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# MIGRATION, FAKE NEWS AND COMMUNICATION CONFLICTS: A STUDY ABOUT SYRIAN IMMIGRANTS IN TURKEY

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## **ABSTRACT:**

As a result of the conflict in Syria in 2011, approximately 3.5 million Syrians migrated to Turkey. A significant number of news articles about Syrian refugees have been produced in traditional media, and various types of content have been created on social media. However, some of these news stories and posts have been based on inaccurate information. This research aims to examine how Syrian refugees interpret the fake news spread about them and how such content affects their daily lives and their relationships with Turkish society. To achieve this objective, focus group discussions were conducted with Syrian refugees working in civil society centres. Various questions were posed to the Syrian refugees about the impact of the spread of fake news on their daily lives, how such news affects their communication processes within society, and what solutions they propose. During the focus group discussion, media texts were distributed which contained fake news or misinformation. According to the study's findings, Syrian refugees frequently encounter fake news in their daily lives, and these reports have negative effects on their daily lives and their integration into the social life of which they are part.

## **KEY WORDS:**

fake news, false information, hate speech, migration, post truth, Syrian refugees

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# 1 Introduction

Fake news, produced and disseminated for political, economic, social, or personal purposes, can lead to decisions based on misinformation, ultimately creating distrust and chaos in society. It is emphasised that fake news, defined as the “spread of news or information about false or manipulated reality,” is consciously produced and disseminated to achieve specific goals (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Factors such as the loss of the sense of knowing the truth and the shaping of reality accordingly, as well as the inability of feelings to perceive the truth, distance us from the truth itself, leading to a dangerous situation in many respects (Mcintyre, 2019). This period, where the truth becomes insignificant, is described as the “post-truth era” (Keyes, 2017). In this era, it is stated that people can accept news as true if it aligns with their interests and beliefs, even though they know the news is false (Alpay, 2019). Sometimes, new social media users share content they know to be false just for the “fun” of interaction (Karlova & Fisher, 2013).

In the post-truth era, where personal beliefs become more decisive, emotional and ideological beliefs replace objective reality, and people accept the “reality” that suits them best (Keyes, 2017). Therefore, in the post-truth era, people tend to prefer, interpret, and understand information based on their personal views and experiences.

Migration movements, increasing worldwide due to conflicts, poverty, and certain political developments, have affected a wide range of regions politically, economically, and culturally. This situation has made migration and refugee issues attractive topics for discussion in both traditional media and social media platforms. Therefore, it is not surprising that the phenomenon of migration, which leads to differences in opinion in various societies and is sometimes used as a political tool, is associated with fake news. In this context, it can be said that within the migration movement from Syria, where internal conflicts escalated into a civil war in 2011, fake news and misinformation targeting Syrian refugees have also spread.

From the very beginning, the wave of migration, which started in Syria and quickly became one of the region’s deepest humanitarian and political crises, has been reflected in media content (Erdoğan, 2020). Due to their geographical proximity, Syrian citizens first sought refuge in countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. According to the data of the Directorate General of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior in May 2024, there are 3,057,632 registered Syrians in Turkey, with 57,712 Syrians living in temporary accommodation centres (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2024).

During the early periods of migration, Turkey’s perception and policy regarding Syrians were built on temporariness, so the attitude towards Syrian refugees was based on hospitality. However, the chaotic situation in Syria, the increase in the number of Syrians in the country, and the prolongation of their stays have led to increased reactions towards Syrians, sometimes reaching the level of xenophobia (Erdoğan, 2018). In this context, it can be stated that the use of negative stereotypes in the media representations of refugees and the rapid spread of fake news and misinformation on social media have further deepened the economic, political, and cultural problems already arising from migration in Turkey. Various studies have been conducted on the topic of Syrian refugees being subjects of fake news in Turkey (Taş & Taş, 2018; Göncü & Sim, 2019). Additionally, studies have focused on the media representations of Syrian refugees (Doğanay & Çoban Keneş, 2016; Saltoğlu, 2019), the representation of Syrian refugee children and women in news (Ardıç Çobaner, 2015; Narlı et al., 2020), and user comments about Syrian refugees on social media (Erbaysal Filibeli & Ertuna, 2021; Bolgun & Uçan, 2020; Uluk, 2019; Kardeş et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies examining Syrian refugees in the context of migration and integration have also been conducted (Erdoğan, 2022; Şahin & Aydemir, 2018; Keskinkılıç Kara & Şentürk Tüysüz, 2017; Çelik & İçduygu, 2018; Şahin et al., 2023, Ayyıldız & Karataş, 2022). In addition, the formation of hate speech against Syrian refugees through media has also been the subject of different research (Sadakaoğlu & Dora, 2022; Pandır et al., 2015; Kurt, 2019).

This research aims to gather the views of Syrian refugees, who are the direct subjects and, in a sense, victims of fake news. Therefore, within the scope of the research, focus group interviews were conducted with Syrian refugees about fake news concerning them, aiming to reveal how they evaluate such content and the impacts of fake news on their daily lives.

## 2 Literature Review

Fake news refers to messages produced and disseminated with various intentions, which have become more prevalent with the widespread use of social media and Internet technologies, thereby increasing their societal impact (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). In the context of news production, fake news refers to deliberately written news articles aimed at misleading readers (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). These types of news generally contain intentionally misleading information and are used to achieve political, social, or economic objectives (Pennycook & Rand, 2019).

Fake news can influence voter behaviour, contribute to the shaping of political preferences, and deepen public debates. This situation negatively affects social cohesion and can even disrupt social peace (Guess et al., 2020). By emphasising and polarising social differences, fake news can further marginalise the disadvantaged groups (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

In conclusion, the societal impacts of fake news are quite complex and multifaceted, affecting critical areas such as public health, democratic processes, media credibility, and social cohesion. Therefore, it is important for the public to adopt a more critical approach to news and information, seek information from reliable sources, and take conscious steps to combat fake news.

While political and commercial reasons are the primary factors behind the production and dissemination of fake news, it is also essential to consider psychological factors in this context. Two main motivations drive the production and sharing of fake news (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The first is political. The propaganda policy, described in the literature as “artificial grassroots” activity, is an attempt to create a false impression on the public to support a person, an ideology, or a product campaign. The second main motivation behind the production and sharing of fake news is the drive to achieve economic gain. Individuals or institutions wishing to generate commercial revenue from a website or social media account can attract attention by producing fake or misleading news and various content, thereby earning economic gains by encouraging users to click on the generated links and subscribe (Tandoc et al., 2018).

Another crucial factor in the dissemination of fake news is grounded in human psychology. People are exposed to a constant and intense flow of information from the media, especially through new media, every day. This situation results in the less frequent use of mechanisms to distinguish truth from falsehood, and constant exposure to misinformation can lead to believing that false content is true (Polage, 2012).

Another concept at the heart of discussions in this field is bias. Strong adherence to an idea can lead to rejecting and even belittling opposing views when encountered (Melchior & Oliveira, 2024). Increased anger and anxiety during crisis times, extraordinary situations, and events of heightened social sensitivity can lead to similar outcomes. It is noted that anger encourages individuals to act on misinformation and strengthens beliefs in biased information (Weeks, 2015). During periods of rising anger and anxiety, the phenomenon of trolling becomes more visible in connection with fake news. Troll accounts are typically described as being managed by individuals aiming to provoke or spread disinformation (Hindman & Barash, 2018). It is emphasised that the phenomenon of trolling, which sometimes emerges for entertainment and sometimes to achieve political gain by misleading the public, fuels the post-truth era (Göncü & Sim, 2019).

Furthermore, the operational principles of algorithms cause the formation of ideological filter bubbles and echo chambers, which open the doors to polarisation within society. Because of filter bubbles representing intellectual isolation, users eventually only access news that aligns with their ideas and beliefs (Spohr, 2017). According to Pavlik “unfiltered social media news and misinformation can deeply impact “the construction of social perceptions and the framing of narratives” among the public.” (2021, p. 10). Consequently, there is a risk of losing the ability to communicate across social and religious lines, as well as shared senses of reality, leading to a resurgence of nationalism, fear of social change, and hatred of the other (Kakutani, 2019). This situation poses an epistemic crisis for democracy. (Dahlgren, 2018)

### 3 Controversial Areas Regarding Fake News in the Context of Asylum, Refugees, and Immigration

Today, millions of people around the world are forced to leave their countries due to war, conflict, political oppression, and for economic reasons. According to the International Organisation for Migration's Glossary on Migration, the term "migrant" generally refers to: "Any person who makes a decision to migrate freely, for reasons of personal convenience and without intervention by an external compelling factor." (Perruchoud & Redpath Cross, 2023, p. 37). "A "refugee" is someone who, due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside their country of nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country." (Perruchoud & Redpath Cross, 2023, p. 65). "An "asylum seeker" is someone who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and awaits the determination of their status as a refugee under relevant national or international instruments." (Perruchoud & Redpath Cross, 2023, p. 74).

The significant impacts of migration and the large number of people involved draw intense media attention, particularly from new media. The representation of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the media has become increasingly controversial. Research indicates that refugees are often negatively portrayed in the media. Both traditional and new media frequently depict refugees as "criminals," "dangerous," or "invaders". These representations can create negative perceptions of refugees and deepen societal polarisation (Iyengar & Massey, 2018).

The mass movement of millions of people seeking new lives in other countries affects both the refugees themselves and the host countries in many ways. This large-scale migration has economic, political, social, and cultural consequences for the host countries, making societal reactions inevitable. However, news and social media content frequently represent refugees and asylum seekers as "terrorists," "criminals," and "invaders," which does not help solve the migration issue. Instead, such news can lead to social exclusion, discrimination, and even physical violence against refugees (Berry et al., 2015).

Fake news and misinformation spreading rapidly on social media platforms can exacerbate the already fragile perception of migration in society, escalating it to xenophobia (Wright et al., 2021). This can lead to further marginalisation of refugees and asylum seekers. Many studies indicate that the combination of migration and fake news triggers extreme emotional reactions and deepens societal polarisation (Borella, 2017).

In Turkey, the negative discourse built around Syrian asylum seekers in news and social media content has contributed to similar polarisation. According to the report, supported by UNHCR Turkey, societal acceptance and solidarity have significantly decreased, while concerns have increased compared to previous years. Syrians are described as "dangerous people who will cause problems in the future," "people who burden us," and "people who do not protect their own country." Participants in the study believe that Syrians will harm Turkey's economy (70.3%), public service quality (67.4%), and socio-cultural structure (67.1%), and express that Syrians disrupt public peace with the crimes they commit (65.9%) (Erdoğan, 2022).

Many news sources and social media accounts frequently claim that Syrian asylum seekers in Turkey cause problems such as unemployment, rent increases, economic burden, and crime. However, verification activities in Turkey reveal that many of these claims are unfounded (Foça, 2017). For instance, the Directorate of Communications' Disinformation Combat Centre states that various claims, such as "houses being built for free for Syrians" and "health services, medication, medical devices, orthotics-prosthetics, and other material costs for asylum seekers being covered by the Ministry of Health," are baseless, and regularly informs the public not to believe such fake news (DMM, 2024). Similar to social media posts, unfounded claims and accusations frequently appear in mainstream media news, portraying Syrian asylum seekers as a group obtaining economic advantages, entering universities without exams, committing various crimes, and ultimately posing a threat to public security in many ways (Doğanay & Çoban Keneş, 2016). Such content depicts Syrians as a homogeneous group, ignoring socio-economic and socio-cultural differences between them.

Fake news about refugees and asylum seekers focuses on three themes in the relationship between the host country and asylum seekers: “threat to societal values,” “threat to public safety,” and “threat to general rights” (Sutherland & Dykstra-DeVette, 2018). Fake news targeting elements of social sensitivity, including the phenomenon of migration, results in people reconstructing reality through emotions such as anger and anxiety, deepening the divide with “the other.” Such stereotypical presentations and negative representations underline cultural differences (Pickering, 2001), assuming that “the other” is “inferior” or “backward” compared to our norms, goals, or culture, and constructing the narrative that foreigners are risky and dangerous (Van Dijk, 1999). For example, a video that rapidly spread on social media in 2018 claimed that a Syrian asylum seeker attacked an Atatürk - the founder of Turkey - statue (Arabacı, 2018). This claim, later proven to be false, posed a risk of making communication between Syrian asylum seekers and Turkish society difficult, thereby deepening the divide between the two communities. Even after being debunked, fake news can leave a lasting impact on readers (Polage, 2012).

In addition to creating a divide based on societal values, many fake news articles are used to spread the notion that refugees are dangerous individuals posing a security threat. Such news is highly effective in misleading the public. In another example, it was claimed that two Syrians kidnapped and raped a woman in Bursa, and a social media post showed a photo of a woman lying face down on the road. However, this photo was found to be from a different incident in 2013 (Çavuş, 2017a; Çavuş, 2017b). News under this heading aims to spread the belief that refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey are living in prosperity thanks to the economic and social privileges provided to them, thus usurping the rights of Turkish citizens. False claims such as “The Ministry of National Education will build four special schools for refugees in İzmir” (Korkmaz, 2021), “Syrians queuing in front of PTT to collect their salaries,” and “Konya Metropolitan Municipality granting salaries to Syrians” (Özer, 2017) spread rapidly on social media. The photos and videos accompanying such content in news and social media posts also visually stereotype people identified as Syrians, presenting them as typical examples of a specific community. Using media portraits and the stereotyped images these portraits create, such fake news can shape public perception by suggesting that people from different cultures are dangerous (Taşdelen, 2020).

## 4 Methodology

The aim of this research is to reveal how Syrian asylum seekers interpret the news shared in traditional media and the content shared in new media that is based on fake news or misinformation. Additionally, the study examines the opinions of Syrian asylum seekers on whether the dissemination of such content leads to xenophobia. In line with the stated aim, the research focuses on two main questions:

RQ1: How do Syrian asylum seekers evaluate fake news about themselves in the context of their lives in Turkey and their integration into social life?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of Syrian asylum seekers regarding the transformation of fake news about them into hate speech?

The qualitative research method and focus group interview technique were used in the study. Generally, qualitative research focuses on expressions rather than numbers in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012). In other words, qualitative research and techniques aim to understand the reasons and methods behind human and group behaviours (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2016). According to Morgan (1997), specific questions are usually asked to a certain number of people in group interviews, and responses are received. However, in focus group interviews, an interaction occurs within the group about the problem being researched, and this interaction allows for various comments. The answers to the questions asked in focus group interviews are shaped by the interaction of individuals in the group, enabling new ideas to form in the minds of other participants (Patton, 2002).

The sample of the research consists of Syrian asylum seekers working in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Gaziantep, one of the cities most affected by the wave of migration of Syrians. The main reason for including Gaziantep in the sample is the large number of civil society centres belonging to local and international organisations that operate in this city to support asylum seekers. Due to the high population of Syrian asylum seekers in border regions, NGOs have established support centres in Gaziantep. Experts working in these centres are in close contact with Syrian asylum seekers and provide support for all their problems.

This situation highlights the importance of limiting the sample to NGO workers. Focus group interviews were conducted with 29 NGO workers within the scope of the study. However, these interviews went beyond gathering the participants' opinions; their close interaction with asylum seekers and their observations allowed for a better understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by asylum seekers from different socioeconomic statuses regarding fake news, providing more perspectives.

Each group consisted of 6-8 participants, and each discussion lasted between 90-100 minutes. Participants were seated in a U-shaped arrangement to facilitate better interaction. Initially, participants were asked 10 semi-structured questions to express their general views on misinformation and false news.

Subsequently, participants were provided with a total of 5 false news items categorised under the themes "threat to societal values," "threat to public security", and "threat to general rights". These news items were selected from content confirmed as false by the fact-checking platform Teyit.org, some of which were disseminated through traditional media and others through new media channels. Participants were given a specified time to read the news items and were then asked to share their opinions and thoughts about the news.

## 5 Results

The research findings from the focus group discussions were categorised into three main categories based on the research questions:

1. Interpretations of Syrian refugees regarding false news and misinformation about themselves.
2. Reflections of the spread of false news and misinformation on the daily life practices of Syrian refugees.
3. Situation assessment and proposed solutions by Syrian refugees regarding false news and misinformation.

### **Comments of Syrian Refugees on False News and Misinformation Directed towards Them**

Participants in focus group discussions conducted as part of the research complain about Syrian refugees being the subject of false claims in both traditional media and social media. According to participants, the way Syrian refugees are portrayed in this manner is often filled with biased and inaccurate claims rather than reflecting the true situation of refugees. Therefore, the perception and representation of refugees could create a negative outlook among the general public: "The common point of news about Syrian refugees is based on sensitive topics. Always economic pressure, threat to national security... We are constantly portrayed as if we are enemies." (Participant 2 from Group 1)

According to participants, some news articles produced do not qualify as news. Yet, some articles, even though lacking this quality, are presented to the public as news simply because the word "Syrian" is mentioned. This reflects the fact that media can employ different tactics to attract viewers' interest and increase viewership/click counts when determining topics for news coverage. News content that purportedly involves Syrian refugees constructs discourse based on emphasising the term "Syrian."

"Recently, an abnormal incident occurred in Istanbul, and an inappropriate image was shared. In the news related to the incident, they directly blamed Syrians. Whenever there's any strangeness in society, media channels say, 'This is the work of Syrians.'" (Participant 7 from Group 2)

Participants complain about content based on fake news and misinformation that creates generalisations about them and spreads prejudices: “There’s a bigger issue than generalisation. Whether the news is fake, false, or even true, if someone does something bad, they say it was Syrians. What’s my fault in all of this?” (Participant 15 from Group 2)

Many participants believe that the fabricated news generated in Turkey in recent years, based on a refugee-centric approach amid economic challenges and political struggles, fuels tension within society. It is expressed that content producers create news and posts that satisfy what the public wants to hear. Participants argue that these fabricated news pieces, shaped and directed by content producers towards certain political and profit goals, are systematically shared and spread, resulting in specific emotions within both communities. The cultural differences between the two communities have also enhanced the credibility of these news stories.

### **The Impact of the Spread of Fake News and Misinformation on the Daily Life Practices of Syrian Refugees**

The difficulties and emotional responses that Syrian refugees experience in the face of discriminatory discourse can negatively impact their daily lives and their process of societal integration. Discriminatory and hate-filled rhetoric can harm refugees’ psychological well-being, and make their integration into society more challenging (Doğanay & Çoban Kenes, 2016). Fake news contributes to this situation by creating a conducive environment for such attitudes, causing numerous problems in refugees’ daily lives.

For example, patterns commonly constructed about Syrian refugees in media and on social networking sites can lead to perceiving all Syrian individuals in a uniform manner, categorising them as a homogeneous group. These patterns, when combined with fake news, swiftly imprint visual stereotypes of refugees into societal memory.

In people’s minds, the image of a Syrian is often a man wearing a worn-out robe (jubba), walking with two veiled women behind him, and they are followed by seven or eight children. They think that all Syrians are the same, and when they see something different, they express surprise by saying, “You’re not Syrian.” (Participant 8 from Group 2).

The news is the primary factor responsible for creating and spreading stereotypes. The second factor is generalisation, meaning if a Syrian person does something good, it’s attributed only to that individual, but if they do something bad, it’s generalised to all Syrians. (Participant 21 from Group 3)

The patterns and prejudices formed against Syrian refugees are emphasised to lead to undesired treatment in society, which negatively affects refugees. Just because they are “Syrian,” individuals may face mistreatment regardless of their personal choices or lifestyle. This can cause negative psychological and emotional impacts. Participants’ views on this matter are as follows.

These kinds of news ruin my day. Because we are also human beings and face enough pressure throughout the day. For example, I’m under pressure about whether my residence permit will be renewed, legal status pressures, the situation of relatives remaining in Syria, the situation in Syria... When you say “Syrian,” it feels like walking on shifting sands, and this puts pressure on us. By doing this, they are suffocating us even more. (Participant 2 from Group 1).

During the focus group discussion, the phenomenon of fake news in daily life was examined through four categories of expressions: denial of their own identity, inability to speak their native language, avoidance of social integration, and lack of interest in following news. According to the findings, participants expressed that such news content negatively impacts their lifestyle and quality of life due to the perceptions it creates in society. It also leads them to change their attitudes in many areas.

When a new story breaks, I stay at home and don’t let my children go outside. Sometimes, my children stay indoors for a whole week without playing outside at all. For example, do you remember the incident in Ankara where they smashed cars? I stayed home at that time and couldn’t go out because my children would ask me questions, and I wouldn’t have answers for them. (Participant 22 from Group 4).



Some participants mentioned that in certain situations, they deny their identity, act as if they are not Syrian, try not to use their native Arabic language in public, claim to be from Hatay (*a Turkish city*) if they speak Turkish, or claim to be Lebanese or Algerian if they do not. They also expressed discomfort in not openly stating their identity. Participant 4 from Group 1, particularly during periods of increased spread of fake news, indicated increased unease and described measures they take: “I avoid saying I’m Syrian. When I’m out on the street, I prefer to speak Turkish instead of Arabic. Sometimes, if my phone rings and I need to speak Arabic, I don’t answer it, especially in crowded places.”

### **Identification of the Situation Regarding Fake News and Misinformation Targeting Syrian Refugees, and Proposed Solutions**

Refugees and asylum seekers may exhibit a tendency to deny themselves when faced with negative perceptions and discriminatory discourse in society. Additionally, due to fake news and misinformation, refugees’ self-confidence can be undermined, and they may be negatively labelled by society, leading them to question and deny their own identity. Refugees, influenced by discriminatory rhetoric, may harbour negative thoughts about their own identity and strive to transform themselves in a way that is deemed acceptable (Uluk, 2019).

If we compare the early years when Syrians first came to Turkey with the present, we can see that Syrians have become more withdrawn. When my Turkish neighbour or coworker sees news about a Syrian killing a Turkish person, it’s normal for them to empathise, but these kinds of stories also affect us because we share the same identity. It implies that they think, “He’s like that, so am I.” (Participant 8 from Group 2)

To respect and protect the human rights of refugees, it is essential for the media to portray accurate and fair representations, and for society to enhance digital literacy regarding fake news. Representations to the contrary lead to stereotypes, and constructing identities and discourse based on fake news and misinformation even forces refugees to conceal their cultural identities in the post-truth era: “My mother is Algerian. When people ask me if I’m Syrian, I say no, I’m Algerian.” (Participant 19 from Group 3)

A friend of mine says he lives a very happy and peaceful life. The reason is this: when people ask if he’s Syrian, he says no and claims he’s Lebanese. They say you’re a foreigner, you’re Syrian, and he says no, I’m Lebanese. Now he lives a very relaxed life. (Participant 24 from Group 4)

When asked ‘where are you from?’ I answer ‘I’m from Hatay.’ Some people say my way of speaking resembles Syrians. In such situations, I tell them my uncles are Syrian and my father is from Hatay. Before, I used to say ‘I’m Syrian from Damascus,’ but now I don’t mention it unless necessary. (Participant 28 from Group 4)

Verification of news and information before publication is crucial to fight fake news and misinformation targeting Syrian refugees. However, participants express that even when claims in fake news are later proven untrue, this correction often goes unnoticed. Numerous studies affirm these concerns in the post-truth era, such as findings showing that fake news spreads much faster on platforms like Twitter compared to accurate information (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

According to participants, Syrian refugees refrain from spreading debunked news stories and fear doing so. The main reason for this is their belief that even if they share the true news, it won’t be beneficial and instead, they will face backlash from society. In this context, participants express the need for social media accounts that accurately convey the views of Syrian refugees in Turkey and counteract such fake news.

So far, there has never been a Syrian account sharing content in Turkish. If only one side could come out and have a little talk and share a subtitled video, things might be better, but no one is doing it. (Participant 1 from Group 1).

Due to the rapid spread of misleading information on social media, posts that provoke and mislead Syrian refugees can lead to negative consequences. Therefore, participants emphasise the vital importance for refugees to employ additional methods during their information search process, such as verifying and questioning the accuracy

of the source. For example, refugees can compare different news sources to determine whether a piece is new. In this context, Participant 24 from Group 4, shared their method as follows.

I read the official Turkish news headlines before going to work, and throughout the day, I compare them with the news shared by Telegram news channels. I believe that the language of translation significantly affects the content of the news (Participant 24 from Group 4).

Among the suggestions provided by participants are actions such as ensuring oversight of various media channels by authorised institutions, verifying news before publication, and countering any false news found on social media. These actions are crucial for strengthening the relationship and communication between both communities.

## 6 Conclusion

In the post-truth era, people tend to believe in “realities” that align with their own beliefs and ideologies, particularly increasing interest in fake news on societal issues. False news flows driven by political and economic expectations often find space in the media, especially false news targeting refugees, frequently spreading on social media regardless of its source or the truth of the claims. This rapid dissemination of such content has become a widespread issue. Against this backdrop, this study aims to evaluate the phenomenon of fake news from the perspective of Syrian refugees.

According to the findings of the study, Syrian refugees in their daily lives frequently encounter false news, which negatively impacts their everyday lives and their integration into societal life. It has been observed that Syrian refugees in Turkey are often subjected to negative representations in the media and consequently in societal perceptions. During focus group discussions, participants noted that media and social media platforms often feature news that does not focus on the real stories of refugees and is filled with incorrect or incomplete information. As a result, a negative perception of Syrian refugees can develop within society. Participants expressed concerns that the media tends to portray Syrian refugees as criminals, and false news of this nature spreads quickly on social media, risking the scapegoating of innocent individuals. Participants also shared their thoughts that such biased or false news content could potentially lead to increased violence against refugees in society. Overall, the study highlights the detrimental effects of false news on Syrian refugees’ lives and their societal integration, emphasising the importance of accurate and responsible reporting in mitigating negative perceptions and promoting understanding.

The research findings indicate that news concerning Syrian refugees, which often relies on attention-grabbing headlines and incomplete/incorrect or false information instead of real stories, can have negative consequences. Participants underscored the media’s responsibility to produce responsible and accurate news. The study strongly emphasises the vital importance of preventing the spread of false news that contributes to misconceptions about Syrian refugees and fosters a negative societal outlook. Furthermore, the research highlights the discrimination and prejudice issues that Syrian refugees face, largely exacerbated by the impact of false news. Findings also suggest that media professionals and content creators in new media may prioritise increasing viewership or click rates by targeting Syrian refugees, potentially leading to their unfavourable portrayal in societal perceptions and increased discrimination. Overall, the study underscores the critical need for media integrity and responsible reporting to combat misinformation and foster a more informed and empathetic societal perspective towards Syrian refugees.

In conclusion, this research highlights how the daily life practices of Syrian refugees and perceptions towards them are shaped by false news. The accurate and unbiased presentation of news by the media is crucial not only for shaping societal perceptions but also for effectively formulating government policies. Furthermore, it is vital that new media content is based on factual information rather than false news and misinformation. This approach encourages users to become more conscious through new media literacy and critical thinking perspectives.

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