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***Public perception of Syrian refugees in Turkey:  
an empirical explanation using  
extended integrative threat theory***

***Summary***

Turkey has provided asylum for Syrian refugees following the civil war in Syria. This process has given rise to considerable public debate, which is often associated with negative attitudes within the community. Previous studies have indicated that realistic and symbolic threats are important components of the integrated theory of threat for understanding opposition towards immigrants and refugees. But the extended Integrative Threat Theory (ITT) suggests that the citizens of the host country may perceive refugees as both threat and benefit. The purpose of this study is to examine the public perception of Syrian

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refugees in Turkey using extended ITT model. The main results of the analysis are that Turkish people perceive Syrian refugees both as a threat and benefit. Nevertheless, benefit perception is higher than threat perception in Turkey.

**Key words:** Syrian Refugees, International Migration, Threat-Benefit Model, Personal Values on Judgment

## *Introduction*

Not only has the Syrian civil war resulted in the complete destruction of a country, it has also led to the largest mass immigration that Europe has ever faced since the Second World War. In fact, the size of this immigration, which seems to be threatening Europe, pales in comparison to the refugee crisis Turkey has been going through. The continuation of the ongoing clashes in Syria and a lack of solutions give rise to a number of challenges for Turkey. First of all, it is becoming gradually more evident that the return of refugees to their own country is impossible in the near future, even if the war ends; they would be already alienated. This situation has forced the Turkish government to put on its agenda a number of extremely tough, sensitive and complex issues such as providing opportunities to refugees to ease their stay in Turkey and to adapt them to life in Turkish society, as well as fulfilling the pressing needs of refugees for education, health, accommodation, employment, public services and other relevant needs.

Second, the Syrian population in Turkey still continues to increase dramatically. While the total number of the refugees that crossed the border in search of asylum in neighboring countries is approaching 5 million (UNHCR 2016a), the total number of refugees registered in Turkey has reached 2 733 044 (UNHCR 2016b). In other words, the number of people living in Turkey under temporary protection status is more than the total population of some European countries. Since ninety percent of refugees live outside the refugee camps and are in close contact with the local community in various cities such as Istanbul, Hatay, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Adana, Mersin, social cohesion and integration have become the priority issues. The prolongation of the war, and the unlikely possibility of the refugees ever returning to the own countries, requires a permanent and strong social cohesion to be mandatory. To maintain social cohesion, the motives that determine the local community's attitude towards refugees should be carefully examined in terms of both local and central governance.

According to the agreement concluded at the EU-Turkey summit held in Brussels on 18 March 2016, all illegal immigrants who pass through from Turkey to Greek islands are to be extradited to Turkey. Thus, the financial burden of the refugees' basic needs staying in Turkey, such as food, shelter, health and education and also the prevention of uncontrolled and mass refugee movements, will rest on the EU and Turkey. Within the scope of these projects jointly established with the EU institutions, the EU was obliged to pay 2 billion 240 million Euros to Turkey by the end of 2017. To date, however, only 222 million Euros have been sent from EU for the Syrian refugees. The unstable and

unreliable attitude of the European Union makes it difficult to carry out long-term policies for the harmonization of refugees in Turkey. Moreover, Europe's failure to abide by the readmission agreement and visa exemption has complicated the performance of the requested legislative amendments at the time of terrorist attacks in Turkey.

It is no longer possible for Turkey to design its Syrian policy only on "temporariness" or "temporary protection". Any detail postponed, deferred or neglected with the consideration of "temporariness" may cause serious problems in the future. Therefore, while doing what needs to be done in terms of domestic and foreign policies regarding the matter of Syrians returning to their country, it is also necessary to acknowledge the reality that a significant portion of them would no longer want to return to their country, preferring instead to stay permanently in Turkey, which would necessitate the development of several living-together strategies (HUGO 2014, p. 8). Social cohesion depends on the appraisal of the host country citizens towards refugee groups, and also on the attitudes formed as a result of the prejudices of the citizens and the attitudes of the immigrant groups. Social cohesion, which basically refers to the extent of connectedness and solidarity among groups in a society (Berkman, Kawachi 2000, p. 175), stipulates the formation and management of attitudes that develop positively.

One of the most popular social theories that tries to shed a light on the factors effective on formation of individual attitudes towards immigrant groups is ITT. This theory basically focuses on the explanation of the conditions that shape individual perceptions of threat that influence individual attitudes and behaviors. The main point of the theory is related to the changes that occur in the social environment as a result of the use of physical and psychological resources by immigrant groups, that are perceived by individuals to be a threat. Normally, these changes have quite a varying effect on the use of resources. Therefore, they are frequently perceived as threats. Threat perception consists of two major axes; realistic and symbolic. Realistic threat refers to economic and political powers of group insiders, whose well-being is weakened and put at risk by group outsiders. On the other hand, the symbolic threat rather represents the threats towards moral, cultural and commonly shared values. However, we claim that the ITT's handling of the local community's appraisals towards minorities solely in terms of threat is an incomplete approach. We argue that the community can have also positive attitudes towards minorities. Many factors, such as ideologies, humanitarian values, the belief systems of these group's original cultures or territories, and also the time the local community spends with these people, are effective in the formation of benefit or threat prejudices towards minorities. As matter of fact, there is no comprehensive empirical research conducted in Turkey regarding the attitudes of local community towards Syrian refugees. In order to overcome the above-mentioned deficiencies, the study expands ITT by taking the positive attitudes of local community towards refugees into consideration and handles the interaction between psychological values, demographic characteristics and refugee perception of local community.

### *Extended Integrative Threat-Benefit Model*

Identifying the perceptions of local community for refugees, and designing policies fitted to attitudes are crucial to achieve more successful outcomes in the long term. Although media and positive/negative perceptions acquired on the basis of direct contact are crucial for designing integration programs by government, and for supporting financial burdens, they also affect the activities of nongovernmental organizations and the ability of organizing at social base. The effect is more striking for mass and instant immigration, as in the case of Syria. ITT-based studies argue that social acceptance is primarily shaped by threat perceptions. However, as the values and characteristics of immigrants differentiate, the perceptions of the host country citizens may be affected the other way around.

#### *Refugees as a threat*

Fear, or other forms of threat, may play a central role in prejudices towards refugees (Stephan, Stephan 1996, p. 417). The researches indicate that realistic and symbolic threats should be considered as ITT's important components in order to understand the opposition towards immigrants and refugees. The realistic threat concerns the political or economic powers and physical well-being of the group of insiders being put in danger by the group of outsiders (Bizman, Yinon 2001, p. 191). Actually, a realistic threat is a challenge to the majority's wealth (Murray, Marx 2013, p. 332). Moreover, a realistic threat has two components: physical threat and economic threat. The physical threat refers to the deterioration of the social order and formation of a risk that social stability, as well as the safety of the local community, may be damaged. The economic threat, on the other hand, refers to the perception of refugees as a threat in terms of economic stability, limited opportunities in employment and social welfare aids (Anderson et al. 2015, p. 5). Symbolic threats represent resistance against the morals, values, and identity of the local community. All perceived culture or religion-based value differences are related to the symbolic threat and are regarded as a threat towards the local community's social order. Therefore, realistic threat perception, rather than symbolic threats perception, is highly effective in the emergence of negative attitudes and beliefs towards asylum seekers (Marx, Murray 2013, p. 333). Symbolic threat also consists of two components: threat to social cohesion and threat to modernity. The threat to social cohesion is the prejudice that social unrest will occur due to the different traditions and behavioral norms of the refugees seeking asylum. And the threat to modernity is the threat arising from the fact that the asylum seekers usually come from a weaker cultural and democratic social structure, and thus have a tendency to have a conservative approach (Tartakovsky, Walsh 2015, p. 6).

#### *Refugees as a benefit*

The weakest aspect of ITT is that it focuses only the negative aspects of the refugee perception. In addition to this; despite the fact that immigrant opposition prevails in many countries as revealed also by the previous researches conducted in different countries, it

is also observed that in societies where the majority of the local community have rather positive attitudes towards immigrants, support for immigrants seeking asylum is on the increase (Leong 2008; Anderson et al. 2015; Patridge 2016). Benefit perception towards immigrants also has also realistic and symbolic forms, as also in the case of threat perception. Refugees bringing new knowledge, skills, cheap labor, being employed in undesirable (dirty, difficult and dangerous) jobs (economic benefit) and the contributions of their physical characteristics (physical benefit); such as different appearance, manner, attractiveness and cleanness, are reflections of the realistic benefit. Refugees introducing different cultural elements (belief, cuisine, clothing, music, etc.) to the society they have been received into, thus increasing the cultural richness in that society and causing the society to be more open to differences (cultural diversity benefit) as well as the pleasure and spiritual peace (humanitarian benefit) provided by helping people in difficult situation and share the same fate with them, are the reflections of the symbolic benefit (Tartakovsky, Walsh 2015, p. 6).

### *Psychological Values*

Researches assume that psychological value preferences and differences between others are effective on attitudes towards asylum-seeking minorities. While self-enhancement values (power) and conservative values (security and tradition) are more related to negative attitudes towards minorities; self-transcendence values (universalism) and openness to change values (hedonism) are rather related to positive attitudes towards minorities (Schwartz 1992; Schwartz 2012; Davidov et al. 2014; Tartakovsky, Walsh 2015). Based on this assumption, the relationship between the psychological value preferences and threat and benefit perception towards refugees has been hypothesized as follows: While power, security and tradition, have a positive effect on threat perception, they have a negative effect on benefit perception. Whereas universalism and hedonism have a negative effect on threat perception, they have a positive effect on benefit perception.

### *Demographic Characteristics*

There are numerous studies suggesting that socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, income level, education, economic condition and religiousness have an effect on a society's attitudes towards asylum-seeking minorities and how they are perceived (Pedersen et al. 2005; Brenner, Fertig 2006; Kehrberg 2007; Wardand, Masgoret 2008; Markaki, Longhi 2013; Deitz 2014; Patridge 2016). However, it is not possible to say that there is a complete consensus between the results of the researches regarding the effects of these factors on local people's perception. Although there are differences between the results of these researches, there is a common point indicating that women have less negative attitudes compared to men. In general, low-income people have more negative attitudes towards refugees. According to a significant number of researches, as age increases, the negative attitudes towards refugees also increases. Again, even though

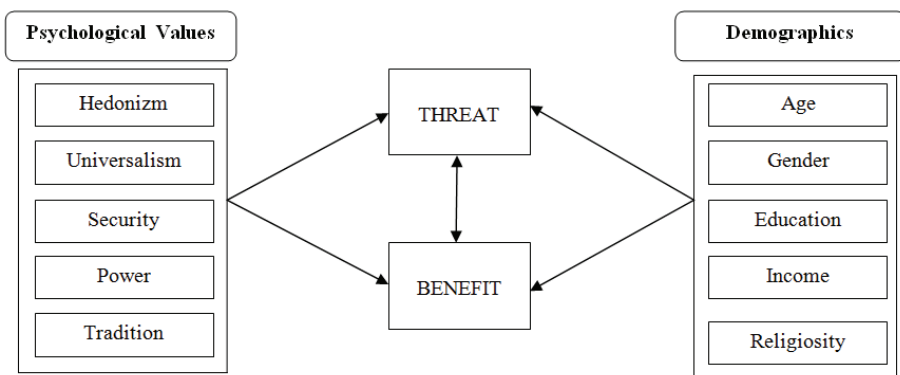
there are results to the contrary, optimistic appraisals increase as the education level of people increase. On the other hand, the relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards refugees changes in accordance with the religious differences between the asylum seekers and the societies that accept the refugees. While religious differences strengthen negative appraisals, negative prejudices decrease in the contrary situation. Ultimately, as individuals have less threat perception towards refugees, naturally their level of benefit appraisal increases, or *vice versa*.

## *Research Design and Method*

### *The Aim of the Study and Research Model*

The aim of this study is to examine how the psychological and demographic characteristics of Turks affects Syrian refugee perception by the extended ITT model. This research, unlike the traditional ITT, asserts that the local community can have prejudices both in the form of threat and benefit in their perception towards refugees. In the study, the refugee perception has been designed as a two-dimensional construct. In addition to pointing out that the local community may perceive refugees both as benefit and threat, the first component of the construct asserts that the local community's benefit and threat perception also acquires realistic and symbolic appearances. And the second component asserts that the threat and benefit perception is influenced both by the psychological values and socio-demographic characteristics of the local community. The model in this paper is depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Research Model**



Source: Authors.

### *Main Hypotheses of the Study*

**Hypothesis 1:** We assume that Turkish people perceive Syrian refugees as being both threatening and beneficial to the society. We hypothesize that Turkish people's perception of the Syrian refugees constitutes a three-level cognitive structure. The top level of this cognitive structure is formed of two judgments, namely threats and benefits. Its middle level is formed of realistic and symbolic appearance of the threat and benefit judgment. The lowest level of the structure is formed of four genres of threat judgment (economic, physical, social cohesion and modernity) and four genres of benefit judgment (economic, physical, cultural diversity and humanitarian). (See below-Figure 3).

**Hypothesis 2:** We assume that the perception of Syrian refugees is differentiated based on the society's psychological value preferences. While people's values of self-enhancement and conservative values cause negative perception of the minority groups, people's values of self-transcendence and their openness to change increase the positive perception of the minorities.

**Hypothesis 3:** We consider individuals' demographic qualities (older age, lower education, lower income) are also influential in the Turkish public perception of the Syrian refugees. In social stratification, individuals, in particular male people with weak social status, have more negative perception of minority groups. Another demographic characteristic is the level of religious devotion. Many surveys show that a higher religious devotion causes more negative attitude against the minority groups. However, we can argue that such an attitude is due to the fact that the minority groups practice a different religion from that of the local people. Therefore, given that they practice the same religion, we can argue that level of religious devotion in Turkey may have a positive influence on the perception of Syrian refugees.

### *Survey Participants*

Since it is not possible to embrace the entire main universe technically and financially, the research was, in compliance with scientific rules, limited to an observation group in Turkey representing the main research universe. Research data was collected via survey. Prepared survey form was uploaded to online environment and then introduced to participants by means of most commonly used social networks. The online survey was accessible from February 22 to May 29, 2016. The data was collected with convenience sampling method in consideration of regional population densities. Regional distribution of the data is attached to present study (see Appendix 1). After the data collection phase was completed, the obtained forms were evaluated and incomplete, erroneous or inconsistent surveys were eliminated and a group of 650 observations in total was determined as the sample.

The prepared survey form consists of 3 sections. In the survey form, there are a total of 66 questions comprised of the ones in the first part related to whether the participants perceive Syrian refugees as threat and benefit or not; the questions in the second part related to psychological value judgments of the participants, and those in the final part

identifying the demographic characteristics of the participants. The questions in the first two parts were translated into Turkish from the previously conducted research scales and then converted into clear statements in accordance with the opinions received from the academicians specialized in their fields.

### *Survey Instruments*

In the research, two scales and five demographic variables were utilized. Two scales are Threats-Benefits Inventory (TBI) and Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ). TBI, which was preferred in order to measure the attitudes of Turkish society towards Syrian refugees, was adapted from studies of Tartakovsky and Walsh (2015). The statements in the scale, of which its original format has 45 items in total, were adopted in a way that Turkish society can perceive refugees and then addressed to participants as 41 items in total; 24 for threat perception and 17 for benefit perception. The items in TBI were measured by a 5-point Likert scale stretching from 1 (=strongly disagree) to 5 (=strongly agree). The threats were grouped as economic, physical threats, as well as threats to social cohesion and modernity. Item examples are as follow: “*Syrian refugees damage Turkey’s economy*” (economic threat), “*Syrian refugees have bad habits*” (physical threat), “*Syrian refugees are a threat to the Islamic character of Turkey*” (threats to social cohesion), “*Syrian refugees bring with them values and norms which harm the modern nature of Turkish society*” (threat to modernity). Benefits were grouped as economic, physical, humanitarian benefits and cultural diversity. Item examples are as follow: “*Syrian refugees bring new knowledge and skills needed in the Turkish economy*” (economic benefit), “*Syrian refugees commit less crimes than Turkish people*” (physical benefit), “*Syrian refugees teach openness and tolerance to us and to our children*” (cultural diversity benefit), “*accepting Syrian refugees can help to save lives*” (humanitarian benefit). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the theoretically suggested three-level structure of TBI, and its results are presented below.

In order to identify the psychological values of the participants, Schwartz’s (1992) PVO was utilized. In the original questionnaire, there are 56 items and 11 psychological value judgments in total. In the scale, an individual whose goals, aspirations and wishes were identified, was introduced to the participants and they were asked to indicate how much that individual resembles them. In order to measure the perception of the participants, a 6-point scale, stretching from 1-not like me at all to 6-very much like me, is used. In this research, in order to assess people’s self-enhancement (power), conservative (security and tradition), self-transcendence (universalism) and openness to change (hedonism) values; 21 items were obtained from PVQ and the items were measured by a 5-point Likert scale stretching from 1 (=strongly disagree) to 5 (=strongly agree). Item examples are as follow: “*being rich is very important for me*” (power), “*it is very important for me living in a safety place*” (security), “*our traditions are very important for me*” (tradition), “*according to me, every citizen deserves equal treatment*” (universalism), “*I take great care in pursuing things that pleasure me*” (hedonism). CFA analysis was applied to 5 dimensional PVQ scale with 21 question and the findings are given in the results section.



In order to define the demographic properties, five categorical questions were asked on the following matters: age, gender, income level, education level and religious devotion level. Findings about participants' demographic properties are attached to the present study (see Appendix 2). 650 observations participated in the research are mainly comprised of male (60%), young and middle-aged (86%) people with high-level education (79%). Most of the research participants identify themselves as medium-level religious (45%) and have a below-medium level of income (58%).

### *Data Analysis and Variables*

During the data analysis process, the internal consistency of the scale items was examined by reliability analysis and the convergent validity of the obtained factors by the CFA. In the analysis to be conducted, reliability analysis should be performed to remove the errors and provide the internal consistency in order to acquire scientific data. The reliability of the scale was tested by frequently preferred Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient. The ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient value ranges between 0 and 1 and when it exceeds over 0.7 the scale is regarded as reliable (Hair et al. 2014, p. 123). CFA is an analysis done to re-evaluate with real data to what extent the previously theoretically supported factors fit with the variables effective on formation of them. Standardized loading estimates should be at least 0.50 or higher, and ideally 0.70 or higher to suggest adequate convergent validity in CFA (Hair 2014, p. 605). Structural equation modelling-path analysis (SEM-Path) was used to test the model and hypotheses. SEM is especially suitable for testing a series of relationships constituting a large-scale model or an entire theory. In fact, SEM has been identified as an appropriate covariance-based approach for studies with a strong basis on 'a priori' theory (Hung et al. 2013). On the other hand, a wide range of fit indices are suggested in order to determine the goodness of fit of the models tested by SEM. For the model's data fit to be regarded as acceptable; chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) fit statistic should be insignificant. However, usually the possibility of this statistic value to be significant also increases as the sample size increases. Therefore, it is generally suggested that chi-square/degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ) value, which indicates the sufficiency of the sample size, to be checked for large samples. This value being below 5 and above 3 is tolerated and the condition that it is below 3 indicates a high-level fit. There are also plenty of alternative indices available to evaluate the goodness of fit of the structural models. In Table-3 is given the information regarding the limit values suggested for the goodness of fit indices taken into consideration in this study (Schermelleh-Engel et al. 2003, p. 52; Meyers et al. 2006, p. 559). The main dependent variables in the models are threat and benefit perception, independent variables are psychological values and demographic characteristics. A brief description of the variables is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Definition of Variables**

<b>Dependent Variables</b>			
	<b>Sub-Dimensions</b>		<b>Definition</b>
Threats	Realistic	Economic	Perception of refugees as a threat for employment and social welfare competition
		Physical	Perception of refugees as a threat for the stability & balance of the country and the local population
	Symbolic	Social Cohesion	Perception of refugees as a threat, because of their different traditions and norms for social cohesion
		Modernity	Perception of refugees who come from weaker countries as a threat for the modernization of the nation
Benefits	Realistic	Economic	Expectations that the welfare will be increased by the employment of refugees in low-paid jobs and jobs that local people do not prefer
		Physical	Expectations that society will be enriched by the refugees' interesting, different, physically beautiful and clean appearance
	Symbolic	Cultural Diversity	Expectations that refugees will increase the social wealth by bringing in new cultural values
		Humanitarian	Expectations that helping others will increase the egalitarian and sharing values
<b>Independent Variables</b>			
Psychological Values	Security	Desire to have safety, harmony, and stability for the community or herself in all relationships	
	Tradition	The desire to adhere to and/or respect the religious rules, the acceptance of cultural norms and/or social values	
	Power	Desire to have higher social status and prestige in order to have control over people and resources	
	Universalism	It is desirable for people to be understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all mankind and the harmony of nature.	
	Hedonism	The pleasure, the enjoying life and the desire to make the activities that enable the enjoyment of physical pleasure, and the individual's self-reflection	
Demographic Characteristics	<i>Age, Gender, Education, Income, and Religiosity.</i> Demographic characteristics present the appearance of social stratification. According to women, men are predisposed to minorities with lower status (lower age, lower education, lower income and higher religiosity) of social stratification.		

Source: Tartakovsky, E., Walsh, S.D. (2016); Schwartz, S.H. (2012).

## Results

### *Frequencies of Participants' Threats-Benefits Perception*

The findings of the frequency analysis are given in Table 2. According to these findings, the participants' state of ambivalence draws attention. Benefit perception is, even just a little, higher than threat perception. While the mean of threat perception is found to be  $M_{threats}=2.61$  ( $sd=1.02$ ) via 5-point scale; the mean of benefit perception is  $M_{benefits}=2.87$  ( $sd=0.93$ ). According to the participants; while the existence of Syrian refugees poses a threat in economic terms ( $M_{ET}=3.42$ ;  $sd=1.27$ ) perception of threats to social cohesion ( $M_{SCT}=2.35$ ;  $sd=1.09$ ) is quite weak. Economic threat perception is respectively followed by threat to modernity ( $M_{MT}=2.69$ ;  $sd=1.12$ ) and physical threat ( $M_{PT}=2.38$ ;  $sd=1.02$ ). In terms of economic threat, the highest concern is observed in the perception that the existence of refugees worsens the economy ( $M=3.42$ ;  $sd=1.27$ ), the weakest concern is related to the one that housing rental prices increase ( $M=2.44$ ;  $sd=1.36$ ). In terms of perception of threats to modernity, the participants feel discomfort that refugees abuse their children ( $M=2.87$ ;  $sd=1.37$ ) but think that their existence does not pose a threat ( $M=2.38$ ;  $sd=1.28$ ) to the traditional family structure of the local community. In terms of physical threat, while the participants feel concerned to a certain extent owing to the damage that the refugees cause in cities and to the environment ( $M=2.69$ ;  $sd=1.34$ ), they perceive that refugees do not get involved in ordinary crimes such as theft, extortion and fraud ( $M=2.13$ ;  $sd=1.16$ ). In terms of threats to social cohesion; while the participants concern that the refugees deepen the cultural differences ( $M=2.75$ ;  $sd=1.43$ ), they perceive that refugees do not pose a threat ( $M=1.96$ ;  $sd=1.09$ ) to the religious identity of the society.

The participants, while perceiving that hosting refugees benefits society the most in the humanitarian sense ( $M_{HB}=3.42$ ;  $sd=1.12$ ), had the perception that the stay of refugees has no physical benefit ( $M_{PB}=2.44$ ;  $sd=0.87$ ). Humanitarian benefit perception is respectively followed by cultural diversity benefit ( $M_{CDB}=3.11$ ;  $sd=1.16$ ) and economic benefit ( $M_{EB}=2.51$ ;  $sd=1.07$ ). In terms of humanitarian benefit, while the participants perceive that the condition of Syrian refugees make them feel the satisfaction for owning a homeland ( $M=3.99$ ;  $sd=1.31$ ), they are indecisive on the point that accepting refugees will contribute to Turkey's democratic development ( $M=2.81$ ;  $sd=1.37$ ). In terms of cultural diversity, while getting know other cultures pleases the participants ( $M=3.39$ ;  $sd=1.25$ ), they are indecisive on the point that refugees make them more sensitive and tolerant ( $M=2.80$ ;  $sd=1.30$ ). In terms of economic benefit, while the participants accept to a certain extent that refugees may bring new knowledge and skills to the economy ( $M=2.62$ ;  $sd=1.24$ ), they were not of the opinion that their contributions to the economy was substantial ( $M=2.39$ ;  $sd=1.13$ ). In terms of physical benefit, while the participants think that the refugees do not extremely bother the local community ( $M=2.73$ ;  $sd=1.08$ ), they also think that refugees do not provide so much of a contribution ( $M=2.09$ ;  $sd=0.95$ ) to the beautification of cities and the environment.

**Table 2. Frequencies and Factor Weights of TBI Items**

Item Number	Items ( <i>Shortened</i> )	Mean	SD	Loadings
<b>ECONOMIC THREATS</b>		<b>3.05</b>	<b>1.12</b>	
ET1	Deterioration of economy	3.21	1.41	.793
ET2	Increase in unemployment	3.09	1.40	.778
ET3	Increase in rental prices	3.41	1.27	.788
ET4	Decline in education quality	2.44	1.36	-
ET5	Draining of social aid fund	2.97	1.37	.81
ET6	Ineffectiveness of social services	2.93	1.40	-
ET7	Employment with low wages	3.29	1.35	.831
<b>PHYSICAL TREATS</b>		<b>2.38</b>	<b>1.01</b>	
PT1	Bad habits	2.49	1.08	.737
PT2	Infectious diseases	2.59	1.17	.754
PT3	Helping to other countries	2.31	1.20	.818
PT4	Violence to local community	2.20	1.12	.835
PT5	Theft, burglary, robbery, etc.	2.12	1.10	.821
PT6	Damage to cities and the environment	2.69	1.34	.854
PT7	Immoral works	2.13	1.16	.785
PT8	Posing a threat for women	2.56	1.32	.845
<b>THREAT to SOCIAL COHESION</b>		<b>2.35</b>	<b>1.09</b>	
SCT1	Cultural difference	2.75	1.43	.869
SCT2	Disturbing social peace	2.44	1.27	.849
SCT3	Degenerating the religious identity	1.96	1.09	.732
SCT4	Different beliefs	2.06	1.14	.735
SCT5	Different behavior and appearance	2.53	1.29	.841
<b>THREAT to MODERNITY</b>		<b>2.69</b>	<b>1.12</b>	
MT1	Weakening of democracy	2.49	1.32	.839
MT2	Incompatibility with contemporary nature	2.78	1.36	.847
MT3	Traditional family structure	2.38	1.28	.769
MT4	Abusing to children	2.87	1.37	.795

Item Number	Items ( <i>Shortened</i> )	Mean	SD	Loadings
<b>ECONOMIC BENEFITS</b>		<b>2.51</b>	<b>1.07</b>	
EB1	Better economic relations	2.45	1.14	.658
EB2	Economic contribution	2.39	1.13	.764
EB3	Better trade relations	2.60	1.25	.815
EB4	New knowledge and skills	2.62	1.24	.808
<b>PHYSICAL BENEFITS</b>		<b>2.44</b>	<b>0.87</b>	
PB1	Less bad habits	2.40	1.05	.596
PB2	Less criminal tendency	2.37	1.05	.62
PB3	Not disturbing other	2.73	1.08	.788
PB4	Sensitiveness to cities and the environment	2.09	0.95	.723
PB5	Calm and understanding human profile	2.62	1.04	.79
<b>CULTURAL DIVERSITY BENEFITS</b>		<b>3.11</b>	<b>1.16</b>	
CDB1	Being sensitive and tolerant to others	2.80	1.30	.811
CDB2	Getting to know new cultures	3.16	1.26	.863
CDB3	Being aware of other cultures	3.39	1.25	.843
<b>HUMANITARIAN BENEFITS</b>		<b>3.42</b>	<b>1.12</b>	
HB1	Satisfaction of having a homeland	3.99	1.31	.589
HB2	The opportunity to save lives of others	3.58	1.28	.783
HB3	Sense of brotherhood and togetherness	3.33	1.33	.849
HB4	Receiving esteem	3.42	1.35	.748
HB5	Democratic development	2.81	1.37	.787
<b>THREATS</b>		<b>2.61</b>	<b>1.02</b>	
<b>BENEFITS</b>		<b>2.87</b>	<b>0.93</b>	

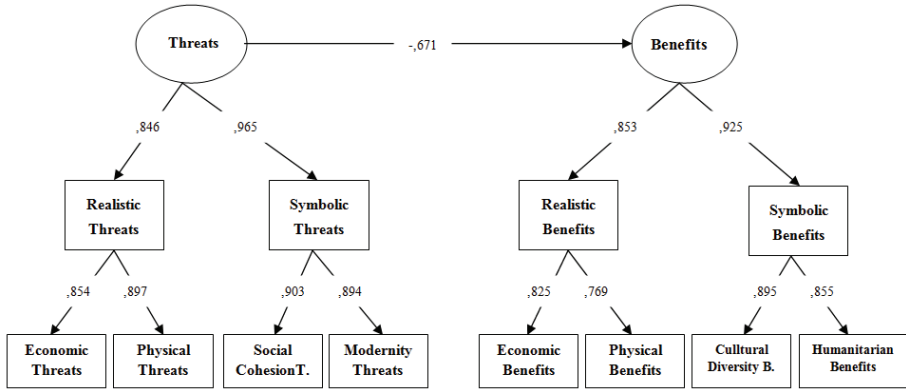
Source: Author's calculation.

### *Validity and Reliability of TBI and PVQ Scales*

In order to be able to evaluate the convergent validity of TBI scale, primarily CFA is applied for a three-level measurement model. In the initial model, there are 41 items in total. The first order of the model is represented by a total of 8 first-order factors comprised of 4 types of threats and 4 types of benefits. In the second order, each one of the

4 factors constituting realistic and symbolic threats with realistic and symbolic benefits is represented by two sub-factors. Finally, in the third order of the model, both threat and benefit are represented by two realistic and symbolic sub-factors (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. The Threats-Benefits Model of Refugees' Appraisal**



Notes: Path diagram with estimated standardized coefficients. All Coefficients have a level of significance  $p < 0.01$ .

Source: Author's calculation.

When the modification indices are checked after the analysis of the initial model, it was observed that two items (ET4 and ET6) decrease the goodness of fit (Table 3, Model A). When the model analysis is performed after excluding these two questions, it was seen that model-data fit did not reach to the desired level (Table 3, Model B).

Although there are many questions in scales, owing to the reason that the sample size is small to an extent, and depending on low subjects-to-variable ratio, the goodness of fit indices may come out bad. A similar situation also applies for TBI scale in this study. In order to solve this issue; item parceling method was applied. Item parceling is one of the many methods used to combine the individual items. Here, observed variables are derived from the items combined in CFA or SEM and these variables are used as alternatives. Generally, item parcels are obtained by collecting the sums or means of the item sets under a factor (Bandalos 2002; Little et al. 2002; Meade, Kroustalis 2005). In the initial phase of the item parceling process, four sub-latent variables for both threat and benefit scales were determined. In order to verify the theoretical relationships between each item in the questionnaire and these latent variables; CFA was performed. As a result of the analysis, a good model fit was observed for both models and it was determined that the variables were loaded to latent variables with standardized factor loadings over 0.50 (see Table 3). After it was approved that the items theoretically belong to the relevant latent variables; four types of observed threat and benefit variables were obtained based on the average of the first-order variables in the model and the theoretical relationship

between these variables with threat and benefit latent variables was tested. As a result of the analysis, a good model fit was observed. In this way, the validity of the three-level theoretical model suggested in regard to the local community's perceptions towards refugees was approved. Afterwards, the reliability level of TBI scale was examined. As a result of the reliability analysis, the scale was found to have a high level of reliability (*Cronbach's Alpha* = 0.957).

**Table 3. CFA Results of the TBI: Goodness of Fit Indexes**

Models	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
A. The Initial Theoretical Model (41 Items)	5010.109	778	6.440	.677	.818	.840	.094
B. The Modified Model (39 Items)	2166.409	701	3.09	.840	.866	.877	.087
C. The Modified Model with 8 Parcels	41.424	15	2.762	.985	.991	.994	.052

Source: Author's calculation.

After TBI scale's validity was approved, the validity of PVQ scale, which was comprised of 21 items, was tested with CFA. As a result of the analysis, goodness of fit values of the initial model, which was comprised of 21 items, did not come out well. When the modification indices were checked, it was seen that one of each of the security-, power- and tradition-related variables decreased the goodness of fit and standardized factor loadings of these variables are much lower than 0.50. As a result of excluding these three variables, it was seen that an acceptable goodness of fit for the model was obtained (Table 4, Model B). According to the reliability analysis results performed for 18-item PVQ scale, the reliability of the scale is quite high (*Cronbach's Alpha* = 0.856).

**Table 4. CFA Results of the PVQ: Goodness of Fit Indexes**

Models	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
A. The Initial Theoretical Model (21 Items)	1510.285	179	8.437	.773	.615	.641	.107
B. The Modified Model (18 Items)	432.462	124	3.48	.932	.926	.946	.062

Source: Author's calculation.

### *Results of Structural Model*

SEM-Path Analysis was used to test the research model that suggests the relationships between the psychological values and demographic characteristics with threat and benefit perception. To perform path analysis, the averages of all the variables in the model are transformed into the observed variables. From all goodness of fit values that indicate the

integral significance of the structural model, all other index values except CFI are within the acceptable or good limits (see Table 5). Therefore, it was determined that the relationships in the model are consistent with the sample data and that the model is integrally valid. After the examination of goodness of fit, hypothesis test results were examined.

**Table 5. Results of the Model Goodness-of-Fit**

Fit Index	Good Fit	Acceptable Fit	Results in This Study
$\chi^2/df$	$0 < \chi^2/df < 2$	$2 < \chi^2/df < 3$	2.626
GFI	$.95 < GFI < 1$	$.90 < GFI < .95$	.906
AGFI	$.90 < AGFI < 1$	$.85 < AGFI < .90$	.886
RMR	$0 < RMR < .05$	$.05 < RMR < 1$	.043
RMSEA	$0 < RMSEA < .05$	$.05 < RMSEA < .08$	.050
NFI	$.95 < NFI < 1$	$.90 < NFI < .95$	.903
RFI	$.95 < RFI < 1$	$.90 < RFI < .95$	.889
IFI	$.95 < IFI < 1$	$.90 < IFI < .95$	.938
TLI	$.95 < TFI < 1$	$.90 < TFI < .95$	.928
CFI	$.97 < CFI < 1$	$.95 < CFI < .97$	.937

df = Degrees of freedom, GFI = Goodness of Fit Index, AGFI = Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index, RMR = Root Mean Square Residual, RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, NFI = Normed Fit Index, RFI = Relative Fit Index, IFI = Incremental Fit Index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index, CFI = Comparative Fit Index

Source: Author's calculation.

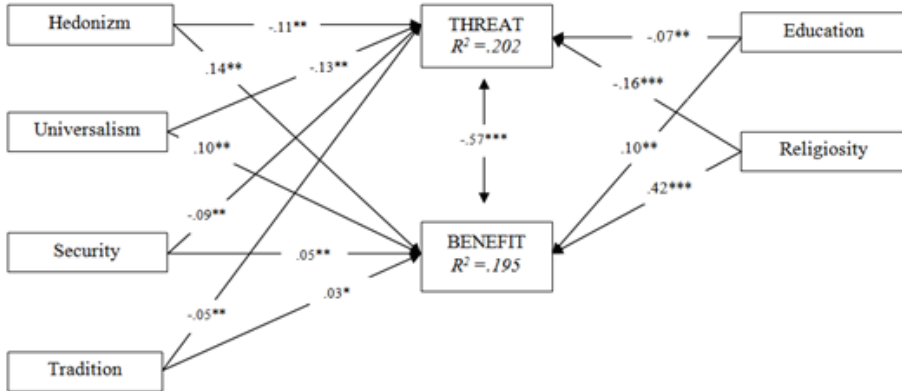
All model results are given in Appendix 3. In Figure-3, only the accepted hypotheses and the standardized regression weights of the independent variables are given. According to the structural model results, power, one from the psychological value preferences, was found to have no significant effect on threat ( $t = -0.043$ ) and benefit ( $t = 0.382$ ) perception. And from the demographic characteristics, gender, age and level of income were found to have no significant effect on threat ( $t_{gender} = 1.37$ ;  $t_{age} = 0.23$  and  $t_{income} = 0.87$ ) and benefit ( $t_{gender} = -0.03$ ;  $t_{age} = -0.09$  and  $t_{income} = -0.52$ ) perception.

On the other hand, according to the model results while hedonism and universalism which respectively identify self-enhanced and open-to-change human typologies, have negative effect on threat perception ( $t_{hed} = 2.34$  and  $\beta_{hed} = -0.112$ ;  $t_{univ} = 2.25$  and  $\beta_{univ} = -0.134$ ), the effect of these values on benefit is positive ( $t_{hed} = 2.40$  and  $\beta_{hed} = 0.144$ ;  $t_{univ} = 2.44$  and  $\beta_{univ} = 0.095$ ). When the relationships are examined between the threat and benefit perception towards refugees with security and tradition, which identify conservative human typology, it is seen that security has a negative effect on benefit ( $t_{sec} = -6.61$  and  $\beta_{sec} = -0.053$ ) while it has a positive effect on threat ( $t_{sec} = 2.66$  and  $\beta_{sec} = 0.085$ ).



Tradition, another conservative type, has a very weak but statistically significant negative effect ( $t_{tra}=-2.78$  and  $\beta_{tra}=-0.050$ ) on threat perception and a positive effect ( $t_{tra}=1.92$  and  $\beta_{tra}=0.029$ ) on benefit perception. This finding has come out differently from the findings of the previous researches.

Figure 3. Path Coefficients with Psychological and Demographic Variables



Notes: All variables are observed variable in the structural model. Only statistically significant paths are given  $^{***}$ ,  $^{**}$  and  $^{*}$  denotes respectively significance at the  $p < 0.1$ ,  $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.10$  levels. R<sup>2</sup>: adjusted.

Source: Author’s calculation.

Nevertheless, according to the model results, the effect of demographic characteristics on threat and benefit perception has statistically come out significant only for education level and religiosity. Accordingly, education level has a negative effect on threat perception ( $t_{edu}=-2.92$  and  $\beta_{edu}=-0.071$ ) and a positive effect on benefit perception ( $t_{edu}=7.21$  and  $\beta_{edu}=0.108$ ). Religiosity has a negative effect on threat perception ( $t_{rel}=-9.99$  and  $\beta_{rel}=-0.162$ ) and a positive effect on benefit perception ( $t_{rel}=11.04$  and  $\beta_{rel}=0.424$ ). However, differing from the findings of the previous researches, a positive relationship between religiosity and refugee perception came out as expected. According to the model results, there is also a reverse interaction between threat perception and benefit perception towards refugees ( $t_{threats}=-15.52$  and  $\beta_{threats}=-0.569$ ).

### Discussion

This study represents the first attempt at using the extended ITT to explain the perception of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The results have confirmed that (1) Turkish people perceive the condition of Syrian refugees fleeing from the civil war and taking refugees in Turkey both as threat to and benefit for themselves, (2) Turkish people’s threat and benefit perception have both realistic and symbolic appearances, (3) their personal value preferences and demographic characteristics, especially such as religiosity and education,

are effective on threat or benefit perception regarding refugees and (4) the fact that both societies are members of the same religion and have similar cultural codes, even hard in short term, is the most important social ground to facilitate in long term the integration of Syrian refugees into Turkish society.

One of the important contributions of this study is that it explicitly reveals the fact that Turkish people perceive Syrian refugees seeking asylum in Turkey not only as threat but also as benefit. Although there is a state of indecisiveness in question, Turkish people perceive Syrian refugees as benefit rather than threat. In this regard, this study, in contrast to many previous studies, draws attention also to the positive aspect of the local community's attitudes towards asylum-seeking groups. Turkish people feel uneasy due to the reason that presence of refugees exceeding 3 million (according to the official statistics) damages Turkish economy. However, especially the social memory, which is still kept alive by the historical, cultural and religious elements, constitutes a ground for Turkish public to regard accepting Syrian refugees as a humanitarian duty. Therefore, accepting Syrian refugees, according to Turkish public, is a virtue with the most humanitarian benefit.

On the other hand, this study also provides answers to some questions about the fact that various groups in the local community have different attitudes. Personal value preferences of the local community and the differences in their demographic characteristics are effective on perception differences towards asylum seeking refugees. For example, open-to-change and self-enhanced people adopt a more optimistic appraisal towards refugees. The people with a tendency to be conservative (especially the ones who have a concern for their security) have a negative attitude. No significant relationship was found between individuals' self-enhancement values and their perception towards refugees. However, again in contrast to the previous studies, an interesting finding draws attention in this study. A positive relationship was found between tradition, which is an indicator of conservative individual typology, and the perception of refugees as benefit. Previous studies rather investigated the inter-group relationships where the asylum seekers and the local community are from different cultural, social and religious structures. Therefore, tradition makes living together easier with those with common values. As another point supporting this finding, differing from the previous studies, the same direction relationship was found also between religiosity and benefit perception towards refugees. The local community more easily embraces the "others" with the same beliefs. In this research, no significant relationship was found between the demographic characteristics of the participants, such as age, gender and level of income with perception of Syrian refugees as benefit or threat. However, as the participant's level of education increases, their positive perceptions towards refugees also increase.

### *Policy Implications*

Considering the findings of the research collectively reveals a very important determination for the Turkish government's political agenda regarding Syrian refugees and the refugee policies to be followed. This determination is the most important contribution

of this study. That is to say, the extreme opposition to refugees, especially in Europe and generally in different regions of the world, cannot be regarded as a common situation also for Turkey. On the contrary, the ground of legitimacy, which is required for humanitarian and rational refugee policies so that Syrian refugees can live in Turkey under more humanistic conditions, and for them to be integrated into the society, have their country-attachment strengthened and a significant part of them can be granted with full-citizenship, always existed and still continues its vitality. This area of legitimacy is rather fed from traditional ties such as a common historical past, social and cultural values, religion, beliefs and brotherhood. Based on the fact that the Syrian refugee policy the government has been recently following has a left-to-its-own-fate, irregular, unsustainable and irrational appearance, a rational refugee action plan should be put into practice immediately before this ground of legitimacy is no more destroyed. Considering the fact that the refugees in Turkey are not peaceful, they want to find asylum in central countries in Europe when they have an opportunity, and that they see Turkey as a transit country. Additionally, the refugee policy, which the Turkish government has been failing to rationalize and Middle-East oriented terrorist incidents, are weakening the people's positive perception of Syrian refugees. Turkey's refugee policy needs to be rationalized and be solved in global cooperation. Further, in order for the refugee crisis not to become social gangrene on a European scale in the long run, European countries need to take immediate initiative and provide financial / political support to Turkey for integration.

#### *Limitations of the Study and Future Researches*

The present study has several limitations. Firstly, all of Schwartz (1992)'s personal value preferences (11 elements) are not taken into consideration and the research was limited to a couple of personal values (5 elements). On the other hand, perception differences towards refugees are not affected from different psychological values. Other values systems and cultural elements can be effective in differentiation of refugee perception. For example, the relationship between political ideology differences and refugee perception can be handled in further subsequent studies. One of the most important constraints of this study is the sample-representation relationship. Sample group of the research was determined in a way to represent the entire Turkish public. However, currently in Turkey, Syrian refugees continue their lives mainly in cities close to the Syrian border and cosmopolitan cities, particularly Istanbul. Therefore, much different results can be obtained when the same research is performed on the local community living in these regions. Nevertheless, in the light of the present findings, the political measures suggested in this study are valid for a refugee policy that will address all the regions of Turkey.

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## Appendix 1. Regional Distribution of Sample



Source: Author's calculation.

## Appendix 2. Demographic Profile of All Respondents

Variable		Count	Perc. %
Gender	Female	254	39,1
	Male	396	60,9
Age	< 20 years old	49	7,5
	20–30 years old	349	53,7
	31–40 years old	160	24,6
	41–50 years old	65	10,0
	51–60 years old	17	2,6
	> 60 years old	10	1,5
Education	Primary School	16	2,5
	Secondary School	69	10,6
	College and Under Graduate	392	60,3
	Master and Post Graduate	173	26,6
Monthly Income	< 1.200 Turkish Lira (TL)	213	32,8
	1.201 — 2.400 TL	111	17,1
	2.401 — 3.600 TL	120	18,5
	3.601 — 4.800 TL	105	16,2
	4.801 — 6.000 TL	40	6,2
	> 6.000 TL	61	9,4

Variable		Count	Perc. %
Religiosity	Quiteirreligious	114	17,5
	Littlereligious	162	24,9
	Mediumreligious	293	45,1
	Quitereligious	64	9,8
	Radicalreligious	17	2,6
		N = 650	

Source: Author's calculation.

### Appendix 3. Path Coefficients of Structural Equation Modelling

Path	B	S.E.	$\beta$	t-stats
Hedonism → Threat	-,243	,104	<b>-,112</b>	-2,346**
Universalism → Threat	-,308	,137	<b>-,134</b>	-2,255**
Security → Threat	,212	,079	<b>,085</b>	2,663**
Power → Threat	-,003	,065	-,001	-,043
Tradition → Threat	-,085	,030	<b>-,050</b>	-2,780**
Gender → Threat	,075	,055	,033	1,370
Age → Threat	,006	,027	,006	,230
Education → Threat	-,115	,039	<b>-,071</b>	-2,921**
Income → Threat	,014	,016	,021	,876
Religiosity → Threat	-,378	,038	<b>-,162</b>	-9,992***
Hedonism → Benefit	,346	,144	<b>,144</b>	2,408**
Universalism → Benefit	,217	,088	<b>,095</b>	2,440**
Security → Benefit	-,165	,025	<b>-,053</b>	-6,610***
Power → Benefit	,035	,090	,018	,382
Tradition → Benefit	,075	,039	<b>,029</b>	1,915*
Gender → Benefit	-,002	,076	-,004	-,032
Age → Benefit	-,004	,038	-,001	-,099
Education → Benefit	,166	,023	<b>,108</b>	7,217**
Income → Benefit	-,029	,055	-,020	-,526
Religiosity → Benefit	,434	,039	<b>,424</b>	11,046***
THREAT → BENEFIT	-,652	,042	<b>-,569</b>	-15,523***

Notes: B = unstandardized estimates, S.E. = standart error,  $\beta$  = standardized regression weights, The results of Structural equation modeling are standardized maximum likelihood path coefficients for the hypothesized model. \*\*\*, \*\* and \* denotes respectively significance at the  $p < 0.1$ ,  $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.10$  levels.

Source: Author's calculation.

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