



7th Grade Students' Perceptions of the Concept of Forced Migration

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to examine in depth the perceptions of 7th grade middle school students regarding the concept of forced migration, the meanings they attribute to this phenomenon, and their attitudes toward the migration process. In particular, how children make sense of the migration experience, their levels of empathy, and their perspectives on social integration constitute the main focus of the study. The research employed a phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research methods. The study group consists of 7th grade students from Mehmet Akif Ersoy Middle School in the Efeler district of Aydin. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview form and analyzed using the content analysis method. The findings reveal that students primarily perceive forced migration as an "involuntary" and "compulsory" form of mobility. War, economic difficulties, and natural disasters emerged as the most prominent causes of forced migration. The majority of students described forced migration as a traumatic experience accompanied by an intense emotional burden, including anxiety, fear, and sadness. In the post-migration process, the greatest challenges were identified as social adaptation, language barriers, and economic difficulties. In school life, it was found that academic achievement declined particularly in the initial periods and that problems such as peer bullying were experienced. The study also revealed that students have a high level of empathy and solidarity toward individuals experiencing forced migration; however, this perception is occasionally shaped by media coverage. Based on the results, it is recommended to establish psychosocial support units to facilitate migrant students' adaptation to school, to provide teachers with intercultural sensitivity training, and to include greater emphasis on the humanitarian dimensions of migration in the curriculum.

Keywords: *Forced Migration, Middle School Students, Social Studies, Perception of Forced*

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Introduction

Migration is a concept that expresses human mobility directed by individuals, groups, or communities from their current location to another region due to negative political, economic, and social conditions. Furthermore, while migration is defined as people leaving their residential areas to move to another region, it is also a process that involves geographical relocation and creates transformations in the social structure (Akinci, Nergiz, & Gedik, 2015). Forced migration, on the other hand, is a phenomenon that has gained national and global importance today, where individuals or social groups are forced to leave their homes due to reasons beyond their choice. Elements such as wars, internal conflicts, insufficient economic resources, natural disasters, and political pressures displace millions of people and force them to turn to different living spaces. This process leads to permanent effects not only on the migrating individuals but also on the social, cultural, and economic structures of the host societies (Castles, 2010). Forced migration is a comprehensive process that should be addressed in its multidimensional aspects, such as social adaptation, cultural interaction, and identity construction, rather than being just a physical change of place. Children, in particular, are among the most vulnerable groups experiencing the direct or indirect consequences of migration most intensely. The perceptions of migrant and local students toward each other in educational environments, their levels of empathy development, and their social adaptation processes play a critical role in establishing a peaceful social life in the future and strengthening the culture of living together. In this context, it is clear that the problems faced by migrants and children experiencing the migration process must be examined in detail (Ateş & Yavuz, 2017).

At this stage, examining students' perceptions of the concept of forced migration will be significant in terms of both guiding educational policies and enriching values education practices. Middle school students are in an important developmental period in terms of being sensitive to social events, respecting differences, and internalizing social justice concepts. Since the Social Studies course is one of the fundamental lessons that contribute to individuals' understanding of social events, understanding students' perspectives on the phenomenon of forced migration in this context carries educational value. Research in this field reveals that the phenomenon of migration has multidimensional effects on students. It is stated that migrant students face great difficulties in terms of language, culture, and social relations during the process of adapting to a new environment, while the perceptions of students in the migrated region toward their migrant peers are shaped by social prejudices and media reports (Çelik & İçduygu, 2019). Examining students' perceptions of forced migration is important for developing social cohesion and intercultural understanding in educational environments.

Such studies conducted within the scope of the Social Studies curriculum have proven that the concept of migration is a very effective tool in the process of developing social awareness and empathy among students (Demir & Yıldız, 2021). However, it is also stated that the impact of the perception of forced migration on students generally remains at a superficial level of knowledge, and the emotional and humanitarian dimensions of the subject are not sufficiently internalized (Özkan, 2020). This situation emphasizes that the teacher's approach and the quality of educational materials are important determinants in the formation of students' perceptions of the phenomenon of migration (Şahin & Akbaba, 2019).

Qualitative studies have revealed that the main determinants of students' perceptions regarding forced migration are shaped by personal experiences, news in the media, and classroom discussions (Kurt & Arslan, 2022). Students mostly associate migration with the concepts of "victimization," "displacement," and "poverty"; it is observed that their emotional reactions toward forced migrants include tendencies of fear or distancing as much as empathy and compassion. This situation shows that migration is not only an economic or political condition but also a phenomenon shaped by social perception (UNICEF, 2021).

Research on the phenomenon of forced migration conducted in our country has shown that although the subject is included in the educational curricula, students have difficulty understanding the topic in depth, and various prejudices can be effective in their interactions with individuals who have migrated (Yavuz & Duman, 2020). All these studies contribute to a stronger understanding of empathy

and social justice-based approaches in the education system by examining students' perceptions of the phenomenon of forced migration through observation, interviews, and other qualitative data collection methods.

In this direction, a qualitative research method, which is one of the scientific research methods, was used to determine the perceptions of 7th-grade students regarding the concept of forced migration. To collect data accordingly, a semi-structured interview form was utilized. The data obtained through the interview form were analyzed using content analysis.

Method

This study is a qualitative research. Qualitative research is defined as a research where data are collected through qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interviews, and document analysis, and a qualitative process is followed in presenting perceptions and events in a realistic, complete, and holistic manner in their natural environment (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). This research was conducted to determine the views of 7th-grade students on the perception of forced migration. Among qualitative research designs, the phenomenology design was preferred for the research. The main reason for choosing the phenomenology design is that while it is a research design rooted in philosophy and psychology, the researcher attempts to understand the common experiences of individuals regarding a specific phenomenon. In this context, it is aimed to reach the essence of the phenomenon under study through the data obtained from the experiences of a small number of participants (Giorgi, 2009). In line with this design, "why" and "how" questions were frequently asked, aiming to reveal the participants' experiences and perceptions in depth. The data of the research were collected through a semi-structured interview form and the obtained data were analyzed using the content analysis method. During the analysis process, the obtained data were classified according to themes, and frequency values were calculated for each theme. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the data collection tool and the analysis results were examined and confirmed by two academics who are experts in their fields.

Data Collection Tools

The data for this study were collected through a semi-structured interview form. This form provides the researcher with a structural basis through a predetermined list of questions. However, as noted by Karataş (2017), the primary factor in choosing this tool was that it allows for additional questions to be asked during the dynamic interview process to deepen the data and complete missing information. In the study, the Students were referred to with the codes "S1, S2, ..., S12." 25 open-ended questions were initially prepared for the interview, and expert opinions were sought to review them. After receiving expert feedback, some questions were eliminated, leaving 16 open-ended questions. Just before presenting the open-ended questions to the participants, the researcher provided the students with brief information about migration. Then, the open-ended questions were directed to the students by the teacher. The following semi-structured interview form was prepared based on the sub-problems formulated in line with the problem statement: "What are the views of Students on the perception of forced migration?"

The primary aim of this semi-structured interview is to explore and understand the participants' perceptions of **forced vs. voluntary migration**. Specifically, the research focuses on the underlying causes of migration (wars, disasters, economic factors), the socio-emotional and academic challenges faced by displaced students, and the potential strategies for social integration and prevention of forced displacement. By examining these dimensions, the study seeks to gather in-depth insights into how migration affects both individuals and the educational environment. As a result of the analysis of the findings obtained from the semi-structured interview form created according to the sub-problems above, the following themes were reached. In this research, ten main themes were identified to determine students' perceptions of forced migration. These themes were created to reveal meaningful patterns in the participants' statements and to interpret the data systematically (Braun & Clarke, 2016). These themes are structured respectively as: definition of forced migration, reasons for forced migration, the difference between forced and voluntary migration, desire to return, emotional effects of forced

migration, challenges faced in the new living area, effects on school life, social attitudes and expectations, prevention of forced migration, and support for the adaptation process.

Study Group

This study was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year and involved ten student participants who were enrolled in the 7th grade at Mehmet Akif Ersoy Middle School in the Efeler district of Aydin, Türkiye. The participants were selected using a random sampling method. In order to reflect diverse perspectives, student participants from different class sections were invited to take part in the study on a voluntary basis.

Data Analysis

One-on-one interviews were conducted with 7th-grade Students using a semi-structured interview form, and their thoughts were recorded via audio. The collected voice recordings were transcribed into text, and separate files were created for each question. Responses given to the same question were brought together and analyzed through content analysis. “Content analysis technique is frequently used in social sciences. It is an effective tool for revealing general trends regarding the subject at hand. In addition, it serves as a guide for future scientific studies. There are two types of content analysis: qualitative and quantitative. In quantitative content analysis, categories and codes are created to analyze the documents or records examined within the scope of the study. Through these categories and codes, certain concepts are identified, and the frequency of their use in the examined document is observed. In other words, numerical data are obtained from concepts to reach the reality” (Metin & Ünal, 2022). Furthermore, the responses were categorized according to their repetition and similarities and presented in tables. The analysis was performed by calculating their frequencies. To increase the reliability of the study, it was requested to be reviewed by another researcher who is an expert in qualitative research.

Findings

In this section, the findings obtained from the opinions of 7th-grade middle school students regarding the concept of forced migration are presented. The data obtained from the open-ended questions directed to the students were analyzed using the qualitative content analysis method; the themes, codes, and frequencies emerging from the analysis are presented in tables.

Findings Regarding the Perception of Forced Migration

Student 7: *For example, the scarcity of resources; people who graze animals might migrate because they cannot access animal products. China and the Mongols put pressure on the Turks. We had to migrate from Central Asia. When the population increases and grows, people find it difficult to live. For instance, many people migrate from Istanbul for this reason. They prefer Aydin; Aydin is more comfortable, life in Istanbul is difficult, so people migrate from there to here. Natural disasters, war, economy, insufficiency of resources, water scarcity, drought.* **Student 1:** *It could be because of work, a war might break out in one's country, or there might be economic problems. It is a problem experienced that forces a person to go to another place.*

Table 1
Students' Perceptions Regarding the Definition of Forced Migration

Theme	Codes	Participants	f
Involuntariness	Obligation, lack of consent	S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	10
Displacement	Going to another place	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	10
Element of Compulsion	War, appointment (transfer), pressure	S1, S2, S4, S5, S7, S8, S10	7

As seen in Table 1, it is observed that all of the students define forced migration as an 'involuntary' and 'compulsory' displacement process. The absence of emphasis on individual preference or voluntariness in the participants' statements shows that the concept of forced migration carries a clear and common meaning in the students' minds. The findings reveal that the prominence of external factors, especially war, appointment (transfer), and pressure, indicates that students perceive forced migration as a situation where control is taken out of the individual's hands.

Findings Regarding the Reasons for Forced Migration

Student 2: *Climate conditions, problems with neighbors, economic reasons, the place they live being very crowded and expensive (like Istanbul), job necessity, natural disasters, educational opportunities might be insufficient, economic status, job obligation, climate conditions, security issues.*

Student 5: *For example, a family might want to go elsewhere to work. There could be economic reasons. It could also be to start a new life. It could be to get away from an environment with harmful habits. There could be war. There could be a job transfer (appointment). Economic reasons could be a factor. There might be a desire for a new beginning. The family might make it compulsory. They might be left in poverty, there might be a feeling of loneliness; if they have no acquaintances, they might even end up on the street. They might experience economic difficulties. They might acquire bad habits.*

Student 6: *Death of family members, peer bullying, natural disasters, war, a person's compulsory appointment (transfer), economic reasons.*

Table 2
Students' Perceptions of the Causes of Forced Migration

Theme	Codes	Participants	f
War and Conflict	Syria, Ukraine, Palestine	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S9, S10	9
Economic Reasons	Livelihood, unemployment, poverty	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S10	9
Natural Disasters	Earthquake, flood	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S7, S8, S10	8
Security	Terror, crime, life safety	S1, S2, S4, S6, S8, S9	6
Social Reasons	Peer bullying, discrimination	S2, S5, S6, S7, S8	5
Appointment / Job	Compulsory duty (Transfer)	S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	9

As seen in Table 2, the expressions of the students show that forced migration is based on multidimensional reasons. War and economic problems stand out as the reasons with the highest frequency. This situation indicates that students closely follow current national and global developments (Syria, Ukraine, earthquakes, etc.). Furthermore, the mention of reasons such as social problems (peer bullying, discrimination) and compulsory appointments (transfers) reveals that forced migration is associated not only with macro-scale events but also with everyday life experiences.

Findings Regarding the Differences Between Forced and Voluntary Migration

Student 1: *Forced migration is a situation beyond a person's control; they are compelled. In voluntary migration, however, the person moves by their own choice. For example, wanting to move from Aydin to Ankara.*

Student 6: *There is a big difference between them. In voluntary migration, there is a situation that attracts you, you want it; in forced migration, bad things are involved.*

Student 10: *The difference between them is that in one, the person wants to go, and in the other, they do not. We wanted to go because we had many problems in our building there, so we moved to this neighborhood.*

Table 3
Students' Perceptions Regarding the Differences Between Forced and Voluntary Migration

Theme	Codes	Participants	f
Control	Presence / Absence of will	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	10
Emotional State	Happiness – Unhappiness	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8	8
Compelling Reason	Obligation / Necessity	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	10

As seen in Table 3, the participants explained the fundamental difference between forced and voluntary migration through the concept of 'will.' Forced migration was associated with reluctance and

obligation, while voluntary migration was associated with happiness and preference. This finding shows that students evaluate types of migration not only as physical mobility but also as an emotional and psychological process.

Findings Regarding the Desire to Return

Student 3: *I think they would want to, because their friends and memories are there. I had very good friends there. I had been in that neighborhood since I was little. It was hard to leave.*

Student 7: *A person migrated from Istanbul due to forced or voluntary reasons. For example, the person came to Aydin. When the problem in the region they migrated from is resolved, they might want to go back there again.*

Student 10: *I think they might not want to go; they might be happy in their new place. Sometimes a person undergoes forced migration and does not want to return again.*

Table 4
Students' Perceptions Regarding the Desire to Return

Theme	Codes	Participants	f
Longing (Yearning)	Memories, friends	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S9, S10	9
Belonging	Homeland (Hometown)	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S8, S9, S10	8
Conditionality	If the war ends	S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S9	6

As seen in Table 4, the vast majority of students stated that individuals who have undergone forced migration might want to return when conditions improve. Longing, memories, and a sense of belonging stand out as the primary reasons for this desire. However, some students noted that the desire to return might decrease if happiness is achieved in the new living space. This situation shows that the desire to return depends on personal experiences and new living conditions.

Findings Regarding the Emotional Effects of Forced Migration

Student 4: *Loneliness, restlessness, anxiety, and unhappiness affect a person negatively. Besides these, there can also be hope for a new life. A new life and a new joy of living also motivate a person.*

Student 7: *They actually experience sadness, but sometimes also novelties. Leaving something I love behind, being unable to recognize [the new place], leaving my friends behind.*

Student 9: *I would be fine, teacher. I've lived in Aydin; I'm bored here and I'm a bit curious about the place I'm going to. One feels longing. As time passes, they miss the region they migrated from even more. It is a hope provided by the new life.*

Table 5

Students' Perceptions Regarding the Emotions Experienced by Individuals Who Undergo Forced Migration

Theme	Codes	Participants	f
Negative Emotions	Anxiety, Fear, Sadness	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S8, S10	8
Traumatic Experiences	Trauma	S7, S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S9	7
Positive Emotions	Hope, Happiness (Salvation/Rescue)	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5	5

As seen in Table 5, the findings in the table reveal that forced migration carries an intense emotional burden. While anxiety, fear, and sadness were the most frequently expressed emotions, expressions of hope and happiness remained more limited. This situation shows that forced migration is predominantly perceived by students as a traumatic experience. However, the emphasis on hope and new beginnings by some students also demonstrates that forced migration does not create the same effect on every individual.

Findings Regarding the Challenges Experienced in the New Living Area

Student 5: *They feel lonely. They experience economic problems. They might fall into bad habits. They might become homeless. They suffer from poverty. They might be subjected to violence.*

Student 1: *They might experience identity issues. They might have difficulty adapting. They might experience economic problems. They need to establish a new order.*

Table 6

Students' Perceptions Regarding the Challenges Experienced After Migration

Theme	Codes	Participants	f
Social Adaptation	Loneliness, exclusion	S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	9
Economic Problems	Job (Employment), housing (shelter)	S1, S2, S3, S4, S7, S8, S9, S10	8
Language / Culture	Foreignness (Sense of being a stranger)	S1, S3, S4, S6, S9, S10	6
Education	School adaptation	S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S8, S9	7

As seen in Table 6, students expressed the challenges experienced after forced migration mostly through social adaptation, economic difficulties, and housing problems. In particular, the frequent mention of social issues such as loneliness and exclusion shows that forced migration creates not only financial but also social and psychological effects on individuals.

7. Findings Regarding the Impact on School Life

Student 2: *They struggle a bit; time needs to pass. Once they get to know the teachers, they get used to it. At first, they might be excluded. People might judge them by looking at their outward appearance. These first 2-3 weeks are difficult. But over time, communication begins, and the student gets used to the environment.*

Student 7: *A student migrating from one place to another has problems with recognition, problems making friends, inability to get used to the new class, and falls behind in their lessons. The topics might not be the same; the topics here might be a bit ahead or a bit behind. While they are very far ahead in Mathematics, we might be behind and not have seen the intermediate topics. I also changed schools. I went to a school because of my mother's job. I had a lot of trouble with friends. I had one friend, and if it weren't for them, I would have had major problems. I couldn't fully get to know the teachers; a teacher gave me a punishment on the first day. Although I am actually a good student, I think they gave me this punishment because they didn't know me. I was very upset, and seeing my sadness, my mother quit her job, and I went back to my old school.*

Table 7
Students' Perceptions Regarding the Effects on School Life

Theme	Code	Participants	f
Decline in Academic Success	Academic achievement	S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S8, S9, S10	8
Social Adaptation	Friendship	S1, S2, S3, S4, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	9
Peer Bullying	Exclusion	S1, S2, S4, S6, S8	5
Adaptation Over Time	Getting used to / Habituation	S1, S3, S4, S7, S8, S9, S10	7

As seen in Table 7, participants stated that migrating students struggle in terms of adaptation and academic success, especially during the initial periods of their school life. The emphasis on problems in peer relationships and bullying is noteworthy. However, the expression that adaptation can be achieved over time indicates that these negative situations can decrease if the school environment is supportive.

Findings Regarding Social Attitudes and Expectations

Student 8: *Society should never judge or act with prejudice; we should approach them well, thinking that they know nothing. If we cannot help them adapt, they might have to migrate again. Society needs to help a little and ask how they are doing.*

Student 4: *First, one should act with tolerance; they need to be able to say welcome so that they can adapt. They should be able to establish positive communication.*

Table 8
Students' Perceptions Regarding Society's Approach Toward Individuals Experiencing Forced Migration

Theme	Student Candidate (Codes)	Participants	f
Empathy	Understanding	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	10
Respect	Tolerance	S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	9
Help	Being supportive / Support	S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9	8
Prejudice	Not judging / Non-judgmental	S1, S3, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	7

As seen in Table 8, the concepts of empathy, respect, and understanding were emphasized by all participants. The students expressed that individuals experiencing forced migration should not be judged and must be supported. This finding demonstrates that students possess a high level of awareness regarding social solidarity and human rights.

Findings Regarding the Prevention of Forced Migration

Student 1: *The state should provide support. Preventing wars is not easy, but efforts must be made for peace. Economic problems should be reduced.*

Student 2: *The place to be moved to can be introduced in advance. Educational and economic support can be provided. Housing and living conditions can be improved. People can be prepared for the place where they will relocate.*

Table 9
Students' Perceptions Regarding the Prevention of Forced Migration

Theme	Codes	Participants	f
Peace	Ending wars	S1, S2, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S10	8
Economy	Employment	S1, S2, S3, S4, S6, S8, S10	7
Disaster Measures	Sturdy buildings	S2, S3, S4, S5, S7, S9, S10	7
State Support	Social policies	S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S9	6

As seen in Table 9, the students associated the prevention of forced migration mostly with the end of wars, the improvement of economic conditions, and taking measures against disasters. This situation indicates that students view forced migration not as an individual choice, but as a result of structural problems.

Findings Regarding the Support That Can Be Provided for the Adaptation Process

Student 6: *We can make them feel at home, and through our behavior, we can encourage them to think positively. We can travel together, introduce them to the environment, our school, our teachers, and our neighborhood. Instead of behaving badly, doing the things they want and offering things they will be pleased with will make them happy.*

Student 10: *We need to empathize; we need to act kindly. We can enable them to adapt to their environment; if we act badly, they might fear us and experience anxiety and distress again.*

Table 10
Students' Perceptions Regarding Support for the Adaptation of Migrating Individuals

Theme	Codes	Participants	f
Psycho-social Support	Providing reassurance (confidence)	S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	9
Social Integration	Friendship	S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S8, S9, S10	8
Financial Support	Housing, job (employment)	S2, S4, S5, S6, S7, S9, S10	7
Guidance	Introduction, orientation	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8	8

As seen in Table 10, the findings reveal that psycho-social support, guidance, and financial aid are crucial in the adaptation process of individuals experiencing forced migration. In particular, the frequent emphasis on support aimed at providing reassurance and establishing social relationships demonstrates that the adaptation process is not limited solely to housing and employment.

Analysis

The findings of this research demonstrate that students perceive forced migration fundamentally as an involuntary, compulsory displacement that occurs beyond the individual's control. All participants clearly distinguish forced migration from voluntary migration. For the students, forced migration is viewed more as a process of psychological strain rather than mere physical mobility. It is generally believed that there is an element of pressure behind this process. Students identify war and conflict as the most primary causes of forced migration. Economic inadequacies and financial distress also rank among significant push factors. Natural disasters are another powerful factor in students' perceptions leading to forced migration. Security issues, concerns for life safety, and criminal environments are seen as factors that make the migration decision mandatory. Some students also cited social exclusion and bullying as reasons for migration. This indicates that students evaluate forced migration as a multidimensional phenomenon.

The most fundamental difference between forced and voluntary migration is the element of "will." According to the students, individuals have no right of choice in forced migration. In contrast, voluntary migration is associated more with positive emotions. Forced migration brings along feelings of unhappiness and helplessness. Participants believe that the vast majority of individuals who undergo forced migration would want to return. At the core of this desire lies a sense of longing. The sense of belonging is another element that strengthens the desire to return. However, returning is generally seen as dependent on the improvement of conditions.

Students express that forced migration creates intense anxiety. Fear and sadness are also among the frequently mentioned emotions. Nevertheless, some students spoke of the existence of hope. A small number of participants evaluated migration as a form of salvation. The most common problem experienced in the new living area is social adaptation. Feelings of loneliness and exclusion were frequently emphasized by the students. Economic difficulties further complicate the adaptation process. Language and cultural differences are also seen as significant barriers. It is believed that academic success declines in the school environment. Problems experienced in peer relationships make adaptation more difficult. Despite this, it is stated that habituation is possible over time.

Students believe that society should approach migrating individuals with empathy. Cooperation, respect, and non-prejudice stand out as important values. The most crucial solution for preventing forced migration is seen as the establishment of peace. Economic stability and state support are also considered significant. It is emphasized that psychosocial support is vital during the adaptation process. Financial

aid and guidance services facilitate this transition. Overall, the findings reveal that students perceive forced migration as a traumatic, multidimensional process that creates strong emotional impacts.

Conclusion

This research aimed to reveal the perceptions of 7th-grade middle school students regarding the concept of forced migration and examined the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of these perceptions through a qualitative approach. The phenomenological content analysis method, one of the qualitative research designs, was utilized in the study, and the data obtained from the students' expressions were analyzed through themes and sub-themes. The findings demonstrate that forced migration is perceived by students as a multidimensional experience that leaves deep impacts—not merely as a physical relocation, but as a life experience with psychological, social, and academic consequences. The fact that students define forced migration largely as an involuntary process involving necessity and associated with negative emotions reveals that this phenomenon has a strong emotional resonance in children's worlds.

While this study largely overlaps with the literature addressing forced migration, it holds a unique position by centering student perceptions. In the literature, forced migration is generally explained through push factors such as war, economic crises, natural disasters, and security issues; it is emphasized that individuals encounter problems such as trauma, adaptation difficulties, and social exclusion during this process (Castles & Miller, 2018; Miller & Rasmussen, 2017; Suárez-Orozco, 2018). Similarly, in this research, students associated the causes of forced migration with uncontrollable conditions like war, economic distress, and natural disasters. However, the aspect that distinguishes this study from others is that the phenomenon of forced migration was handled directly through the children's own expressions, within the context of their emotional worlds and daily lives. One of the significant contributions of this study to the literature is that students make sense of forced migration not only as a global issue but by relating it to their individual lives.

The research findings show similarities with previous studies in some aspects while diverging in others. While the traumatic effects of forced migration, challenges experienced in the adaptation process, and psychological problems are frequently emphasized in the literature, it is noteworthy that in this research, students also included positive emotions such as hope, new beginnings, and salvation. This situation reveals that the experience of forced migration does not carry the same meaning for every individual and that the process can vary according to subjective experiences. Furthermore, evaluating the phenomenon of forced migration—which is generally handled through adults or migrant individuals in the literature—from the perspective of children in this study provides a new perspective on the perceptual dimension of the concept. The students' emphasis on school life, peer relationships, and academic success has made the effects of forced migration in the educational context more visible. In this regard, the research provides a significant foundation for future studies in the field of education.

The research results clearly demonstrate that individuals experiencing forced migration need multifaceted support during the adaptation process. In this context, it is of great importance to strengthen guidance and psychological counseling services in schools, raise awareness among teachers on this issue, and create inclusive classroom environments. Additionally, encouraging approaches based on empathy, tolerance, and solidarity at the societal level will facilitate the social adaptation of individuals experiencing forced migration. In future research, examining the perceptions of different age groups, teachers, and families may contribute to a more holistic understanding of the educational and social impacts of forced migration. Consequently, this research reveals that forced migration is not just a relocation in children's worlds but a life experience that leaves deep emotional and social traces, offering a significant perspective for future studies in this field.

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Ethical Declaration and Committee Approval

In this research, the principles of scientific research and publication ethics were followed.

Proportion of the Author Contribution

Researchers contributed equally to this study.