


Social and Educational Difficulties of Refugee and Migrant Children in the Contemporary Educational Environment

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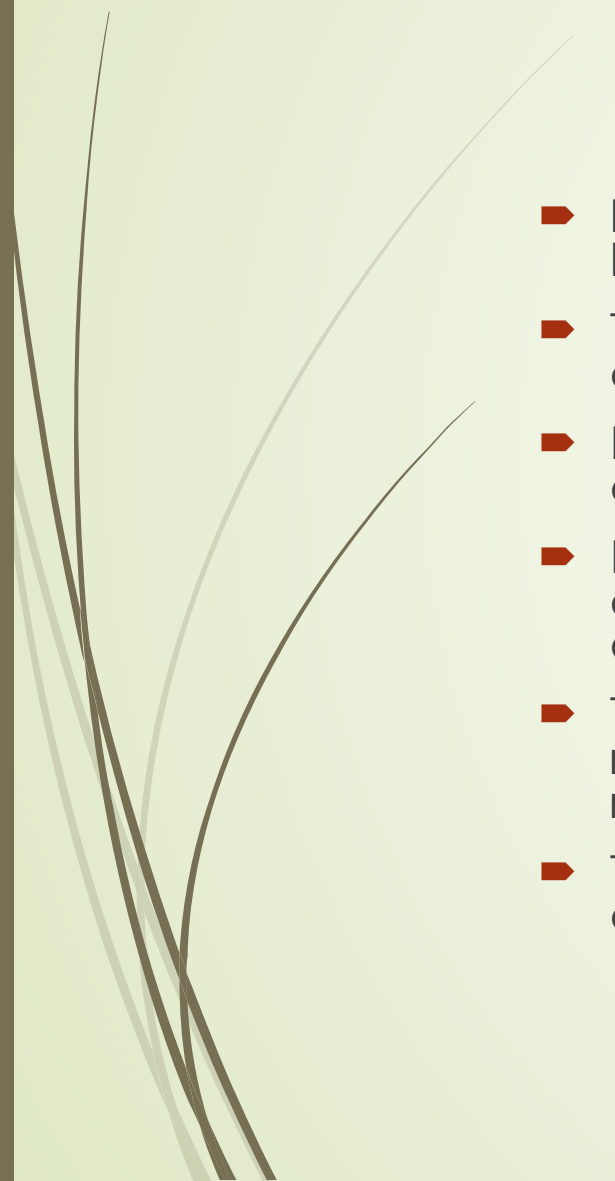
Purpose of the research



The purpose of this study is to investigate the difficulties faced by refugee and migrant children in education.



Refugee and Migrant Children in Schools

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- ▶ International migration is a timeless phenomenon with a significant impact on history and society, influenced by historical and social conditions.
 - ▶ Today, migration is at historically high levels, while the treatment of migrants is characterized by stricter border controls and social suspicion.
 - ▶ Education is called upon to respond to the integration of many children of different ethnicities, which creates challenges for both teachers and students.
 - ▶ Refugee and migrant children come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, often bringing with them traumatic experiences, fear, and a lack of trust in others.
 - ▶ The term "interculturalism" should not be confused with assimilation or cultural relativism, but should be understood as a process of interaction and mutual respect between different cultures.
 - ▶ The intercultural approach aims to create school environments that promote acceptance of diversity, social cohesion, equality, and justice.



Difficulties faced by parents(1)

- Refugees and immigrants bring with them problems from their country of origin, which are economic, family-related, social, and psychological.
- Initial contact with the local community can cause fear and vigilance due to negative or hostile treatment by locals.
- The loss of property and the need to find work are significant difficulties, especially due to the lack of identity and language barriers.
- Lack of adequate communication and mutual distrust between employers and employees make it difficult to find decent work, often leading to exploitation.
- The financial difficulties of parents directly affect the basic needs of children, causing feelings of inferiority, insecurity, and anger.
- On a social level, parents find it difficult to adapt due to different cultures, customs, and, above all, language barriers.



Difficulties faced by parents(2)

- The inability to learn the language reduces the possibilities of communication with the school, resulting in reduced parental involvement in their children's school life. Often, the children themselves take on the role of interpreter.
- The psychological impact is severe, as traumatic experiences of war, persecution, and violence cause problems such as PTSD, phobias, and chronic conditions (cardiac, respiratory, etc.).
- Bureaucracy and contact with public authorities are often accompanied by racist or hostile treatment, which reduces access to assistance and increases feelings of despair.
- The lack of interpreters in critical services, such as hospitals, can have serious consequences, as communication is crucial in health matters.
- Many refugees and migrants, even after years of residence, do not obtain official identity or citizenship, resulting in them not having rights such as legal employment, travel, or education.
- Lack of citizenship has long-term consequences for them and their children, who often grow up without the necessary legal identity or rights.



Difficulties faced by children

- Refugee and migrant children face multiple problems, particularly within the school environment.
- They often come from environments where they have been exposed to violence and traumatic events, which have caused psychological trauma and fears.
- In some cases, children have arrived in other countries as victims of trafficking or are unaccompanied minors due to the loss of or separation from their parents.
- These traumatic experiences affect their psychological state and social behavior.
- Many children develop a fearful and isolated personality, with difficulty in developing relationships of trust and friendship.
- Other children exhibit rebellious and unruly behavior, which often manifests itself in problems at school and at home.
- The above behaviors act as defense mechanisms to protect against the possible recurrence of negative experiences.



Learning and Language Difficulties

- Many children come from countries with poor economic and social conditions, where education was either inadequate or non-existent due to survival needs.
- The lack of education and unfamiliarity with the school environment make it significantly more difficult for them to adapt to a Greek classroom, while the need for support from teaching staff is increased.
- Children often experience feelings of inferiority and insecurity, especially when compared to their peers who have more experience in education or who are native speakers of the language.
- Communication between parents of foreign students and teachers is hampered by language difficulties, with the result that parents are not adequately informed about their children's needs and progress.
- Learning Greek as a foreign language is particularly difficult without the use of the mother tongue as a basis, and many students give up, with consequences for their further education and social integration.
- Special mention should be made of foreign students with learning difficulties or special needs, as the poor economic situation and the lack of interpreters make it impossible for them to be integrated into appropriate educational settings or to receive parallel support.
- The isolation of these students has serious consequences for their lives, as they are left without help and support, leading to marginalization both inside and outside school.



Financial difficulties (1)

- The financial difficulties faced by foreigners in their country of origin usually continue in their host country, significantly affecting the lives of their children.
- Children often become victims of bullying because of financial hardship, mainly because they do not have access to basic school supplies or new clothes, resulting in them being marginalized by their classmates.
- The experience of bullying negatively affects children's psychological state, which is further exacerbated when they return to their family environment, where conflicts arise due to their parents' inability to meet their needs.
- Financial pressure leads many children to drop out of school early in order to find work and contribute financially to their families, which limits their future opportunities and increases the risk of social exclusion.
- Children who work are often exposed to forms of exploitation by older individuals, such as overwork, abusive pay, or even violence, and may become victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation, or become involved in illegal activities due to their inability to survive.



Financial difficulties (2)

- The vicious cycle of poverty and delinquency begins with survival through illegal activities, with frequent arrests leading to reformatories and possible deportation.
- Unaccompanied children, due to a lack of financial support and protection, often live in shelters with strangers and older people, increasing the risk of exploitation and abuse, with long-term consequences for their psychosocial development.
- The frequent involvement of unaccompanied children in criminal groups, as a result of seeking protection, carries a significant risk of violence and loss of life due to conflicts within the gangs.
- Health care for children is often inadequate due to financial constraints, with many parents unable to cover medical expenses, while in some cases exploitation by health professionals is observed.

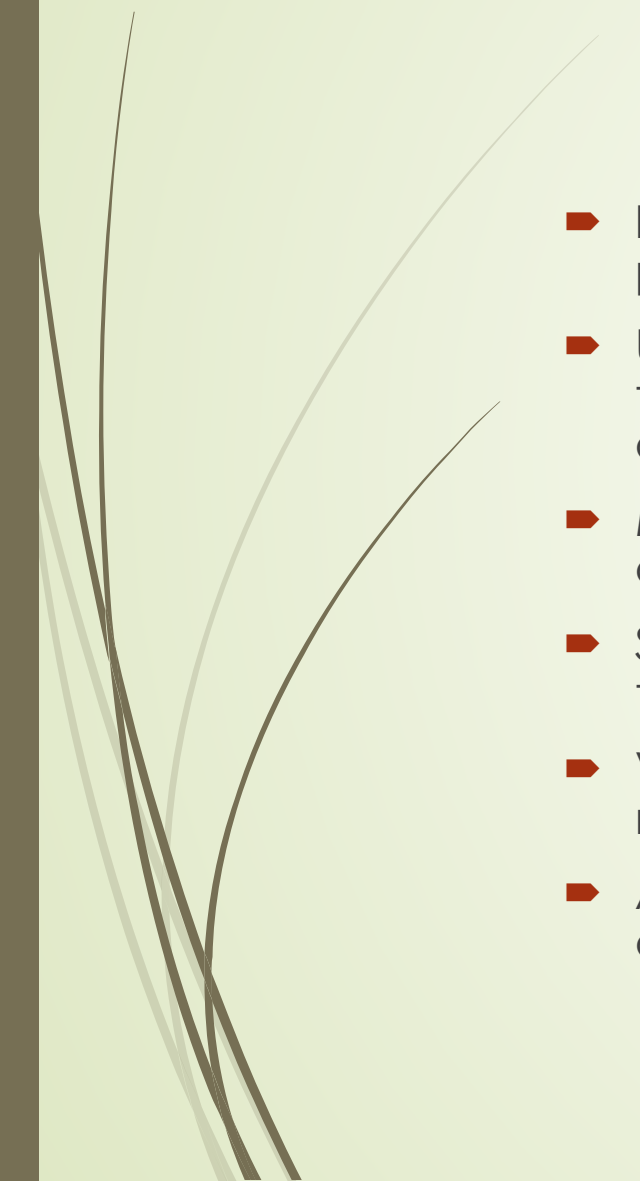


Psychological Difficulties (1)

- Approximately two-thirds of refugees show symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as frequent episodes of panic and agoraphobia .
- Psychological problems are linked to both traumatic past experiences and current socio-economic conditions (social exclusion, poverty, racism).
- High unemployment rates and living in deprived areas increase the risk of social isolation and ghettoization, exacerbating mental health problems.
- Refugee children often develop phobias, insecurities, and psychological disorders, especially when exposed to racist or hostile behavior.
- Experiencing war and violent events causes post-traumatic stress, manifested by fear of loud noises and constant anxiety.
- Lack of adequate psychological support can lead to deterioration in mental health and aggressive behavior.



Psychological Difficulties (2)

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- In the school environment, psychological difficulties can cause conflicts and problems with social integration, hindering the educational process.
 - Unaccompanied refugee children are entitled to international protection under the Geneva Convention (1951) and must receive care regardless of the legality of their arrival.
 - Many unaccompanied children are victims of human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation (prostitution, child labor, theft, begging).
 - States are obliged to provide protection, staff training, and preventive measures to combat trafficking.
 - Victims of trafficking suffer serious psychological and emotional trauma, which makes it difficult for them to trust and communicate with those helping them.
 - A specialized and patient approach is required for the psychosocial support and reintegration of these children.




Importance of Addressing Refugee and Migrant Issues

- The successful social integration of migrants is a critical factor in ensuring prosperity, progress, and social cohesion in European societies.
- Responsibility for integration lies primarily with Member States, while the European Union supports national and local authorities through policy coordination, knowledge sharing, and the provision of financial resources.
- The protection of human rights, including the provision of asylum and medical care, is a fundamental basis for ensuring a dignified life for refugees.
- The education of refugee and migrant children is a fundamental factor for integration and development, helping to overcome linguistic and cultural difficulties and promoting positive attitudes towards the school and social environment.
- Economic integration through access to the labor market allows refugees to contribute to the host society by utilizing their professional and scientific skills.
- Respect for religious and cultural diversity promotes social cohesion and the maintenance of peaceful intercultural relations.
- Educators are called upon to take on a multifaceted role, demonstrating cultural competence and counseling skills in order to effectively support students from different cultural and worldview backgrounds.
- The protection and support of unaccompanied minors is a moral and legal obligation, ensuring that their basic needs are met and promoting their holistic development.
- The ethical dimension of providing assistance lies in empathy and solidarity, which are fundamental values for the well-being of both the individual and society.



Conclusions



Refugee and migrant children face multidimensional difficulties in the school environment, ranging from language and learning barriers to cultural and psychological difficulties. Their successful integration requires targeted policies, an intercultural approach, and active support from the educational community. Cultivating an inclusive and welcoming school environment is essential for the equal participation of all students.

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Thank you for your attention!!!