gender-Male	**Gender-Female**	**Work-Yes**	**Work-No**		
Turkish	49.85	50.15	47.72	52.28		
Syrians	48.92	51.08	38.17	61.83		
Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	0.235 [0.6279]		14.366 [0.0002]			
Marital Status	Single	Married-Civil	Married - Religious	Separated-Divorced	Widowed	
Turkish	31.62	59.46	2.23	3.59	3.10	
Syrians	15.72	41.63	34.80	2.71	5.14	
Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	198.315 [0.0001]					
Education	Illiterate	Not illiterate but no diploma	Primary school	Secondary school	High school	Higher Education
Turkish	3.98	2.91	31.13	20.66	25.80	15.52
Syrians	12.07	6.45	26.66	25.82	18.80	10.20
Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	41.049 [0.0001]					

Note. P-values within the brackets

The average ages of Syrians and Turks ranged from 34 to 39 years. The average income for the Turkish sample was notably higher at 48,000 Turkish Liras (TL) compared to 28,360 TL for the Syrian sample. Men comprised approximately 49% of the sample, and women 51%, which, along with the average age, is representative of the Turkish and Syrian populations. About 47.72% of the Turkish sample was employed, compared to 38.17% of the Syrian sample. It is important to note that the term "non-working" does not imply unemployment. The question refers specifically to whether respondents had worked in the previous week for pay or profit, including both employers and employees. This is consistent with the European Union-Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and is followed by TURKSTAT. However, the survey focused only on this question to keep interviews brief, given that some Syrian respondents may not have stable employment. The non-working category also includes individuals outside the labor force, such as students, homemakers, retirees, and those unable to work due to disability. The statistics reveal income and employment inequalities between Turkish citizens and Syrian migrants (Caro, 2020).

Most Syrians in our sample (34.8%) were married in a religious ceremony, compared to only 2.23% of Turkish respondents, while nearly 60% of Turkish respondents were married in a civil ceremony. This difference is expected, as religious marriages are not legally recognized in Turkey. Among Syrians, 15.72% were single, compared to 31.62% of Turkish respondents. The last control variable in Table 1 is education level. Approximately 12% of the Syrian sample was illiterate-nearly three times the proportion in the Turkish sample. While 26.66% of Syrians and 31.13% of Turks had completed primary school, high school completion rates were 25.80% for Turkish respondents and 25.82% for Syrian respondents. Notably, 15.52% of Turkish respondents had completed higher education, including undergraduate and postgraduate degrees such as a Master's or PhD. These statistics indicate educational disparities, with Turkish people being more educated, consistent with previous findings (Adalı & Türkyılmaz, 2020; Bircan & Sunata, 2015).

Table 2 reports the frequency proportions of participation in various sociocultural activities examined in this study. For theater attendance, the question for Syrians addresses whether they attend Turkish plays, whereas, for Turkish respondents, it asks about attendance at foreign plays over the past two years. It should be noted that a "foreign play" does not necessarily mean it is performed in a foreign language but rather refers to an adapted play originally written by a foreign author. Similarly, for cinema attendance, we consider how frequently Syrian migrants attend Turkish films, while for Turkish respondents, we assess whether and how often they watch foreign movies. This includes dubbed and original-language films, as cinema facilities in Turkey may offer both types, although not consistently.

The third question investigates the frequency of visits to historical monuments, sites, parks, and museums for Turkish and Syrian respondents. The fourth activity concerns television viewing habits; specifically, for Syrian respondents, it involves the frequency of watching Turkish programs, shows, and series, while for Turkish respondents, it refers to watching foreign TV programs. Across these activities, most respondents reported no participation, but the percentage is significantly lower for Turkish respondents. For example, 86.81% of the Turkish sample reported never attending a foreign play, compared to 95.88% of the Syrian sample. Regarding cinema attendance, 89.62% of Syrian respondents reported never watching a Turkish film, significantly higher than the 59.64% of Turkish respondents who had not watched a foreign film. Notably, 13.50% of Turkish respondents reported watching a foreign movie eight or more times over the past two years, compared to only 0.94% of Syrians who reported watching a Turkish film.

The next set of questions focuses on activities involving direct interaction between Syrians and Turkish respondents. Specifically, one question asks about the frequency with which a Syrian is invited by a Turk or a Turkish respondent is invited by a Syrian. Another question examines the frequency of a Turkish person inviting a Syrian or a Syrian inviting a

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Turkish citizen. Although these questions appear similar, they allow us to investigate whether a Syrian being invited by a Turk correlates with a higher level of SWB than a Syrian inviting a Turk, with the same analysis applied to Turkish respondents. Additional questions address the frequency with which Syrians and Turks go out for food or drinks together and organize joint activities, such as cooking and hosting parties. We also assess the frequency with which Syrians and Turks participate in sports activities together.

Table 2
Participation in Sociocultural Activities

Frequency of attending a theatre to watch a Turkish play (for Syrians) and a foreign play (for Turkish)	Turkish	Syrians	**Frequency of going to cinema to watch a Turkish movie (for Syrians) and a foreign movie (for Turkish)**	Turkish	Syrians
Never	86.81	95.88	Never	58.64	89.62
Only Once	3.39	1.22	Only Once	2.72	3.18
2-3 times	4.66	1.96	2-3 times	11.75	4.30
4-5 times	1.94	0.56	4-5 times	9.51	1.50
6-7 times	0.78	0.19	6-7 times	3.88	0.46
8 or more times	2.42	0.19	8 or more times	13.50	0.94
Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	13.224 [0.0003]		Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	171.075 [0.000]	
Frequency of visiting a museum, public library, historical monument, park or sites.	Turkish	Syrians	**Frequency of watching Turkish movies; TV series-programmes at home (for Syrians) and watching foreign language shows, programmes, series and movies (for Turkish)**	Turkish	Syrians
Never	48.59	66.42	Never	30.07	34.05
At least once a week	20.86	16.46	At least once a week	38.89	40.32
Monthly	17.46	6.45	Monthly	13.19	9.26
4-5 times	9.02	6.83	4-5 times	13.29	8.98
6-7 times	3.49	3.37	6-7 times	2.42	3.09
8 or more times	0.58	0.47	8 or more times	2.14	4.30
Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	171.075 [0.000]		Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	52.144 [0.000]	
How often are you invited to a Syrian friend's house (for Turkish) or to a Turkish friend's house (for Syrians) for food or drink?	Turkish	Syrians	**How often do you go out for food or drink with your Turkish friends (for Syrians) and with your Syrian friends (for Turkish)?**	Turkish	Syrians
Never	89.23	61.09	Never	88.21	50.14
Once a year	1.36	1.31	Once a year	2.26	9.45
Twice a year	1.26	3.27	Twice a year	1.68	6.45
Many times a year	2.33	8.33	Many times a year	1.97	2.53
Once a month	4.36	13.38	Once a month	4.30	3.27
At least once a week	1.46	12.62	At least once a week	1.58	28.16
Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	133.995 [0.000]		Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	305.940 [0.000]	

How often do you invite a Syrian friend's house (for Turkish) or a Turkish friend's house (for Syrians) to have something to eat or drink?	Turkish	Syrians	**How often do you participate in sports activities with your Syrian friends (for Turkish), or you Turkish friends (for Syrians) like playing football, basketball, table tennis, billiards and bowling)?**	Turkish	Syrians
Never	89.91	61.09	Never	96.41	87.56
Once a year	1.45	1.59	Once a year	0.58	1.78
Twice a year	0.68	2.15	Twice a year	0.68	1.40
Many times a year	2.13	8.79	Many times a year	0.29	1.40
Once a month	4.27	13.84	Once a month	1.65	4.86
At least once a week	1.55	12.54	At least once a week	0.39	3.00
Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	133.995 [0.000]		Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	12.511 [0.0006]	

Table 2 (Cont.)

Participation in Sociocultural Activities

How often do you organize meetings with your Syrian friends or Turkish friends for activities such as cooking, and parties?	Turkish	Syrians	**Have you ever read a novel or a story book written by a Turkish author (for Syrians) and from a foreign author (for Turkish)?**	Turkish	Syrians
Never	91.50	72.68	Yes	34.63	7.39
Once a year	1.36	5.05	No	65.37	92.61
Twice a year	2.26	4.49	Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	116.744 [0.000]	
Many times a year	1.88	7.39	**Reading Turkish poems or singing Turkish Songs (for Syrians) or a foreign poem or song (for Turkish)**	Turkish	Syrians
Once a month	2.52	8.33	Yes	10.67	17.40
At least once a week	0.48	2.06	No	89.33	82.60
Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	68.016 [0.000]		Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	7.129 [0.0076]	
Frequency of practicing Salah in the mosque with Turkish friends (for Syrians) and with Syrian Friends (for Turkish)	Turkish	Syrians	**Do you have a Turkish (for Syrians) or Syrian (for Turkish) friend?**	Turkish	Syrians
Never	84.09	62.39	Yes	23.67	52.01
Almost never	5.14	3.37	No	76.33	47.99
Less often but at least once a year	1.75	5.06	Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	126.439 [0.000]	
Less often but at least once a month	1.07	1.68			
Once a week	5.62	16.46			
Not every day but more than once a week	1.07	3.74			
Once a month	0.48	2.62			
More than once in a day	0.78	4.68			
Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square Test	87.502 [0.000]				

Note. P-values within the brackets

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The last question in this section concerns participation in Salah (Muslim prayer) at the mosque. This question addresses how frequently Syrians practice Salah with Turkish friends, and vice versa. In this set of variables, we observe that Syrians are more likely than Turks to participate in activities such as sharing meals, going for drinks, picnicking, inviting or being invited by Turkish friends, and practicing Salah in the mosque with Turkish friends. This is evident from the lower proportion of Syrians answering "never". For instance, approximately 90% of the Turkish sample reported never inviting a Syrian or being invited by a Syrian for food or drink, compared to about 61% of Syrians. Similarly, 88% of Turkish respondents reported never going out for a meal or drink with Syrian friends, while only 50.14% of Syrians reported the same.

The final set of variables includes binary responses on whether Syrians have read a novel or poem by a Turkish author or know a Turkish song. For Turkish respondents, the questions pertain to whether they have read a foreign novel or poem and know a foreign song. In this case, 34.63% of the Turkish sample reported reading at least one foreign novel, compared to only 7.39% of Syrians who reported reading a Turkish novel. It is important to clarify that "foreign novel" for Turkish respondents does not imply it is read in the original language; most are likely translated into Turkish. Conversely, a larger proportion of Syrians reported knowing at least one Turkish poem or song (17.49%) compared to Turkish respondents who reported knowing a foreign poem or song (10.67%). The final question in this set assesses the proportion of Syrians who have a Turkish friend, which is 52%, significantly higher than the 23.67% of Turkish respondents who reported having a Syrian friend.

Given that the variables are ordinal, we apply the Kruskal-Wallis chi-square test to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between Turkish and Syrian respondents in sociocultural activities. In all cases, based on the p-values, we reject the null hypothesis, indicating that these differences are statistically significant. The t-test yields similar conclusions, though these results are not reported here.

Results

Table 3 presents the estimates for cinema attendance. The results in column (1) confirm Hypotheses H_1 and H_2, as income and education are positively associated with cinema attendance, while no significant differences were found across gender, employment status, or health status. This is expected, as physical health limitations, such as disabilities, may not restrict participation in this activity. Additionally, both men and women appear to attend the cinema with similar frequency; however, women tend to participate less frequently in sports matches and events but more frequently in other "highbrow" activities, such as visits to historical sites and attendance at opera and theater performances (Christin, 2012). Our findings, however, do not align with prior studies, as we find no significant gender differences in the frequency of theater attendance, TV program viewing, or visits to historical sites and museums. Additionally, employment status does not show a significant association with cinema attendance, which may be due to the fact that the non-employed category includes students, homemakers, and retirees who do not necessarily belong to lower-income groups.

The coefficient from the first regression, addressing the study's first aim, is negative and significant, indicating that Syrians participate less frequently than their Turkish counterparts, supporting Hypothesis H_2. This may be attributed to the significantly lower income and education levels reported by Syrians in our sample, which are associated with lower sociocultural participation. The results in columns (2) and (3) pertain to the SWB regressions. We do not find support for Hypothesis H_3, as the coefficient b_2 for cinema attendance is insignificant, suggesting no positive effect of cinema attendance on SWB. Similarly, the results do not support Hypothesis H_4, as the coefficient of primary interest b_3, is also statistically

insignificant. Therefore, the results indicate that this specific activity does not significantly impact SWB.

An interesting finding is that Syrian migrants report higher SWB levels than Turks, as shown by the positive and significant coefficient b_1. This could be explained by differences in life aspirations and expectations. Despite the hardships faced by Syrians in our sample, who were forced to leave their homes and jobs, they may report higher SWB due to having lower expectations than Turkish respondents. This finding aligns with Erdoğan's (2019) study, which observed increasing happiness among Syrians. According to the Syrians-Barometer 2017, Syrians report rising happiness due to expanding networks with Syrians and Turks (Erdoğan, 2020). The Syrians-Barometer indicates that Turkish society is increasingly concerned about the growing Syrian refugee population and issues related to security, public expenditures, service disruptions, and identity loss. From the perspective of Syrian migrants, an expanding Syrian community in Turkey strengthens Syrian identity and solidarity networks despite the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity within these provinces. Thus, the growing Syrian population may contribute to anxiety among Turks, while Syrians experience increased happiness through a sense of community and network growth (Erdoğan, 2020).

In both SWB regressions, men report lower SWB levels than women, corroborating findings from prior studies (Graham & Chattopadhyay, 2013; Joshanloo & Jovanović, 2020; Zheng et al., 2022). Although identifying the mechanisms behind men's lower SWB is beyond the scope of this study, unemployment is a significant factor impacting men in many regions globally. This suggests that employment remains crucial for men's social approbation (Blom & Perelli-Harris, 2021; Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021; Van der Meer, 2014), as supported by our Turkish and Syrian samples.

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Table 3

Simultaneous Ordered Probit Estimates for Frequency of Going to Cinema

	DV: Cinema	DV: Happiness	DV: Life Satisfaction
Nationality (Syrian)	-1.4089***	1.093***	1.153***
	(0.1508)	(0.1245)	(0.1246)
Attendance to Cinema		0.1471***	-0.1354
		(0.0340)	(0.1183)
Nationality × Attendance to Cinema		-0.0054	-0.0616
		(0.0518)	(0.0513)
Gender (Male)	0.1057	-0.2959***	-0.2831***
	(0.0749)	(0.0586)	(0.0588)
Age	-0.0216***	-0.0004	-0.0004
	(0.0036)	(0.0041)	(0.0025)
Household Income	0.1258*	0.2175***	0.2331***
	(0.0652)	(0.0503)	(0.0505)
Language Proficiency	0.7087***	0.1398***	0.1254**
	(0.0474)	(0.0211)	(0.0530)
Work (Yes)	0.1027	0.0132	0.0662
	(0.0798)	(0.0619)	(0.0621)
Physical Health Problem (Yes)	-0.0286	-0.2662***	-0.3206***
	(0.1194)	(0.0756)	(0.0759)
Marital Status (Reference Single)			
Married-Civil	-0.2767***	-0.0464	-0.0670
	(0.0971)	(0.0812)	(0.0810)
Married -Religious	-0.2466*	-0.0434	-0.0556
	(0.1291)	(0.0954)	(0.0952)
Separated-Divorced	-0.1626	-0.2086	-0.2970*
	(0.2176)	(0.1667)	(0.1665)
Widowed	-0.0953	-0.0953	0.0039
	(0.2671)	(0.2670)	(0.1646)
Household Type (Reference-Single)			
Childless Couple	-0.1046	0.6114*	0.5496*
	(0.2245)	(0.3348)	(0.3227)
Couple and at least one child	-0.1156	0.2744	0.2755
	(0.1709)	(0.2113)	(0.2077)
Nuclear family of a single parent and at least one child	-0.2992	-0.2688	-0.2540
	(0.2226)	(0.2379)	(0.2443)
At least one nuclear family and other persons	-0.0635	0.0427	0.1396
	(0.1768)	(0.2228)	(0.2186)
Households of more than one person without nuclear family	0.0479	0.2162	0.2340
	(0.1938)	(0.2695)	(0.2594)
Education Level (Reference-Illiterate)			
Not illiterate but no diploma	0.0178	-0.1535	-0.0889
	(0.1606)	(0.1379)	(0.1390)
Primary school	0.2697	0.0659	-0.0246
	(0.1717)	(0.0944)	(0.0998)
Secondary school	0.2012*	0.0072	-0.0707
	(0.1210)	(0.0103)	(0.1044)
High school	0.4654***	0.1323	-0.0243
	(0.1707)	(0.1029)	(0.1096)
Higher Education	0.8045***	0.1251	0.0263
	(0.1773)	(0.1244)	(0.1242)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		1,245.47	1,260.33
		[0.000]	[0.000]

Note. Robust standard errors within parentheses, P-values within the brackets, ***, ** and * indicate significance at the 1% and 10% levels.

Household income shows a positive association with SWB, while physical health conditions are negatively associated with SWB (Arrondo et al., 2021; Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002; Kushlev et al., 2020; Mathentamo et al., 2024; Ngamaba et al., 2017). However, we find no significant relationship between SWB and variables such as age or education level. Previous studies have produced mixed findings, reporting linear, cubic, U-shaped, or inverted U-shaped relationships (Argyle, 1999; Bitzer et al., 2024; Easterlin, 2006; Giovanis, 2019; Myers, 2000). In our study, the relationship between SWB and age appears insignificant, likely influenced by factors such as income, gender, provincial residence and birth. Language proficiency is positively associated with both cinema attendance and SWB. Regarding education, previous research emphasizes the role of expectations, as discussed in our conceptual framework (Giovanis, 2019; Stutzer, 2004; Wu & Becker, 2023; Wu et al., 2022). For marital status, the only significant difference is observed among divorced or separated individuals, who report lower life satisfaction; however, this finding does not extend to the happiness regression.

It is worth noting that in the regression system (1)-(2), we include estimated coefficients for 51 provinces representing respondents' birthplaces in Syria or Turkey, including the six provinces where the survey was conducted. Although the SWB regression estimates remain largely similar, the estimated coefficients in the sociocultural participation regressions may vary depending on the activity analyzed. However, further exploration of these differences is beyond the scope of this study.

We also control for household type, categorized as nuclear families without children, nuclear families with at least one child, single parents with children, nuclear families with additional household members (e.g., grandparents), and households comprising multiple individuals without a nuclear family structure. Overall, we find no significant differences across household types; however, some variations emerge in specific cases. For instance, childless couples and single-parent nuclear families with at least one child are more likely to know a Turkish or foreign poem or song, while couples with at least one child are more likely to attend Salah in a mosque with their Turkish or Syrian friends. Additionally, nuclear families with additional household members and multi-person households without a nuclear family structure tend to watch Turkish or foreign TV programs, movies, series, and shows more frequently. In the SWB regressions, we observe no differences across household types, except that childless couples report higher life satisfaction and happiness than the reference category (singles and other marital statuses) at the 10% significance level.

Table 4 provides further insights into other sociocultural activities. Specifically, we find that Syrians are less likely to engage in "highbrow" activities such as theater attendance (Panel A), visits to historical sites and museums (Panel B), and reading books and poems (Panel J). In contrast, they participate more frequently than Turkish respondents in "lowbrow" activities. Although no positive relationship was observed between SWB and cinema attendance in Table 3, the results in Table 4 indicate that participation in most social and cultural activities enhances the well-being of Turks and Syrians, supporting Hypothesis H_3. Exceptions include practicing Salah in the mosque (Panel D), going out for drinks or food (Panel G), engaging in sports activities with Syrian or Turkish friends (Panel H), and reading or knowing poems and songs by Turkish or foreign authors (Panel K).

Regarding Hypothesis H_4, specific activities are found to improve SWB more for Syrians than for Turkish respondents. Notably, in the case of "highbrow" activities, visits to historical sites and museums (Panel B) and reading books (Panel J) have a greater positive effect on Syrians' SWB. However, the coefficient b_3 for theater attendance (Panel A) and reading poems or knowing Turkish and foreign songs (Panel K), while positively associated with SWB for both groups, is insignificant in differentiating SWB gains between Syrians and

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Turks. This suggests that although these activities enhance SWB for both groups, they do not result in relatively higher SWB changes for Syrians.

Table 4
Simultaneous Ordered Probit Estimates for Frequency of Participation in Sociocultural Activities

Panel A: Attendance to Theatre	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	-0.8331***	1.0510***	1.0972***
	(0.2136)	(0.1112)	(0.1116)
SCP		0.3874**	0.3244*
		(0.1770)	(0.1805)
Nationality × SCP		0.0775	0.0901
		(0.0828)	(0.0826)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		712.48	721.94
		[0.000]	[0.000]
Panel B: Visits to Museums and Historical Monuments and Sites	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	-0.6474***	1.1092***	1.1728***
	(0.1211)	(0.1159)	(0.1141)
SCP		0.3756***	0.4081***
		(0.1623)	(0.1275)
Nationality × SCP		0.0749**	0.0704*
		(0.0356)	(0.0414)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		935.39	944.83
		[0.000]	[0.000]
Panel C: TV programmes-shows	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	0.8748***	0.7013***	0.8159***
	(0.1106)	(0.1730)	(0.1793)
SCP		0.2216***	0.1441**
		(0.0606)	(0.0672)
Nationality × SCP		0.0018	0.0103
		(0.0032)	(0.0314)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		924.38	928.98
		[0.000]	[0.000]
Panel D: Practicing Salah in the mosque	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	0.9201***	0.9769***	1.0436***
	(0.1328)	(0.1247)	(0.1251)
SCP		0.0641	0.0417
		(0.0425)	(0.0420)
Nationality × SCP		0.0020	0.0195
		(0.0027)	(0.0271)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		1,169.83	1,171.62
		[0.000]	[0.000]
Panel E: Invited by a Turkish or Syrian friend for drink or food at home	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**

Nationality (Syrian)	1.2014***	0.9555***	1.1542***
	(0.1387)	(0.1522)	(0.5570)
SCP		0.1264**	0.0073
		(0.0579)	(0.0127)
Nationality × SCP		0.0928**	0.0575
		(0.0364)	(0.1076)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		994.81	1,007.22
		[0.000]	[0.000]

Table 4 (Cont.)
Simultaneous Ordered Probit Estimates for Frequency of Participation in Sociocultural Activities

Panel F: Invite a Turkish or Syrian friend	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	1.1263***	0.8262***	1.0409***
	(0.1376)	(0.1522)	(0.1712)
SCP		0.1937***	0.1505**
		(0.1488)	(0.0678)
Nationality × SCP		0.0770***	0.0870**
		(0.0341)	(0.0382)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		974.79	979.51
		[0.000]	[0.000]
Panel G: Go out for food or drink with a Turkish or Syrian friend	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	1.5145***	1.0278***	1.0829***
	(0.1431)	(0.1311)	(0.1316)
SCP		0.0374	0.0343
		(0.0505)	(0.0507)
Nationality × SCP		0.0188	0.0268
		(0.0426)	(0.0427)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		1,145.35	1,151.35
		[0.000]	[0.000]
Panel H: Participate in sports activities with a Syrian or Turkish friend	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	0.9421***	1.0676***	1.1298***
	(0.1952)	(0.1335)	(0.1339)
SCP		0.0638	0.0453
		(0.0851)	(0.0844)
Nationality × SCP		0.0538	0.0691
		(0.0624)	(0.0622)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		759.61	771.43
		[0.000]	[0.000]
Panel I: Get together with a Turkish or Syrian friend for activities such as cooking, and organising parties	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	0.8130***	1.2527***	1.3161***
	(0.1521)	(0.1311)	(0.1298)
SCP		0.0391	0.2916***
		(0.0634)	(0.0711)
Nationality × SCP		-0.1833***	-0.2482***

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	(0.0484)	(0.0508)
No. Observations	2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square	858.61	861.56
	[0.000]	[0.000]

Table 4 (Cont.)
Simultaneous Ordered Probit Estimates for Frequency of Participation in Sociocultural Activities

Panel J: Read books	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	-1.3806***	1.0876***	1.1110***
	(0.1853)	(0.1212)	(0.1218)
SCP		1.0981***	0.8504**
		(0.3566)	(0.3574)
Nationality × SCP		0.4465***	0.3758**
		(0.1512)	(0.1521)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		1,206.93	1,208.42
		[0.000]	[0.000]
Panel K: Read Poems or Know Turkish-Foreign Songs	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	-1.4089***	1.093***	1.153***
	(0.1508)	(0.1245)	(0.1246)
SCP		0.0102	0.1354
		(0.1217)	(0.1183)
Nationality × SCP		0.0054	0.0616
		(0.0518)	(0.0513)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		930.97	1,260.33
		[0.000]	[0.000]
Panel L: Having a Turkish or Syrian Friend	**DV: SCP**	**DV: Happiness**	**DV: Life Satisfaction**
Nationality (Syrian)	1.0602***	0.8530***	0.9109***
	(0.1398)	(0.1561)	(0.1612)
SCP		1.0925***	1.1422***
		(0.2401)	(0.2384)
Nationality × SCP		0.2341**	0.2130**
		(0.1037)	(0.1024)
No. Observations		2,098	2,098
LR Chi-Square		930.97	936.96
		[0.000]	[0.000]

Note. Robust standard errors within parentheses, P-values within the brackets, ***, ** and * indicates significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level.

Similarly, the coefficient b_3 remains insignificant for practicing Salah in the mosque, watching Turkish or foreign TV programs, movies, and series, engaging in sports, and going out for drinks or food. On the other hand, we find that Syrians who invite or are invited by a Turkish friend (Panels E-F) and those with a Turkish friend (Panel L) experience greater improvement in SWB compared to Turkish respondents. An intriguing finding in Panel I is the significant negative coefficient b_3, indicating that Turkish respondents who participate in activities organized with Syrian friends, such as cooking, picnics, and parties, report larger increases in SWB than Syrians. Although we cannot fully explain this negative association, it

is possible that such social interactions and communication help Turkish respondents reduce biases and foster more positive attitudes toward migrants.

Discussion

We have attempted to explore the role and significance of the influence that participation in social and cultural activities exhibits on the well-being of Syrian migrants in Turkey. Our findings confirm the theories developed in the sociology literature that wealth, income, and educational attainment define the social status and overall position of an individual in society. We found a positive association between education, income, and participation in sociocultural events, especially "highbrow" activities, which confirms the results in previous studies (Ateca-Amestoy & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2023; Estrada-Mejia et al., 2020; Giovanis, 2021; Heikkilä & Lindblom, 2023; Kallunki, 2023).

This study sought to explore the impact of social and cultural participation on the well-being of Syrian migrants in Turkey. Our findings align with sociological theories that suggest wealth, income, and educational attainment are key determinants of social status and position within society. We observed a positive association between education, income, and participation in sociocultural events-particularly "highbrow" activities-supporting results from previous studies (Ateca-Amestoy & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2023; Estrada-Mejia et al., 2020; Giovanis, 2021; Heikkilä & Lindblom, 2023; Kallunki, 2023).

Due to potentially higher aspirations and life expectations among Turkish respondents, Syrians in our sample reported higher SWB levels. Although we did not use panel data to examine SWB dynamics over time, one limitation of this study is that we argue that Syrians, despite the trauma of war and displacement, may experience higher SWB due to lower initial expectations upon arriving in Turkey. In particular, 80% of Syrians in our sample had lived in Turkey for at least five years, with 43% residing for over six years. Overall, the findings suggest that engaging in social and cultural activities enhances the SWB of both Turks and Syrians, with a few exceptions, such as attending the cinema, praying in a mosque, dining out, knowing a Turkish or foreign poem or song, and participating in sports activities.

Based on Bourdieu's framework, our findings also support results from Suarez-Fernandez et al. (2020), which indicate that cultural participation depends not only on personal preferences but also on social and economic access. For Syrian migrants, financial limitations and lower educational levels create barriers to activities requiring cultural capital, such as theater attendance or museum visits. This finding supports Hypothesis H_2, suggesting that Syrian migrants are more likely to engage in lowbrow activities due to socioeconomic constraints, while Turkish respondents participate more frequently in highbrow activities, a trend seen in other migrant populations (Caro, 2020).

Our findings show that Syrians derive greater SWB from social activities, such as inviting Turkish friends for a meal, rather than attending the cinema or theater. This suggests that Syrian migrants may prefer direct interactions with Turkish people, where income is less of a factor. However, activities associated with Turkish culture, such as reading a Turkish novel or visiting museums, also significantly enhance Syrians' SWB. Although the data do not conclusively support this, higher costs associated with cinema and theater attendance, such as ticket prices, can be a limiting factor. Furthermore, the absence of a positive relationship between SWB and cinema or theater attendance could be due to language barriers, as advanced listening skills in Turkish are often more challenging than the reading skills required for books or visits to museums where language skills are not required.

Consistent with previous studies, individuals with higher income and educational attainment are more likely to participate in cultural activities such as theater attendance, museum visits, and book reading (Ateca-Amestoy & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2023; Giovanis, 2021; Jæger et al., 2023). Our results confirm this, with Turkish respondents, on average, earning

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higher incomes and attaining higher education levels than Syrians, leading to higher participation in highbrow activities. In contrast, due to financial and educational limitations, Syrian respondents engage more in lowbrow activities, a pattern also identified in earlier studies (Alkan, 2021; Estrada-Mejia et al., 2020). This aligns with findings from Orakci and Aktan (2021), showing that while students aspire to achieve educational success and social inclusion, they often experience feelings of hopelessness regarding the future. These insights support the notion that sociocultural activities associated with increased SWB can help mitigate feelings of hopelessness and improve well-being among Syrian refugees.

Our findings also support the social capital theory (Putnam, 2000), which posits that sociocultural participation enhances social inclusion and well-being, particularly for migrants (Cicognani et al., 2008; du Plooy et al., 2020; Giovanis, 2021; He, 2022; Toepoel, 2011). This study confirms Hypothesis H_3, showing that both Turkish and Syrian respondents report higher SWB through sociocultural participation. However, Syrians experience even greater improvements in SWB, particularly when engaging in activities that bridge cultural divides, such as reading Turkish literature or visiting historical sites, reflecting the embodiment of cultural capital in Bourdieu's framework. Our study extends the work of Erdoğan (2019, 2020) and Alefesha and dina (2019) who focused on social harmony and integration, by demonstrating that such interactions can also enhance SWB. Specifically, Syrians who interact with Turkish citizens not only build social connections but also experience an increased sense of belonging, significantly enhancing their well-being, thus supporting Hypothesis H_4.

Our findings emphasize the importance of involving migrants and host communities in integration efforts. According to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, successful integration depends not only on the migrants but also on the resources and openness of the host society. Consistent with Gilan et al. (2023) and Addae and Kühner (2022), our results suggest that addressing socioeconomic barriers and promoting inclusive sociocultural participation are essential for improving migrants' well-being.

Integration is often viewed solely as the responsibility of immigrants, yet this study illustrates that integration, social inclusion, and cohesion require active efforts from both immigrants and host societies. Financial resources and income disparities can hinder participation in various activities, with education and income identified as key factors in sociocultural participation. Higher education levels improve employment opportunities and increase earning potential (Estrada-Mejia et al., 2020; Glei et al., 2022; Pham et al., 2024; Wolla & Sullivan, 2017). Education and income thus help overcome financial constraints, facilitating greater engagement in social and cultural activities. Our findings show that Syrian respondents report significantly lower household income and education levels, resulting in reduced sociocultural participation and highlighting potential inequalities in labor and education outcomes as barriers to cultural integration. There is no simple solution to achieving integration and social cohesion. Migration policies and programs should address the important barriers and gaps between native and migrant populations.

This study has several limitations. The analysis relies on cross-sectional survey data, meaning we cannot control for unobserved heterogeneity or track changes over time, which limits the study's ability to establish causality. Therefore, the results show associations rather than causal relationships, making it difficult to confirm the directionality between sociocultural participation and SWB. Moreover, the location of Syrian migrants may not be random, as data were collected in provinces sharing a border with Syria, and natives may choose their residence based on personal preferences. For example, Turks less accepting of Syrian refugees may live in areas with lower Syrian populations, while others may reside in areas with higher immigrant densities. This study also relies on self-reported data, which can introduce biases, such as recall bias-where respondents may inaccurately recall participation frequency-and social desirability

bias, where respondents may overreport engagement in sociocultural activities (Te Braak et al., 2023; Teh et al., 2023).

Limitations include unobserved heterogeneity and potential reverse causality. Although we control for socioeconomic and demographic factors, unmeasured variables, such as personality traits or social networks, could influence both cultural participation and well-being. Reverse causality may also be present; while sociocultural participation can improve SWB, happier individuals may participate more frequently. This study aimed to highlight the role of social and cultural engagement and its connection to SWB among Syrian migrants in Turkey.

Future studies should employ longitudinal or panel data to better capture dynamic interactions among variables over time and establish causality. This study explored the experiences of Syrian migrants in six Turkish provinces with high Syrian populations. While these areas provide valuable insights, the findings may not be generalizable to other regions within Turkey or to Syrian migrants in other countries. Future research should expand geographically to include additional regions in Turkey and examine migrant populations from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. To address endogeneity from reverse causality, future studies could use instrumental variable (IV) approaches for sociocultural participation or apply propensity score matching (PSM) to account for selection bias. Our findings suggest that integration efforts should involve not only migrants but also the host community. Future research should evaluate the effectiveness of different integration policies and programs to promote mutual engagement and well-being.

Conclusion

This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by investigating the impact of sociocultural participation on the SWB of Syrian migrants living in Turkey. It is crucial to remember that integration is not solely the responsibility of migrants; it also requires active engagement from host societies. Therefore, social integration is a two-way process where both migrants and natives must collaborate to build integrated and mutually inclusive communities. The findings of this study have broader implications for migrant populations in other countries, as the factors influencing sociocultural participation and well-being are not exclusive to Syrian migrants in Turkey. Moreover, these results can be valuable for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations focused on migration and integration.

Overall, this study's findings suggest several practical implications. Policies that promote and encourage immigrants to engage in social and cultural activities may facilitate their integration into host societies and improve their SWB. The results underscore the need for more inclusive policies that recognize sociocultural participation as a vital component of migrant integration strategies. Such policies could include subsidized or free access to museums and public socio-cultural events, which can enhance well-being and strengthen connections between migrant and host communities. The study has also shown that proficiency in the host country's language is essential for sociocultural participation, highlighting the importance of prioritizing language training and cultural orientation programs.

Additionally, the findings indicate that factors like education and income significantly impact access to social and cultural participation. Policymakers can address these socioeconomic disparities by creating opportunities accessible to individuals of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Potential measures could include financial support, vouchers, or discounts for low-income migrant families, enabling them to participate in cultural events, as well as community-oriented programs that allow them to experience cultural diversity at minimal economic cost.

The study also reveals that activities fostering interaction between Turkish natives and Syrian migrants, such as invitations to or hosting social events, can positively influence well-

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being. This finding suggests that policies promoting cross-cultural interactions could be crucial for successful integration. Additionally, the results have broader implications for mental health interventions, as participation in sociocultural activities can serve as a form of informal psychosocial support. Investments in integration and social inclusion should be prioritized in migration policies, especially considering that integration is a complex, multigenerational, and multifaceted process. Embracing reciprocal and shared learning in integration can enhance the benefits of immigration for host countries, ultimately leading to more inclusive, secure, healthy, and fulfilling societies.

Notes

1. Turkish Embassy https://www.allaboutturkey.com/marriage_foreigners.html

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