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Attitudes of the Host Population towards Syrian Refugees: A New Theoretical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the nuanced attitudes of the host community in Izmir, Turkey, towards Syrian refugees, employing a robust threat and benefit theoretical model. It scrutinizes the multifaceted factors contributing to perceived threats and benefits, elucidates the reasons behind the variation in these attitudes, identifies the individuals responsible for holding these perspectives, pinpoints the specific contexts in which they manifest, examines the temporal dimension of these attitudes, and dissects the profound impact they have on mutual adaptation processes and the formulation of migration policies. A diverse group of 34 participants from the host community actively engaged in semi-structured interviews, comprising 16 females and 18 males across an age spectrum spanning 19 to 64 years. Thematic analysis methodically uncovered that economic and demographic considerations prominently constitute the bedrock of perceived threats, while conversely, the study illuminated financial contributions as pivotal benefits. The in-depth understanding garnered from this study holds significant promise for fostering enduring mutual adaptation between the host and refugee communities, thereby cultivating a more harmonious coexistence. Additionally, this nuanced insight informs the strategic development of immigration policies, ensuring they align with the evolving dynamics of this complex relationship.

Keywords: Attitude; Prejudice; Syrians; Social identity; Threat-benefit model

1. Introduction

The escalating phenomenon of human mobility

in today's world has led to the coexistence of diverse groups with distinct social backgrounds and characteristics. These groups, whether labelled as migrants,

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refugees, asylum seekers, or protected individuals within a country, are shaped by many circumstances. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports a staggering 35.3 million refugees globally who have been compelled to flee their homelands due to the harrowing forces of violence, conflict, and persecution ^[1]. Among these displaced souls, approximately 6 million are Syrians, and Turkey hosts a substantial 3.7 million Syrian refugees ^[2]. Previous scholarly investigations ^[3,4] have illuminated Syrian refugees' strong inclination to remain within Turkey's borders. Consequently, this mounting presence has cast a prominent spotlight on the Syrian community within Turkish society. Given the rapid surge in refugee numbers within Turkey, this study seeks to delve into the intricate fabric of attitudes towards refugees. In human cognition, individuals inherently hierarchically structure their thought processes, with attitudes reflecting their preferences toward specific circumstances or particular social entities ^[5]. The evaluation of newcomers by the host community holds significant importance. Yet, previous research has predominantly focused on the perception of refugees as a threat by the local population, inadvertently neglecting the examination of the positive aspects of migration ^[4,6-8]. Initially, attitudes toward Syrian refugees in Turkey were positively imbued during the initial years of the Syrian migration. However, as the Syrian population swelled and their presence extended over time, negative attitudes towards these refugees became increasingly conspicuous. Understanding the factors that underlie these negative attitudes and behaviours, encompassing aspects such as social identity, prejudice, perceived threats, and opportunities, becomes essential. Such insights will undoubtedly pave the way for developing policies to enhance the well-being of all parties involved. In this study, the attitudes of the host community towards Syrians have been examined within the framework of the threat and benefit model. İzmir, located in the westernmost part of Turkey, is a city where migration has reshaped the demographic and sociocultural landscape. Due to its geographical location, İzmir is one of the primary

routes for refugees heading towards Europe. As of July 2023, 133,687 registered Syrians live in İzmir. Despite having a multicultural sociodemographic structure, various studies (e.g., ^[6]) have observed a high perception of threat towards Syrians in İzmir.

Understanding the peaceful integration of groups within society requires more information and effort concerning the parties involved. The relationships between newcomer groups and the host community are evaluated in the acculturation process, where the mutual interaction of different cultural groups is central ^[7]. Social identity and threat theories are believed to help understand the process. Social identity is shaped by the interactions between individuals and the groups to which they belong ^[8]. Attitudes and policies regarding newcomers are also shaped by social identities. According to social identity theory, individuals become more sensitive to intergroup differences and evaluate others based on their group memberships as they identify with a group. This leads to the perception of external groups as a threat to their social identity and the formation of prejudice.

Understanding the psychological processes related to threat perception is vital in achieving social peace, as refugees may become the target of prejudice based on ethnic, cultural, and religious differences when they settle in host countries. The perception of threats and prejudices can create division and conflict between refugees and the host community, supporting exclusionary behaviours and social policies towards refugees.

Most previous studies have focused on the host community perceiving various groups as threats, with the Intergroup Threat Theory being the most well-known theory explaining the perception of refugees as threats. However, this theory has been criticized for largely ignoring the positive aspects of migration and for its inadequacy in defining the precursors of threats. Threat-Benefit Model (TBM) based on the Integrated Threat Theory ^[9] and the Value Theory ^[10] to address this gap was developed. According to the model, the host community can perceive different immigrant and refugee groups as

both threatening and beneficial, categorizing threats and benefits the host community perceives concerning refugees comprehensively.

The perception of threat towards Syrian refugees in Turkey has been examined in various studies, which have observed that Syrian refugees pose both realistic and symbolic threats regarding cultural, economic, and security issues. However, attitudes towards refugees can simultaneously be positive and negative, and it is considered rational to evaluate refugee groups in terms of threat and benefit. Furthermore, there has yet to be a systematic study examining the host community's members' perceptions of threats and benefits related to refugees to date.

In conclusion, this study evaluates the attitudes of the host community towards Syrian refugees within the threat and benefit model framework. Additionally, this study can contribute to examining concepts such as social identity, prejudice, and threat perception, understanding intergroup contact, and developing policies and practices that promote social equality and inclusivity.

2. Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design with an interpretative constructivist perspective to examine the attitudes of host community members living in Izmir towards Syrian refugees.

2.1 Sampling

Participants for this research were selected using the snowball sampling method^[11]. The research sample consisted of host community members in Izmir who had no prior migration experience. **Table 1** provides details about the sample characteristics. Participants were informed about the research's subject and purpose. We safeguarded the participants' identities when presenting the study's findings. Participants (e.g., P1) were assigned to them. Participants were chosen from areas in Izmir, specifically Konak, Karabağlar, Bornova, Buca, and Bayraklı, where Syrian refugees predominantly reside.

2.2 Data collection

Data for this research was gathered through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were designed to be flexible, allowing for the inclusion of new issues as they emerged, based on a literature review^[12]. Subsequently, two experts in the field reviewed the study questions to ensure their content validity. The research questions were as follows:

- 1) Do you encounter Syrian refugees in your daily life or workplace?
- 2) What are your thoughts about Syrian refugees living in your city?
- 3) In your opinion, can Syrian refugees pose a threat? a) If you think they pose a threat, in which areas?
- 4) In your opinion, do Syrian refugees provide benefits? a) If you think they provide benefits, in which areas?

In adherence to ethical guidelines, this study prioritized participant consent, privacy, and confidentiality. Before conducting interviews, each participant was fully informed about the research objectives, and their voluntary participation consent was obtained. Data collection occurred between June and July 2022. Furthermore, ethical approval for this study (Ethics Committee Number: 2023/14-11, Date: 30.05.2023) was obtained from the Yuzuncu Yil University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee before commencing the research. All interviews were conducted at designated, suitable locations and times, ensuring the privacy and comfort of the participants. Each interview had an average duration of 45 to 90 minutes. The researcher continued conducting interviews until data saturation was achieved, safeguarding the participants' privacy and confidentiality throughout the research process.

2.3 Data analysis

Research data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic themes were generated using an inductive approach, which connects data and themes holistically by defining themes, supporting the mean-

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Participant	Gender	Age	Marital status	Professional status	District of residence
1	Female	34	Married	Employed	Konak
2	Female	25	Separate	Employed	Konak
3	Female	44	Married	Housewife	Konak
4	Female	19	Single	Student	Karabağlar
5	Female	32	Single	Employed	Karabağlar
6	Female	57	Married	Retired	Karabağlar
7	Female	34	Married	Employed	Bornova
8	Female	29	Single	Employed	Bornova
9	Female	46	Married	Retired	Bornova
10	Female	23	Single	Student	Buca
11	Female	54	Married	Employed	Buca
12	Female	61	Separate	Retired	Buca
13	Female	58	Married	Housewife	Bayraklı
14	Female	31	Separate	Employed	Bayraklı
15	Female	20	Single	Student	Bayraklı
16	Female	36	Married	Housewife	Bayraklı
17	Male	19	Single	Student	Konak
18	Male	22	Single	Student	Bayraklı
19	Male	64	Married	Retired	Bayraklı
20	Male	53	Married	Employed	Bayraklı
21	Male	49	Married	Retired	Konak
22	Male	45	Married	Employed	Bayraklı
23	Male	22	Single	Student	Bornova
24	Male	37	Married	Employed	Bornova
25	Male	32	Married	Employed	Bornova
26	Male	48	Separate	Employed	Karabağlar
27	Male	30	Single	Employed	Karabağlar
28	Male	20	Single	Student	Karabağlar
29	Male	34	Married	Employed	Karabağlar
30	Male	41	Single	Employed	Buca
31	Male	36	Separate	Employed	Buca
32	Male	29	Single	Employed	Buca
33	Male	33	Married	Employed	Konak
34	Male	40	Married	Employed	Bornova

ingfulness of the data coded under each theme, and strengthening the consistency of the themes^[13]. Data analysis followed a six-stage process. First, the data were noted and carefully re-read. Then, initial codes were created. The generated codes were grouped under themes. Themes were reviewed, ensuring consistency with the coded data content and the entire dataset, resulting in a thematic “map”. Subsequently,

themes were defined and named. In the final stage, findings were logically reported^[14].

3. Findings

Participants shared their thoughts and experiences regarding Syrian refugees. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying

two main themes, each comprising subthemes as shown in **Figure 1**. These are “Challenges of Living Together” and “Opportunities of Living Together”. Subthemes of the main theme, “Challenges of Living Together”, include uncertainty, economic threats, security threats, and threats related to social life. The main theme, “Opportunities of Living Together”, encompasses economic opportunities and cultural diversity.

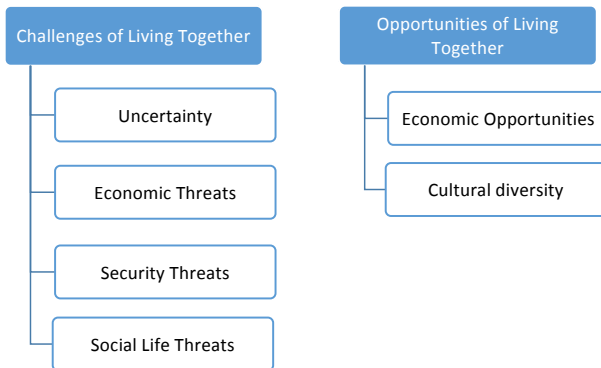


Figure 1. Main themes one and two.

3.1 Challenges of living together

Participants shared their experiences and perceptions of their difficulties coexisting with Syrian refugees. This theme encompasses subthemes such as uncertainty, economic threats, security threats, and threats related to social life.

Uncertainty subtheme

Participants expressed experiencing uncertainty regarding Syrian refugees. They voiced concerns about knowing how long the refugees would stay, their exact numbers, and what the future holds for them. There was particular emphasis on the uncertainty surrounding the refugees’ permanence and their growing numbers.

“They have more children than us. They are reproducing rapidly, and then they will become Turkish citizens... Their numbers have exceeded ours in the southeastern cities of Kilis and Hatay. What will happen?” (P13)

“How long they stay is not even questioned anymore. There is no problem for them, but what we

will do and how we will bear this burden is unclear. ‘There is no standard practice regarding refugees in the country’.” (P25)

“We do not know how many refugees there are, where they live, what their children do, whether they have regular records, what their illness history is. But they live with us.” (P34)

Participants generally expressed discomfort with the uncertainties surrounding the refugees’ length of stay, the number of children, the potential for infectious diseases, and their registration status.

Economic threats subtheme

Participants frequently described Syrian refugees as posing an economic threat. Many noted that refugees were causing unease in the host population by competing for jobs.

“When they first came here, they had nothing, but they opened a shop, and now their business is better than ours. They do not pay taxes here either. They also affect our business.” (P33)

“They engage in free trade here. For example, they are preferred because they work for less than our air conditioners. They also affect prices. But there is no taxation.” (P24)

“I am a construction master. Syrians have been preferred for a long time because they work for less. If we do not lower our prices, we will not be able to do business.” (P27)

Participants expressed discomfort with allocating national resources, especially the assistance provided. The prioritization of refugees in services like health and education negatively affects the host community’s perception of equality.

“We have our poor people, but no one sees them. They receive constant aid. The money that should be spent on the country goes to them. From whom is it collected, from us?” (P12)

Participants also mentioned that Syrians benefit from many resources, such as education and health-care expenses, without paying taxes.

“In economic terms, they are like a swarm of locusts. Their numbers have increased rapidly. They take everything like a bottomless pit. Aid, support, child assistance, aid for women. How will this end?

We are not in a good situation either.” (P9)

“The number of students in classes has risen. Classes were already overcrowded.” (P16)

“Hospitals are full of them. We are waiting in line because of them. Everything is free for them. It is as if they are citizens of the country, and we are foreigners.” (P19)

Security threats subtheme

Participants commonly expressed their perception of refugees as individuals with the potential to engage in criminal activities. They also mentioned that refugees were seen as physically threatening due to residing in economically disadvantaged areas. The arrival of refugees in their communities was regarded as a security threat because the unauthorized entry of Syrian refugees into living spaces compromised the sense of security within the host society.

“They have a tailor shop in the neighborhood. Their friends come over, different types, but nothing is done. We get anxious from time to time.” (P4)

“I worked in a textile workshop where someone from their group was employed. It turned out that he was stealing, and then he disappeared. Not all of them are like that, but such incidents happen.” (P7)

“They are often in large groups and sometimes engage in criminal activities when they have nothing else to do, I haven’t seen them around my area, but this makes people uneasy.” (P20)

“They typically make money by collecting paper, but when young people return from work, they move around in groups, which makes people uncomfortable.” (P28)

Social life threats subtheme

Participants frequently noted the differences in Syrian refugees’ lives, worldviews, cultures, family structures, and relationships. Participants described how Syrians often had large families with many children, making them challenging to manage (P1, 3, 6, 5, 16, 28, 33). Some participants also mentioned that Syrians practiced polygamy, which they disapproved of (P1, 13, 29).

“They do not pay much attention to their children. Girls look after their younger siblings.” (P16)

“Their perspective on life differs from ours. Their cultures, lifestyles, and everything is distinct. Is it enough to share the same religion?” (P22)

“They have been here for years, but they still maintain their traditions. They tend to socialize within their community.” (P12)

3.2 Opportunities of coexistence—Opportunities of living together main theme

Participants also mentioned the opportunities related to Syrian refugees. This theme encompasses subthemes: economic opportunities and cultural diversity.

Economic opportunities

Participants frequently described how refugees were willing to take on jobs that the host population was not inclined to do. They believed they contributed to the economy by working longer hours for lower wages.

“Syrians are willing to work longer hours and for lower wages than Turks. This contributes to the local economy.” (P20)

“In the past, people from the eastern regions used to do tasks like paper collection, but now Syrians have taken on these roles.” (P19)

“They have started running businesses from their homes here. Some of our neighbours also work with them from home.” (P14)

“They engage in electrical repair work, both individually and by providing employment to others. The quality of their work is also good.” (P29)

“Where I work, there are people employed as domestic helpers, but they also assist patients as caregivers. They handle their assigned tasks quietly.” (P14)

“We can say that Syrians buying goods from businesses similar to ours boost our local economy.” (P34)

Cultural diversity

Participants explained that having different cultural groups in society provided diversity. They emphasized that cultural diversity was seen as a socially

beneficial and enriching community experience.

“People came from Bulgaria before, and they were different from us. They had a hard time adjusting, but we worked together. I learned many new things. People are not all Turks nowadays, but we can still learn from them.” (P12)

“We are witnessing intermarriages now. At the beginning of the summer, our neighbors’ daughter married a Syrian boy. They are good people, although they have different customs.” (P16)

“Although there are negative aspects, having children from different cultures in the classroom is educational. Kids are curious about them.” (P1)

“My son’s math and English teacher is Syrian. He gets along well with the children. They are caring and selfless. They introduce a new culture. It is an opportunity to learn about cultures we might not otherwise encounter.” (P22)

“They have different cultures and customs. As we get to know each other, we learn. It seems foreign to us, but we occasionally shop from them. We find it affordable, and the products are good. We also learn new things.” (P13)

Participants mentioned that they significantly interacted with refugee merchants in their areas.

4. Conclusions

This study examined the attitudes of the host community towards Syrian refugees within the framework of the threat-benefit model. It is well-known that host communities need to uniformly perceive and evaluate refugee groups^[15]. In Turkey, a country with the largest population of Syrian refugees, this research adopted a multidimensional perspective by utilizing the threat/benefit model to assess the host community’s attitudes towards Syrian refugees. The study’s findings revealed that the host community evaluates Syrian refugees from both a threat and a benefit perspective.

In the study, it was found that the host community perceived uncertainties about Syrian refugees as threats. Participants expressed concerns about sharing inadequate information on topics such as the number of refugees in the country, birth rates,

duration of stay, expenditures on them, and contagious diseases. Similar to Karataş^[16], this study also revealed that the host community is concerned about the increasing Syrian population. It is believed that these concerns can be alleviated through regulations and explanations provided by policymakers.

The study also found that the host community perceived Syrian refugees as an economic threat. Participants believed that refugees received more support than the host community regarding rights, social assistance, free access to healthcare, and work permits. As a result, refugees were generally perceived as competitors for jobs and social welfare services. This perception can potentially undermine social equality and social peace. Additionally, it can contribute to the reinforcement of prejudices and the delineation of intergroup boundaries. Thus, refugees threaten the host community’s control over resources, economic security, and stability^[15,17,18]. For example, in a study by Tartakovsky and Walsh^[15], refugees were perceived as more economically threatening than other migrant groups. Therefore, the evaluation of refugees by the host group in Israel was generally negative.

Israeli scientists developed the threat-benefit model to reveal the host society’s attitudes towards different immigrant and refugee groups. Since the model is relatively new, supporting it empirically in other cultures contributes to the literature. It provides a different perspective on the issue, as the host society evaluates refugees not only as a threat but also in terms of their benefits. Furthermore, it was observed that Israelis considered refugees the most economically threatening group, despite their willingness to work in jobs that the host community did not prefer (such as restaurant cleaning) and receiving limited support. Similarly, in various studies conducted in Turkey, Syrian refugees have been seen as an economic threat and a threat to resource usage^[19,20]. However, as observed in Woods and Kayalı^[21] and Erdoğan^[4] studies, host community members do not necessarily blame Syrian refugees for economic problems but believe that they exacerbate the situation.

Host participants also perceived security threats from Syrian refugees. Participants generally believed that Syrian refugees were more involved in criminal activities, contributing to security concerns. Studies conducted in Turkey have also confirmed that Syrian refugees are perceived as a security threat^[19,20]. In Israel, different studies have shown that the host community perceives refugees as threatening their bodies and property^[17,18]. The intervention of a new group in the existing social order within a society can disrupt it and undermine feelings of stability and security among the local population^[22]. Therefore, it can be argued that a large Syrian refugee population is seen as a security threat from the perspective of the host community, especially in areas where participants reside, such as Izmir, which Syrian refugees prefer due to its lower socioeconomic structure, and this threat might be more pronounced.

In the study, it has been observed that within the theme of social threats, the host community perceives Syrians as a threat to their way of life, culture, and worldviews. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with research findings from different countries (e.g.,^[23,24]), indicating that refugees are often perceived as threatening social life and order due to bringing their traditions and behavioural norms. In Turkey, one of the reasons for widespread prejudice and discrimination against Syrians is the perception that Syrians threaten the social structure and cultural values^[19,20]. In summary, the study's results align with findings from other studies conducted in Turkey^[4,21], highlighting the negative attitudes of the host community towards Syrian refugees and their perception of them as a threat. However, examining the social psychological processes underlying these negative attitudes and threat perceptions is believed to contribute to promoting social justice and peace. It is crucial to achieve social integration in intergroup relations without the host community members feeling exploited, without self-other alienation, and exclusion.

As a result, numerous studies conducted in Turkey^[4,25,26] have shown that Turkish society exhibits certain negative attitudes and behavioural tendencies

towards Syrians. It is well-known that in Turkey, there are serious concerns regarding Syrians related to economic, cultural, and security issues^[27]. For instance, Genç and Özdemirkıran's^[28] research revealed that Syrian refugees were perceived as threatening social harmony, order, and the economy. In other cities (e.g., Gaziantep and Ankara), it is known that citizens hold strong beliefs that Syrians cause economic damage, pose security risks, and cannot adapt to the local society due to cultural differences^[4,29,30]. Taşdemir^[30] found that items measuring both realistic and symbolic threats from Syrians were grouped under the same factor among psychology students, with most students reporting high threat perception. A study in Izmir observed a significantly increased threat perception despite positive attitudes towards Syrians based on shared religious or humanitarian concerns^[6]. Most studies have primarily focused on negative attitudes and threats towards Syrian refugees. However, it is rare for attitudes to be solely positive or negative. Therefore, presenting positive attitudes towards Syrian refugees is believed to align with the course of life.

Increasing awareness about attitudes towards Syrian refugees can also open new avenues for policymakers to achieve social justice and peace. For example, in a study by Tartakosky and Walsh^[17], social work professionals in Israel assessed their attitudes towards various immigrant groups. The study revealed that immigrants could be perceived as both a threat and a benefit. Similarly, this study identified certain benefits associated with Syrian refugees. Participants indicated that Syrian refugees were willing to perform jobs that the host community did not want to do. This situation provides insights into the social and hierarchical structure of the host community. Refugees often work in undesirable jobs (referred to as "3D" jobs in the literature; dirty, challenging, and dangerous jobs) and at lower wages^[31]. In the study, participants viewed Syrian refugees working in undesirable jobs for extended periods at lower wages as a benefit. Additionally, similar to Borjas's^[32] study, it was found that refugees consuming local goods and services contributed to the local economy, creating

vitality.

It is well-established that the coexistence of different groups in society increases cultural diversity and brings dynamism. It has been observed that host community members perceive refugees' cultural elements, such as food and clothing, as enriching cultural aspects. The idea that newcomers to society bring diversity has been highlighted in many studies [17,18,33,34]. Furthermore, intergroup marriages have been reported as the duration of living together in a society increases. This can also be considered an indicator of society's acceptance of newcomer groups.

In the last decade, Turkish society has begun to live together with millions of Syrians. Especially at the beginning of the process, acceptance and solidarity towards Syrians were evident, linked to the reasons for their arrival. However, over time, for various reasons, this situation has evolved towards discomfort and anxiety within Turkish society. Nevertheless, it can still be said that the level of social acceptance of Syrian refugees by Turkish society remains relatively high [35].

Studies conducted in Turkey emphasise negative attitudes towards Syrian refugees [4,36]. While studies generally focus on attitudes toward migration (e.g., [37]), it is known that attitudes of the host group vary according to the characteristics of newcomers (nationality, religion, status in the country) [38]. Intergroup relations shape people's attitudes toward others. Furthermore, these attitudes can psychologically, socially, and culturally affect newcomers [39,40]. Intergroup relations are fundamentally based on the concept of social identity. Social identity can increase inequalities in intergroup relations in daily life, leading to adverse outcomes for both parties. Therefore, social identity is an essential theoretical framework in intergroup relations research. As individuals interact more with a group, they see themselves as typical members. They assume they share standard norms, values, behaviours, and culture with their group. As individuals identify with their group, they become more sensitive to differences with other groups and evaluate others based on their group membership. In daily life, individuals compare their group to other

groups. Individuals feel better about themselves to the extent that they perceive their group as superior to others. However, when individuals perceive a threat in this process, intergroup relations lead to anxiety and nurture prejudice and stereotypes [9]. This process becomes pronounced, especially when different groups start living together in post-migration society. It is often used to explain negative attitudes toward newcomers. However, although studies generally focus on negative attitudes towards refugees, it is also assumed that positive attitudes exist.

The evaluations of the host community regarding refugees are a complex process; therefore, more than a single theoretical perspective may be required [17,18]. Attitudes towards refugees can rarely be purely positive or negative. Therefore, a comprehensive perspective considering threats and benefits will provide a more detailed understanding of the process. The most significant contribution of this study is to demonstrate that Syrian refugees in Turkey are perceived not only as a threat but also as a benefit. Tartakovsky and Walsh [17,18] have shown in their studies in Israel that threats and benefits can coexist for different immigrant and refugee groups and are not mutually exclusive. When the host community perceives refugees as a social, economic, or cultural threat, it supports exclusionary behaviour and social policies [41]. Therefore, understanding the psychological processes contributing to the perception of refugees as a threat is essential for developing policies and practices.

The study has several limitations. This study is qualitative. There is a need for quantitative research to establish the concepts related to the threat and benefit model and to establish causality between variables. Additionally, there are limitations in the selection and inclusion of research participants. The study included volunteers living in Izmir, a metropolitan city in the westernmost part of Turkey, which is culturally and economically developed. The study focused on attitudes toward a specific refugee group (Syrians) within a specific cultural and social context. Therefore, more research is needed to examine the proposed threat and benefit model in different cities and with other groups. Working with immigrant

groups with different characteristics is believed to increase awareness of the subject and uncover new socio-psychological issues.

The findings of this study, which examines the attitudes of the host community towards Syrian refugees in Turkey through the threat-benefit model, have important policy implications. The research sheds light on the multifaceted perceptions of Syrian refugees within the host community, encompassing threats and benefits. These findings can inform policymaking regarding Syrian refugees in Turkey in several key areas:

Information Dissemination: The study highlights that the host community perceives uncertainties about Syrian refugees as threats. Concerns about the number of refugees, birth rates, duration of stay, expenditures on them, and contagious diseases contribute to these uncertainties. Policymakers should address these concerns by providing transparent and accurate information to the host community. Regular updates and clear communication can help alleviate fears and misconceptions.

Economic Integration: The study reveals that Syrian refugees are seen as economic threats, as they are perceived to receive more support than the host community in terms of rights, social assistance, healthcare, and work permits. Policymakers should focus on policies that facilitate the economic integration of refugees to promote social equality and harmony, including creating job opportunities, ensuring fair access to social services, and developing support programs to ease competition in the job market.

Security Concerns: Security concerns related to Syrian refugees are prevalent among the host community. Policymakers should prioritize security measures to address these concerns. This may involve enhancing law enforcement efforts, fostering community policing initiatives, and promoting social cohesion to minimize the perception of security threats.

Cultural Integration: The study underscores that the host community sees Syrian refugees as threatening their way of life, culture, and worldviews. Cultural integration programs should be developed

to facilitate the coexistence of different cultural elements. Policies can encourage cultural exchange and mutual appreciation, thereby reducing fears related to cultural differences.

Economic Contributions: The research identifies certain benefits associated with Syrian refugees, particularly their willingness to work in jobs that the host community may find less desirable. Policymakers should acknowledge and promote the contributions of refugees to the local economy. Highlighting the positive aspects of their participation in the job market can counterbalance negative perceptions and promote social acceptance.

Cultural Enrichment: The study emphasizes that host community members perceive refugees' cultural elements, such as food and clothing, as enriching cultural aspects. Policies that support cultural diversity and appreciation should be encouraged. This can include initiatives that promote cultural exchange and understanding.

Research and Data Collection: Given the study's limitations and the need for quantitative research, policymakers should consider investing in further studies to validate the threat-benefit model and establish causality between variables quantitatively. These studies should encompass various cities and refugee groups to understand attitudes toward refugees in different contexts comprehensively.

Social Integration and Psychological Support: Policymakers should recognize the importance of social integration and provide psychological support resources for refugees and the host community. These efforts can help mitigate negative attitudes and promote social cohesion.

Education and Awareness Campaigns: Public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives can play a vital role in changing perceptions and attitudes. These campaigns should emphasize the shared benefits of hosting refugees and promote empathy and understanding.

In conclusion, the study's insights into the attitudes of the host community towards Syrian refugees in Turkey provide a valuable foundation for policymaking. Policies should address the concerns

and perceptions highlighted in the study, focusing on promoting social integration, economic inclusion, cultural diversity, and a more accurate understanding of refugees' role in the host society. By addressing these issues, policymakers can contribute to social justice, peace, and harmonious coexistence between Turkey's host community and Syrian refugees.

While studies reflect attitudes towards refugees ^[4,6,19,20,30], this study systematically examined a new model, the TFM, comprehensively. This study examines the attitudes of the host community toward Syrian refugees from the perspective of threats and opportunities. Quantitative studies in Turkey examine the attitudes of the host community towards Syrian refugees ^[30,42-45]. However, it is observed that there is a limited number of qualitative studies that provide in-depth information on this topic in the literature (e.g., ^[46]), and there is no study that examines attitudes towards Syrian refugees using the TFM. Therefore, the study is believed to provide detailed information to the literature and contribute to practitioners and policymakers. In addition, the study may contribute to developing social psychology as a discipline related to society and creating effective policies and intervention programs.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest relevant to this research article.

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