



KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY  
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**WORKING EXPERIENCES AND URBAN LIFE  
PRACTICES OF HIGHLY EDUCATED SYRIAN WOMEN  
IN GAZIANTEP**

ELİF SİNEM İNAN

MASTER'S THESIS

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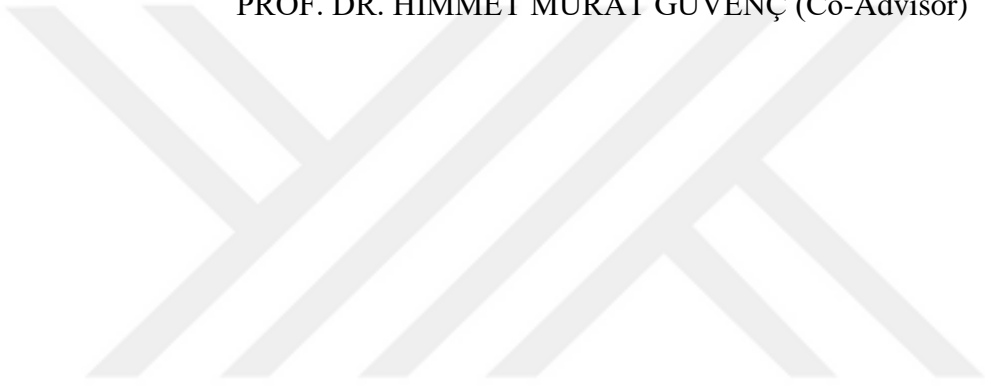
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IN GAZIANTEP**

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A thesis submitted to  
the School of Graduate Studies of Kadir Has University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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Istanbul, January, 2023

## APPROVAL

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**DECLARATION ON RESEARCH ETHICS AND  
PUBLISHING METHODS**

I, ELİF SİNEM İNAN; hereby declare

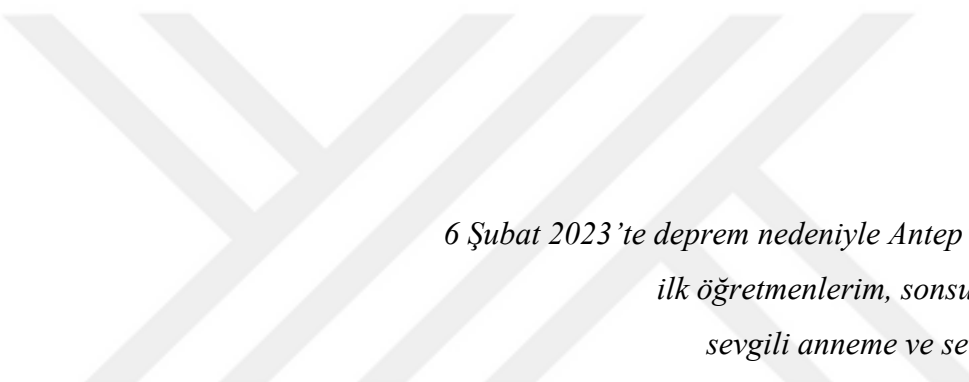
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In addition, I acknowledge that any claim of irregularity that may arise in relation to this work will result in a disciplinary action in accordance with the university legislation.

ELİF SİNEM İNAN

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09/01/2023



*6 Şubat 2023'te deprem nedeniyle Antep'te kaybettiğim;  
ilk öğretmenlerim, sonsuz destekçilerim  
sevgili anneme ve sevgili babama...*

*Sizi çok seviyorum.  
Devriniz daim, yolunuz ışık olsun.*

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Elif Sinem İnan

January, 2023, İstanbul

# WORKING EXPERIENCES AND URBAN LIFE PRACTICES OF HIGHLY EDUCATED SYRIAN WOMEN IN GAZIANTEP

## ABSTRACT

This research aimed to examine the inclusion of highly educated Syrian women in the labour market and their urban life practices after they migrated to Gaziantep. In 2022, Gaziantep is the second city with the largest Syrian population in Turkey. The fact that Gaziantep is preferred by migrants due to its ties from the past, having various job opportunities, being chosen by Syrians due to its proximity to the Syrian border and being a relatively cheap city, and the scarcity of information on highly educated Syrian women enabled this research to be conducted. With the Syrian migration, which has recently been added to the existing layered migration history of the Gaziantep, is experiencing spatial, economic, social, and cultural transformations. In this research, the post-migration practices and the relationship between the use of space and the working conditions of women were examined. Although no generalisation will be made about highly educated Syrian women, this research aims to convey the migration stories, resettlement experiences, participation in the labour market, and urban life of highly educated Syrian women living in this city. In this direction, interviews were conducted with 15 highly educated women, mostly from different occupational groups, who came from Syria in different years. Women preferred Gaziantep either because of its distance to Syria or because of job opportunities. The majority of women are involved in the labour market outside of their professional specialties. Their participation in urban life is also related to how women are included in the labour market. Urban mobility of women has increased over time after migration. Women exposed to discrimination in workforce or urban life have developed ways to cope with it.

**Keywords:** highly educated Syrian women, feminisation of labour migration, Gaziantep, urban life practices, deskilling of migrants.



GAZİANTEP’TE YAŞAYAN YÜKSEK EĞİTİMLİ SURİYELİ  
KADINLARIN ÇALIŞMA DENEYİMLERİ VE KENTSEL YAŞAM  
PRATİKLERİ

**ÖZET**

Bu araştırma, yüksek eğitimli Suriyeli kadınların Gaziantep’e göç etmelerinden sonra emek piyasasına dahiliyetlerini ve kentsel yaşam pratiklerini incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. 2022 yılında Gaziantep, Türkiye’de en fazla Suriyeli nüfusu barındıran ikinci kenttir. Gaziantep’in geçmişten gelen bağları nedeniyle göçmenler tarafından tercih edilmesi, çeşitli iş olanakları bulunması, Suriye sınırına yakınlığı ve görece ucuz bir kent olması nedeniyle Suriyeliler tarafından tercih edilmesi, yüksek eğitimli Suriyeli kadınlara dair bilgilerin azlığı bu araştırmanın yapılmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Kentin varolan katmanlı göç tarihine yakın zamanda eklenen Suriye göçü ile kent; mekansal, ekonomik, sosyal, kültürel değişimler ve dönüşümler yaşamaktadır. Bu çalışmada göç sonrası dönemde yerleşme pratikleri ve mekân kullanımı ilişkileri ile kadınların çalışma koşulları incelenmiştir. Yüksek eğitimli Suriyeli kadınlara dair bir genelleme yapılmayacak olsa da; bu kentte yaşayan yüksek eğitimli Suriyeli kadınların göç hikayeleri, yerleşme deneyimleri, emek piyasasına katılmaları, kentsel hayatları aktarılacak istenmiştir. Bu doğrultuda Suriye’den farklı yıllarda gelmiş, çoğunluğu farklı meslek grubundan 15 yüksek eğitimli kadın ile görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Kadınlar ya Suriye’ye yakın oluşundan ya da iş imkanlarından dolayı Gaziantep’i tercih etmişlerdir. Kadınların çoğunluğu profesyonellikleri dışında emek piyasasına dahil olmuşlardır. Kent hayatına katılmaları kadınların emek piyasasına nasıl dahil oldukları ile de ilişkilidir. Kadınların kentsel hareketliliği göç sonrası zamanla artmıştır. İş yaşamında ya da kent hayatında ayrımcılığa maruz kalan kadınlar, bununla baş etme yolları geliştirmişlerdir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** yüksek eğitimli Suriyeli kadınlar, kadınlaşmış emek göçü, Gaziantep, kentsel yaşam pratikleri.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CHP:	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
HÜNEE:	Hacettepe Üniversitesi Nüfus Etütleri Enstitüsü (Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies)
KADEM:	Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (Women and Democracy Association)
LFIP:	Law on Foreigners, and International Protection
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organizations
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
T.C.:	Türkiye Cumhuriyeti (Republic of Turkey)
TP:	Temporary Protection

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study aims to research the forced and/or voluntary migration processes and resettlement (work, home, and social life) practices of highly educated Syrian women from an ethno-spatial perspective. The decline of social class and deskilling experienced by many Syrian women who migrated also affected their urban experiences and habits. The starting point of the research was the changes experienced by highly educated women working in professional occupational groups in Syria, in their professional lives and careers, at home, and in their new urban life after migration. This research was conducted, considering the lack of studies dealing with the consequences of migration within the socio-spatial dialectic.

In Gaziantep, where I was born and grew up, the Mutfak||Matbakh Workshop<sup>1</sup> was established with the maxim “We want to live together” within the framework of the Kırkayak Kültür Art, and Nature Association, for which I volunteer. Beyond being a physical kitchen, this workshop aims to work about art, academia, and the city. In this workshop, which I first encountered after finishing my undergraduate studies in 2016, I had the chance to take part in a variety of projects. When I met the Turkish and Syrian women who came to the workshops, I realised that some Syrian teachers, dentists, doctors, and artists could not exercise their professions or pursue their careers; some worked in different working lines. Some of them tried to continue their professions illegally. However, when I talked about the city with women who attended workshops and worked at home or outside the home, they said that they were curious about the city. They stated that they only spent time in the city when their friends or guests visited. What do highly educated Syrian women experience as migrants and women in the labour market in Gaziantep? How have women's urban life practices transformed? How is urban life in Gaziantep shaping up today? With these questions, personal curiosity shaped this master's thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.kirkayak.org/mutfak-matbakh-workshop/>

There has been a significant migration from Syria to Turkey due to the civil war that followed the revolution<sup>2</sup> in Syria in 2011; this has affected Turkey and various groups within it in the manner of social, economic, cultural, and spatial. There are many studies on the Syrian population in Turkey, according to these scholars (Körükmez, Karakılıç, Daniş, 2020, p. 10) “which varies significantly in terms of both demographic characteristics and individual stories”. Despite the fact that Turkey has been moving from being an out-migration country to an in-migration one, as well as being an emerging market with a changing labour landscape, the data and research on migrants’ participation in the labour market are very limited. (Sert, 2016, p. 99). Considering the studies focusing on the participation of migrants in the labour market within this limited research pool, it is seen that they mostly focus on working in unskilled, insecure, low-paid jobs (Baban, et. al. 2016; Dedeoğlu & Bayraktar, 2018; Yasım, 2019; Kaya, 2019; Caro, 2020). In these studies, which focus on problems in employment and violations of rights, women are generally in low socio-economic classes, low education levels, and work in unskilled jobs. The professional skills of women are ignored, they are seen as a homogeneous group, and it is seen that women are employed through this (Kaya & Demirağ, 2016, p. 164). This study was conducted in an effort to increase the visibility of women who work in professional fields, despite the fact that women are underrepresented in these fields "In a city like Gaziantep, where the majority of the migrant population comes from rural Syria" (Gültekin et al., 2018, p. 64).

According to Kofman and Raghuram (2006), highly educated women migrants do not migrate on their own through highly educated migration flows, as primary migrants or as students who later find a job abroad. Family reunification, marriage, and being the spouse of the migrating men become forms of migration for highly educated women (Kofman & Raghuram, 2006, p. 282-303). According to Kofman and Raghuram (2006), highly educated women are ignored as individual migrants, even though they migrate with their husbands. In the migration literature, the notion that women are not primary and active migrants was ignored until their participation in the labour market became more visible.

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of revolution is used here because of both the use of this concept by the majority of the women interviewed in this research process, and the personal experiences gained.



However, it should not be overlooked that almost half of the migrants are women and that women migrate alone or without the “man of the house” (Şenses, 2020, p. 49).

The reasons behind the invisibility of women in migration movements are part of the patriarchal social order, hence disregarding the existence of women in migration studies. This mutually influencing process has also led to the stereotyping of migrant women. Gender-blind studies on refugees or migrants ignore women's experiences and differences stemming from their femininity and treat them as individuals who are no different from men (Uçar, 2020, p. 39).

Migration movements that emerged with the increase in globalisation and transnational movements have become inexplicable with migration paradigms that focused on men who migrated primarily for economic reasons and families with male heads. Migrant profiles in new migration movements have become increasingly diversified, especially among skilled and highly educated individuals. Other innovations related to current migration movements are the increasing visibility of women migrants, women's participation in migration movements no longer as family members but as migrants who migrate alone, and their movement across borders. (Dedeoğlu & Gökmen, 2020, p. 25)

Increasingly, women's migration alone and the increase in the visibility of women in migration studies have made the gender perspective evident in the feminisation of migration. This transformation has also occurred in parallel with the increased visibility of women in the labour market (Dedeoğlu & Gökmen, 2020, p. 26).

### **1.1. Aim of the Research**

Although not all highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep will be represented in this research, it aims to make some determinations of their professional experience, age, Turkish language level, and participation in the labour market and urban life. In addition, this research targeted to contribute to the literature in terms of looking at the urban life of women and mapping their urban practices, which are lacking in the labour migration literature. This study does not just look at the reasons for the migration of highly educated Syrian women; it also looks at migration as a process, its causes, effects, and outcomes from a time-space perspective.

The approach that ignores the past of the migrants and deals with it only through the integration skills in the new place is condemned to be an incomplete and one-sided view. In

order to understand the migrant experience properly, it is necessary to abandon the perspective that standardises migrants according to the perspective of the destination, and to consider their background in the country of origin, the reasons for the migration, the way it took place, and the conditions in the resettlement process. (Sayad, 1991; cited by K r kmez, Daniř, Karakılıç, 2022, p. 205)

As a result of the research and examinations, the fundamental question constructed as follows in order to contribute to the deficiencies in the literature by considering the gender principle: How is the participation of highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep in the labour market and their urban life practices shaped after their migration? The sub-questions of the research are as follows:

- How did the sectors in which highly educated Syrian women work differ from before they migrated?
- What are the obstacles to their participation in the labour market? Have these obstacles led highly educated Syrian women to a different field of work?
- How did the relationship between the highly educated Syrian women and their urban life in the process of change they entered with their migration? How are their mobility and spatial uses in Gaziantep shaped?
- Are women satisfied with living at home, in the neighbourhood or in the city during the resettlement process? What are the reasons for this satisfaction?

## **1.2. Scope of the Research**

The reason for choosing Gaziantep as the field study is to find answers throughout the city to the question of how highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep's central districts (řahinbey and řehitkamil) participated in the labour market and urban life after they migrated. According to the January 2023 data of the Directorate General of Migration Management, the number of Syrians living in Turkey is 3.522.036; the number of people living in Gaziantep is 460.429 (URL-1). This population<sup>3</sup>, which corresponds to almost one fifth of the city of Gaziantep, has different socio-economic groups, cultures, genders, and ages. The reasons for choosing this city can be listed as follows: Gaziantep

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<sup>3</sup> The percentage of the Syrian population registered in Gaziantep province to the local population is 17.77.

is a city of commerce and industry, it is close to the Syrian border, it is preferred by migrants because the city is a relatively cheap city despite various job opportunities, and despite the existence of highly educated Syrian women, there is very little data on this subject. This research has been prepared to show less visible, highly educated Syrian women's participation in the labour market, work experiences, and urban life. Considering the lack of spatial data on Syrians, the urban life of highly educated Syrian women has been included in the research using various data visualization techniques.

### **1.3. Theoretical and Methodological Approach**

This research focused on highly educated women living in Gaziantep among the Syrians who had to leave their country as a result of the war. The participation of these highly educated Syrian women in the labour market and their involvement in urban life has been examined. In this research process, I first looked at feminised labour migration in order to understand the inclusion of women in the labour market. Then I examined migrant labour in Turkey, Syrian women's labour living in Turkey and Syrian women's labour living in Gaziantep. This order seems to shape research through labour migration. However, Syrian women living in Gaziantep and Turkey, which I have studied here, have been included in the labour market as a result of forced migration. While citing the labour migration literature, I do not separate the forced migration literature. Labour migration and forced migration have separate dynamics; However, looking only at labour migration means ignoring the consequences, conditions and results of war.

Feminist methodology principles were followed in this research. As Öztan and Doğan (2015, p. 193) quote, the idea of "examination of the mechanisms, processes and discourses through which women are rendered invisible beyond 'focusing on women' has been adopted. The research has been designed around the compilation and interpretation of the studies on the participation of highly educated Syrian women in the labour market and the studies that will support the research on feminised labour migration. I focused on feminised labour migration specifically on migrant women's labour living in Turkey. I studied the labour of migrant women from the Former Eastern Bloc countries, Asian and African countries, and the Middle East countries. However, there is limited information about highly educated migrant women throughout the migrant labour literature. One of

the limitations of this study is the scarcity of data, especially on highly educated women who migrated from Syria. While the participation of highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep in the labour market, their resettlement experiences after migration and their urban practices constitute the main lines of the study, how their participation in urban life is shaped was also included in this research using data visualization techniques. I aimed to contribute to the literature by mapping the reflections of migration on space. I mapped the paths in which highly educated Syrian women the way of reproducing publicness and as I aimed to deal with the “invisible visible” as a whole. Because, according to Güvenç (2018), the map turns into a publicity tool that is sensitive to the research question and its priorities and open to alternatives (Güvenç, 2018, p. 77). For this reason, from the main lines of my research, I chose the mapping method as it is a means of publicity, considering the uniqueness of the migration stories and the settlement experiences and urban practices of women after their migration. In this research, which I have started based on my observations, I tried to examine at the urban mobility of women and whether there is an obstacle ahead of it. While analysing the urban mobility of women in the stories that emerged from the interviews conducted for this research, I also tried to convey what women see as an obstacle in mobility. I used a visualization tool called Tableau<sup>4</sup> to perform spatial analysis. With this tool, I mapped women's migration routes and stories, and urban life practices in Gaziantep.

In Gaziantep, where the field research was conducted, in-depth interviews were conducted to determine the socio-cultural structures and space usage habits of highly educated Syrian women. In-depth interviews were conducted with Syrian women of different ages and professions questions are to support the content of the research topic. A total of 15 interviews were done. While one interview was face-to-face, all the remaining interviews were held online. While there was no translator in two interviews, the Arabic-Turkish translator participated in the online interviews in 13 of them. The interpreter is a woman who has migrated from Syria, like the other women interviewed, and entered the labour market by making changes in her professional life (she is a civil engineer but is currently an interpreter). Unfortunately, the presence of translation support during the interviews causes some deficiencies or shifts in meaning. This is another

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.tableau.com/>

limitation of the research. The interviewed women were reached through Kırkayak Kültür, Art and Nature Association, researchers, and personal relations. Some of the interviewed women were asked for support in reaching the highly educated Syrian women around them. Thus, the interviewees were reached with a snowball effect. Interviews were audio-recorded with voice confirmation from the interviewee. No video recording was taken during the interview. The actual names of the women interviewed were not included in the research; all women's names have been changed. The earliest arrival date of the interviewed women in Gaziantep was 2013; the latest arrival date is 2017. While there are six women aged between 18-39, eight people vary between 40-75. One of the women did not specifically state her age. All the women have started university education; one studied until the 3rd grade and left school, and one had to migrate in the 3rd grade. Only one of the interviewed women attended a university in Turkey. One of the women interviewed had a master's degree. Detailed information about women is given in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1.: Information on the interviewed women**

Name of Person Interviewed	Age	Arrival Time in Gaziantep	City of Migration	Educational Status	Profession	Pre-migration Status	Current Job Status
Amal	27	September 2021 (for university in Izmir in 2015)	Raqqqa	Graduated with a BA degree	Pharmacist	Student (high school)	Health program assistant
Zelal	33	June 2015	Homs	Graduated with a BA degree	Physiotherapist	Physical Therapy Specialization	Domestic worker
Melek	54	January 2016	Selimiye (Hama)	Dropped out of university in the 3rd year	Arabic Teacher	Arabic Teacher (Education Center Owner). She was supporting human rights, social and psychological issues.	Project based freelance worker
Nehir	73	2015	Aleppo	Graduated with a BA degree	Arabic Teacher	Arabic Teacher	Previously worked as an Arabic teacher, currently retired.
Deren	53	2014	Aleppo	Graduated with a BA degree	Education	Deputy Principal	Previously worked as an Arabic teacher, currently working in an NGO.
İmge	34	2014	Damascus	Graduated with a BA degree	Accountant	She migrated soon after graduation.	Has its own logistics company.
Dilan	She did not specify her age	2013	Aleppo	Graduated with a BA degree	Dentist	Dentist	Health-Care Worker

Name of Person Interviewed	Age	Arrival Time in Gaziantep	City of Migration	Educational Status	Profession	Pre-migration Status	Current Job Status
Cansu	43	2015	She was from Idlib but lived in Aleppo.	Graduated with a BA degree	Lawyer	She worked in student affairs at the university.	She has her own restaurant.
Zeynep	44	2015	Damascus	Graduated with a BA degree	Doctor/Surgeon	Surgeon	Manager at NGO (in the field of health)
Yasemin	32	February 2014- June 2014. Permanently June 2015	Damascus	Institute of Medical Sciences	Health Care Worker	Health Care Worker	English and robotic coding teacher
Sultan	63	2013	Aleppo	Graduated with a BA degree	Arabic Teacher	Arabic Teacher	Kindergarten owner (officially a Turkish citizen)
Sezen	43	2017	Homs	Graduated with a BA degree	Dentist	Dentist (clinic owner)	Beauty centre owner
Pınar	33	October 2016	Homs	Graduated with a BA degree	Civil Engineer	Civil Engineer	Manager at NGO
Canan	33	2013 (first), 2017 (permanently)	Homs	Dropped out of university in the 3rd year, she migrated	Interpreter	Secretary (in vocational training centre)	Financial responsible for the Syrian association
Zuhal	41	September 2015	Aleppo	BA degree	Undergraduate degree Computer Engineering, Graduate degree from Automation Engineering.	Government Officer as Engineer and Assistant to Professor at University	Data Analyst in Syrian NGO

The interviews I listened to how women were involved in the labour market and urban life through migration processes were analysed as follows. The interviews, 13 of which were conducted in Arabic-Turkish and 2 in Turkish, were deciphered. In these deciphered interviews, the names of the women were changed, and all the interviews were combined into a single text. After translating, I proceeded in the analysis of the interviews, being aware of the difficulties of translation, semantic deficiencies, and semantic shifts. As a result of the analysis, three main topics emerged: migration stories, working experiences and urban life. The working experiences of women were grouped under two headings as working conditions and discrimination in the workplace. Women's participation in urban life was grouped as urban mobility, feeling comfortable in the city, discrimination in the city and future plans.

#### **1.4. Structure of the Research**

In this section, first of all, the research's aim, scope, and method are explained; brief information is given about the interviewed women. In the following sections, preliminary studies that determined the emergence of the research questions, the methodology, and the scope of the thesis are presented. In the second chapter, under the title of Feminisation Labour Migration, the existence of women in the migration literature and its change are examined. Under the same title, the labour of migrant women in Turkey, the labour of Syrian women in Turkey, the labour migration of Syrian women living in Gaziantep, and the sectors in which Syrian women work in Gaziantep are mentioned. In the third chapter, the migration stories and working experiences of highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep were given for the 15 women interviewed. In the fourth chapter which is the last chapter, the participation of highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep in urban life and urban life practices are tried to be made visible.



## 2. FEMINISATION OF LABOUR MIGRATION

Feminisation of migration and, accordingly, women's participation in the labour market have manifested themselves differently. With industrialization in the 19th century, women became more visible in the labour market. The feminisation of migration, which started with the migration from rural to urban, with women working in factories, then shifted to transnational too with migration within the nation. Especially where international agreements support this labour migration; societal, social, individual, and economic have created changes and transformations. Beginning in 1961 and officially ending in 1973, however, the Turkey-Germany Labour Agreement, the effect of which has continued for many years, complies with this. In the following years, women started to migrate with their husbands in this treaty, in which family "heads" were not allowed to bring their families with them in the past. This was followed by parents who left their children in Turkey and migrated to become workers. After other European countries such as Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and later on, France started to employ women workers, unmarried, widowed or single women who live alone also took to the migration routes (Abadan-Unat, 2015, p. 20). Likewise, causing chain migration, but this time as women are directly at the forefront is the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This migration, which increased because of the economic and social transformations experienced after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the globalisation movement in the 90s, has gradually gained momentum. In countries that have transformed from a socialist administration to a nation-state, women have been the first and most intensely affected by the rapid economic changes.

In the destruction brought about by the collapse of the Soviet system, women faced disadvantages such as unemployment and poverty twice and experienced the shock more deeply. In addition, the economic and social depression experienced in the collapsing environment caused domestic violence and divorce rates to increase. These factors led to an environment in which women struggled for a better life and sought ways to support their families. Thus, women's migration spread massively. (Ünlütürk Ulutaş & Kalfa, 2009, p. 15)

In the post-Soviet period, women started to migrate after the difficulties they experienced. This process both increased the visibility of women as migrants and focused research on

the feminisation of migration. In addition, these migrant women have destroyed the perception of migrant women (unskilled, dependent on men/head of the family) until that time. In the post-Soviet period, economic, social, and political, the vast majority of women who migrate due to various reasons are highly educated and skilled (Ünlütürk Ulutaş & Kalfa, 2009; Çakmak & Yaman, 2018).

## **2.1 Migrant Women's Labour in Turkey**

Since the early Republican period in Turkey, women have always participated in the labour market. Women outside of invisible labour; worked in agriculture, factories, and various branches of industry to fill the men's workforce, which decreased after the First World War (See Makal, 2015, p. 35-99). However, the visibility of women's participation in the formal/urban labour market in Turkey begins mostly in the 1960s. In the 1950s, with the industrialization in agriculture, people living in rural areas began to migrate to urban centres. Women working in agriculture and the home in rural areas continued to provide domestic services and care when they migrated to urban centres. In order to contribute to the household economy, they began to provide "cleaning service" to the middle and upper-middle class, who started living in apartments and newly emerging closed estates. As Eder said, domestic care services were initially "solved" with internal migration from rural to urban areas (Eder, 2015, p. 137). Especially in the 1960s, when industrialization was located in the city, and accordingly, slums were located in the city centre, women who migrated to the city became the main actors of this "solution". In these years, when the industry needed more and more workforce, women started to work in factories. The visibility of women in the labour market has increased with the fact that women living in the city, especially those who came with internal migration, work in factories. Not only in factories, in the neo liberalizing new world order, women's employment in all kinds of working lines has been supported by the state. While women's participation in employment and social life is supported by the state, there has been no study of public policy on who will provide domestic services and care. This means that the domestic services and care given by women are given by migrant women.

In the Middle East, Turkey has gone through a full migration transition, attracting migrants and refugees from an increasingly diverse array of European, Asian and African

countries (De Haas, Castles, & Miller, 2020, p. 221-222). Among the reasons for these migrations; the economic conditions of the destination countries, Turkey being at the point of transition from Asia to Europe, and Turkey's need for labour due to the rapidly increasing capitalisation processes. Except for exchange, state-controlled resettlement or forced migration of Kurdish, Armenian, Alevi other minorities has often proceeded unevenly.

Under this title, the types of migrations towards Turkey, each of which would be the subject of broad and in-depth research, briefly mention through migrant women's labour. According to Toksöz and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2012, p. 85-86), irregular migration towards Turkey can be examined under three headings: those coming from the former Eastern Bloc countries, those coming from Asian and African countries waiting in Turkey to cross into the EU, and those seeking asylum in Turkey, fleeing from the oppressive regimes in the Middle East. (Toksöz & Ünlütürk Ulutaş, 2012, p. 85-86). The first migrant group consists of those who had to migrate from their countries due to the collapse of the Eastern Bloc countries' economic, political, and social regimes in the 1990s. As a result of unemployment and poverty, people had to migrate to countries where they could find a job. The second migration movement consists of migrants who come from Asian and African countries and want to transpass to Europe. These migrants are mostly unregistered; they participate in the labour market in insecure, informal ways. The third and last group of migrants are those who want to overcome the living conditions created by the oppressive regimes in the Middle East.

Among these migrant groups, there are migrants who are called regular and irregular migrants and who are involved in the labour market, either registered or unregistered. While it is possible to obtain information from research and reports for migrants who are unregistered in the labour market, work permit data for registered migrants can be viewed. At the same time, the conditions for obtaining a work permit for each migrant group change, and the short duration of work permits and the need for renewal should not be overlooked. In Table 2.1., the number of migrants who received work permits by year and gender is given.

**Table 2.1.: Number of migrants obtained work permits by year and gender**

Year	Number of work permit				
	Female		Male		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
2016	35601	48,4	37948	51,6	73549
2017	37756	43,3	49426	56,7	87182
2018	48087	41,5	67750	58,5	115837
2019	50690	34,9	94542	65,1	145232
2020	41853	33,9	81721	66,1	123574

Source: Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Labour and Social Security Department of Work Permits for Foreigners (2020)<sup>5</sup>.

According to the 2020 data from the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the number of migrants who obtained a work permit is 123,574. It is possible to say that the number of migrants who obtain a work permit is increasing every year without ignoring population of the migrants working without a work permit. The number of men and women who obtained work permits increased steadily until 2020 and decreased by 2020. The reason for this can be shown as the Covid-19 outbreak.

In this chapter, migrant women's labour in Turkey will be examined through the order created by Toksöz and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2012, p. 85-86).

### **2.1.1. Migrant women from former Eastern Bloc Countries**

Undoubtedly, the women who migrated from the former Soviet countries in the 90s contributed the most to the visibility of the feminisation of migration. The most important feature of the migration process that started with the collapse of the Soviet Union is that women were at the forefront of this migration movement. In previous migrations, men

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<sup>5</sup> Number of Work Permits Granted to Foreigners by Nationality and Gender.

were in the majority and women were ignored in the patriarchal system. Women who migrated from the former Eastern Bloc mostly left their families behind and provided their livelihood by sending money from the country they migrated to. These women preferred Turkey for reasons such as the flexible visa application offered by Turkey at that time and its geographical proximity and cultural similarity. The deterioration of the economy in their countries and the social and societal reasons that developed accordingly have also been the driving factors in migration.

The relatively high level of education and work discipline of migrants, their work without causing any problems to the employers, the absence of legal rights, and the fact that unionisation is not on the agenda make them attractive to employers. (Toksöz, Erdoğan, Kaşka, 2012, p. 23)

Since no data is kept on women coming from the former Eastern Bloc, there is no clear information about the migrant women in this group in terms of economic, social, and cultural context. However, in general studies, it is seen that women who migrated from these places work in the textile, service, and entertainment sectors etc. (İçduygu, 2004; Gökbayrak, 2009). Migrant women from former Eastern Bloc countries are relatively educated and seen as “European”, for middle-upper class people who started to be added to the labour market, it meant both providing domestic service and care and also, gaining status. The limited labour supply of women from the lower classes has revealed migrant women as a new labour force to meet the growing care labour demand by middle-upper class women working in professional occupations (Erdoğan & Toksöz, 2013, p. 11).

With the perception that migrant women from former Eastern Bloc countries are “more educated and experienced”, women have undertaken domestic service and care in Turkey. The reason why migrant women prefer to provide domestic service and care is mainly that they do not pay any rent and bills because they stay in the serviced house as a boarding house too. Thus, women can financially support the families and relatives they who left behind. In addition, it is preferred by migrant women in the domestic service and care sector, as speaking Turkish is less important than other working lines. Although this situation is favourable for women who participate in the labour market in this way, domestic service and care has one of the most insecure working conditions.

Because to work in care and cleaning services does not seem particularly profitable for migrants who speak languages because it has a closed working environment, does not have

a particular overtime payment, is quite tiring mentally and physically, and the wages received in return are relatively low. (Çakmak & Yaman, 2018, p. 222)

In the domestic service and care sector, it is also possible for women to be sexually harassed in the workplace. In this sector, where migrants can work informally, women cannot access complaint mechanisms or use the necessary protection methods. This situation paves the way for physical and psychological violence against women and sometimes even results in the death of women. The domestic services and care sectors are among the many sectors where women work without security.

In line with the feminization of global migratory flows, Turkey received increasing numbers of irregular female migrants throughout the 1990s, mostly from the post-Soviet world. These women found jobs in precarious informal labour markets as domestic caregivers, cleaners, shop clerks and sex workers. (Eder, 2015, p. 133)

Migrant women have also been included in other branches of the insecure labour market, which Turkish people do not prefer. Migrant women have existed in a wide variety of branches of the labour market, regardless of their qualifications and educational level.

In the labour market, the demand for migrant labour arises in domestic and care services or various jobs in tourism, as well as in sectors where local labour is not supplied and in sectors where there is wage competition with local labour in areas where the country competes by keeping labour costs constant in global markets, such as textiles and agriculture. (Dedeoğlu & Sefa Bayraktar, 2018, p. 248)

With the regulation<sup>6</sup> of the law in force in Turkey and the publication of a related circular<sup>7</sup>, it has been easier to register migrants working in Turkey since 2012. After these regulations, the number of registered migrants has increased since February 2012.

However, the critical aspect of the regulation is the convenience brought to foreigners who want to work in fields such as caregivers and home services in obtaining a residence permit from within the country. In previous foreigners with a tourist visa or visa exemption can return to their own country and apply to the Turkish representatives there to apply for a work permit; however, now they can apply for a residence permit from the Police Department of the province they are in Turkey. (Toksöz, Erdoğan, Kaşka, 2012, p. 39-40)

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<sup>6</sup> Law No. 5683 on Residence and Travel of Foreigners in Turkey

<sup>7</sup> Circular on Foreigners Violating Visa/Residence

According to this title Table 2.2 has been compiled to the latest data published the numbers of work permits issued by nationality and gender for 2020.

**Table 2.2.: The number of work permits issued to foreigners by former Eastern Bloc countries and gender, 2020**

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Armenia	26	228	254
Azerbaijan	1403	1542	2945
Belarus	71	190	261
Georgia	235	4638	4873
Kazakhstan	211	750	961
Kyrgyzstan	824	2681	3505
Moldova	105	1135	1240
Russia	1578	1546	3124
Tajikistan	151	127	278
Turkmenistan	1370	8351	9721
Ukrainian	439	1832	2271
Uzbekistan	562	3821	4383

Source: Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Labour and Social Security Department of Work Permits for Foreigners (2020)<sup>8</sup>.

Except for Tajikistan and Russia, women from former Eastern Bloc countries obtained more work permits than men in 2020. This shows that more women migrants come from these countries, and women participate more in the formal labour market than men. However, the women mentioned above who do insecure, informal, unqualified, and labour-intensive work should not be ignored.

Some of the migrant women from the former Eastern Bloc have short-term visas, and they enter and exit the country at regular intervals. During this period, some women take the

<sup>8</sup> Compiled from the table named Number of Work Permits Granted to Foreigners by Nationality and Gender.

products from Turkey to their country, sell them, and return to Turkey after the visa procedures are completed. The exchange rate difference between their own countries and Turkey and the economic crisis in their country at that time triggered this situation. The fact that women do this more than once and this situation continued over the years has entered the literature as luggage trade or shuttle migration (Toksöz, Erdoğan, Kaşka, 2012; Çakmak, Yaman, 2018).

### **2.1.2. Migrant women from Asian and African countries**

In the 1970s, industrialization accelerated in East and Southeast Asian countries that adopted the export-based production model. Unhealthy and insecure working conditions fed the export-based production model, and women and child labour were considered appropriate. In this labour-intensive production, migrants started to come to East and Southeast Asian countries from countries that had not yet entered the process of capitalisation.

Household incomes decreased as a result of the neoliberal policies put in place after 1980 due to the rise in unemployment and the decline in wages. Basic services like health and education started to become commodities. Thus, household expenses have increased as a result of the reduction in state assistance, new taxes, and rising prices. Women who were trying to survive entered the labour force throughout the this entire process. (Yaman Öztürk, 2010, p. 115)

Economic developments in these countries were based on women's labour and migrant women's labour in the 80s and 90s. However, the economic crisis, which started in Thailand at the end of the 1990s and spread to other Asian countries, began to be felt in different geographies. Women who had previously migrated to Thailand and joined the labour market either returned to their home countries or were deported as a result of the economic crisis. Thus, once in-migration countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea have become out-migration countries.

The conditions of the free-market economy were determined by the January 24 decisions, which are the starting point of the global transformation in Turkey. This decision had large-scale consequences such as external dependency and irregularity in the economy. Competing specially to become a global city in these years, Istanbul became the centre of



high-level services for the national economy. At the same time, trade and finance are concentrated here, as well as the country's culture and media industries. With globalisation, multinational companies have emerged, and the employees of these companies have started to settle in Istanbul. In the 1990s, illegal migrant workers started to work in Turkey when multinational company employees brought Filipino domestic workers with them (Weyland, 1994; cited in Özbay, 2015, p. 122).

Not counting the Filipinos; Georgian, Azeri, Armenian, Turkmen and Uzbek migrants from the east joined the first wave of migrant domestic workers from Russia and Eastern European countries such as Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. (Özbay, 2015, p. 123)

Another type of migration, which is the subject of this title, is migrants from African countries. These migrants mostly migrate to Turkey to enter Europe via Turkey. Nevertheless, not only for this purpose; since there are cultural similarities, there is migration from Muslim African countries to Turkey. In addition to these reasons, it is necessary to specify the new trade networks that have developed between Turkey and Africa (Şaul, 2013; Toksöz, Erdoğan, Kaşka, 2012). In this type of migration too, women migrate based on the gender roles attributed to them.

Especially since the mid-2000s, there has been a diversification in women's migration to Turkey as well as other types of migration. While women from distant countries such as Asia-Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa took part in these new migration flows, they started to work in gender-based jobs in the labour market as domestic workers, cheap workshop workers or sex workers. The common feature of these jobs is the unregistered and insecure work of migrant women. (Coşkun, 2016, p. 94)

The reasons for women's migration from Africa, especially from Sub-Saharan countries, can be listed as follows: the need to care for their families after the divorce or the obligation to provide for the family due to never getting married, and seeking for a better life due to poverty in their country. In addition to these push factors, among the reasons why women prefer Turkey is the hope of finding a well-paid job in Turkey. At the same time, employers in Turkey pay low wages for labour-intensive jobs and employ women unregistered without the need for a work permit are the problems faced by women from African countries, just like every migrant woman. Women in this group, like other migrants, work in domestic service and care, in textile workshops, in the service and entertainment sector or as sex workers. However, since these women have different skin colours than the migrant women described above, they are more exposed to racism,

discrimination, and harassment. Women coming from African countries have to work in jobs that other migrants would not do. Together with the roles attributed to them, these women are in the position of "the other of the other". Table 2.3. shows the number of work permits given to foreigners by Asian and African countries and by gender.

**Table 2.3.: The number of work permits issued to foreigners by Asian and African countries and gender, 2020**

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
China	1387	224	1611
Indonesia	108	1309	1417
Ethiopia	38	132	170
Morocco	179	428	607
Philippines	136	1467	1603
Ghana	111	22	133
South Africa	74	62	136
South Korea (Republic of Korea)	399	43	442
India	812	38	850
Japan	245	56	301
Nepal	635	786	1421
Nigeria	180	73	253
Thailand	85	158	243

Source: Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Labour and Social Security Department of Work Permits for Foreigners (2020)<sup>9</sup>.

Looking at the distribution of work permit holders in 2020, the number of women from Asian countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand is higher than that of men. Women from these countries generally work in the domestic service and care sector. In 2020, the number of women from Asian countries who obtained work permits was

<sup>9</sup> Compiled from the table named Number of Work Permits Granted to Foreigners by Nationality and Gender.

twice as much as that of women from African countries who obtained work permits. This data also supports that women from African countries work more informal jobs in this group.

### **2.1.3. Migrant women from Middle East countries**

There has been and still is migration from these countries towards Turkey, especially in the Middle East countries bordering Turkey, to escape from the oppressive regime, to find a solution to unemployment brought on by the economic crisis, and to lead a better life. The unconstrained visa practices that Turkey once followed also affected and accelerated this type of migration. Since free trade relations created a need for an unconstrained visa regime, Turkey switched to a flexible and pragmatic visa system with both Black Sea Basin, Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Toksöz, Erdoğan, Kaşka, 2012, p. 18). This situation, along with the titles mentioned above, also affected migrants from Middle East countries. With the establishment of the Economic Cooperation Organization, which covers Central Asian countries and Turkic Republics, the citizens of these countries started to benefit from the banderol application. This practice was also valid for those coming from Middle Eastern countries.<sup>10</sup> As a result of the political and commercial decisions that have been going on for many years, the migration movement continues.

Geographically positioned at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Turkey has received thousands of asylum seekers escaping from civil wars and massive conflict in recent decades, both from countries in Asia and Africa and increasingly from countries in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. (Baban, Ilcan, Rygiel, 2016, p. 1)

Like other migrant women, women from the Middle East work in unskilled, insecure, and labour-intensive jobs. They are perceived by Turkish society as "less educated" than other migrant groups. For this reason, they either enter the labour market informally or cannot find a job. Table 2.4 shows the number of work permits granted to foreigners by Middle Eastern countries and gender.

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<sup>10</sup> For more detailed information, see: Toksöz, G., Erdoğan, S., & Kaşka, S. (2012). Türkiye'ye Düzensiz Emek Göçü ve Göçmenlerin İşgücü Piyasasındaki Durumları. IOM Türkiye.

**Table 2.4.: Number of work permits issued to foreigners by Middle East countries and gender, 2020**

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Afghanistan	1661	260	1921
Palestine	437	71	508
Iraq	1521	273	1794
Iran	2178	1837	4015
Libya	151	23	174
Lebanon	138	51	189
Egypt	490	140	630
Pakistan	280	67	347
Syria	58402	3967	62369
Tunisian	133	213	346
Jordan	260	67	327
Republic of Yemen	165	16	181

Source: Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Labour and Social Security Department of Work Permits for Foreigners (2020).<sup>11</sup>

It is also understood from the 2020 Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Labour and Social Security data that women from the Middle East often have fewer work permits than men from the same country.

As migrants and women, they face various difficulties regarding the safe participation of migrant women from former Eastern Bloc countries, Asian and African countries, and Middle Eastern countries in the labour market. Regulations regarding their work have been made as registered in the Law on Foreigners, and International Protection (LFIP<sup>12</sup>) numbered 6458, which entered into force in 2013. This law not only reduced bureaucratic

<sup>11</sup> Compiled from the table named Number of Work Permits Granted to Foreigners by Nationality and Gender.

<sup>12</sup> The Turkish version of this “Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu (YUKK). English abbreviations are used in the text.

barriers to migrants but also arranged work permit procedures in a simpler and faster way. However, in accordance with the Law on Work Permits of Foreigners<sup>13</sup> No. 4817, work permits are given for a maximum of 1 year. As a result, employers either do not deal with obtaining work permits or do not extend their work permits.

Migrant women's labour, each of which could be the subject of a separate research/examination, such as insecure work, and labour exploitation, being included in the labour market according to the ascribed gender norms, has been briefly mentioned. The inclusion of highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep, the main subject of this research, in the labour market will be focussed on. However, in the next title, the inclusion of Syrian women living in Turkey in the labour market, their level of education, and in which working lines / sectors they work will be discussed.

## **2.2. Syrian Women's Labour in Turkey**

Before the war, women's work was not generally accepted in Syria, working women worked for short hours in public places, and after migrating, women worked for low wages, insecure and unqualified to earn enough income for the whole family (Ünlütürk-Ulubaş & Akbaş, 2020, p. 193-212). Although the existence of such a migrant population is not ignored, the participation of highly educated Syrian women in the labour market in Turkey should be examined. For this purpose, concerning the homogenised “Syrians”; ethnicity, gender, occupation, age etc. intersectional studies should be carried out on factors. Intersectionality both to make women's labour and the differences between women visible and to reveal the uniqueness of each migration, enabling similarities to be seen from a broader perspective, emerges as an essential analytical tool. (Uçar, 2020, p. 41).

With Turkey's open-door policy towards Syrian migrants, the entrance of the migrants to the country, the need for shelter when they first came, adaptation in the city and the enterprises participating in the labour life were not carried out sturdily. In countries such as Turkey, where the government and civil society support given to refugees is very

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<sup>13</sup> The Turkish version of this law is *Yabancıların Çalışma İzinleri Hakkında Kanun*.

limited, it becomes essential for these users to find a job to ensure their safety (Körükmez, Daniş, Karakılıç, 2022, p. 204).

Due to the perception that Syrians in Turkey are "temporary" and "guests", the necessary legal regulations have progressed slowly, and there has been no supportive work on employment. With the Temporary Protection Regulation prepared in 2014, Temporary Protection Status was given to those who came from Syria. However, the Temporary Protection Regulation has left the issuance of work permits and the details of this issue to the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services.

The temporary protection status and kimlik (in Turkish) do not grant immediate access to the right to employment. The RTP (Regulation on Temporary Protection) leaves the specific details of work permits to the Council of Ministers acting on the advice of the Ministry of Labour and Social Services. According to the regulation, Syrian refugees under temporary protection can apply for work permits in specific sectors and geographical areas designated by the Council of Ministers. However, the very low number of work permits issued since 2011 indicates that Syrians living in Turkey lack proper access to employment rights. Like other foreigners, Syrians must apply for the legal right to work following stipulations outlined in the 2013 LFIP Act, according to which foreigners must apply to the government for residency and work permits. (Baban, Ilcan, Rygiel, 2016, p. 11)

When the job conditions created in temporariness and insecurity are evaluated, it seems difficult for Syrians to enter the labour market and work in a permanent job. Syrians meet a large part of Turkey's demand for cheap and flexible labour. The number of Syrian men granted a work permit in 2020 is 58402; The number of women is 3967<sup>14</sup>. These numbers, especially the number of women, are quite low among the Syrian population, which is almost 2 million potential workforce.

It is extremely difficult for Syrians to find jobs commensurate with their skills and education in Turkey. While labour laws require Syrians to obtain a work permit in order to legally gain employment, many employers are willing to employ Syrians illegally to take advantage of their comparatively cheap labour cost. (Özden, Ramadan, 2019, p. 43)

There is no precise and up-to-date study on the participation of Syrian women in the labour market in Turkey. Significant reasons for this lack of data on women's domestic and piecework production; their work in the seasonal agricultural business; is the failure

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<sup>14</sup> Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Labour and Social Security Department of Work Permits for Foreigners (2020).

to renew the work permit holders' permits or not to follow up. According to three different reports<sup>15</sup> that provide quantitative data on Syrian women living in Turkey, only 10% to 15% of Syrian women in Turkey work in a job that generates income (Körükmez, Daniş, Karakılıç, 2022, p. 205). According to the UN Women research<sup>16</sup>, which is one of these reports, when we look at the working status of Syrian women in Turkey, 10% of them work in a regular job, 4% work in an irregular job and 1% in seasonal work (UN Women, 2018, p. 45). According to the data in the same report, the rate of highly educated Syrian women living in Turkey is quite low. Only 5% of the participants had higher education, and this rate is in AFAD's report (2014), which shows that 6.2% of Syrian women (7.3% of Syrian women living outside the refugee camps) have received higher education; is compatible with the given rate (UN Women, 2018, p. 19).

According to KADEM's Profile Scanning Study Report<sup>17</sup>, only 9.4% of the women participating in the survey stated that they are currently working in Turkey. 10% of these participants have registered social security. The report focused more on unskilled labour. The inadequacy of women's education and work experience causes employers to define Syrian labour as unqualified and informal (KADEM, 2018, p. 9-10). There is no information about highly educated Syrian women in this report.

According to the Turkey Demographic and Health Survey report<sup>18</sup>, 64% of women surveyed had either not worked or never worked in the 12 months prior to the survey. The employment rate of women increases with age. It is at the highest level, with 37% in the 40-44 age group. (...) 47% of women work as regular or temporary wage workers, and 15% as civil servants (HÜNEE, 2018, p. 182).

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<sup>15</sup> These three different reports are as follows: UN Women research, Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (TNSA), KADEM report.

<sup>16</sup> According to the report, 1,230 Syrian women and girls aged 15 and over who live in Hatay, Istanbul, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Adana, İzmir and Konya were interviewed.

<sup>17</sup> The 2018 KADEM report (Sığınmacı Kadınlar Ekonomik ve Sosyal Uyum Profil Tarama Raporu) is based on a survey of 5000 people, 4000 from Istanbul and 1000 from Ankara.

<sup>18</sup> The 2018 TDHS report (Türkiye Nüfus ve Sağlık Araştırması, 2018-Suriyeli örnekleme) is based on interviews with 13982 households and 7345 women aged 15-49.

### **2.3. Migration of Syrian Women and Labour in Gaziantep and the Sectors in which Syrian Women Work**

Gaziantep, where most Syrians live after Istanbul, has a population of almost half a million Syrians. Gaziantep, after 2011, received migrants from almost every region of Syria, especially Aleppo. While Gaziantep's location on the border largely determines the initial migration route, Organized Industrial Zones and small industrial enterprises owned by the city ensured that the majority of the migrant population remained in the city. At the same time, Gaziantep's economic coexistence and cultural closeness dating back to before the war with Syria are among the reasons why Syrians prefer Gaziantep.

The development of Gaziantep, with neoliberal policies in the field of economy and urbanization after the 1980s, caused migration from the close provinces to the city. Apart from the pre-existing textile sector, which had an essential share in Turkey, cheap labour was needed in the agriculture, construction and industry sectors. Due to the conflicts that took place in the 1990s and targeted the Kurds, there was an intense migration of the Kurdish and Alevi populations in the region. By the 2000s, the demographic structure of the city was redefined. Gaziantep relatively recently; however, it faced a much greater migration this time.

Due to the open-door policy followed by Turkey until 2016, there was the uncontrolled entry of Syrians into the country. The fact that reliable and up-to-date data started to be kept later, not upon entry into the country, has not been a solution to the infrastructure and superstructure problems of cities, especially basic human rights. Some of those who came from Syria were placed in Temporary Accommodation Centers and camps; some started settling in cities, especially border cities. After the tent camps in Gaziantep's districts were closed in 2018, the number of Syrians living in the city centre has increased. Thus, access to basic rights such as housing, employment and health has become more difficult for urban refugees.

It is seen that nearly half a million Syrians are concentrated in certain districts and centres. The total population of Syrians in Araban, Karkamış, Oğuzeli, Yavuzeli and Nurdağı districts is around 4% of registered Syrians in Gaziantep province. Therefore, 96% of Syrians in Gaziantep (whole province) live in the districts of Nizip, İslâhiye, Şehitkamil and Şahinbey. (Gültekin et al., 2021, p. 2-3)



If we look at this population, which is concentrated in the two central districts of the city, in terms of the labour market, Syrians have also been added to the multi-layered economic structure of the city of Gaziantep. From factory owners to small business owners, it is possible to see Syrians on a broad scale, from those who work in piecework to those who practice their profession. As the subject of this research, this section will look at the Syrian women's labour migration in Gaziantep and the sectors in which Syrian women work.

In the “Gaziantep Monitor 2020” report examining Syrians and Gaziantep residents, 2280 Syrian households and 2258 Gaziantep households were interviewed. According to this report;

It is not easy for women to be found in the wage labour market in Syrian households where traditional family structure and patriarchal order are dominant. Women work intensively at home. Therefore, while 70% of men seem to be working before they come to Turkey, this rate corresponds to only 15% for women. Unfortunately, these rates make women's labour at home invisible. (Gültekin et al., 2021, p. 26)

Women's gender roles and inclusion in the labour market within the patriarchal order are possible with piece-rate domestic production in a city like Gaziantep, where the textile industry is especially developed. After the Syrian migration to the city, many Syrians entered the labour market, which soon became low-cost labour for the industry and service sectors. In textiles and other sectors, women not only "disrupt" the needs of the house (child-aged care, cleaning, food) by making piece-rate production in the house, but they also engage in income-generating activities.

In Gaziantep, the migrant women work in generally labour intensive sectors such as the textile, service sector, unregistered workshops, and in what we can call piecework at home. Also, some women perform their profession at home or in a workplace of her colleague with Turkish nationality in Turkey informally (doctor, dentist, hairdresser) and also there are some Syrian women from a different class, age, and ethnicity who start their enterprise and work in NGOs and various organisations and institutions. (Kırkayak Kültür, 2020, p. 9)

The fact that Syrian women are involved in very different working lines in Gaziantep can be explained by women's different educational, language and social background levels. After migration, both central and local mechanisms and national and international organisations took action. Since 2011, the number of employees in non-governmental organisations has increased in the city. Syrian women have also started working in NGOs according to their fields of expertise and interests. According to Özden and Ramadan

(2019, p. 13), Gaziantep has become the centre not only of activities within Turkey but also of associations working in Syria.

In this section, an analysis has been made of feminized labour migration to the participation of Syrian women living in Gaziantep to the labour market. The third part will explain the migration stories and working experiences of highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep.



### **3. MIGRATION STORIES AND WORK EXPERIENCES OF HIGHLY EDUCATED SYRIAN WOMEN WORKING IN GAZIANTEP**

Due to the uprisings that started in Syria and the war that followed, deaths, demolitions and migrations were experienced. Millions of people have been displaced in the last ten years. In the first years of the war, migration to countries with Syria's borders spread to other countries over time. The economic, social and cultural diversity among millions of people also affected the countries they migrated to, leading to fundamental changes. Kofman and Raghuram (2006, p. 282-303) say that the disregard of educated women as individual migrants, whether with their spouses or not, is also seen in migration from Syria. Among the mentioned diversity, mostly women, it is generalised as people dependent on their spouses, do not work or work in temporary/insecure jobs, and cannot be actively present in the public space. This situation has also been reflected in academic studies and research, publicity in the production of urban policies have been shaped through this view. Due to the central and local governments' perspectives on urban, employment, education, and health issues, highly educated Syrian women are less visible in the public and on the labour market. Especially in Gaziantep, the second largest city in terms of the Syrian population, the visibility of these women in the labour market and the public space is worth examining.

Migration stories and working experiences of highly educated women living in Gaziantep will be examined under this title, each of which is different and unique. I would call this group to be examined as highly educated rather than the middle or upper-middle class with no boundaries or inclusion. The phenomenon of a class takes into account not only economic circumstances but also capital, social, and cultural events, as well as the interconnectedness of the cases.

... we can think of class and migration in two ways. The first is that the class position of the migrants affects the migration preference and process. In this process, the economic category that determines the class position emerges as the main influencing factor. The second is that the class position of the migrants determines and affects their position in the place where they migrate. (Utanır Karaduman, 2020, p. 58)

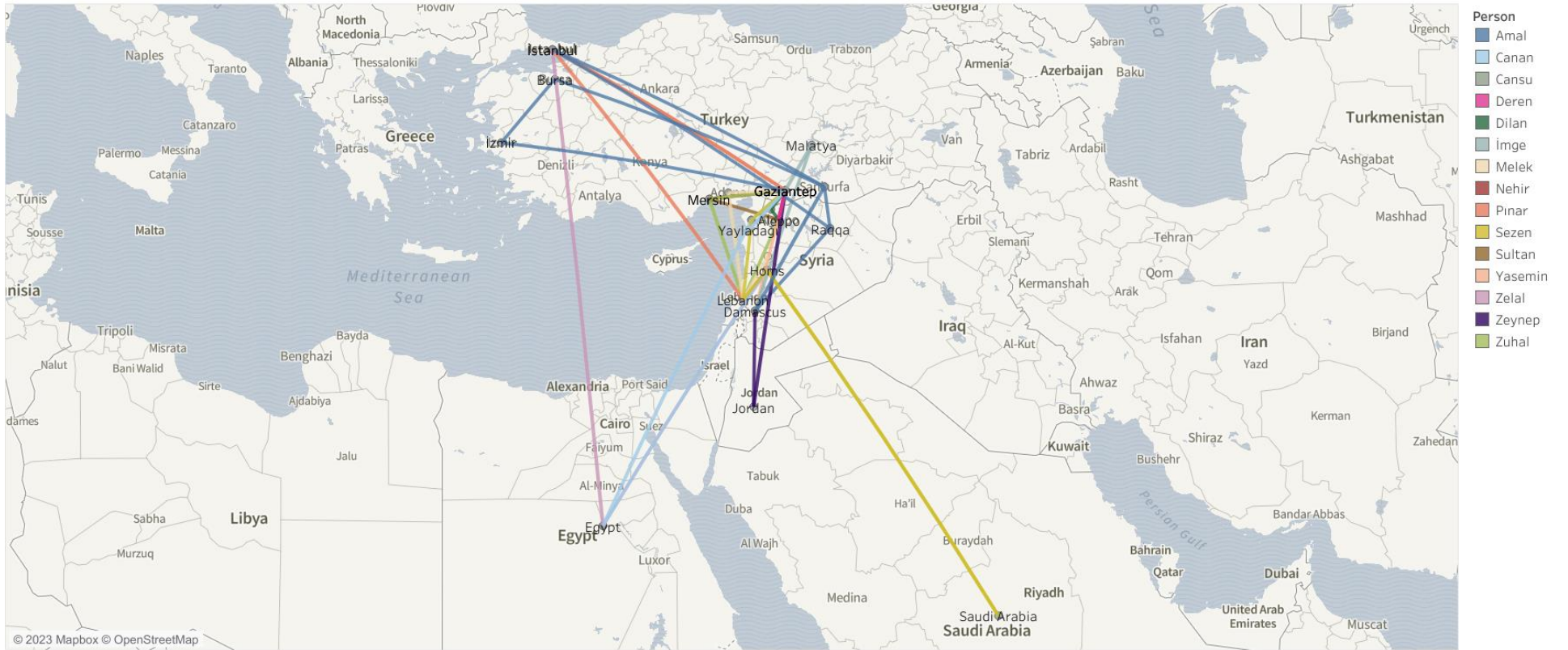
First, class position, which affects the choice and process of migration, affects and shapes the participation of people in the urban, labour market and social life in the place where they live after migration.

### **3.1. Migration Processes and Resettlement Experiences of Highly Educated Syrian Women in Gaziantep**

*“Are the local people you referred from Turkey or Syria? You know, we are considered now as locals.” (Amal, 27).*

Within the scope of this research, highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep were interviewed. Although it is impossible to represent all of the highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep, the migration stories of women conveyed give some important hints about common traits. Most of the 15 women interviewed migrated with their spouses and/or children. Very few women migrated alone. Most women went to another country or city in Turkey as transit and then resettled in Gaziantep. It is possible to see the migration routes of women in Figure 3.1.

### Migration Route of Highly Educated Syrian Women



**Figure 3.1.: Migration routes of highly educated Syrian women resettling in Gaziantep**

Source: Created by Elif Sinem İnan via Tableau.

For the map where women's migration routes and migration stories are compiled, see: [migration route of the highly educated Syrian women](#)

Amal, who was 27 years old at the time of my interview, had to change places several times for her university education and family reasons.

Our first visit was in 2013. I was a student, and I had just finished high school. I was going to start as a pharmacy student at the state university in Damascus. Because the road between Raqqa and Damascus is dangerous, my parents did not send me. In 2013 we called it the revolution, but we had to go from Raqqa to Damascus because the fighting started. We stayed there for one month. Then we came to Turkey via Beirut because Damascus was too dangerous. My brother was studying business in Damascus; he was a sophomore. We applied for a scholarship for both of us in Spain. After that, we went to Damascus in the waiting phase, and after that, we came to Turkey. When we came to Turkey, the plan to go to Spain was still valid. That is why we went to Urfa when we came to our aunts. We stayed there for two months. This time we could not stay due to family conflicts. We returned to Raqqa. We probably stayed there for 4-5 months. That is when the missiles started. We saw that these borders would be closed, we came to Turkey again so that our scholarship would not be annulled. When we came for the second time, only me and my brother came. My mother stayed with my father at that time. Our only concern was to go to university if the borders were closed. We lived in Istanbul at that time. We probably stayed there for six months or so. My older brother was there, and we stayed with him. Then we returned to Urfa because our scholarship had been cancelled. They said they prioritise people in the camps. Of course, during this time, my mother and father had come to say goodbye to us. We were going to go to Spain. This time, the four of us went to Bursa, my mother, my father and my younger brother. We rented a house and settled down. My father returned to Syria again, and he did not stay there. Then I started preparing for the foreign student exam. This happened in 2014. I started university in 2015. I came to Antep in September 2021. (Amal, 27)

Zeynep, who migrated to Jordan before coming to Turkey, preferred Turkey instead of going to Europe after staying there for a while.

In 2011, my husband was arrested. After getting out of prison in 2011, we went to Jordan at first. We stayed there for four years. Then we came to Turkey in 2015. We had no other option. So, we were going to either go to Europe or Turkey. We chose Turkey. Somehow, the culture is closer to a Muslim country. (Zeynep, 44)

Among the women who lived in other cities in Turkey before coming to Gaziantep, Sultan was one of the first to migrate to Gaziantep.

In 2012, the war had already begun. We took a decision when the Syrian regime entered Aleppo. We were going to come to Turkey. We had our car. At first, we went to a neighbourhood close to Aleppo. Then we went to Mersin. So, we entered through the border gate. We stayed for a year and a half. We came to Antep from Mersin. (Sultan, 63)

Although Temporary Protection Status is “temporary”, it has a different meaning for Syrians who do not have this status. İmge, who first moved to another city, describes the lack of a sense of belonging to the cities she migrated to as follows:

We came to Turkey in March 2013. First, we went to Malatya. We stayed there for a year and a half. Coincidentally, I met Turkish girls in 2009 when I was in Damascus. We were in constant contact after that. When the war started, they said to come to Turkey. They were also studying in Malatya. They took us there. Then we came to Gaziantep. We settled here. So, when we say resettled, we resettled temporarily. Because we are using a travel permit, there is no sense of resettling in. (İmge, 34)

Her participation in the labour market and her daily routines in the city have both been impacted by her "inability to resettle" in Gaziantep, as İmge states. The story of İmge will be included in the third and fourth parts. However, it is worth noting that when I met İmge's mother, whom I knew through Mutfak||Matbakh Workshop, during the writing process of the thesis, she said that her daughter had moved to England. It will also be mentioned in the following parts of the research; However, İmge's travel document, her inability to obtain a work permit and discrimination she felt she experienced in the city caused her to migrate. Some interviewees, such as İmge, also said they wanted to leave Turkey; however, no information on their current status could be obtained in this process. If we go back to the migration stories of women, the proximity of Gaziantep to the border is one of the main reasons why some interviewees prefer the city.

I studied law. I graduated from university in 2000. I am from Idlib, but I was living in Aleppo. From 2000 to 2015, I worked at Aleppo University in student affairs and human resources. Different positions, But I was working at the university. I have two daughters, one 18 years old and one 16 years old. I came to Turkey by road with my two daughters in May 2015. There was a border between us, or we crossed it. We came directly to Gaziantep. Since then, we have been living in Antep. (Cansu, 43)

Some interviewed women cited job opportunities as the reason for choosing Gaziantep. With the increasing Syrian population, different job opportunities have emerged in the city. With the schools opened for Syrians due to Turkey's policy, the increase in national

and international non-governmental organisations due to the increasing population has created various job opportunities. Yasemin, whose husband works in an NGO, mentions that they preferred Turkey because of their cultural ties, together with the effect of her husband's job situation in their decision to migrate.

I got married in 2014. The very next day, we came to Turkey. We came in February 2014. We had two options. We could go to Egypt, and we could come to Turkey. I am already Turkish; my origin is Turkish. My grandmother is from Bursa, and my grandfather is from Kilis. They met in Syria and got married. That is why I always said that I am Turkish. I wanted to go to Turkey. We stayed in between for a while. We decided to come here after my husband had a job interview here. In other words, even if there were job offers from two places, we would prefer Turkey. After the interview, we decided to buy the plane tickets before the result was communicated to us. (Yasemin, 32)

Although she currently works as a freelancer, Melek, who has NGO experience, says that she preferred Turkey, where she came for education before migrating, for job opportunities in case of migration.

On January 6, 2016, I left Syria. Then I went to Lebanon. I went to Adana (in transit) from Lebanon. Then I came to Gaziantep. Since then, I have already been staying in Gaziantep. Due to the war, the situation in the city where we live was already mixed. I was a trouble to the regime because I provided psychological support. Maybe there was something about me. So, when I found out about it, I left immediately. I have been here since 2016 but I am officially out of Syria. So, I did not run away. When I came to Turkey for education in 2015, I realised that this is a country for me, a country where I can live. I even thought I could find a job here, so I chose this place later. (Melek, 54)

In this section, where I briefly touched on the beginning of the migration stories of some of the women, I focused on their migration routes and the reasons for choosing Gaziantep. The title that follows looks at the work experiences of these highly educated Syrian women in Gaziantep; I convey the working environments and the discrimination they encounter there.



### 3.2. Work Experiences of Highly Educated Syrian Women in Gaziantep

*"We thought at one point.*

*Let Turkey benefit from us. Why should Europe benefit?*

*We are highly educated, why should we go? ...*

*Nevertheless, sometimes we think, did we make a wrong decision (Zeynep, 44)?"*

Since there is no regular and up-to-date registration system for the education and employment of Syrians living in Turkey, these data are taken from field studies. As mentioned in the First Chapter, these field studies mainly focus on those who work in unskilled, insecure, low-paid jobs, especially in education and employment. The most up-to-date and comprehensive field research conducted in Gaziantep is "Gaziantep Monitor", published in 2020. Although almost half of the Gaziantep and Syrian households were interviewed, these interviewed households mostly live in unskilled, insecure, low-paid jobs. Work experiences of highly educated Syrian women, who could not find a place in this current study, have been examined under this heading.

Some highly educated Syrian women have entered the labour market by doing their profession after migrating to Gaziantep. Some of these women did their job right after the migration but currently not working in this field. Nehir, who migrated right after she retired from teaching Arabic in Syria, could not get her pension after coming to Gaziantep and worked as an Arabic teacher in the school opened for Syrians for four years. She says that this process affects her Turkish learning negatively. She expresses the change she experienced in her working conditions with the closure of schools opened for Syrians as follows:

After I finished teaching, I was editing the Arabic texts. I was both translating in Turkish schools and editing texts in extra time. I am not working now. Because as I told you, UNHCR has no longer renewed contracts for Arabic or Syrian teachers in recent years. It has already stopped. There were about 12,000 teachers laid off. For now, a few of them returned to work, but they did not return as teachers. They do administrative work. That's a very small part of it. This doesn't suit me. Either I will teach or I will give education or administrative jobs that are not for me. That's why I don't work. (Nehir, 73)

Deren, who graduated from the education department of the university in Syria, worked as the assistant principal while she was in Syria. Deren said that when she first came to

Gaziantep, she did not look for a job because she thought it was not permanent. Later, she worked as a teacher in the school opened for Syrians, and after the school's closure, she moved to an NGO to work.

I worked as a teacher for five years and have been working at KEDV for four months. I worked as a volunteer for the first month. I even asked if there would be a continuation of this, but they said there would be a continuation if there would be a fund; the project ends at the end of this month. Even though I do not continue a full-time job at KEDV, I want to continue voluntarily. I want to teach women something new. (Deren, 53)

Sultan, on the other hand, studied Arabic Language and Literature and worked as a teacher in Syria. When she migrated to Gaziantep, she wanted to go to the Provincial Directorate of National Education and open a private school. When she learned that Syrians were not allowed to open private schools, she taught classes for Syrians after Turkish children in public schools.

After these temporary schools were opened, national education made a new decision. We were going to hire Turkish personnel, and this personnel would coordinate. The personnel would be an intermediary between national education and school. I resigned during this period and could not continue. Then I opened a private nursery and continued this work. (Sultan, 63)

Melek, who studied Arabic in Syria until her third year of university, opened an education centre there. She had to close the centre where she provided human rights and social and psychological support and migrated to Gaziantep. Melek, who stated that the regime in Syria does not want people to be informed about these issues, migrated due to the pressures she experienced due to her job. Since coming to Gaziantep, she has worked in various NGOs in the same field and received training in new fields. She has worked in NGOs both as a volunteerly and professionally.

I am currently working as a freelancer. Again, I participate in all activities related to integration and life skills for young people. I am currently working as a freelancer. Again, I participate in all activities related to integration and life skills for young people. An association gave me a place. I work there, but I am doing my own thing, like teaching. (Melek, 54)

İmge, on the other hand, did not participate in workforce in Syria because she migrated immediately after graduating from the accounting department. After migrating, she

worked various jobs; then, she preferred establishing her business as closest to his profession.

The camp was opened 2 months after we first came to Malatya. I applied right away. I was a translator there. So, two months later, I started to work. My husband started work ten days later. He did not know Turkish. He started to do some electrical work. He is also a university graduate. But then we couldn't do our own business. While in Turkey, I worked in the first camp in Malatya. Then there is the Interim Syrian Government here. I worked with them for about a year and a half. I later worked in the association. After that, I also worked in another association. Then I started my own logistics company. I have been managing it for three years. (İmge, 34)

Pınar, a civil engineer in Syria, came to Gaziantep after working in an engineering office in Istanbul for a while because she was struggling economically. She started working in an NGO, and now she is working in a managerial position in an NGO.

I came to Gaziantep in 2016, and I did not know anyone. I applied as a volunteer to an association in Gaziantep, and when I was accepted there, I moved to Gaziantep. My journey started with the association. I found the volunteer jobs I told you about through an acquaintance. At that time, there was already a job opportunity in Gaziantep. ... I say volunteer, but I was getting a small salary. The association was an association of migrant women providing training. I did not have experience in this field, and I received training from the association; then, my experience in this field increased quickly. This association was challenging in the first period because I did not know anyone in Gaziantep, I did not know anyone. I worked as a volunteer for the first seven months and then started working as a full-time contract worker. I worked in the previous association until 2019 and then moved to another. I am currently working there. (Pınar, 33)

Canan (33), who had to leave the university and migrate due to the war in the third year of her English interpreting education, first migrated to Egypt and then changed places between Gaziantep and Hatay several times. She currently works as a financial officer in a Syrian association working on facilitating of granting citizenship to women and children in Gaziantep. Zuhail is the only person working in an NGO and working in line with her professional knowledge. Zuhail graduated from computer engineering in Syria and got a master's degree in automation engineering. After graduating from Syria, she worked in the United Arab Emirates and got her master's degree. She later returned to Syria and started as an engineer officer in a hospital. At the same time, she worked as an assistant to a professor at the University of Aleppo. Afterwards, Zuhail, who also had different work

experience, started to work in an NGO after migrating. She is now working as a data analyst in an association.

When I first came to Gaziantep, I started working in an association because my brother was working in the association. I got a job in that line of work. I applied to an association. Coincidentally, this association was the one I worked for in Aleppo. That association had offices in opposition areas. Since I am a computer engineer, I was not going to the office and just doing the work, sending it to them. In Aleppo, I worked under a secret name, hiding my name. Because I was a civil officer and I was afraid. They didn't know me, they saw me once in Aleppo. Then I applied here in Gaziantep and went for an interview. They remembered me when I went to the interview, and they said you worked with us. They hired me directly. They also had needs, and I already had some experience. When I came to Antep, I improved myself. Yes, I am a computer engineer, but in this sector, I have greatly improved with courses and stuff. (Zuhal, 41)

Another woman working at the NGO is Amal. Since Amal migrated after high school, she studied Pharmacy at a university in Turkey. She graduated from Ege University and moved to Gaziantep. Amal, who was a freelance translator while at university, was working as a health program assistant at a Syrian NGO at the time of the interview.

Dilan is one of the interviewees who cannot do her job. Dilan was a dentist and clinic owner in Syria. After migrating, she worked with dentists living in Gaziantep to facilitate the equivalence of dentists. In a period that can be considered as late, equivalence was given to dentists; but Dilan did not make her professional equivalency. Now she works in a clinic, not as a dentist but as a health worker.

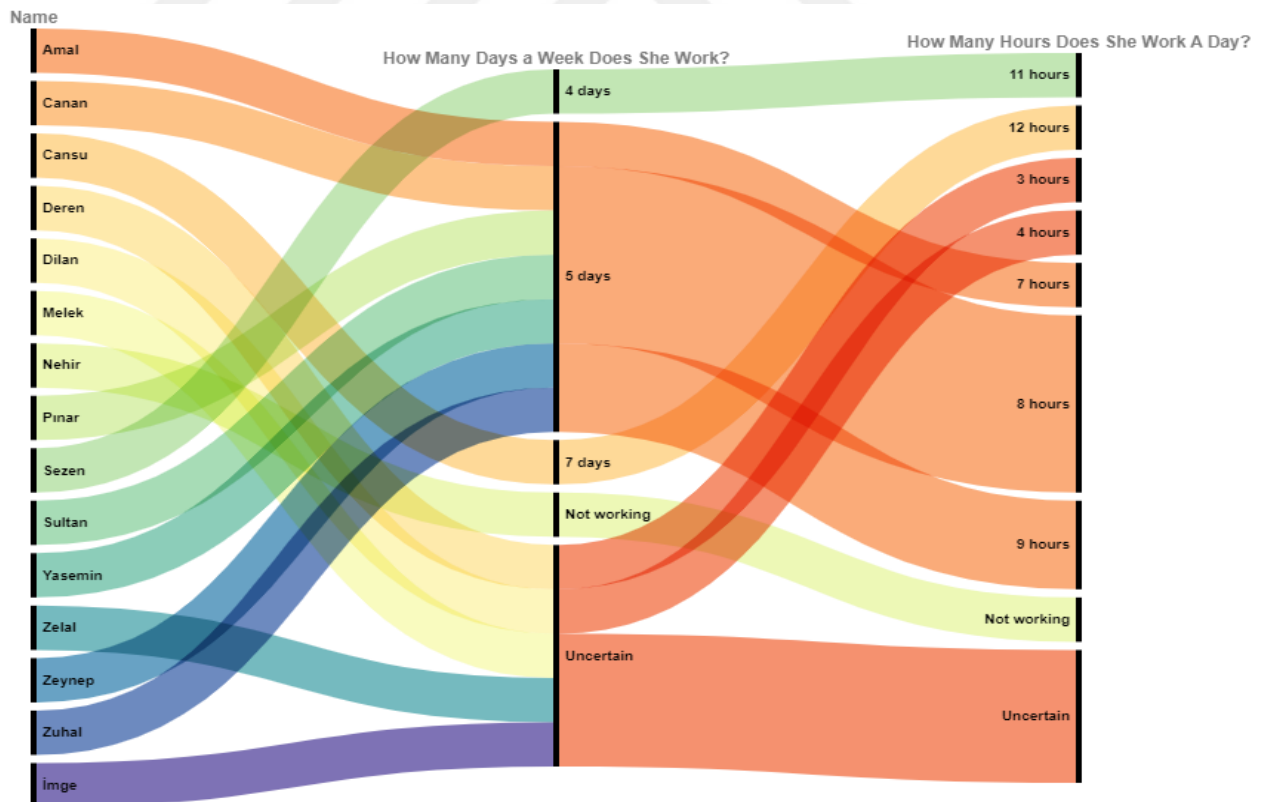
Frankly, when I first came, I did not want to work. I wanted to be more interested in the political field. Then I saw that foreign dentists do not have a work permit in Turkey. They don't allow it. We had no right to make Professional Equivalency. Then, at a late time, the equivalence proceedings began. ... For the first two years, I didn't want to work. I didn't want to attempt such a thing without a valid professional equivalence anyway. Then two years passed, and I realised that two years was too much to stay away from this profession. That is why I thought I should work. (Dilan, she did not specify her age)

Some women could not do their jobs, some turned to related fields, especially NGOs, with the competence brought by their profession, and some could not work officially. Zelal, who is a physical therapist and manufactures epoxy products at home because she could not get her professional equivalence in Turkey; Cansu, who is a law graduate and has never worked in that field in Syria, worked at an NGO after migrating and now opens

her restaurant; Sezen, who was a dentist and owned a clinic before she migrated, now opens a beauty centre in Gaziantep; Yasemin, who graduated from a health institute in Syria and worked in this field, working in various NGOs after migrating, but is currently an English teacher and robotic coding teacher at a school. Very few of the women could do their jobs in Gaziantep. The working conditions of women in the labour market in different ways after their migration and the discrimination they experience in working life will be examined under this title.

### 3.2.1. Working conditions of women in Gaziantep

Considering the working conditions of highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep, they work between 7-9 hours, five days a week, as most women work in NGOs. Working hours are not certain as two women work from home, and one is freelance worker. Figure 3.2. shows the weekly working days of women and the hours they work in a day.



**Figure 3.2.: Women's weekly working days and daily working hours**

Source: Created by Elif Sinem İnan via RAWGraphs.

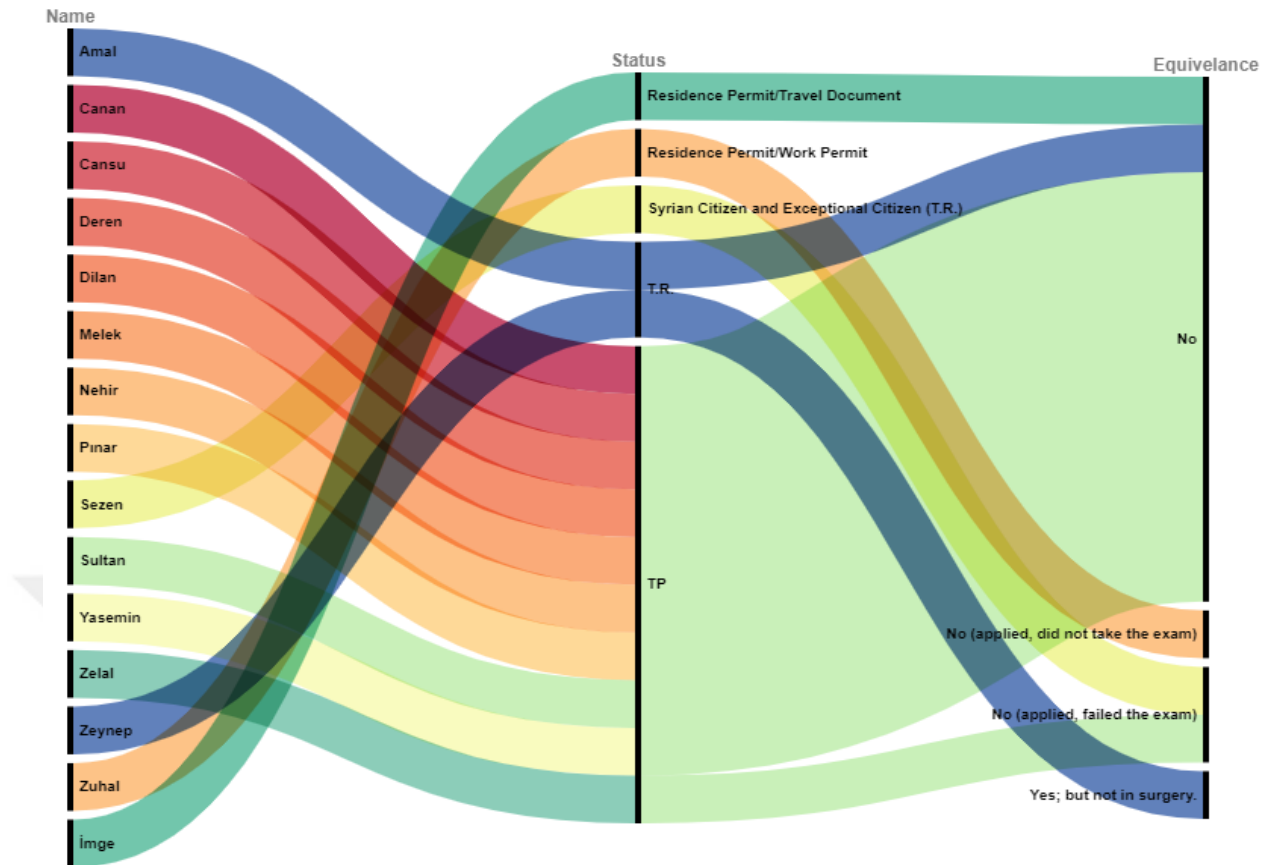
Cansu has her own restaurant and has the most working days and hours among the women interviewed. She takes care of everything in her restaurant and has an intense work pace.

I am pleased that I am doing what I love. I love the kitchen, and I love to prepare food. It is nice that I do what I love, but working for 12 hours, checking if there is a problem. Furthermore, providing customer satisfaction is very tiring. I always work. If I did any work, there would definitely be a day off. I can't take a vacation. Then came these situations [Covid-19 Pandemic]. Of course, it is a situation that is reflected not only to us but to the whole world, but it has been a challenge for us as well, we experienced it. It has a very difficult problem, so we do not do an easy job. Sometimes we have difficulties. (Cansu, 43)

İmge, who owns a logistics company, works from home. She says that the working days and hours are not certain. “When you have your own company, you work almost 24 hours,” she said. However, she stated that as a positive side of working from home, her working hours are adjusted according to her.

There is also housework. That is why I work whenever I want. It is better actually because this effort is for your company. No matter how hard you work, it belongs to you. (İmge, 34)

Working conditions of women vary according to their status and whether they have diploma equivalency. As indicated in Figure 3.3. three interviewed women are citizens of the Republic of Turkey, and only one has diploma equivalency. Among the citizens, Sezen is shown differently in Figure 3.3 because she is a citizen of both Syria and the Republic of Turkey.



**Figure 3.3.: Status of women and diploma equivalency**

Source: Created by Elif Sinem İnan via RAWGraphs.

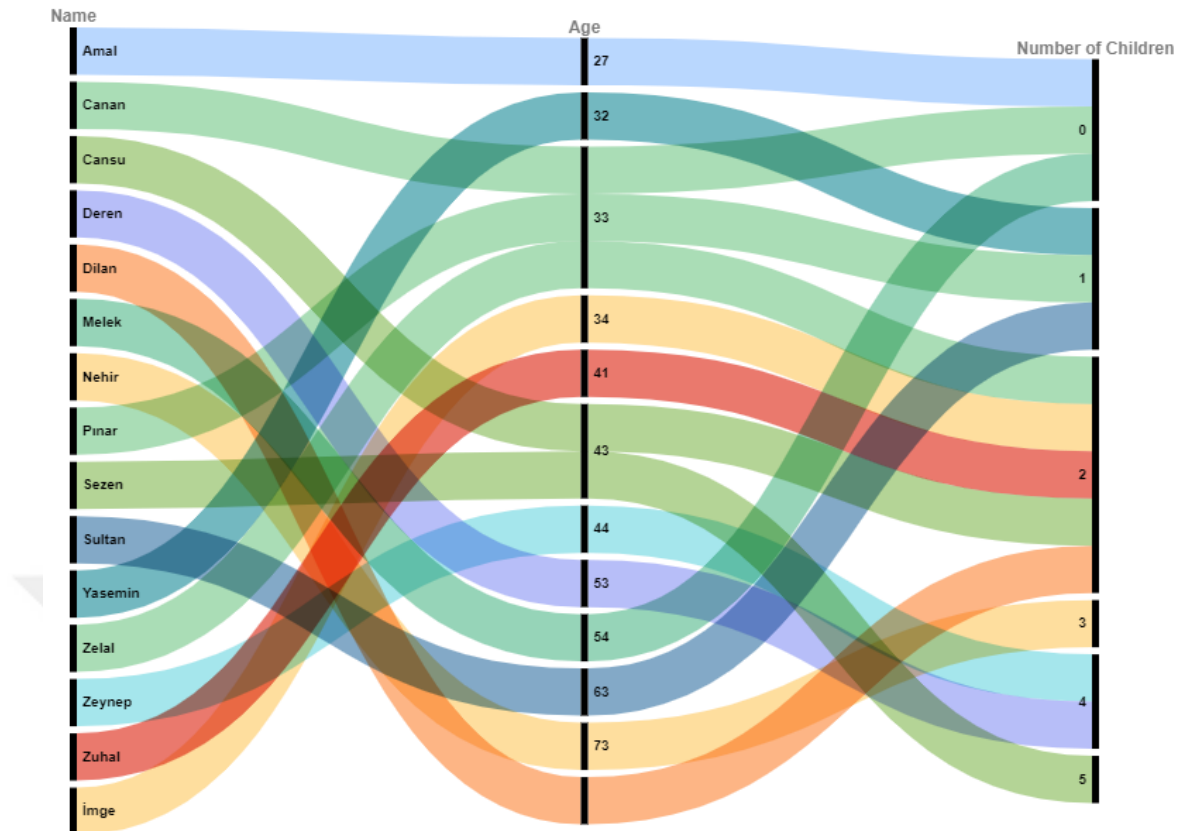
Some women interviewed cannot do their jobs due to the lack of diploma equivalence and citizenship. The high fees for equivalency, the necessity of completing the missing courses and internship in some professions, the difficulty of the equivalence exam, the need to spend a long time studying for the courses that the entrant graduated a certain time ago, and the lengthy procedures; these are among the difficulties of the equivalence process. Therefore, the majority of women benefit from the increasing job opportunities created by their NGOs in Gaziantep. Of the women interviewed, only Zeynep, a doctor, received equivalency. However, Zeynep, a surgeon in Syria, was only able to get her medical equivalency in Turkey; she was not accredited as a surgeon. She attributes this situation to political reasons and is currently working in a managerial position in an association working on Syrians in the health field in Gaziantep.

I applied for equivalency three years ago. This process took longer. As of the beginning of the year [2022], I finished the exam and did an internship. Now I got my equivalence. So now I can work in Turkey. Of course, I want to work with my diploma, but it is a little

complicated. Because we are foreigners, Syrian, there are no jobs everywhere. At the same time, I did the equivalency, but I did the equivalence for general medicine. I cannot work because I still cannot get an equivalency in my area of expertise. I want to work as a surgeon, but I cannot work. I do not want to work as a health centre family doctor. After all, I have 20 years of experience in Syria. Unfortunately, I cannot work as a surgeon. It seems that my job in associations is not my job but my duty. I am doing a duty to my country. Now, applying for equivalence in our field of specialization is easy since we have received equivalence in general medicine. There is only one thing, a complicated condition or impossible: they want our documents to be approved by the Syrian consulate. Since Syria knows this, the Syrian consulate does not approve in any way since there is such a condition in Turkey. Many of my friends have tried. Even those who offered to pay money were those who wanted to bribe. In our country, everything is usually bribed. Doctors do not do it very seriously, so they do not work. Because they know everyone will come here and work. Since they know this condition, they do whatever they can to avoid giving consent. As far as I know, no one has yet. Many tried, but no one took it. In other words, most people are considering going abroad after all these years. How long it will take, why can't we work with our diplomas? This applies to all fields of medicine. My husband is a psychologist; the same goes for him. We also ask, is this a temporary annotation? We hope they will one day remove it. (Zeynep, 44)

There is no inverse ratio between women's participation in the labour market and having children. Figure 3.4 shows women having children.





**Figure 3.4.: Women's age and number of children they have**

Source: Created by Elif Sinem İnan via RAWGraphs.

We can say that for almost all of the women interviewed, having children does not prevent them from participating in the labour market. It should not be forgotten that the women I interviewed migrated with financial savings. When examining the participation of women with children in the labour market, the class perspective of women's participation in the labour market should not be overlooked. Some of the women I interviewed do not provide child care, which is one of the domestic care work. Some women's children go to kindergarten, some continue their formal education, and some children are adults. Of the interviewees, only Zelal stated that she could not prepare for the diploma equivalency exam because she herself had to take care of her children. However, she stated that even if she got the diploma equivalence, she could not work in her own specialty because she was not a citizen.

As indicated in Table 3.1, most women in Gaziantep were included in the labour market by working in other fields and institutions before their current job.

**Table 3.1.: Previous jobs of women in Gaziantep**

Name	Current Job Status	Previous Jobs in Gaziantep
Amal	Health program assistant	None
Zelal	Domestic worker	None
Melek	Project based freelance worker	She taught at a psychology support center. She taught at the Syrian NGO. Later, she worked in the another Syrian NGO.
Nehir	Not working	She taught Arabic in a Syrian school. She worked as a translator at a school for a short time.
Deren	Working in an NGO	She taught in a Syrian school.
İmge	Has its own logistics company	She worked with the Interim Syrian Government. She worked in two different associations.
Dilan	Health-Care Worker	She worked with a Turkish dentist. She worked in another dental clinic.
Cansu	She has her own restaurant	She worked in a Syrian NGO.
Zeynep	Manager at NGO (in the field of health)	She worked on the project at the NGO. Then she worked as a manager in a different association.
Yasemin	English and robotic coding teacher	She worked in two different positions in an association, respectively. She worked in the audit position at the association in Gaziantep again. She worked in the same association in different positions.
Sultan	Kindergarten owner (officially a Turkish person)	She worked as an Arabic teacher in public schools in the evening hours.
Sezen	Beauty center owner	She opened a health center for women. Then she turned the same place into a hairdresser.
Pınar	Manager at NGO	She worked in an association.

Name	Current Job Status	Previous Jobs in Gaziantep
Canan	Financial responsible for the Syrian association	She worked as a project manager in an NGO. Then she worked in the news agency.
Zuhal	Data Analyst in Syrian NGO	She worked at an NGO for 6 months. Then she worked in another association for 4 years.

Source: Created by Elif Sinem İnan.

The majority of women have a background in NGO experience. While some turned to another field of work from the NGO, some continued in the same industry. Their lack of citizenship and diploma equivalence is a significant factor in this situation.

### 3.2.2. Discrimination against women in professional life

Almost all the highly educated women living in Gaziantep interviewed have been exposed to discrimination in the workplace. In comparison, most women attribute this discrimination to being Syrian. Some associate it with being a woman.

... Nevertheless, while we were working as teachers, we Syrian teachers and Turkish teachers were working 11 hours in the same period. However, they were getting double our salary and had insurance. They had a one-year employment contract, and when their contract expired, they received compensation. Syrian teachers used to teach Turkish in schools, and then they brought Turkish teachers. UNICEF was paying our salaries, they were showing us as volunteering. However, they appeared to be full-time employees, and they had insurance. Turkish teachers taught only Turkish, but we taught all Arabic, mathematics, and physics courses. We were working at equal times. (Deren, 53)

Yasemin, who works in different positions in different associations, stated that she does not experience discrimination because the associations she works for are Syrian. She expresses the discrimination she experienced at the school where she currently works as an English teacher and robotic coding teacher:

This school where I teach English is a private school. The school where I teach English is a private school. I know how much the principal there loves me, and I know how well-intentioned the principal is, but sometimes when the parents of the children come to school, they say they want to meet the English teacher. After all, they pay so much and want to see

how good the English teacher at school is and how good the accent is. The principal was calling me to meet parents of the students in situations like this. When I first came, I did not know Turkish very well. While I was speaking English, the parents were generally saying, "Oh, she speaks English very well. Where did she learn it?" The principal was also saying, "She is Syrian, but clean Syrian." That word sounded like someone hit me. It's like we're not good in general, only I'm the exception, I'm clean, I'm fine, I'm good. I know the principal's well-intentioned, but it still hurts a lot. Such an event happened. ... The cook at the school said directly to my face several times: "I do not like Syrians; Syrians are dirty, they are lazy, they do not work." In response, I said that "you are right. I have met many Turkish people, and there are good and bad people among Turkish people." That is all I could answer, but it hurt so much. So I experienced these two events. (Yasemin, 32)

When asked about the reason for this discrimination she experienced, she associated it with personality, not being Syrian, and said these when the cook realized that I am someone who could not answer. However, she still stated the discrimination she experienced at school due to the short-time working allowance given by the state during the Covid-19 period.

The state was paying salaries, and I was working then, but they did not state that I was working, so the state would not pay. Since I did not have insurance at that time, the payment was not made from the allowance given by the state. If the employer does not pay the insurance, there is a problem because I am a foreigner. For citizenship, uninterrupted insurance of 5 years or so is required. There was a blank to be filled like this in my file. (Yasemin, 32)

Sultan, who opened her kindergarten after teaching in Gaziantep for a while, cannot be the official owner of the kindergarten because she is not a citizen. That is why she had to establish a kindergarten for an acquaintance who is a citizen of the Republic of Turkey.

The woman who officially owns the kindergarten has not finished primary school. She has concluded the 6th grade or even not. Even if I am a citizen, that woman says that she will not give me back the ownership of this kindergarten. She stated that she would shut down the kindergarten. Because I pay her a salary every month. She knows I would not give her a salary if I would take over the ownership of kindergarten. She puts me in a challenging position. She says if I become a citizen, she will not pass the ownership of kindergarten to me. In the worst case, she says she will close the kindergarten. ... I have my file, and the citizenship process has started. Of course, it has not been concluded yet, but I am thinking about it too. After all, this business looks at the laws, but I do not know anything about these laws. When we met this woman, she already seemed reliable. ... My son also has an education

centre. Ownership of his education centre is on a Turkish citizen also. It is forbidden to us, so only the Turkish citizen can do it. (Sultan, 63)

The majority of women work without a work permit. Pınar states that this situation creates injustice in the workplace. İmge, who started her own business and is the only one working in the company, also mentioned that she could not get a work permit.

The state provided employees during the pandemic period a short-time working allowance. I could not get that support because it did not give me a work permit. And you know why they did not give me a work permit? First, I have to employ 5 Turkish people, and then I have to work and get permission. So I export goods, I bring dollars to this country. I'm selling goods. I have exported more than 1 million dollars, and they still say that we will not give you a work permit if you do not employ Turkish people. So my husband is supportive, But I am the only employee in the company. Despite that, I could not get a work permit. They did not give me a permit. I have such a problem. I always write on social media. Nobody cares. So, I work, and I pay taxes. I pay income tax. Also, I pay profit tax. So, who is doing that job? Does no employees in this company? (İmge, 34)

Some experience discrimination in the workplace for being a woman beyond being a Syrian. Amal, who started her first employment outside of freelance work in Gaziantep, often lives in the workplace due to being a woman.

I work in the health and nutrition program. There are 3 of us in total, and the other two are men. We are three pharmacists. We are all Syrian. We call the pharmacist a doctor in Syria. One was hired because he was a manager, even though he was not a citizen. The two are called doctors, but I am called by my name. They work higher in other positions. For example, Turkish people do not do this, and this addressing form is especially for Syrians. (Amal, 27)

Zeynep, a surgeon, who works for a Syrian association in Gaziantep, mentioned that she had not experienced any form of discrimination in the workplace. She mentioned that she was hired because she is a woman at the place where she works, but she did not see this as discrimination. "Do you think there is a salary difference between men and women where you work?" She answered the question as follows:

There may be no equality in different associations on some issues. However, I have a chance at the association where I work. I was hired for this position because I am a female doctor. The American sponsor wanted a female doctor to support women. That is why they chose women. I am the only woman in this position. As a senior manager, it is usually not a woman. That is why they chose a woman. I am the only woman in this position. As a senior manager,

-it is often not a woman-, this is how I took advantage. Because they also had conditions to support women, they hired me. In my association, there is no such thing. Men and women are equal. (Zeynep, 44)

Zuhal, an NGO employee, also mentioned the lack of a woman as a senior manager in NGOs. “Do you get the same wage as Turkish people if you do the same job at your place of work? Do you think there is a salary difference between men and women? Zuhal mentioned that there is no difference between them and the Turkish people.

No, there is no difference in salary. However, as a woman, you can improve yourself to a certain extent. They allow you up to a particular position, so you are a woman. Maybe there is some discrimination here. This happens because I am a woman. (Zuhal, 41)

The majority of highly educated women who have migrated from Syria are involved in the labour market by using their professional competencies in a different field. For this reason, most women have a work experience in non-governmental organisations. Some women started their businesses and entered the labour market. Some women either do not work or work in a different field due to the lack of diploma equivalence. Some work long hours, while others work short hours. Some women are exposed to discrimination in professional life because they are women or Syrians. Under this title, I mentioned the migration stories of highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep, their educational and professional status, participation in professional life, and their conditions. In the next section, I examine the urban life practices of these women in Gaziantep.

#### 4. URBAN LIFE PRACTICES OF HIGHLY EDUCATED SYRIAN WOMEN IN GAZIANTEP

*“Here we are on the same page, there (in Europe) we are in a different book”  
(Yasemin, 32).*

Whether the phenomenon of migration takes place in the form of internal migration between settlements within a country or external migration between two different countries, it necessarily leads to the emergence of a wide variety of complex social, economic, cultural and spatial changes and transformations in cities (Ertürk Akay, Kurtarı, 2021, p. 2). Along with these changes and transformations, the use of space by the people living in the city is also shaped. A recent example of the migration phenomenon that has existed in Gaziantep for many years is those who migrated from Syria’s urban centres. This mass migration has added a new layer to the layered spatial structure of Gaziantep.

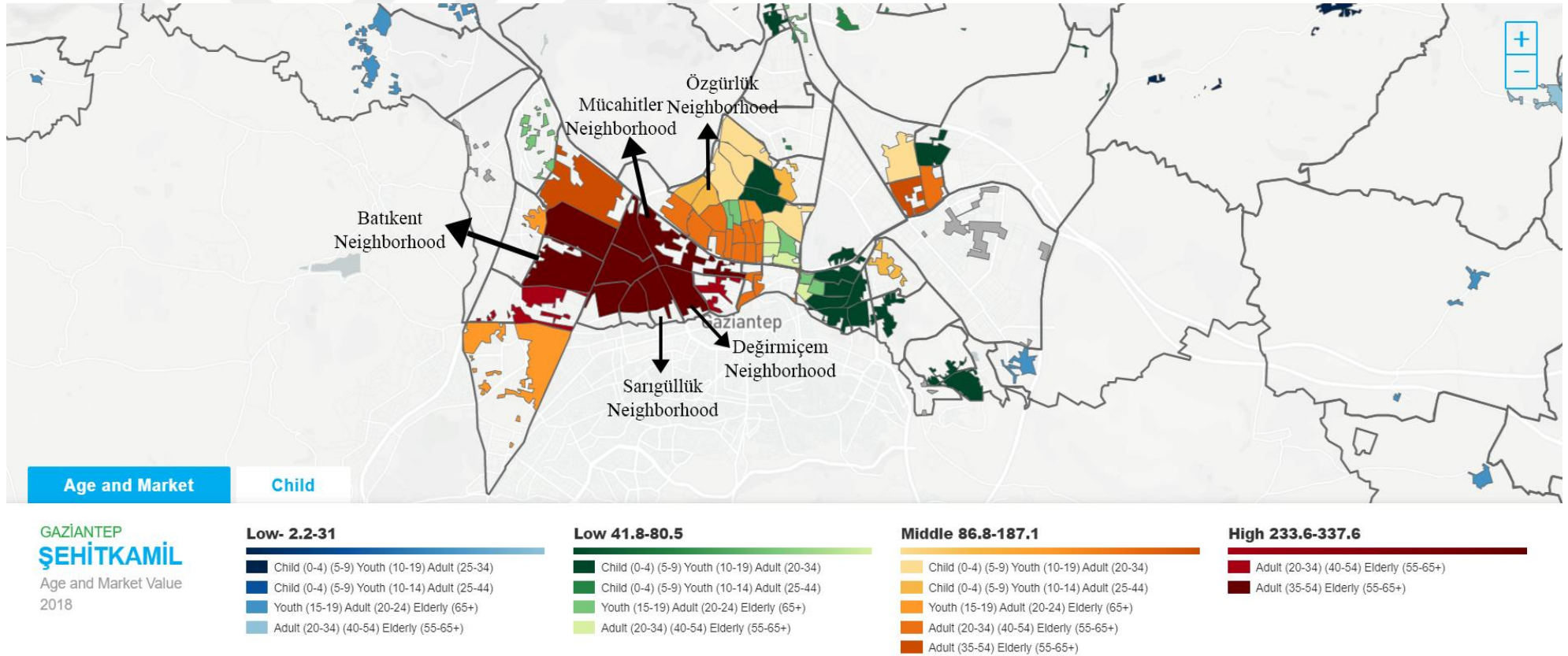
This thesis emerged from my curiosity about the urban mobility of the highly educated Syrian women who came to the Mutfak||Matbakh Workshop in Gaziantep. In the interviews I conducted with 15 women from the workshop or outside, I tried to learn about women's use of public spaces by asking various questions. The ties that women establish with the city are shaped similarly to their relations with the city before they migrated, or women are trying to make it happen. As women say, the old settlements of the city "reflect the nostalgia and longing for the past" and are especially significant for women who migrated from Aleppo to Gaziantep. Almost all the women went to the old city centre of Castle and its surroundings, and if a friend/acquaintance came, they would take a friend/acquaintance there. All the women love Gaziantep's parks, go with their friends and organise their activities there. The majority of those using public transport prefer the tram. Almost everyone has experienced a housing problem at least once because they are Syrians.

While eight interviewed women live in the Şehitkamil District, seven live in the Şahinbey District. It is seen that the neighbourhoods where women live are also preferred by the middle class and upper-middle class from Gaziantep. The Kent95 Map, prepared over the

age group and market values of the provinces and districts of Istanbul, Izmir and Gaziantep, was prepared between 2018 and 2021 (URL-2). According to this map, the market value of the neighbourhoods in which the residents of Gaziantep live, based on their current values, and the household average ages can be determined. The neighbourhoods of women living in Şehitkamil in Figure 4.1 and Şahinbey in Figure 4.2 are shown.







**Figure 4.1.: The location of the neighbourhoods of the interviewed women in the district of Şehitkamil on the Kent95 Map**

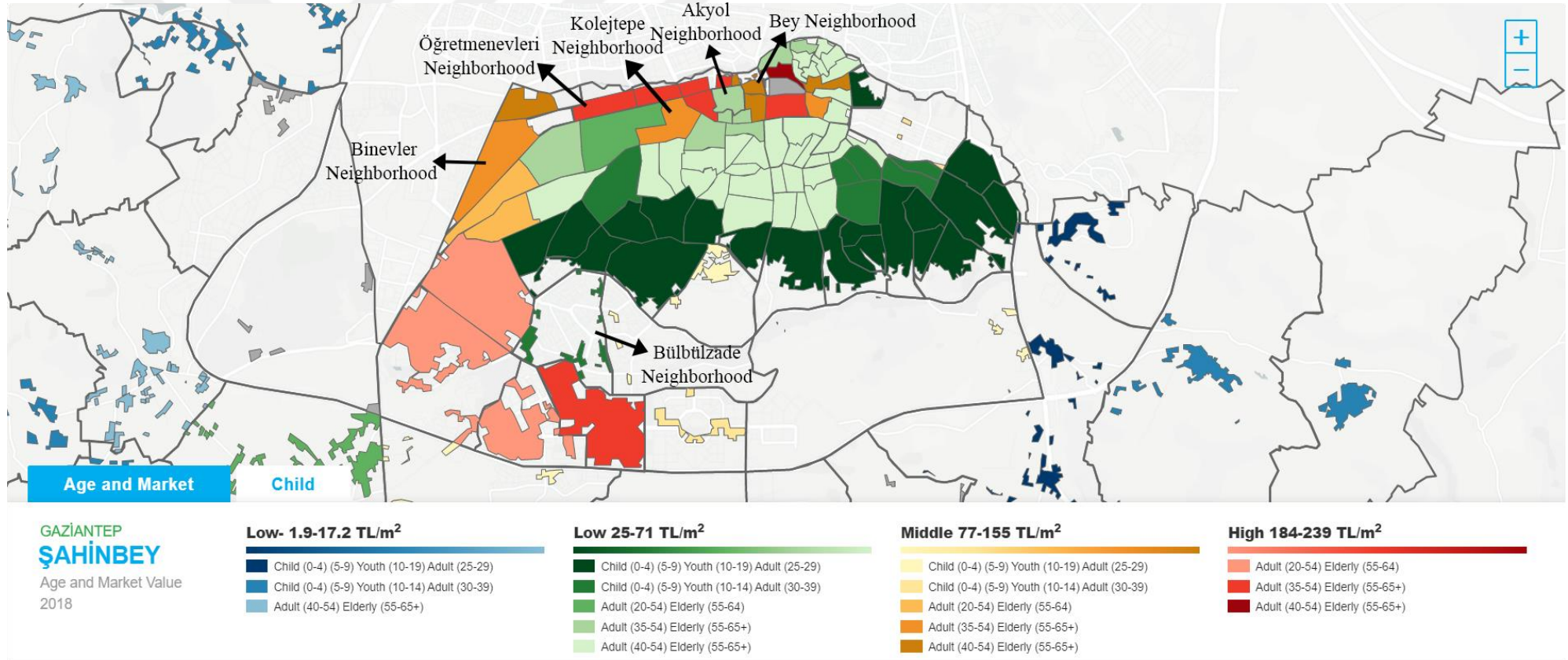
Source: Arranged with using Kent95 Website, by Elif Sinem İnan.

Among the interviewed women, those living in Şehitkamil District live in Batıkent, Sarıgüllük, Değirmiçem, Mücahitler and Özgürlük Neighbourhoods. Among these neighbourhoods, Batıkent, Sarıgüllük, Değirmiçem<sup>19</sup> and Mücahitler Neighbourhoods have the highest market value. Again, these neighbourhoods are the ones with a minor proportion of children. The Özgürlük Neighbourhood, where a woman lives, has a medium market value; however, it has a more young population compared to the other neighbourhoods mentioned.

Batıkent Neighbourhood is the newest neighbourhood among the other mentioned neighbourhoods in Şehitkamil District. In the 1990s, the İbrahimli area, which was preserved as an 'Agricultural Area' in the west of the city in the previous plan, was shown as a medium density development residential area (Hıdıroğlu, 2019, p. 66). Batıkent Neighbourhood is also located in the place known as İbrahimli area. This neighbourhood is the neighbourhood with the newest construction. There is a new and high-rise building stock in the neighbourhood. In addition, there are more gated communities in these neighbourhoods compared to other neighbourhoods. Sarıgüllük, Değirmiçem, Mücahitler Neighbourhoods are located in the centre of the city. At the same time, the neighbourhoods have been preferred by the upper-middle and upper class since the first settlement in these neighbourhoods.

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<sup>19</sup> Gazi Muhtar Paşa Boulevard is located in this neighbourhood. The importance of the boulevard in the city 4.1. mentioned in the title.



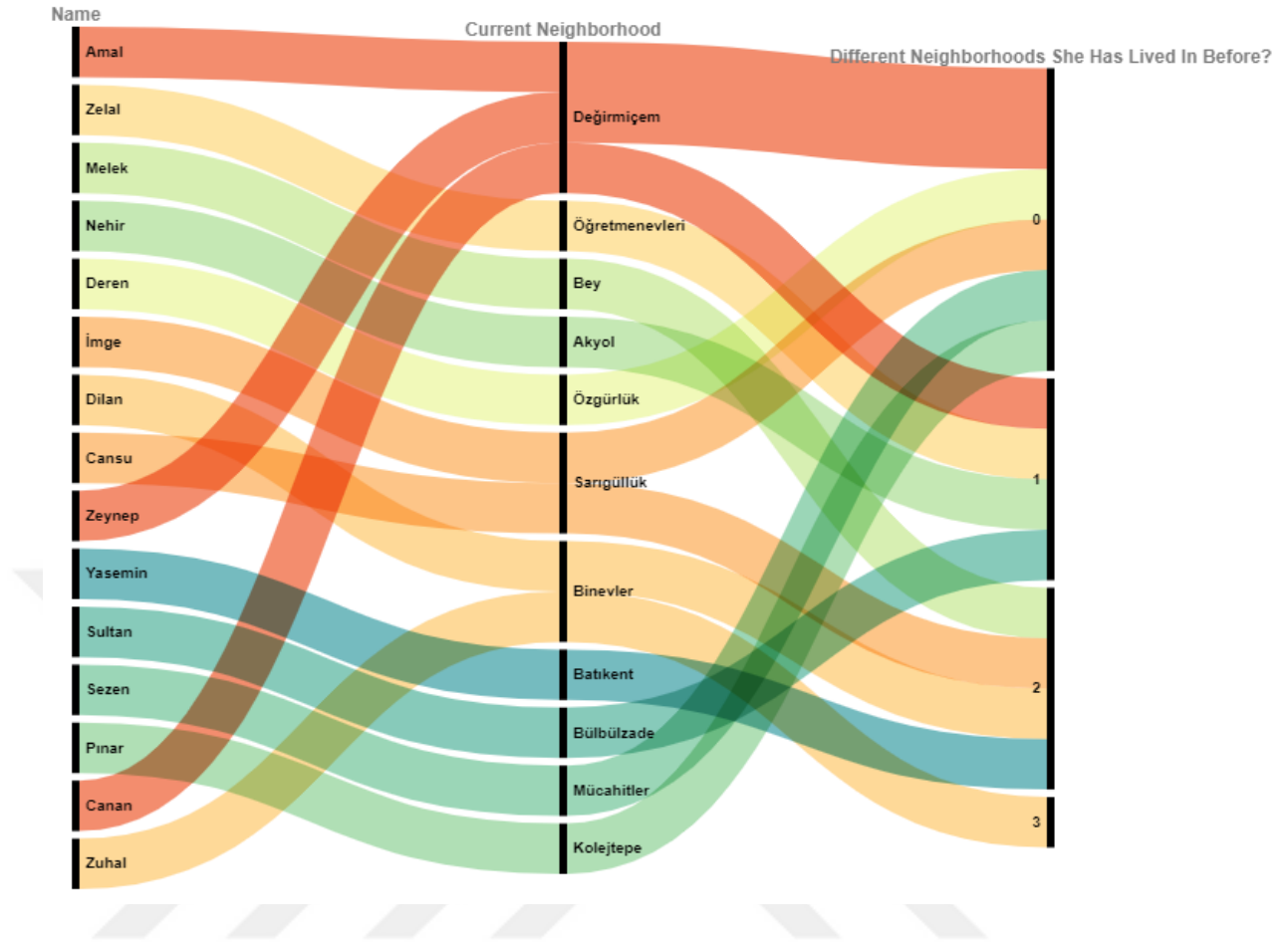
**Figure 4.2.: The location of the neighbourhoods of the interviewed women in the district of Şahinbey on the Kent95 Map**

Source: Arranged with using Kent95 Website, by Elif Sinem İnan.

Among the interviewed women, those living in the Şahinbey District live in Binevler, Öğretmenevleri, Kolejtepe, Akyol, Bey and Bülbülzade Neighbourhoods. Among these neighbourhoods, the Öğretmenevleri Neighbourhood has the highest market value; Binevler, Kolejtepe and Bey, Akyol and Bülbülzade Mahallesi follow it. The Bülbülzade Neighbourhood has the highest proportion of children. The upper market value of the Şehitkamil District is almost twice that of the Şahinbey District.

Except for the interviewer living in Bülbülzade Neighbourhood, the neighbourhoods where women living in Şahinbey District live are the old and central districts of the city. Especially Akyol Neighbourhood and Bey Neighbourhood are two neighbourhoods with a deep-rooted history. These neighbourhoods are the central neighbourhoods where Armenians lived intensely while they were living in the city. Today, the building stock of these neighbourhoods consists of perennial, 3-5-storey buildings. Binevler, Öğretmenevleri and Kolejtepe Neighbourhood are old; However, due to the widespread conversion of buildings on the basis of buildings, there is a renovated buildings stock. Bülbülzade Neighbourhood, on the other hand, has a new building stock compared to the other neighbourhoods mentioned in this district. There are more gated communities in Bülbülzade Neighbourhood compared to other districts. Again, while this neighbourhood could be counted on the city periphery in the early 2000s, it can now be counted as an inner-city area.

Some women choose the neighbourhood they live in because it is the centre; some of it is a coincidence that they live here; some said that Syrians were not given houses in other neighbourhoods. While some prefer this neighbourhood because it is close to the workplace, others choose it because it is close to their relatives or acquaintances. While people have been living in three different neighbourhoods since they moved to Gaziantep, some did not live in a different neighbourhood. Figure 4.3 shows the neighbourhoods that highly educated Syrian women live in now and how many different neighbourhoods they lived in before.



**Figure 4.3.: Neighbourhoods where women live now and how many different neighbourhoods they have lived before**

Source: Created by Elif Sinem İnan via RAWGraphs.

Zuhal, who currently resides in Binevler Neighbourhood, had to move both from her house and her neighbourhood several times.

I changed a few places in Antep. At first, I was in Güneykent. Then I went to Emek. Then I went to the Mücahitler Neighbourhood. After getting married, I moved to Emek Neighbourhood again. Now I live in Binevler. We struggled but found it here, so we chose this place. I chose this place because I could only find a house here. Because foreigners cannot find a house easily. (Zuhal, 41)

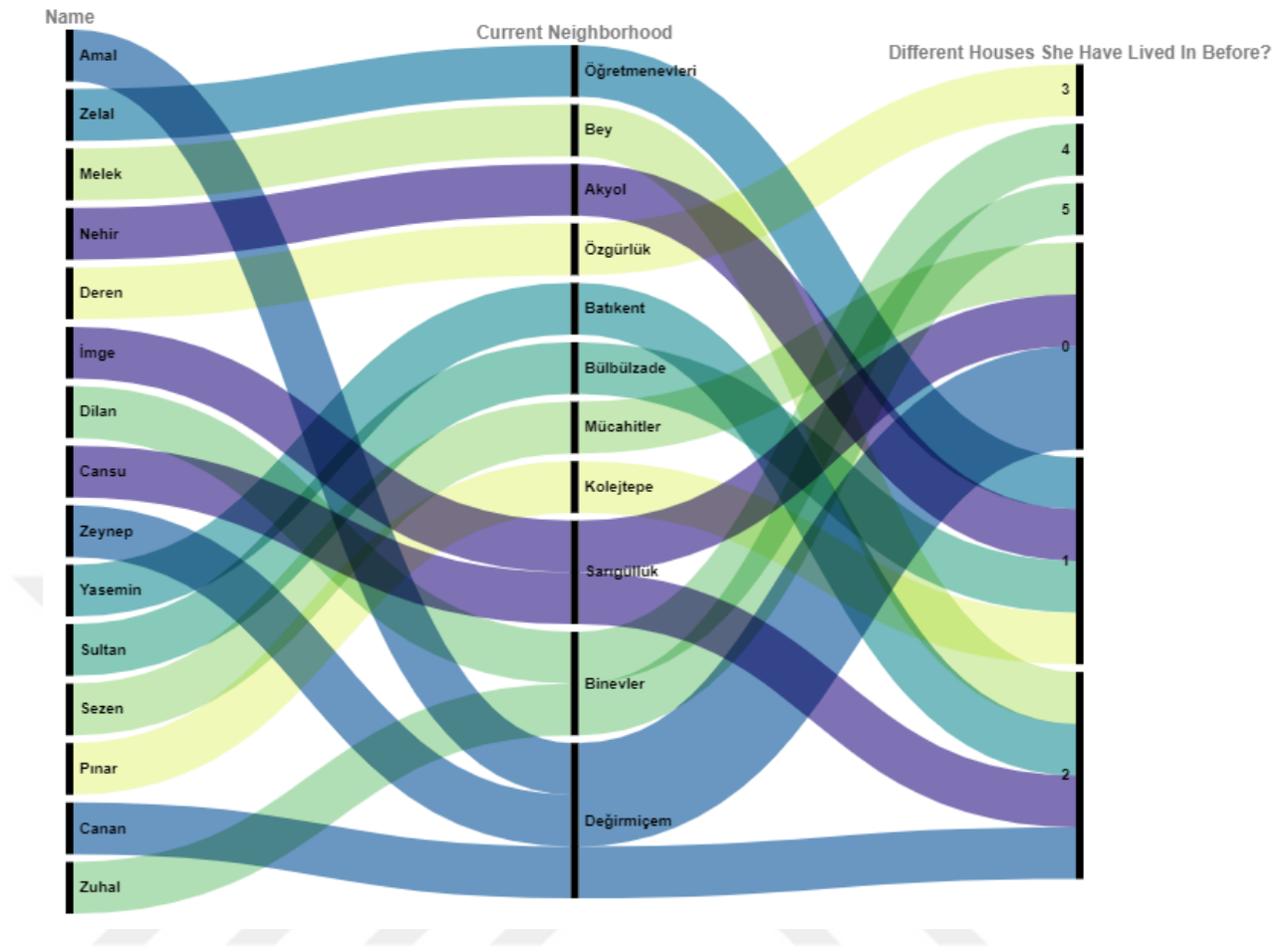
Dilan, who, like Zuhal, had to change a few neighbourhoods, described the problem of Syrians in terms of housing as follows:

At first, we were living in Karataş. Then we moved near the Göznuru Hospital. When we change houses, you do not have a luxury option anyway. Because most places do not give homes to Syrians and do not give homes to foreigners. So, you cannot live where you want.

That is why we moved wherever we found it. We came to this neighbourhood last. The house I live in now is my third house in this neighbourhood. Therefore, we did not have such an option. We moved wherever we could find. (Dilan, she did not specify her age)

Zeynep, who has been living in the same neighbourhood since she came to Gaziantep, chose Değirmiçem Neighbourhood because it is a central place. İmge preferred Sarıgüllük Neighbourhood because it is close to her workplace, Amal chose Değirmiçem Neighbourhood because of her relatives, Kolejtepe Neighbourhood because Pınar was her friend, and Sezen chose Mücahitler Neighbourhood because it would contribute to her child's education because it was a central place.

Some women changed their homes without changing their neighbourhoods. For example, Deren, who lives in the Özgürlük Neighbourhood, migrated to Gaziantep through her brother and chose this neighbourhood because he was in the Özgürlük Neighbourhood. When she first came, she lived in a shop with her family and then returned to Syria. When she came to Gaziantep again, she went to a house in the Özgürlük Neighbourhood. She changed houses two more times in the same neighbourhood. As can be seen in Figure 4.4., the number of women who do not change their homes is low. The vast majority of women have changed homes at least once.



**Figure 4.4.: How many different houses women have lived in Gaziantep before**

Source: Created by Elif Sinem İnan via RAWGraphs.

Even though women change their houses a lot, most are satisfied with their houses and do not want to change. Some of those who want to change their house want to move to a bigger house. Some stated that it would not be in Gaziantep if they were to change their home.

Maybe if it happens, I want to go back to my hometown. If I have to change it, I prefer Kadıköy. (Canan, 33)

The sub-questions of the research are as follows: “Are women satisfied with living at home, in the neighbourhood or in the city during the resettlement process? What are the reasons for this satisfaction?” In order to find answers to these sub-questions during the interview, I asked the women the following questions: “Are you satisfied with your life in Gaziantep?” and “Are you satisfied with the city, neighbourhood and neighbours? How do people generally treat you?” I have collected the answer to this question in several

categories. Although it is very difficult for the majority of women to find a home and they change homes frequently, women are satisfied with their life at home. The relationship they establish with their neighbours and neighbourhood progresses smoothly after people get to know each other. Although most women face discriminatory attitudes in transportation and find it unsafe to walk in the city at night, women are satisfied with city life. Therefore, it can be said that the majority of the women interviewed are satisfied with their life in Gaziantep. However, there may not be a relationship in the same direction between the state of being satisfied with the city and the sense of belonging to the city. Amal, who had just moved to Gaziantep from Izmir at the time of the interview, expressed her satisfaction with the city life as follows:

So, I do not know what to compare it to. It was student life in Izmir, and it was different. For example, when I am hopeless, I think of going to my own country. So, when we are hopeless here, I think I should go to Syria. It is always in my dreams to return. I will never say I am here forever. Nevertheless, it depends a bit on the situation in Syria. (Amal, 27)

The women who stated that they were not happy because of the difference in city life, even though the culture was close because they did not feel belonging to the city, and could not make permanent friendships said the following:

I cannot accept the first two years anyway. I left my hometown and came to another place. It was not very easy for me. I spent two years like this, and I could not accept it. Then I slowly got used to it. Now we say we thank God. Our situation is good, but I cannot say that we are happy because I do not belong in this place. This is how I feel, and I always have this feeling. This is not my place. Also, my family, unfortunately, stayed in Syria. (Dilan, she did not specify her age)

You meet someone, but maybe you will not see her again one day. There is no true friendship here unfortunately, we don't have time either. There is also the language barrier. Maybe if I knew Turkish, we would have a relationship with the Turks. Of course, Turkish people also want to make friends with foreigners. However, there is a language barrier. ... Unfortunately, we do not have a social life in Turkey. We are already very busy here, we are working. Also, for example, we do not have the taste of Ramadan anymore. You are there with the family on the feast, but we do not understand that there is a holiday here. Everything has changed a lot, and special days are different in Turkey. Maybe we cannot feel it because our family is not with us. We have lost that feeling. (Zeynep, 44)



İmge, on the other hand, attributes her dissatisfaction with her life in the city both to the discrimination she faces when speaking Arabic and her inability to feel a sense of belonging.

I am not happy. Because when I leave the house here, unfortunately, I cannot speak Arabic. People look at it differently or sulking. I am afraid of it. I want to speak my language comfortably when I leave. Second, I remember this, what am I still doing in this country where I am not a citizen? I have to go, or I have to be a citizen. These always make me so sad. I remember them every minute. I always remember these when I leave the house. That is why I am not happy here. So, for all these reasons. Maybe if there is a sense of resettlement, if we get citizenship or something, these feelings will change. I do not know. But unfortunately, I always remember them like this. (İmge, 34)

Urban life practices of women begin with the relationships they establish with the neighbourhoods they settle in. This type of relationship is shaped by the places where they will take them when they go to work from their homes, meet with their friends, or if they come to an acquaintance/friend. The places that women think they cannot go to in the city can be specifically designated places or places that have a place in everyone's mind. Under the title of "Urban Mobility of Women", these forms of relationship that women establish with the city will be examined.

#### **4.1. Urban Mobility of Women**

The interviewed women usually go to the parks to meet their friends, spend time with their children, do activities or spend their free time. All of them have seen that they like city parks very much and that the parks are functional. Generally, parks in the city centre are preferred; parks far from the centre can be preferred with their functionality.

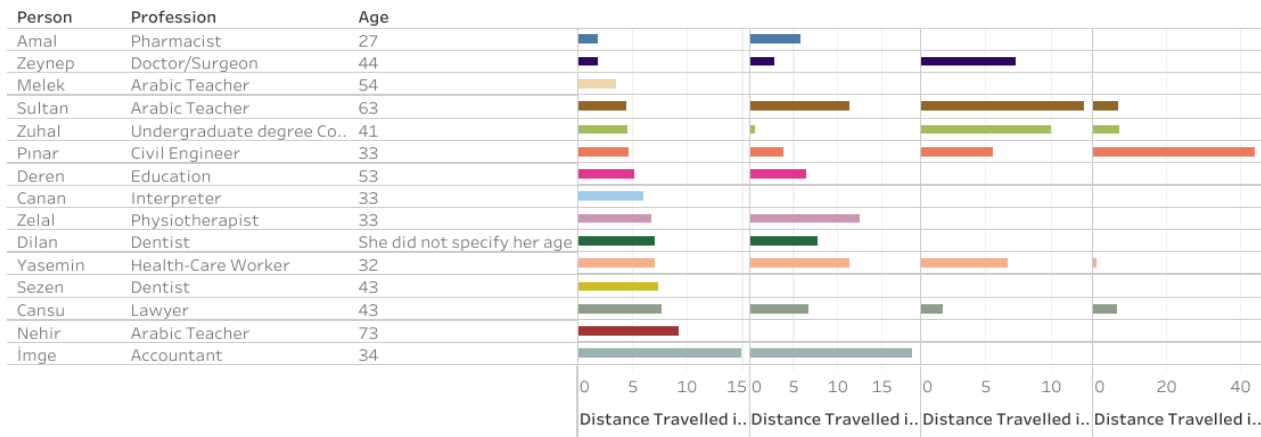
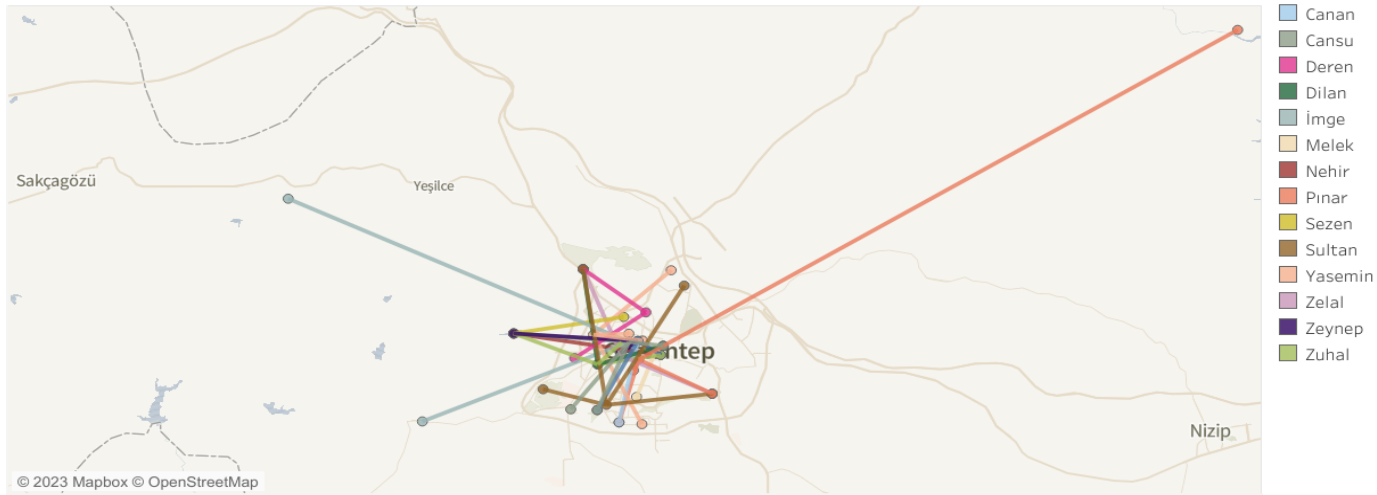
"Have you been to different parts of Gaziantep? Where did you go the farthest?" Zeynep answered the questions that she went to the parks. However, she mentioned that she could not go to all the parks because she did not have a friend, and she stated that her urban movement was limited.

Sometimes we go to the parks if we have time. We are going to the poplar forest, and we are going to the Alleben Pond. Unfortunately, I could not go to all the parks. I do not feel like going because I do not have a friend. (Zeynep, 44)

The answers to the same questions were compiled, and the farthest places women went in the city are shown in Figure 4.5.



### The Farthest Destinations Highly Educated Syrian Women Travelled in Gaziantep



**Figure 4.5.: The farthest places women travelled to in Gaziantep**

Source: Created by Elif Sinem İnan via Tableau.

When the urban mobility of the women interviewed was examined, the farthest places they went in the city were mapped. For the full map, see: [the farthest destinations highly educated syrian women travelled](#)

Among the farthest places to go are the villages of the city and Rumkale. Dülükbaba (recreational area), Alleben Pond, Zoo, Şelale Park, Telpher, Karataş Neighbourhood, Akkent Neighbourhood, Yeşil Vadi, M1 shopping centre and Fıstıklık Neighbourhood are the farthest places to go from the city periphery to the city centre. The places where women go the farthest from their homes differ within the city.

“If a friend or acquaintance came to Gaziantep, where would you take them?” women to the question; they said that they took them to places they liked, liked to go and felt comfortable in the city. These places have sometimes been the old city centre of Gaziantep, which reminds interviewees of the old days, sometimes they have been the green areas that they talk about with praise, and sometimes they have been the taste stops of the city famous for its gastronomy. As can be seen in Figure 4.6, these places are concentrated in the old city centre.

Where do they visit when a friend/acquaintance comes?

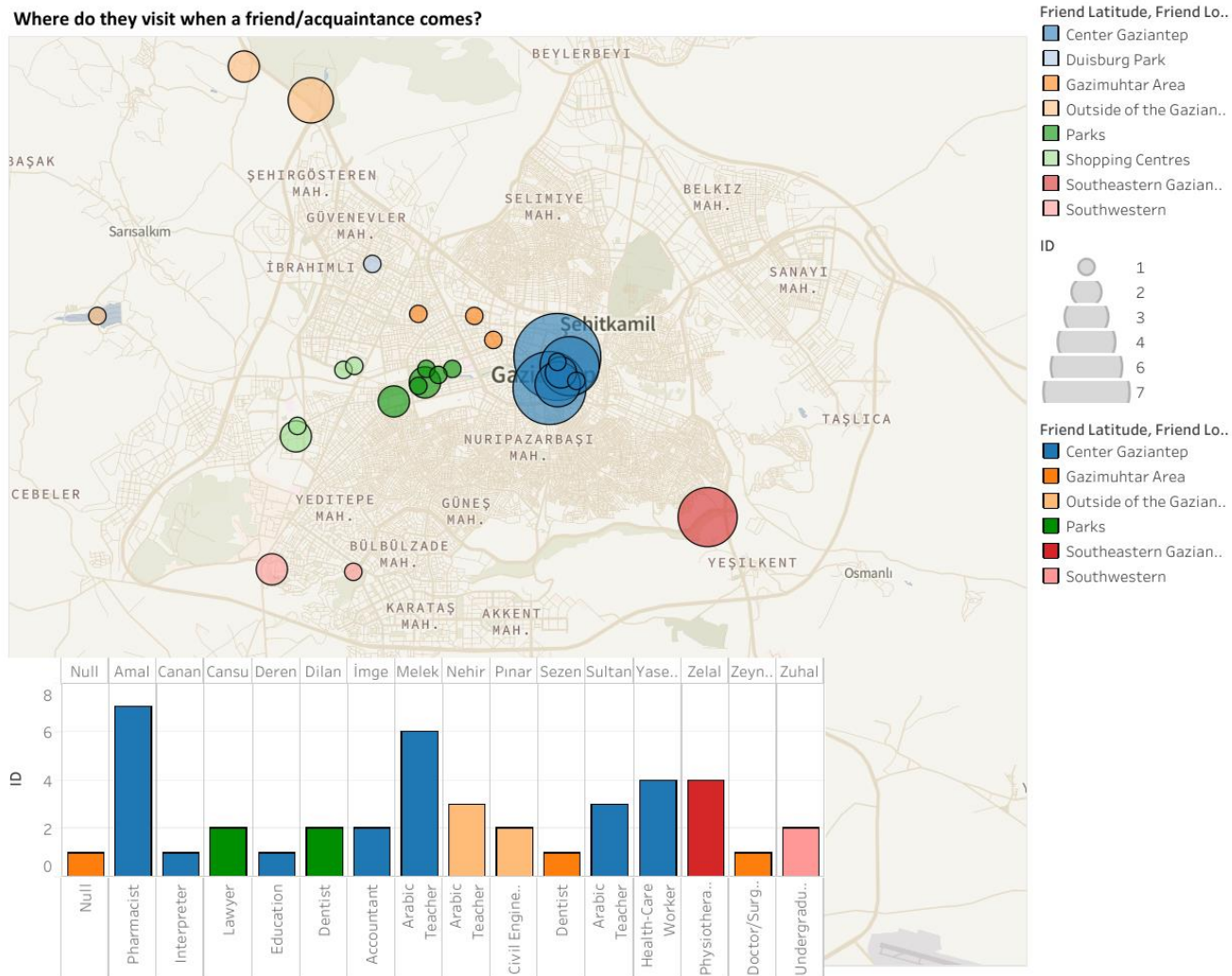


Figure 4.6.: Places women would take if friends/acquaintances come in the city

Source: Created by Elif Sinem İnan via Tableau.

For the full map, see: [where do they visit if a friend/acquaintance comes](#)

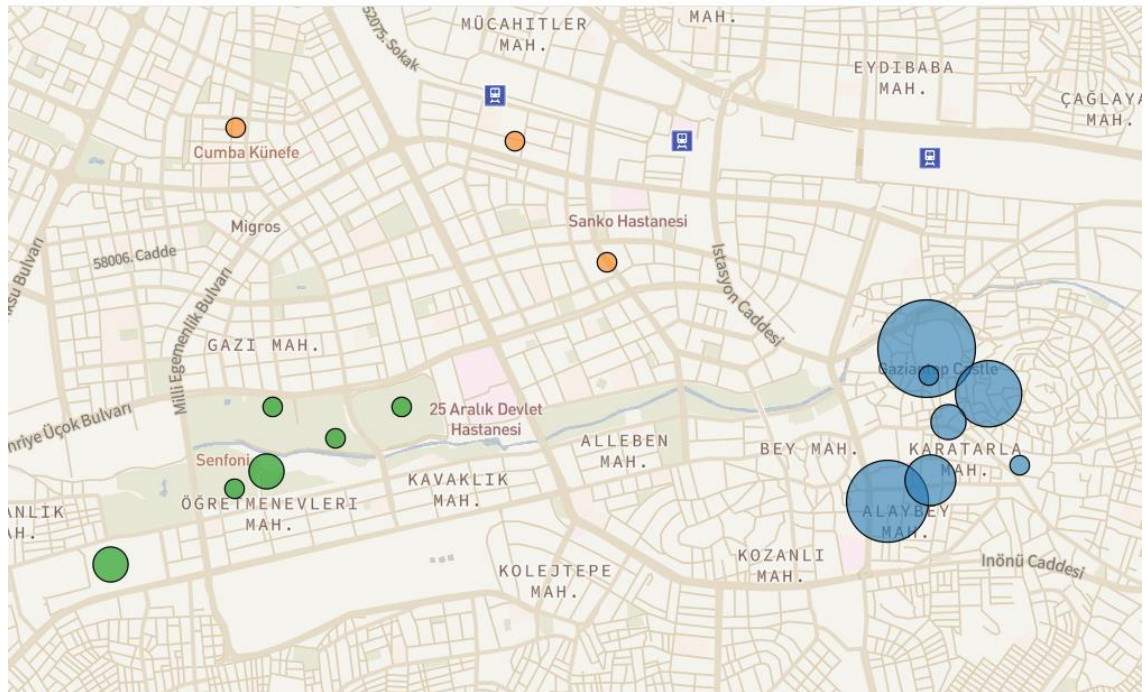
Women take a friend or acquaintance to the old city centre for the first time. As mentioned before, this place is significantly similar to Aleppo, which is why it is most preferred. It is Deren who expresses this preference with the most intense emotion.

I want to take it to more historical places; the castle and its surroundings resemble Aleppo. I cried when I first went; it looked so much like a neighbourhood in Aleppo. I go wherever there is a beautiful place. I go to most grand bazaars, old bazaars, and cafes. The places I go to should not be ordinary but unique places. (Deren, 53)

Besides the spatial similarity of Gaziantep and Aleppo, they are close to each other; due to their cultural, social and economic ties, this old city centre was already preferred by women before they migrated.

Figure 4.7. shows the places in the city centre that women will take when a friend or acquaintance comes to the city.

Where do they visit when a friend/acquaintance comes?



**Figure 4.7.: Places women would take if their friends/acquaintances come in the city-city centre**

Source: Created by Elif Sinem İnan via Tableau.

Another area that is mainly preferred is Gazi Muhtar Paşa Boulevard. Gazi Muhtar Paşa Boulevard has become the city's shopping and entertainment space, which started to change in the early 2000s. Gazi Muhtar Paşa Boulevard has started to be named the new bazaar because of the "need for renovation" of the bazaar located in the old city centre. During this period, luxury brands started to open stores here. The presence of business centres here has also increased the popularity of this place. With the passing of the first tram line in Gaziantep, the value of workplaces and residences has increased. The importance of this boulevard for the city is so great that the Gazi Muhtar Paşa Development and Promotion Association was established in 2015 (URL-3). The boulevard has undergone various infrastructure and urban superstructure transformations over time. Although it lost its glory with the opening of shopping malls, it is still among the places people will primarily take when their friends or acquaintances come. Of course, parks<sup>20</sup> and green areas are among the priority places to take a friend or acquaintance.

The beauty of Gaziantep is that it has green areas wherever you look. There are also beautiful places. (Nehir, 73)

Likewise, some prefer Gaziantep's green areas and recreation areas.

We will take it to Dülükbaba. We will take them both if our Turkish or Syrian friends come. They love it very much. Very beautiful place. Yeşil Vadi, so we show the parks. Because Gaziantep has many beautiful parks. If we have a guest, Turkish or Syrian, we always take them to the parks. There is also Erikçe, of course. (İmge, 34)

I see another factor that determines the urban mobility of women as places they cannot go in the city. "Are there places you think you cannot go to in the city?" To the question, women stated that they could not go to some parts of the city because they were both women and Syrians. While some women mentioned the places they had experienced, some stated the places they heard from their surroundings. Although it is preferred for Amal to visit the Castle and its surroundings, it is still one of the places where she cannot go in the evening. On the other hand, Yasemin listed Merveşehir, the place she went to once by mistake, at the top of the places she could not go.

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<sup>20</sup>In Figure 4.5, Gazi Muhtar Paşa Boulevard is denser than the parks and green areas in the city because some interviewees answered this question: "I take friends/acquaintances to the parks, I take friends/acquaintances to the green areas".

For example, Merveşehir. I accidentally entered there once while coming from the bus station. There was a fear in me. It looks like the neighbourhood we live in Syria. People are alike. I do not know, and something was scary inside of me. There was confidence in me when I was there. If I go to a friend, I can go to those sides; But I cannot go alone. There is also Karşıyaka on the other side of the Silk Road. (Yasemin, 32)

Some women said they would not go to Hacıbaba and Vatan Neighbourhoods even if they did not go. For Vatan and Hacıbaba Neighbourhoods, which are criminalized in the state discourse, Deren (53) has heard that these neighbourhoods cannot be entered after 6 pm. Similar to this discourse, Syrian women also expressed that slums are seen as “dangerous”. Women also cited theft and drug use attributed to these neighbourhoods as reasons for not going to these neighbourhoods. At the same time, women do not go to these “dangerous” slums as foreigners.

I cannot go to slums. I do not know the neighbourhood; I just heard. As a foreigner, I do not prefer to go to troubled places. (Canan, 33)

İnönü Street is among the places women think they cannot go to in the city. They call this street Iran Street and Iran Bazaar. This street, one of the city's central axes, has a long and layered history. İnönü Street is where the old bus terminal of the city is located. Before the 1980s, the area around the bus terminal became where smuggled goods from across the border (mainly from Syria) were distributed. Due to the changed pilgrimage route after the Iraq-Iran war, it has become a one-day destination for Iranian pilgrims. Therefore, especially in 90s, İnönü Street became where border trade was carried out, and pilgrimage materials were sold. That is why it is called the Iranian bazaar. It is a bazaar where border trade was carried out, and people have come and gone, probably since the 1950s, in Gaziantep<sup>21</sup>. This place, which the women I interviewed knew perhaps before they migrated, is where some interviewees prefer not to go in the city now.

Yes, there are places I prefer not to go. Iran street [İnönü Street], Cumhuriyet. We hear many incidents happening here, and there is harassment, so there are places that I do not prefer. (Pınar, 33)

Yes, there are some problematic places, we do not go there. For example, Iran Street [İnönü Street]. (Sezen, 43)

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<sup>21</sup> Narrated from Kemal Vural Tarlan from the Kırkayak Kültür, Art and Nature Association.



Some of the women also mentioned that there is nowhere they cannot go in the city and that they can go anywhere in the city easily. Women have expressed this comfort state by saying they can go anywhere in the city. However, some of the questions I asked about urban life in Gaziantep deepened this issue.

#### **4.2. Feeling Comfortable in the Urban Life**

The fact that women feel comfortable while spending time in public also determines urban life practices. In this direction, there are a few questions I asked the women I interviewed to understand their urban life practices. One of them is “How do you feel when you are outside? Do you feel comfortable with the way you dress while walking around the city?” are the questions. Most women said they felt comfortable outside whether they were wearing a headscarf or not. Cansu said she felt comfortable outside her dressing style and had no problems because she dressed like Turkish people. When I asked her if this was done deliberately to feel comfortable in public, she mentioned that she always dressed like this and that this is an advantage in Turkey. She added the following:

I used to dress the same way. I had such a coat and went on a tour around the Aleppo Citadel in 2007. One of the Syrians asked to me whether I am Turkish. He began to speak in a foreign language. When I answered in Arabic, he said you look much like Turkish. You dress the same. This was my style anyway, and my clothes were like that. There was no other change. (Cansu, 43)

Some women state that they do not feel comfortable outside. However, these women cannot feel comfortable for a crucial reason and restrict themselves. Yasemin said she felt uncomfortable because she could not speak Arabic outside. Zeynep is also experiencing the uneasiness of being understood that she is Syrian again; however, she mentioned that since she has been in the same neighbourhood for a few years, everyone knows them and is respectful to each other. Melek said that she did not have any problems outside and added the following:

I have never been stressed before. I go alone, with friends, and with men and women, there is no problem. I do not go where I will be stressed anyway. (Melek, 54)

These examples mean that the women I interviewed, both Syrian and women, avoid themselves and limit urban mobility. On the other hand, Canan said she did not experience

any difficulties as a foreigner; however, she stated that as a woman, she felt uncomfortable outside when it was late. This is related to the question I asked to understand and convey urban practices: “Is it safe to walk at night?” Most of the women answered no to this question. All of the women who say it is safe to walk at night are related to their neighbourhood, but they said there might be trouble elsewhere.

It varies by neighbourhood. Since I am in the centre, on the main street, it is not a problem. But yes, there are problems on the Bazaar side or Iran Street [İnönü Street]. (Melek, 54)

I did not see any trouble. Sometimes I have to go out in the car. I went out at 12 or 1 at night. But I had no problems with the car. However, it is clear from my car's licence plate that I am Syrian. I came home on foot at midnight. Especially on summer days. I did not have any trouble. Maybe it is because of the area I live in. Maybe there is a problem elsewhere, and I do not know. I had no problems in this region. (İmge, 34)

The majority of women who stated that it is not safe to walk at night gave this answer because there are not many people outside in the evening hours in their neighbourhoods.

On the university side, yes, but this Öğretmenevleri Neighbourhood is unsafe. After 8 pm, there is no one on the street. I am not going out either. (Zelal, 33)

Another person who prefers to avoid walking at night is Dilan, as there are fewer people in the evening. She said the increasing population is more crowded outside at night; however, she still said she was home as early as possible.

People in Gaziantep go to bed early. So, after 8.30 pm, everyone is already at home. You can't find anyone outside. We could not go out at night in Syria anyway, and there was such a fear of bombs. When I came to Turkey, I said I would roam freely at night. I left the house at 8.30 pm, and it was empty, there was no one, it was terrible. Maybe it used to be like that. Now, as the number of Syrians increases, we are finding more open spaces. It is different from what it used to be now. However, I try to be at home by 10:30 at the latest at 11:00. Of course, the back streets are still impossible to pass; but there is no problem on the main streets. Now that more restaurants are opening, they all close later. That is why it is crowded. But Gaziantep generally is calmer than in other cities. (Dilan, she did not specify her age)

Yasemin, who finds the city not crowded at night, and unsafe, compares Gaziantep with Istanbul because she lived in Istanbul for a while. The crowd made her feel safe. However, she mentioned that she felt comfortable at night in the neighbourhood where she lived in Gaziantep. She stated that walking on İnönü Street is unsafe, and some women see it as a place where they cannot go into the city.

But here in my neighbourhood, I am not afraid. For example, there is an Iranian market [İnönü Street] and many Syrians there. My mother calls it the Arab market. I do not prefer to go there in the morning, and I am not too fond of that road. I do not feel safe. I cannot go there at night. (Yasemin, 32)

Another question to be examined under this heading is, “Do you think women from Turkey or Syria can move around freely in the city?”. Although most women said that it is unsafe to walk in the city at night, this question was answered positively by most women. Some of those who answered positively also said that the environment of trust provided by the neighbourhood they live in was effective. Cansu (43) explained the situation by saying, "If I can travel comfortably, then everyone can travel". Pinar (33) compared this state of being able to travel comfortably with Syria: “After the war in Syria, it was not safe at all. But it is safer in Turkey,” she said. Some women say that no matter where they are during the day, women can easily walk around the city, but at night they state again that this is not possible. They had attributed this to both being a woman and being a foreigner. Dilan is one of those who stated that women could not move freely in the city. Dilan, who stated conservative neighbourhoods as the places she could not go in the city, also said that women from Turkey or Syria could not move freely in these neighbourhoods.

In Antep, as I told you, it varies according to the neighbourhood. Of course, you cannot move around in conservative neighbourhoods so comfortably. For example, the place where I worked was a conservative place. I was paying attention to my clothes because I went to work. However, one day my friends came, and they were dressed openly. They noticed a lot, so they understood from everyone's eyes. On their next visit, they were now wearing closed clothes. Because they knew they could not accept dress openly in that neighbourhood. It varies from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. ... If we compare Gaziantep with other cities, Gaziantep is more conservative. For example, we can say that Gaziantep is more conservative than Mersin, Antalya and Istanbul. (Dilan, she did not specify her age)

On the other hand, Yasemin said that walking around the city comfortably is about more than just getting dark or crowded streets.

In terms of security, yes, but not in terms of culture. For example, I have a Turkish friend whose father does not accept it. Before Covid-19 Period, our school finished at 5.30. Her home in Akkent, the road took one hour. We are going somewhere where she does not sit very comfortably. I have another friend, also Turkish. Her mother knows me. She says you

can go with Yasemin or you can go to her. But 3-4 friends will go for coffee and not accept it. (Yasemin, 32)

### **4.3. Discrimination Subjected by Women in Urban Life**

The fact that the interviewed women are exposed to discrimination in urban life is related to their visibility in the public sphere. Women who do not work or who work from home generally stated that they are not exposed to discrimination. It cannot be said that these women move less in the city; however, they are less in contact with local people than women working outside the home. The fact that some of the women who have been subjected to discrimination are Syrian, as well as the fact that some of them are wearing headscarves, has increased this situation. On the other hand, women who do not wear headscarves stated that someone did not understand that they were Syrian until they spoke Arabic.

In general, I did not experience a big event, but in the last 3-4 years, everyone's gaze and behaviour have changed while speaking Arabic. They say, are you Syrian? You do not look alike at all. Yes, their gaze changes when I speak Arabic. I did not experience anything exactly, but I understand when there is racism. (Canan, 33)

Most women are exposed to intense racism and discrimination, especially during house renting. The situation of “not renting or selling Syrians a home”, which is an obligation for women to choose their homes, emerges as the discrimination that most women experience in urban life. Sezen, who wants to buy a house in a good place for her child's education, had difficulties purchasing a house despite being a citizen.

My son was about to finish middle school and start high school. I also looked to see where there are good schools. I wanted to live in a good neighbourhood for my children since school registration is related to the address. I did much research so they would not be bullied and sit in a good place. We searched for a house for three months; real estate agents did not want to give us a house. Even though we were citizens, they did not give us a house because we were Syrian, and we faced racism. We are looking for a house with three bedrooms and a saloon; the real estate agent says he is looking for a newly married couple. Where will large families live then? Then we rented a house, and we are still in that house. We rented it very expensive with the money back then, for 2500 liras, but it was many years ago. (Sezen, 43)

On the other hand, Zeynep was able to keep a house with the guarantor of a Turkish person, although she stated her profession and fixed income during the rental.

Of course, when we first came, we had a big problem. Nobody wanted to rent a house to Syrians. No matter how much we say, I am a doctor; my wife is a doctor, we can pay for this place, they would not. This problem persists even after obtaining citizenship. Nobody welcomes the Syrian when they hear about it. No matter how hard you tried, it wouldn't work. Even a Turkish guarantor was requested. They said if a Turkish would vouch for you that is how we would give you a house. That is what we did at first. We found a Turkish person to vouch for us and agreed that way. Then, the landlord's family was very kind, and after they agreed on us to rent the house to us, they helped us. However, we worked hard to get to this level. We had difficulties. ... We do not know if we will be able to find a home if we get out of here. That is why we are here. (Zeynep, 44)

Almost all the women are on good terms with their Turkish neighbours, and they mentioned that they sometimes made house visits and sent food to each other. However, Zuhail, who lives in the gated community and only that block is entirely Syrian residents, is not in the period renting a house; later, she was exposed to racism.

We only had a problem with the gated community we were sitting in. The manager was not paying the electricity bill. He did not pay for months, so they came and cut off the electricity to the elevator. However, there are eight blocks on the site. The apartment we live in has only Syrian tenants. They cut off the electricity in our block, but it was not cut off in the blocks where the Turkish people lived. Electricity was cut off for six months. I also have knee disease. I live on the 3rd floor. It was very difficult for me. We used to pay the monthly dues regularly, but the electricity in the elevator was cut off. We used to pay 600 TL every month. It was tough for me to go to the 3rd floor with my children. It was challenging for us; why did you cut only the Syrian block? After all, the whole site was experiencing the same problem, so why did you cut ours? (Zuhail, 41)

The discrimination experienced by women in public transportation is based on different reasons. Amal (27), who lives in Şanlıurfa, Izmir and Gaziantep, says that the three cities are different from each other; but she still said that people treated her rudely on public transport. This situation, which is prevailing not only for Amal but also for others, is usually increased due to the way women dress.

I got so sad once something happened before. I was getting on the bus and it was very crowded. A young man was sitting somewhere, and everyone said to him, get up and give this lady a seat. The man looked at me and told them why he should get up, and he told them I am not from Turkey. There is no respect for people here, not gender. I didn't like the way he looked at me. He gave his place to a Turkish woman younger than me. He was looking badly at me, so I got nervous and got off the bus. I was very sad to experience such a thing. (Deren, 53)

I sometimes use public transport. Since we, as Syrians, wear the headscarf in a different way, it is already understood that we are foreigners. Sometimes when I see a woman, some people get up and give me a place. However, lately, when they realised, I was a foreigner, they did not get up. It looks like they are not getting up. When another Turkish person gets on, they take off immediately. Of course, I am experiencing such an annoying situation. (Zeynep, 44)

Women face racist attitudes not only in public transportation but also when they take a taxi or in their private vehicles.

I had a car before, but now I have sold it. Since my car has a Syrian licence plate, I was having much trouble. It was as if they were finding an excuse to swear or bother. I lived a long time when I had my car, but now I have sold it. ... It was snowing one day, and it was pretty cold. I was going to take my daughter to kindergarten. I pressed the button to call a taxi. When the taxi came, an older woman came too; she was Turkish. She wanted to ride too, but I had already called. Then the driver said I would drop you off first; then I would drop off this older woman. I said OK. After I dropped my daughter off at kindergarten, I went to work. After I left my daughter, they got along pretty well and started swearing. They disturbed me in every way, and I saw violence from them spiritually. The weather was terrible that day, but they did not leave me where I wanted. They left it halfway down the road and continued down the road. I think that they did this because I was a foreigner. (Zuhal, 41)

Those who are not initially recognized as Syrians because they are not wearing headscarves face less discrimination in public transportation than other Syrians.

Most people do not notice because I do not wear a headscarf. It is already known that it is evident in how you tie your headscarf. Since I am not wearing a headscarf, it is not very noticeable. However, sometimes it can be noticed on the phone. I have never had a problem before. On the contrary, sometimes young people get up on public transportation so that I can sit. I did not have a problem. (Melek, 54)

It is a situation that other women also pay attention to when it is noticed that she is Syrian on the phone calls during public space that Melek talked about. Women who do not wear headscarves also be careful to avoid discrimination in public transportation or on the street.

I do not speak Arabic outside. Since my daughter spoke Turkish at first, I do not use Arabic at all outside. Maybe they can look different or something, I am afraid. I am sensitive ... For example, when I get on the bus, how they say can I get off (The idiom is used as; can I get off in Turkish; she is saying the idiom differently). I cannot keep that in my memory. The only public transportation that I like is the tram, there is no need to talk to anyone. You are reading, where will you get off, so there is no problem. (Yasemin, 32)

Canan is the other person who limited her behaviour by not speaking Arabic to avoid discrimination. She stated that she did not use public transportation because she was working from home after Covid-19 Pandemic.

Even if I use it, I do not speak Arabic, so no one knows. There was no discussion, however.  
... I prefer the tram. Buses are very crowded. Both stations are precise and safer. Buses are very crowded. (Canan, 33)

Almost all women who use public transportation stated that they use the tram whenever possible. The tram is seen as a place where there is the least number of arguments, where they do not have to talk to anyone, where they are safe and where there is no conflict.

The urban mobility of women, the limitations of this mobility, the discrimination experienced in the city and the limiting of the behaviour of this discrimination are the main subjects of this chapter. The future plans of women are intertwined with their current working and urban lives. Therefore, in this chapter, where I examine the urban life practices of highly educated Syrian women, I also look at their future plans.

#### **4.4. “Our Future is a bit Cloudy and a bit Dark”**

At the end of each interview, I asked a question: “What would you like to do in the future? Where would you like to live?”. Aim of this question to understand the urban belonging of these highly educated women who became involved in the labour market and Gaziantep city life after the migration. Women generally experience more negativity in working life; however, they are generally satisfied with their homes, neighbourhoods and the city. However, almost all of them gave a negative answer to this question. That is why I took the title from the first sentence that Nehir used to describe her future plan. There are many reasons in the shaping of this cloudy and dark future; from not being a citizen to a longing for life before migration; from not getting a diploma equivalence to political discourses. Almost all women are outside Gaziantep, maybe in Istanbul, but they especially expressed their desire to live abroad.

Amal is one of the women who shaped her future out of the instability of Turkey's migration policies, her sense of belonging to the city, and her longing for her life before she migrated. Due to the discrimination, she has experienced in her working life and the city, she wants to trust and belong in her future.

I want to be in a place where I know who I am and who my parents are. I feel very unqualified here right now. Even if I did not work in Syria, it would have been very different if I had been a pharmacist. Everything would be more comfortable. ... As a Syrian, I no longer make plans. However, at least as a Syrian, where I can walk comfortably and feel safe, at least as a woman. ... They do not need to be the ones I know now, but I would like them to be where there are people I have lived with for a while. For example, my parents used to say all the time that it is essential for a shopkeeper to greet you while crossing a street. I would not understand this, but now I understand. I do not want to change places all the time. (Amal, 27)

This feeling of trust was also expressed by Nehir, and she defined the place where she felt safe as her home.

Unfortunately, our future is a bit cloudy and a bit dark. I guess this applies to everyone. There is some instability. We still do not feel like we belong anywhere. In particular, there is a passenger permit with a refugee ID. We were neither able to get a residence permit nor become a citizen. It makes us feel a little insecure. If there is only one problem, I would say that is it. However, I want to spend the rest of my life in Turkey if I have to choose. Of course, everyone's hometown is best for herself. However, I miss it. Your hometown is where you feel safe. I think like this, that is why I prefer to stay in Turkey. (Nehir, 73)

The fact that women cannot buy a house because they are not citizens or they cannot do their profession even if they get an equivalency is an obstacle for them to feel that they belong to this city.

For example, I want to buy a house. The city is not important to me. I want to live a comfortable life. I want to open a store. That is how I dream. I also want to be a citizen. So, I pray a lot for that. Because my life will be very different. My children's lives will be very different. Same for my wife. This is very important for all of us. (Zelal, 33)

Among the women I interviewed, Zeynep is one of the few women who became citizens<sup>22</sup>. In fact, she is the only person who has an equivalence besides her citizenship. However, she works in the field of NGOs because she has no equivalence on surgery, and she thinks that it will probably continue like this. That is why she plans to move to Istanbul, considering the abundance of job opportunities.

As I said, I want to live in Istanbul. We already have such a plan. We seriously want it now. Besides, since we got equivalence, there may be more options. There are people from different countries and nationalities there. So, it may be a better opportunity for us in business. ... At the same time, I want to work in the field which I specialise in. I want to take

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<sup>22</sup> See the Figure 3.3.



care of patients. Maybe I can improve my social life more. I will also take care of myself. Because I neglected myself a lot. (Zeynep, 44)

Yasemin, who would like to stay in Turkey if she became a citizen, and especially prefers this place because the culture of Europe is very different, emphasised that citizenship is essential for her life here.

If I get citizenship, I will stay in Turkey and live a happy life. My daughter grew up here. She said his first word in Turkish. It was not Arabic. This is my hope and wish, to stay here and live here. However, it seems that we will not continue here. We will go to Berlin. A person who will start from scratch in a place at least knows the language. However, when we get there, we will start with the minus. I am learning languages now, but the culture seems distant to me there. I am absolutely sure of one thing; nothing is certain in your life. I came here, I said, we will stay here for sure. We grow up here; we age here. We filed a lawsuit for citizenship. We did not know whether our application was accepted or not, so we went to law for it. It was a hilarious excuse. They say that I don't look like a Turkish. Anyway, we are waiting for a result. They will give notice by the end of August 2022, either accept it or not. If they do not accept, we are going for sure. Because we can no longer get citizenship. If they accept, we will stay, but maybe we will move to Istanbul. We buy a house there. (Yasemin, 32)

In addition to not being a citizen, İmge shaped her career because of the political discourses in Turkey and her inability to feel belonging here. She has established her own logistics company, where she can work without belonging anywhere. As mentioned above, İmge moved to England when writing this thesis.

Now that we have filed a lawsuit for citizenship, if we get citizenship, we will be a little comfortable. I have now set up an independent business for myself. It is not clear whether we will stay here or not, I do not know if I am a citizen or not. So, I do not know what the future will be like. Unfortunately, I do not see anything positive. You see the news. The CHP (Republican People's Party) leader said on television that they would send the Syrians. How sad my son was. So, I will never forget that. I will not forget the unfairness that I experienced. I am arbitrarily denied citizenship by authorised bodies, and it continues. Moreover, after nine years, if I still looked like a tourist in this country, I thought I should think differently. I will no longer bind my future to anyone or any country. If my business goes well, even if I live in Africa, it will not be a problem wherever I live. I have this plan now. Because there is no settling, this makes people very sad. I am planning something like this for my future. So, this seemed like the best plan. (İmge, 34)

There are also those who want to return to Syria in the future. Melek (54) stated that she would like to live in Syria in the future with the work experience she gained here. Cansu is also planning to return to Syria in the future. However, she said that she had to postpone her plan due to both the education of her daughters and the critical situation in Syria. In this case, there are possibilities for her future.

If I am going to stay in Turkey, I will stay in Antep, or if there is an option, I will go to Istanbul or Bursa. Because I can open my second branch of my restaurant. I chose Bursa because it is a tourist place. Because there are no tourists or foreigners in Antep, there is a problem in this regard. Then I would prefer Bursa or Istanbul. (Cansu, 43)

Dilan, who wants to tell the unique story of everyone who migrates, conveyed the dream to me that she wanted to come true a long time ago as her future plan.

If you ask where I will live, maybe Spain or Italy. It is life, after all. As for what to do, there was always something I wanted to do. Writing a book. We have a lot to talk about Syria in particular. Maybe if everyone writes something, it can be a story after all. Because everyone has an experience, they have their own story. This is something I have wanted for years. If I had free time, maybe I would. I used to dream all the time that if I had a room, I could read and write. No responsibility; no one should want anything from me. Just my room to read and to write. I had such a dream. I hope I will be. I told a personal dream. However, if my hometown goes back to the way it used to be. I want to live and see that day even if I am in the best country. (Dilan, she did not specify her age)

I tried to convey sometimes hopeful but most of the time uncertain future plans of women. By drawing a pessimistic picture here, I do not infer that women are unsatisfied with the city of Gaziantep and their lives. The future plans of these women, who came between 2013 and 2017, differ from what they have planned today. In this state of flux, the urban life practices of women have also changed.

## 5. CONCLUSION

We are living in a period in which millions of people were displaced due to the revolution in Syria and the war that broke out afterwards. People who had to migrate live in many countries, especially in Turkey. When faced with this dense population, Turkey produced various policies in the first place. Among the fundamental rights, sheltering has been tried to be solved with temporary shelter centres, education with Syrians receiving education separately from Turkish people, and humanitarian aid mostly with non-governmental organisations. Producing instant solutions not only for these issues but also for many other issues has caused various problems. Three years after the massive arrival of Syrians, the Temporary Protection Regulation was issued, and some changes on this regulation were made. However, with this regulation and the policies produced after, it was desired to accept the Syrians as "temporary" or "guests". This situation adversely affected the labour market and urban life. Irregularities in the labour market have increased. There have been conflicts/problems in spatial, cultural and social issues, especially social cohesion in urban life. Various regulations are made at both the national and local levels to solve these problems. In order to produce appropriate policies, research of universities, national and international non-governmental organisations, local and central government and independent persons are used. Most of these studies do not examine Syrians in terms of intersectionality and deal with them from a generalising point of view.

The rarity of number of studies dealing with the labour migration of highly educated women and the intertwining of migration and the city, among the many studies produced on Syrians for over a decade, pioneered this research idea. Therefore, I aimed to examine the participation of highly educated Syrian women in the labour market and urban life. I targeted to eliminate to lack of studies in the literature in the research I have done here. For this purpose, I chose the city of Gaziantep because it is preferred by migrants due to its ties from the past, there are various job opportunities, it is preferred by Syrians because it is close to the Syrian border and it is a relatively cheap city, and despite the fact that it hosts almost half a million Syrians, there is little information about highly educated women. The main question of the research: "How are the participation of highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep in the labour market and their urban life practices

shaped after they migrate?” is another reason why I chose this city is that the question of being ignored in the diversity of the half-million population.

In the labour migration literature, there is a general belief that the migrant will become deskilled while participating in the labour market. With the existence of such a migrant group, there are migrants who participated in the labour market apart from generalization. While starting this research, highly educated Syrian women living in Gaziantep, whom I knew through the Kırkayak Kültür, Art and Nature Association, of which I volunteered, expressed that there were limitations in their participation in the labour market and urban life in 2016-2017. I wanted to see how this limitation changed with the increasing population over time. For this reason, within the scope of this research, I started to meet with the women I know from the Mutfak||Matbakh Workshop, which is within the framework of the Kırkayak Kültür, Art and Nature Association. I interviewed a total of 15 highly educated Syrian women through personal relationships and the snowball method that the women I met suggested others. Among these women, there were those who lived in Gaziantep for ten years, and those who lived for five years. Teachers, dentists, surgeons, engineers, pharmacists, physical therapists, accountants, lawyers, health care workers, translators are the professions of the women I interviewed. Some of the women could not practice their jobs, some of them turned to different fields. The majority of them, on the other hand, joined the labour market in more than one field after migrating. Some of them work especially in the field of non-governmental organizations based in Syria, some of them have established their own company or business regarding to their experience. The labour market participation processes of these highly educated Syrian women are progressing very dynamically. This dynamic progress is determined by criteria such as citizenship, diploma equivalence, knowledge of Turkish, and the plan to stay in Turkey. However, I can say that child care labour, which is generally stated as an obstacle for women's participation in the labour market, loses its validity for the highly educated Syrian women I interviewed. Most of the women I interviewed have children. The ages of these children range from 2 to 40. Some of the women who take care of their children do not do this labour themselves. Since most of the women's children are young and adult, having children did not prevent women's participation in the labour market after they migrated. Likewise, the fact that some women do not provide childcare labour themselves, due to their financial savings, does not prevent their participation in the

labour market. Other parameters of dynamic progressing that determines women's participation in the labour market are citizenship and diploma equivalency. The majority of women are not citizens and only one of them was able to get diploma equivalency. This is an obstacle to women's participation in the labour market in line with their profession. Likewise, the fact that some women do not know the language is an obstacle to participation in the labour market. Therefore, most of the women chose the international non-governmental organisations, where they can participate in labour more comfortably, since citizenship, diploma equivalence and knowledge of Turkish are not required. Although there are various difficulties in this field, the majority of women have worked or are working in the field of NGOs after they migrated. When we look at the working conditions of women, while women in NGOs have an average of 8 hours of work; this period may be extended for women who set up their own company and business. Most of the women are exposed to discriminatory and racist discourses in the workplace. Sometimes this happens because they are Syrian and sometimes because they are women.

The positive impact of migration on some highly educated Syrian women can be clearly stated. Some of the women I interviewed said that they developed themselves in very different subjects, especially because they worked in the field of NGOs. They can use this development if they return to their country; there are women who express their satisfaction that they are currently working for their city, for their country, through international NGOs here. Some women also stated that they did not find the courage to start their own business in Syria because it is not very common for women there. Women who found the courage to open their own place and start their own business after migrating said that they achieved the working life they wanted for a long time after migrating. The women who started their own businesses stated that the possibility of doing the same job again in another city in Turkey or anywhere in the world made them feel safe. Of course, the economic and class perspective of having these opportunities should not be ignored. The majority of these highly educated Syrian women I interviewed living in Gaziantep migrated with a certain background. Women who have this background have been able to overcome some situations that are generally seen as an obstacle to participation in the labour market, or they have been able to enter the labour market by establishing their own business thanks to their savings.

The financial accumulation of highly educated Syrian women facilitates their participation in the labour market. However, as mentioned, there are some obstacles in the participation of these women in the labour market in line with their competencies. The lack of equivalence and citizenship are the most obvious of these obstacles. The lack of diploma equivalence and citizenship are the most obvious of these obstacles. In order to overcome these barriers, it should be easier for women to receive diploma equivalence. In particular, it is essential to conduct more information studies for the procedures required for equivalence and its obtaining process. For some professions, it is obligatory to do an internship after the equivalency exam. If this internship could be done before the exam would increase the success rate in the exam. Even if there is equivalence in some occupational groups, there is a situation where she cannot do her job because she is not a citizen. Especially if there is equivalence in these occupational groups, citizenship procedures can be facilitated. In addition, related institutions and organizations, especially local governments, should expand Turkish language courses at different levels on the language problem that affects participation in both the labour market and the urban public space. Again, relevant institutions and organizations, especially local governments, should serve in a multilingual way in working life.

Highly educated Syrian women I met earlier said that they also participate in urban life on a limited basis. In the course of time, after these interviews, it is possible to say that women's urban life practices have increased, although some limitations remain. In addition, they have developed a coping strategy against some of the obstacles they encounter in participating in public spaces. Considering the urban life practices of the highly educated Syrian women I interviewed, the places they most prefer to go are parks, green spaces, Castle and its surroundings. Women said that if a friend/acquaintance comes to Gaziantep, they prefer to take them there. Besides, they can take their friends/acquaintances to the old and new bazaars (Gazi Muhtar Paşa Boulevard) and shopping malls. There are "places in the city where they cannot go" as a criterion for women's urban mobility. Some stated these places based on their own experiences, and some expressed the places criminalised by the state. The places that cannot be visited are indicated because they are both women and foreigners. The farthest places women mostly go in the city are green areas and pond in the city periphery. As they get closer to the city centre, the farthest places vary according to the neighbourhood they currently live in.

While going to these areas or any public space, they prefer to use their cars if possible. If they have to use public transport, it is primarily the tram. The priority of the tram is that it does not give rise to any conflict due to the lack of a dialogue environment. Women, who are exposed to unequal treatment, discrimination and racism in working life, unfortunately also encounter this in urban life. There are women who avoid being exposed to discrimination and racism to a minimum. Not speaking Arabic on public transport or the street and not being in public space where they do not feel safe is a method of self-protection for women. Most women are also satisfied with their life in Gaziantep, the neighbourhood and their neighbours. The exclusivity of the housing market is encountered almost everywhere, regardless of ethnicity, class, gender, age. Since almost all of the women I interviewed were Syrians at least once, they faced a discriminatory and exclusionary attitude towards housing. Although women have problems with housing after migrating, they do not want to change the houses they live in now. When asked about the relations of women with their Turkish neighbours and friends, some women said that Turkish people are respectful to Syrians due to Syrians being respectful to Turkish people. Some women state that they are respected because they show respect not only in neighbourhood relations but also on the street and in the public space. In their relations with Turkish neighbours, women who faced discrimination because they were Syrian initially said that this behaviour stopped when they saw how good a family they were and how successful their children were. Again, some women say they support each other in their relations with their neighbours, especially during the Covid-19 Pandemic period. One of these supports is as follows: One of the women I interviewed, and her husband stayed in the hospital when they got Covid-19 Pandemic, and their Turkish neighbours met the needs of the children in this period, as their children under the age of 18 were in quarantine. Considering the state of feeling comfortable in the city of the highly educated Syrian women I interviewed, most of them stated that they felt comfortable. Some women think that it is not safe to walk at night; however, they said that both Turkish and Syrian women could freely move around the city.

There are discriminatory and racist attitudes that highly educated Syrian women face in their urban life practices. This situation prevents the social cohesion and urban mobility of highly educated Syrian women. In the face of these behaviours, which manifest themselves in different publicity from housing to transportation, first of all, local

governments should take action. In addition, relevant institutions and organizations, especially local governments, should provide multilingual services in urban public spaces. It is essential to prevent the "temporary" perception created for Syrians due to Turkey's migration policies. In studies that increase social cohesion and publicity, there should be no discrimination between migrants and local people; it should be inclusive, participatory, collaborative and fair for everyone living together in cities.





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## **ATTACHMENTS**

### **APPENDIX-A INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Date:**

**Nickname:**

**Age:**

**Nationality:**

**Place of birth/City of residence before migration:**

**Educational status:**

**Occupation/job in Syria:**

**Occupation/job in Turkey:**

**Marital status:**

**Age, gender and educational status of the child, if any:**

**Where she lives in Gaziantep:**

**Status:**

#### **1. Causes and Processes of Migration:**

- When and how did your migration from Syria to Turkey begin?
- Are there any other countries where you migrated to and worked before Turkey?  
Did you mainly prefer to come to Turkey, or did you enter here quickly because it is a neighbouring country?
- Do you have relatives and friends who have migrated to Turkey before? Did they help you migrate?
- Are any of your family, friends or close relatives left in Syria?

- How did you travel to Turkey? By bus or by plane? Was entry difficult? How did you apply for your passport?
- How did you get your visa, at the border or in advance?
- Did you come directly to Gaziantep when you migrated? If so, how did you pause, and how long did it last?
- What is your arrival date in Gaziantep?

## **2. Resettlement Practices**

### **-Work experiences:**

- How was your first work experience in Gaziantep? What jobs did you do while you were in Turkey?
- How did you find your current job?
- Do you have a work permit? Have you talked to your employer about this?
- Do you have health insurance? Is it possible for you to be treated in the hospital?
- How many hours a day do you work? How many days a week do you work?
- Do you think you earn enough to live? Do you support your family? Can you make any investments?
- Are you satisfied with your job? What are the pros and cons of your job?
- Do you get the same wage as Turkish people if you do the same job at your place of work? Do you think there is a salary difference between men and women?
- Do you think there is unequal treatment in working life towards you as a foreigner and as a woman?
- If you think there are such behaviours, do you think they are due to being a woman or an migrant?
- As a woman, have you encountered discriminatory attitudes in your work environment in Syria?

### **-Domestic life**

- Where do you live in Gaziantep?

- Which neighbourhoods did you live in? How is the neighbourhood you live in now? Did you particularly prefer this place? Why?
- Can you share your process of settling in this neighbourhood? Did you experience any difficulties during this period?
- Do you have any compatriots/relatives in the neighbourhood? When did they arrive? Why did they choose this place?
- Do you have Turkish friends or neighbours? Did you get any support from them?
- Do you live alone or share your flat with your spouse or friends/family members?
- Did you experience any difficulties in your home environment?
- If you were to change your house, where and what kind of house would you like to live in?

### **3. Urban life**

#### **in Syria;**

- Are women comfortable with financial matters?
- What do you think about the difficulties of being a woman in Syria? Socialization; street, bazaar use; What are the limitations/obstacles for you in terms of dress code?
- What were you doing in your spare time?
- Where would you go in your daily life in Syria?
- Where were you meeting with your friends?
- How would you spend an ordinary day with or without work?
- How much time do you spend at home and outside?
- How often did you go for a walk, to the movies, or the park in Syria?

#### **in Turkey;**

- Are you satisfied with your life in Gaziantep?
- Where do you go in your daily life in Gaziantep?



- How much time do you spend at home and outside in Gaziantep?
- Have you been to different parts of Gaziantep? Where did you go the farthest?
- Where do you meet your friends in Gaziantep?
- If a friend or acquaintance came to Gaziantep, where would you take them?
- Are there places you think you cannot go to in the city?
- Are you satisfied with the city, neighbourhood, and neighbours? How do people generally treat you?
- Where and how often do you meet your basic needs?
- Where do you do your kitchen shopping?
- Do you eat out? Where?
- Can you cook Gaziantep dishes at home?
- Are you having trouble finding any ingredients for your meals here?
- Do you have free time? What do you do on holiday?
- How would you spend an ordinary day in Gaziantep, with or without work?
- How often do you go for a walk, to the cinema, to the park in Gaziantep?
- How are you going to your workplace? What is your route?
- How do people react to a strange woman on buses or the street? Have you had any conflicts, arguments or fights because of your nationality?
- Have you had a bad experience with men on the street or public transport?
- Where do you gather for weddings, funerals, and religious events?
- Which public transportation do you use to go to these places?
- How do you feel when you are outside? Do you feel comfortable with the way you dress while walking around the city?
- Is it possible for you to go out for a drink alone or meet a boyfriend?
- Is it safe to walk at night?
- Do you think women from Turkey or Syria can move freely in the city?

- Where would you like to live in the future? What would you like to do in the future?

### **Covid-19 Pandemic Period**

- How were you affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic outbreak in Turkey? Did you lose your job?
- Have you felt insecure about being in a foreign country?
- What is your pre/post-pandemic income? Have there been any changes?
- How did you pay your rent, bills and food expenses?
- Did you need social assistance? If yes, did you have access to social assistance? How were your solidarity processes with non-governmental organizations or your neighbours?

Is there anything else you want to add?

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Information

Name and surname: Elif Sinem İnan

### Academic Background

Bachelor's Degree Education: Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Department of City and Regional Planning (2012-2016)

Foreign Languages: English

### Work Experience

Institutions Served and Their Dates:

- Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Migration Unit / Project Manager / since February, 2020
- Kırkayak Kültür Art and Nature Association / Team Coordinator / April'19-July'19
- Kırkayak Kültür Art and Nature Association / Project Assistant / February'17-May'17