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Trapped in precarious work: The case of Syrian refugee workers in Turkey

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Abstract

Precarious working conditions have been a significant global challenge across many countries, and the impact of precarious employment conditions, particularly on low-income refugees, has led to dramatic experiences. Drawing on a qualitative study, this chapter investigates the precarity experiences of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Our exploration which highlights the vulnerable nature of refugees in the work environment also reveals the unwelcoming treatments they face in social life. Our multilevel analyses represent macro-, meso-, and micro-level findings. The macro-level findings point to a lack of migration policy, insufficient level of employment laws and labour unionisation that worsen the precarious conditions. At the meso-level analysis, we found inadequate organisational level interventions by firms such as unethical treatment, intimidation for noticing police and wage theft. Finally, the micro-level results focused on social exclusion. The study contributes to debates on insecurity, inequality, diversity and human rights in migration studies.

Introduction

Precarious work has increased in many countries and has become a global challenge (Foster, 2021; Vij, 2019). Numerous factors have contributed to increasing precarity, such as macro-economic recession, neoliberal globalisation, increased organisational competition, and economic integration that accelerated the adoption of work outsourcing (Kalleberg, 2009; Suresh Sapkal & Sundar, 2012; Standing, 2011). The existing literature suggests that as the labour market witnesses growth in self-employment and zero-hour contracts to boost the economy and attain profitability, it also increases precarious work globally (Harvey, 2005). However, previous studies demonstrated that certain groups are far more vulnerable to precarious working conditions such as young workers (Bradley & van Hoof, 2005; Kretsos, 2010), women (Fudge & Owens, 2006; Jonsson & Nyberg, 2010; Scarponi, 2010), LGBTQ+ people (Kamasak, Özbilgin, Baykut & Yavuz, 2020), agency workers-temporary employment (Elcioglu, 2010), older workers (D'Amours, 2010) and minority ethnic workers, migrants and refugees (Bhalla & McCormick, 2009; Porthé et al., 2009) and Roma people (McKay, Szymonek & Keles, 2012). In fact, McKay et al. (2012) argue that undocumented migrants are the most vulnerable population of all the mentioned categorisations since they attain limited opportunities to land high-paying jobs and possibilities for upward mobility.

The conceptualisation of precariousness differs among scholars. For instance, Ettlinger (2007) utilizes the term to describe the generalised condition of unpredictability in society, whereas Vasudevan (2015) refers to the concept as an economic and political condition that arises from “ambient insecurity” (p.351). For some scholars, precariousness is a multidimensional concept that occurs in five distinctive aspects of social life (Campbell & Price, 2016). The first level of precariousness is related to employment conditions, which is related to job specifications that are characterised by "insecurity" resulting in a low level of regulatory protection, minimum wages, high job insecurity, low level of employee control over their work conditions (Vosko, 2010: 2; Vosko et al., 2009: 7). The second level referring to precarious work is related to "waged work" that encompasses several preciousness attributions (Standing, 2011). The third level of precariousness focuses on the “precarious worker" and on the experiences of individual lives (Anderson, 2010). The fourth level of precariousness is related to understanding a particular group, the so-called "precariat", in a labour market (Standing, 2011). As Standing (2011) argues, this new social class, namely the "precariat" has arisen as a consequence of instability, insecurity, and unpredictability (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018: 7) and provoked particular challenges like the “Occupy Movements” in Western societies. The fifth level of precariousness refers to a more generalised conceptualisation of precariousness in a social context, i.e., housing, welfare, human geography, and personal relations (Anderson, 2010; Arnold & Bongiavi, 2013; Ali & Newbold, 2019). Although understanding precarity as a life condition resulting from unstable societal conditions (Bourdieu, 1999; Butler, 2004), the term is commonly used to explore the specific labour market condition (Waite, 2009; Dorre et al., 2006). As social and labour historians focused on understanding the structural conditions of precariousness within the domain of social life (Betti, 2018), precarious work conditions have increased steadily despite the commonly adopted "standard employment model" of the 1950-1970s. Herein the standard employment model refers to work arrangements characterised as *"a stable, protected, full time that is regulated to a minimum level by collective agreement or by labour and social security law*" (Bosch 2004, pp. 618–619). Even though the standard work model is full-time employment, providing individual social protection via the employer and state support, precarious work is often related to short-term fixed contracts that are commonly found in hospitality, construction, agriculture, retail, care, and domestic work (McKay, Szymonek & Keles, 2012; Anderson 2010).

Clement et al. (2009) argue that precariousness is contingent upon certain elements such as access to welfare services irrespective of labour market status. Due to a rise in transnational movements of the workforce globally, the immigrant population also increased substantially (Mcdowell et al., 2009). Immigrants and ethnic minorities face precarious work conditions as they are generally offered temporary contracts and seasonal work (Mcdowell et al., 2009). This condition is not surprising since Polanyi (1944) warned that allowing the market as the prevailing actor in society could be detrimental. Similarly, Kalleberg (2009) highlighted that there is an increased workforce vulnerability due to the unregulated labour market conditions. This circumstance resulted in limited rights to attain healthcare, welfare, and social benefits, inadequate employment rights, and difficulties such as acquiring essential education to gain relevant skills and competence to increase upward mobility (Bobek et al. 2018; Waite & Lewis 2017) for the precariat. Although some of today's workforce has more flexibility and opportunities such as remote work and diverse work arrangements (Hoffman et al., 2020), the way immigrants and ethnic minorities experience

precarious work may be distinctive, particularly since many immigrants and ethnic minorities work in professions that do not allow for remote work, such as cleaners.

Thus, this chapter focuses on the experience of the precarity of minority ethnic Syrians in Turkey. While minority ethnic Syrians entered the country as refugees, most of them have now settled permanently. As such, minority ethnic Syrians now form with nearly 4 million people one of the largest ethnic minority groups in Turkey. An ethnic minority is a group of people who differ in race or colour or in national, religious, or cultural origin from the dominant group, often the majority population, of the country in which they live. Accordingly, when referring to minority ethnic Syrians, we use both terms, refugees and ethnic minorities. However, only 15,000 Syrians have been granted a work permit and they also lack access to vocational training, which has turned many Syrians, irrespective of their educational attainment, into precarious workers. Accordingly, the chapter starts by exploring how this group became a precarious workforce. We then describe the precariat context in Turkey from a historical perspective. Next, we present a qualitative study that illustrates the precariat experiences of minority ethnic Syrians in Turkey. Finally, we provide a chapter summary and discussion of possible ways to combat precarious work conditions.

Migrants and refugees as precarious workforce

The employment conditions and relations of migrant and refugee workers in receiving countries have attracted the growing interest of management scholars (Wright & Clibborn, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021) as their working and living vulnerability has increased due to precarious work conditions (Bloch et al., 2012; Triantafyllidou & Marcetti 2015; Anderson 2007). Anderson et al. (2014) have hinted at a link between segmented markets and migrant workers. Although the undesirability of the work conditions has created a demand for migrant workers, the circumstance also created poor employment terms and conditions. Since migrant and refugee workers face substantial mobility restrictions due to their legal status, they face increased precarious situations and are excluded from legal and social protection (ILO, 2012; UNDP, 2020). Although the categorisations of migrants and refugees and their status vary due to adopted national migration and refugee policies and discourses, the role of migrants and refugees in some economic landscapes may be vital. Various research on the migrant and refugee workforce and their precarious conditions have focused on their immigration/refugee status (Anderson et al., 2006; McKay et al., 2009; Valentine, 2010), nationality (Kagan et al., 2011), and industry-specific attributes (Anderson & Rogaly, 2005; Bloch & McKay, 2017; Posch et al., 2020).

Previous research demonstrated that migrant and refugee workers are more likely to face unfavourable work treatment (Akinlade et al., 2020; Esses, 2021) and encounter greater difficulty integrating into the workforce (Ertorer et al., 2020; Amuedo-Hamrin, 2019). Dorantes and Rica (2007) found that migrant workers often face discrimination based on their ethnic origin. Additionally, Porthe et al., 2009 showed that undocumented migrants experience high job instability, disempowerment due to insufficient legal protection, and high vulnerability. Migrants and refugees often face limited job mobility and lack opportunities to obtain necessary skills and competence due to their unique conditions in the receiving country (Kamasak, Özbilgin, Yavuz & Akalın, 2020). Thus, migrant and refugee workers are frequently associated with precarious work characterised by minimum wages, high insecurity, undesirable working conditions and unfair

treatment at work (Campbell & Price 2016; Bloch & McKay 2017). Especially undocumented migrants face precarious working conditions since they do not have the necessary permits, and lack knowledge of the host country and the regulative and legislative framework (McKay et al., 2012).

Zhang et al. (2021) outlined several factors contributing to migrants' precariousness in the labour market. These factors are categorised under three levels of analysis, namely micro (individual), meso (organisational), and macro (country or contextual) levels. The authors focused on various human resource management (HRM) practices utilised in managing a precarious workforce at the individual level. For example, Hopkins et al. (2016) identified that harsh HRM mechanisms, such as attendance control, are adopted to effectively manage the precarious workforce in an organisation. Researching the experiences of black, Asian, and asylum seekers they conclude that the individual experience of precarity varies across migrants, which must be understood as a heterogeneous group of migrant workers. This finding is relevant for the development of international human resource management literature, which often views migrant workers as a homogenous group. Campbell et al. (2019) conducted a study in Australia where an increasing level of precarity occurs. The study draws attention to so-called "wage theft", a practice known as intentional underpayment, which is a form of illegal employer practises implemented by organisations and tolerated by employees. The authors highlight employees' reluctance to complain about such practices and the rationales adopted by the precarious migrant workforce to do so. Esbenshade et al. (2019) examined the individual conditions of the precarious migrant workforce in the USA, exploring the ambiguities of the precarious workforce, such as lack of work protection and control.

Several studies have used a meso-level of analysis, attempting to understand various organisational level aspects of migrant precarity, such as patterns of "vulnerabilization" in organisations, and lack of representation by trade unions (Kirov & Hohnen, 2015). Several meso-level studies explored trade unions and employment agencies' responses to the changing labour market dynamics shaped by increasing precariousness. For instance, Heinrich et al. (2020) have considered the effects of trade union strategies to manage cross-border migrants' precarity in the European Union, arguing due to heightened competition among domestic and EU-migrant workers. The study adopted an actor-centred approach and tried to illuminate the perspective of trade union representatives. The study findings show that trade unions had inadequate knowledge of industrial relations among new and old member countries, adopted selective inclusive strategies, and lacked mechanisms to effectively manage conflict of interest.

At the macro-level, authors argue that migrant and refugee workers' employment precarity is due to receiving countries' migration refugee and labour market policies. For example, Kushnirovich et al. (2018) has focused on identifying "bilateral agreements" (BLA) that establish the rights of the migrant precarity in Israel, specifically in the construction industry. The authors stated that BLA implementation in various countries has increased the vulnerability of migrant precarity and that BLA is effective only in the recruitment process and an ineffective macro-level mechanism to combat exacerbating conditions of migrant precarity such as protecting their social rights in the workplace. Additionally, Howe (2020) identified several governmental and legal interventions,

such as a “new system of employer scheme” to combat the exploitation of migrant precarity in Ireland and New Zealand. The individual-level analysis of migrant precarity focuses on worker attributes such as employment experiences towards implemented HRM practices and mobility (Alberti, 2014; Premji, 2017). Finally, at the macro-level, several authors examined the legal framework on migration policy and labour market regulation and investigated various adopted mechanisms in the receiving countries. There is a clear indication of several factors contributing to the heightened vulnerability of migrant precarity. Although these studies consistently indicate the exploitation of migrants in various contexts, much uncertainty exists in countries with *“limited legal discourses and supportive measures"* protecting the social rights of migrants and refugees (Küskü, 2020: 555).

Syrian refugees in Turkey

Turkey is home to nearly four million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2020), which have become one of the largest minority ethnic groups in Turkey. In this chapter, we focus on the experience of the precarity of minority ethnic Syrians in the labour market in Turkey, who experience precarity in employment at a significantly larger scale compared to the majority population. Historically, irregular migration has not been a major issue in Turkey compared to other nations such as the United States and the EU countries (Boratav, 2006; Toksöz et al., 2012). Turkey has not been considered a popular destination for migrants until the 1990s because of its relatively unattractive economic and political conditions (Çelik, 2005).

In fact, it is the other way around, as a result of the neoliberal economic approaches of the government under the control of the Democrat Party (DP) which mainly adopted populist market policies with no social dimension and with the mechanisation of agriculture, many Turkish villagers became unemployed between the early 1950s and late 1970s (Kamasak & Yavuz, 2016; Boratav, 2006) and left the country. The harm in family farming in villages caused internal migration and emigration of Turkish people to other countries (Çelik, 2005; Akşit, 1993). In particular, the emigration activities which began in the early 1960s are conspicuous. Turkish workers systematically emigrated to Germany under the so-called guest workers agreement signed on October 30, 1961 (Akgündüz, 2018). Regular emigration continued until the mid of 1980s and its scope extended to other European countries i.e. Austria, Belgium, France and The Netherlands. After the bilateral agreements between Turkey and the host countries, Turkey “turned into an emigration country” (Şenses, 2016). The systematic migration comprised nearly 1 million people of whom 800.000 went to Germany in 1973 (Deutsche Welle, 2021).

The popularity of Turkey for migrants only started increasing during the dissolution period of the Soviet Union between 1988 to 1991. People who were in desperate situations from Caucasian countries i.e. Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Armenia and the former Eastern Bloc countries i.e. Moldavia, Romania, and Bulgaria together with Ukraine arrived in Turkey as irregular migrants with no work permits (Toksöz et al., 2012). Irregular migration to Turkey did not come only from these countries but also from Pakistan and particularly Afghanistan which suffered from the Soviet occupation between 1979 and 1989.

Because of the lack of an optimal immigration policy and a low level of regulatory protection in work-life (Baykut et al., 2021), most of the migrants found themselves in an insecure work environment in Turkey and they were considered unskilled workers irrespective of their actual skills (Şenses, 2016). Thus, while some migrants from certain nationalities were associated with the sex industry, others were positioned in housekeeping type of jobs and the others worked in industries such as construction, textile, hospitality which generally employ workers with low skills and pay minimum wages (Armağan & Lloyd, 2018). Although the position and social status of migrants in the labour market have changed over time, the basis of a toxic precarious environment has already been grounded. The precariat context has initially started to emerge after the arrival of the migrants from the countries mentioned above, yet the situation worsened in Turkey due to the civil wars in Iraq between 2006 to 2008 and particularly in Syria which has been continuing since 2011 as part of the wider 2011 Arab Spring protests (UNHCR, 2019). The civil war which is next to the Southeastern borders of Turkey made the country the home of millions of Syrian refugees. The upsurge in irregular migration resulting from the Syrian refugee crisis triggered the precarious conditions that are directed at the migrant population in Turkey.

According to the UNHCR (2020) report, as of October 2020, approximately 5 million migrants reside in Turkey of whom 3.9 million are descendants of Syrian nationality. In Turkey, "Law no. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection" was approved in 2013 to provide a framework for the migration process (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2021). Although Law no. 6458 on immigration tries to eliminate undocumented migrants, approximately 1 million Syrian undocumented migrants are currently working in Turkey (Özvarış et al., 2020). The study by Sevgi (2021) on migrant labour critically argues that 94% of Syrian migrants are employed in the informal economy in Turkey. The informal economy is characterised by precarious work conditions from various perspectives (ILO, 2015). Thus, it is possible to argue that a substantial migrant workforce in Turkey faces precarious work. Although a considerable amount of research has focused on the precarious conditions of the migrant workforce in the Global North (Mcdowell, Batnitzky & Dyer, 2009; Milkman, 2011; Bloch & McKay, 2017; Hande, Akram, & Condratto, 2019), there is a limited number of studies (i.e. Parrenas et al., 2019; Wang, 2020) conducted in the Global South. Turkey hosts the highest number of migrants/refugees in the world and has been experiencing a surge of irregular migration movements since the Syrian conflict started. Therefore, it is important to explore the link between precarity and minority ethnic Syrian workers.

Methods

We have used an abductive methodology (Locke, 2011; Özbilgin & Erbil, 2019). Abductive research allows researchers the flexibility to move back and forth between data and the related literature to identify common patterns. Within the scope of this research, the data represents the participant migrant experiences concerning precarious work from a multilevel perspective. As part of an ethnic minority and migrant workforce, the experience of precarity rises from numerous sources, such as their belief system and attributes as consequences of micro-, meso-, and macro-level interactions of individuals. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 15 Syrian refugees residing in Turkey. The participants' selection was based on their ability to provide researchers with obtaining an in-depth understanding of precarity. We have reached each participant through the contacts of one of the authors who works for the Small and Medium

Enterprises Development Organisation of Turkey (KOSGEB) to which many migrants apply for business-related education, training and funding. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, recorded, and transcribed verbatim. An average interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was conducted by one of the authors of the manuscript.

The demographics of the data reflect that the participants are between 25 and 46 years of age. The majority of the respondents are married with children. They have been residing in Turkey for an average of 5.2 years ranging from 2 to 8 years. All participants have fled Syria due to the civil war and conflicts in the country, thus they all possess Syrian nationality. The migrants were from two Western cities of Turkey, Istanbul and Tekirdag. Both cities host many industries that offer high potential employment for job seekers. Only 2 of the participants were female and the rest were male. The demographic data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

Participant pseudonym	*Age and gender*	*Marital status*	*Education level*	*Jobs in Syria*	*Jobs in Turkey*	*Arrival in Turkey*	*City of residence*
Nubar	44 male	Divorced with 2 children	High school 2nd year dropout	Worker in the garment industry	Worker in the garment industry	2014	Tekirdag
Habib	46 male	Married with 3 children	Vocational school 1st year dropout	Grocer	Worker in textile, biscuits and agriculture	2015	Istanbul
Amine	28 female	Married with 3 children	Studying her final year in university	Not worked (she mentions that women should not work)	Not working	2016	Istanbul
Affan	26 male	Married	High school	Farmer and worker in construction	Worker in construction (not working since last month, could not find a job)	2014	Tekirdag
Secat	35 male	Married with 4 children	High school final year dropout	Electrician	Worker in a coal dealer	2018	Tekirdag
Benat	35 male	Married with 3 children	Theological school	Chauffeur	Cleaner in a mosque	2018	Istanbul
Arvin	30 male	Married with 3 children	Secondary school dropout	Egg dealer	Glassmaker	2019	Tekirdag

Furkat	28 male	Married with 1 child	Secondary school	Worker in construction	Worker in construction (not working, could not find a job because of the pandemic)	2019	Istanbul
Hafza	32 female	Divorced with 3 children	Secondary school dropout	Cleaning and housework	Cleaning and housework, and eldercare	2014	Tekirdag
Renas	32 male	Married with 2 children	Secondary school	Tailor	Sewer in a tailor shop	2018	Istanbul
Omar	31 male	Single (his wife is pregnant)	Unknown	Police officer in the department of homicide	Worker in construction	2015	Tekirdag
Othman	Unknown male	Married with 1 child	Unknown	Worker in women's shoe manufacturing	Worker in construction	2014	Tekirdag
Menduh	28 male	Married with 1 child	Tailoring education	Worker in textile	Worker in textile	2019	Tekirdag
Hubeyb	36 male	Single	Law school 3rd year dropout	Jobless	Worked in ironing, construction, aluminium and has been working in knitting for 4 years	2014	Tekirdag
Sufi	25 male	Married	High school	Farmer	Worker in construction (not working, could not find a job because of the pandemic)	2014	Tekirdag

We have utilised semi-structured interviews to make participants associate their relevant experiences with precarity. The fully transcribed interview data including the precarious experiences of the migrants were analysed by a thematic analysis using the relational perspective.

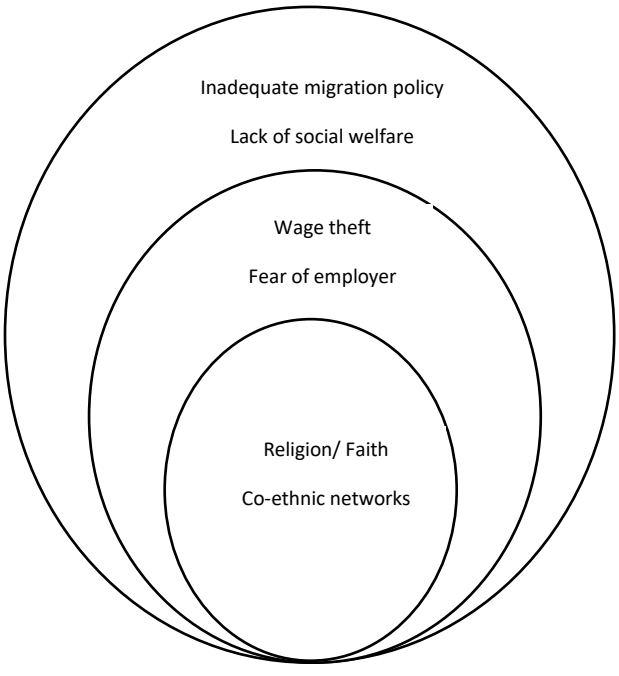
Method of data analysis

Three co-authors independently coded and thematically analysed the data in order to examine how the participants experience precarity in the Turkish labour market. The common procedure in thematic analysis requires methodological categorisation of the empirical data. This procedure

involves encoding qualitative data through explicit codes, leading to emerging patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2007). Furthermore, the identified themes were evaluated on their overall significance in shaping the thematic analysis by the co-authors. Lincoln & Guba (1985) identified several factors in achieving trustworthiness of qualitative data of the explored construct, known as credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability. The researchers have observed the same phenomenon across various individuals and examined common underlying factors contributing to experiences of precarity to attain the study's credibility. We have enriched multiple iterations and emphasised vital factors contributing to migrants' precarious experiences to achieve the study's dependability. For conformability, after the first author collected the raw data, the data was codified and shared among two co-authors who conducted the analysis and coding and selected illustrative codes independently. Then common and significant themes were discussed among the researchers. When authors could not reach common ground on specific themes, the theme was omitted or reconstructed until consensus among the researchers was reached. The study provides valuable insights into migrants' precarity in developing nations with limited regulative discourses in terms of transferability of the study.

We have adopted a relational perspective in this study, in which micro (individual), meso (organisational), and macro (labour market, government) levels are incorporated that impact migrant workers' experience of precarity (Özbilgin & Vassilopoulou, 2018; Kamaşak, Özbilgin, & Yavuz, 2020) (Figure 1). The study's key focus on identifying themes of migrants' precarity experiences in Turkey contributes to understanding the mechanisms that drive an individual to accept such adverse conditions. The constructed thematic analyses allowed researchers to identify categories of themes to discuss some of the prominent reasoning that lead to precarity acceptance. This research critically analyses the precarious migrants' conditions in a context that has high migration levels and is characterised by a limited and durable migrant policy. Figure 1 below outlines how intersectional encounters can be viewed from the perspective of multilevel relationality.

Figure 1. Relational multilevel framework for intersectional encounters & intersectional analysis



As depicted in Figure 1, within this study we have identified various intersectional factors contributing to the acceptance of precarious conditions of migrants in Turkey. For the macro-level encounters, we have observed a lack of inadequate migration policy and lack of social welfare highly contribute to the acceptance of vulnerability. In the study, we have discovered wage theft and fear of employer retaliation are some of the salient causes that lead to migrant precariousness in Turkey for meso-level analysis. The micro-level factors contributing to migrants' acceptance of adverse work conditions stem from their religious affiliation and belief system in addition to co-ethnic employment attachment.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, we present the findings of our study across the three levels of analysis, namely the micro-, meso- and macro-level. Starting with the macro-level of analysis, we examine how inadequate migration policy exacerbates the conditions of the precariousness of migrants. Next, on the meso-level, we analyse how precarity manifests on the organisational level. Lastly, on the micro-level of analysis, we focus on how individuals experience precarity in the labour market in Turkey.

Currently, there are four distinctive immigration categorisations in Turkey (i) irregular/undocumented labour migrants and transit migrants, (ii) asylum seekers and refugees, and (iii) documented/regular migrants (İçduygu & Aksel, 2013). Respective of the categorisation, the irregular/undocumented migrants comprise those considered either as "transit" that use Turkey as a transit state to immigrate to another country or those who stay and work without legal documentation. Furthermore, asylum seekers and refugees are given temporary protection from an emergency humanitarian situation. Lastly, regular migrants immigrated to Turkey for employment, education, settlement, and long-term or recreational purposes. Although various groups are facing an increased vulnerability of precarity including women, young workers, students and the disabled workforce, the majority of the precarious workforce consists of undocumented migrants (Mckay et al., 2012). In the study, the majority of the participants are also undocumented migrants, who migrated to Turkey due to the Syrian conflict.

Macro-level Encounters: how inadequate migration policy exacerbates the conditions of the precariousness of migrants.

Turkey is one of the countries with the highest Syrian migrant population, currently unable to provide adequate policy and social welfare to its irregular migrants. The high absorption rate of migrants in Turkey created various challenges, such as increased inter-communal hostility. This is partially due to the migrant's acceptance of precarious work in metropolitan areas i.e. Istanbul and Ankara, and industrial cities such as Tekirdag and Gaziantep where the conditions create a conflict of economic interest (International Crisis Group, 2018) among migrants. Even though the Turkish government demonstrated constructive efforts in managing migration, due to limited migration policy, the majority of the migrants currently work in the informal economy with limited social welfare. According to the International Crisis Group Report (2018), approximately 750,000-950,000 Syrian migrants currently reside in Turkey. However, only 15,000 out of the Syrian migrant population have obtained a work permit, are highly illiterate, and lack access to vocational

training. Since one of the salient attributes of precarious work is related to its unpredictability of working conditions irrespective of the industry, we have identified that inadequate migration policy exacerbates the conditions of the precariousness of migrants. One of the participants, Amine, who experienced the challenge of getting employment opportunities through state-supported institutions said:

> *"I was looking for a job and applied to ISKUR (Turkish employment Agency), but they told me that 'you are Syrian and you will not be able to get a job through us'.... In the end, no institution helps us to get a job".*

Also, the majority of the participants attained job opportunities through the imams of mosques. This is partially due to insufficient treasury allocation of the Turkish Government to municipalities, as these are designed irrespective of the migrant population (International Crisis Group, 2018). The claim of Hubeyb supports this as he stated:

> *"The state could not manage the refugees well from the beginning, opened the borders, and left them in chaos. If Turkey needed the workforce, if it had obtained a residence permit legally, it would have given a work permit, etc. Both political and economic barriers prevent refugees from working. Opposition parties want to rule the state and talk about refugees in every election to win elections"*

Although the participants possessed various occupational backgrounds prior to migration to Turkey, ranging from education, textile, accounting, participant migrant workers have attained short-term jobs that lack standard rights and entitlement (Campbell & Price, 2016). Participant Habib commented:

> *"In my county, I used to work as an accountant. Here I have been working in the denim industry in spinning and weaving. Before this, I worked in a food manufacturing factory; however, they have closed the factory, and when I first arrived in Turkey, I worked in plantation agriculture".*

Additionally, participant migrants have substantial limitations attaining several social benefits such as educational attainment, food, and household goods assistance to effectively transition into the living standards of the receiving country. The participant migrant, Hafza, who experienced a lack of social welfare, claimed:

> *"I looked to get a job but I could only find it through a close friend, I did not have any chance to get vocational training, and I do not think I will ever get any training as well…"*

Since the migrant workforce in Turkey fills low-skilled job vacancies, they also lack necessary adjustment and integration support such as language training, assistance in housing and education, and accessing government services such as healthcare (Davas, 2018).

Meso-level Encounters: how inadequate organisational level interventions exacerbates the conditions of the precariousness of migrants.

For the most part, employers operating in low skilled industries only employ migrant workers because such jobs are not attractive to the majority population (McKay & Markova, 2010); the low

cost of the migrant workforce (MacKenzie & Forde, 2009), and their flexibility (Thompson et al., 2013), which often is a necessity for migrants to get work, rather than a mindset or choice. Forde and Mackenzie's (2009) study has shown that employers of migrant workers adopt a "low wage and long hours" approach predominantly to maintain low labour costs to remain competitive in the marketplace. For example, a study by Bloch and McKay (2017) has shown that the migrant workforce is generally employed in temporal/seasonal conditions such as construction, agriculture, the hospitality industry, care, and cleaning industries. In a similar vein, the majority of migrants attain employment opportunities in labour-intensive and hazardous industries such as construction, textile (mainly denim industry), and manufacturing (Davas, 2018) in Turkey.

One of the common challenges that the migrant workers face in the receiving country is known as wage theft, as numerous studies identify the issue as being systematic and widespread in various cultures (Berg & Farbenblum, 2017; Clibborn & Wright, 2018; Weil, 2018; Cambell et al., 2019). Scholars argue several rationales behind the acceptance of wage theft, including implementing state policies favouring employers that potentially increase the vulnerability of the migrant workforce (Clibborn & Wright, 2018; Befort and Budd, 2009). The migrant workforce frequently encounters wage theft since there is a limited collective representation and employment opportunities (Fudge, 2014; Holgate, 2005). In the study, we have observed a similar challenge. The participants indicated that their employers are non-compliance with the minimum wage laws and are poorly compensated relative to Turkish citizens conducting the same job. One of the participants, Othman expressed:

> *"Although we generally do the same job, Syrians are paid far less than Turkish. We accept this circumstance since we do not have any other employment opportunities. For example, we do the same job, but a Turkish employee earns 200 TL, I get 100 TL, and they give my brother 80 TL ".*

Undocumented migrants face structural barriers to collective representation as governments embrace employer-friendly imperatives, resulting in the heightened vulnerability of the workforce. Moreover, the lack of collective representation of the migrant workforce leads to an exclusive regulatory system that allows employers to breach employment regulations (Clibborn & Wright, 2018). This circumstance intensifies the current adverse conditions of migrants residing in Turkey since the state regulation on migration policy is relatively new. Additionally, in the context of a toxic triangle (Kusku et al., 2019), where employment laws are ambiguous, and a lack of adequate legal measuring mechanisms increases the likelihood of precariousness of the migrant workforce. Interestingly, although the employers exploit the fundamental rights such as earning a minimum wage, the migrant workforce is reluctant to voice their complaints out of employer retaliation fear (Campbell et al., 2019). One participant, Menduh, states the unequal treatment to the local and migrant workers in the workplace:

> *"There is a big difference between a Turkish and a Syrian in terms of compensation. Even though we did the same job in my previous workplace, they paid me very little money, so I asked for a raise. The Turks laughed at me for asking for a raise. I did not know why the Turks laughed at me or why it was so interesting. They usually made fun of me because I do not speak Turkish and only speak Arabic. They used to tell me, "shut up, we speak*

Turkish here. The boss misbehaves towards us at work. Everyone was afraid of him anyway, I mean, he was not mean to everyone, but he was to those he felt overpowered".

Migrants' reluctance to challenge mistreatment and employment violations in organisations is driven by specific rationales such as lack of employment opportunities due to undocumented status and perception of power imbalance in the employment relation (Weil, 2018; Campbell et al., 2016). One limitation for the migrants on the way of reaching employment opportunities is the existence of unique traditions and ethos in relation to accommodation of migrants in state institutions such as police and military services. The state is an employer as well as a service provider to the whole society. However, state employment is rather difficult for the migrants. Omar who was a police officer in the department of homicide in Syria provides support to this argument:

"I was an officer in the department of homicide, yet it was impossible for me to do my job as an immigrant here… Therefore I started to work with some other friends in the construction business. This is not a contemporary job. We sometimes work one day a week and wait for another week".

In addition to the various claims of participants above, the participants live under financial pressures without access to social security and welfare benefits. As immigration policies amplify employers' power over migrants', their adverse conditions may even further exacerbate, especially when exposed to immediate deportation.

Micro-level Encounters: how experiences of individuals exacerbate the conditions of the precariousness of migrants.

The literature emphasises the political economy of migrant precariousness as they are subjected to exclusion due to their legal and social status in the receiving country (MPI, 2021; Crisis Group Report, 2018; Campbell et al., 2016; McDowell et al., 2009). Furthermore, within the social fragmentation that they experience in their new residency, the migrant precarity also creates their new sense of self through mechanisms such as religion to cope and increase resiliency. Religion can be interpreted as an agency to minimise the adversity of migrant precariousness as it can help create a positive stance within a society and increase interconnectedness by attaining reliability and candour (Nijhawan, 2019). In the interviews we have conducted within the scope of this study, religious affiliation was the focal point of attaining employment opportunities for the majority of the participants. As one of the participants, Omar's claim illustrates this:

"Being Muslim is a privilege in Turkey. This is one of the salient characteristics and reasons we are accepted in this country. The conditions in Europe are far better, but they are not Muslims"

The claim of Benat further supports the fact that migrants need to search for other means of mechanisms such as religious affiliations to attain employment opportunities in Turkey.

"I think they help Muslims to find jobs in Turkey, I found my job through the local Imam Ahmet like many of my friends".

Faith and religion are the underexplored aspect of migrant precariousness (Nyamnjoh et al., 2021). They provide essential survival support and minimise economic challenges. As the illustrated quotes above suggest, in the lack of state support, religious affiliation becomes a primary source of employment. However, as the participants indicate, it also creates an increasing precarity since the Islamic faith religiosity values gratitude, the migrants' will to negotiate to ameliorate work conditions diminishes.

Additionally, co-ethnic networks provide employment opportunities specifically in the first year of arrival to the receiving country for many migrants (Battisti et al., 2018). Since Syrian migrants in Turkey face challenges in attaining social support such as access to education (Baban, IIcan, and Rygiel, 2017), health services, and the language barrier; they rely on the co-ethnic social networks to survive (Oner et al., 2020). Participant Nubar explains how he experienced the help of co-ethnic networks in finding employment opportunities:

> *"I found my job with the help of my friends and people I met. They had friends from the refugee camp, looking for employment as well. Since I do not have any relatives in Turkey, I get help from the Syrians".*

The above quote highlights that attaining jobs via co-ethnic social networks expedites the employment process, but it also creates limitations such as obtaining necessary skills to increase employability. Thus, co-ethnic networks may also intensify and contribute to migrant precarity.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed how Syrian workers in Turkey experience precarity in the labour market from a multilevel perspective, namely the micro-, meso- and macro-level of analyses. We have identified a number of challenges for Syrian workers on all three levels of analysis and at the same time, we identified coping strategies that Syrian workers deploy to minimise the negative impact of precarious work on their lives. In the following, we summarise what we view as the most important factors exacerbating precarity for Syrian workers in Turkey. Finally, we will offer policy recommendations for breaking the link between precarity and being a minority ethnic worker in Turkey.

On the macro-level we identified that there is a low level of regulatory protection such as a lack of adequate migration policy and employment laws that could prevent Syrian workers from being exploited in the labour market, ultimately leading to precarity in employment. Additionally, we identified a lack of political support for Syrian workers in Turkey, which partially explains the willingness to implement regulatory protections for Syrian and other minority ethnic workers. A lack of unionisation in Turkey contributes further to the precarity of Syrian workers and rising economic inequality. Overall, the absence of effective policy aiming to integrate refugees into the labour market and into wider society, make it difficult for Syrian refugees to live and work in Turkey.

On the meso-level of analysis, we highlight that employers, at the expense of migrants, often deploy precarious working conditions for migrants in order to remain competitive in the marketplace. Such conditions are for example long working hours, but also low pay and in extreme

even cases wage theft. Several studies have identified wage theft as being systematic and widespread in many countries (Berg & Farbenblum, 2017; Clibborn & Wright, 2018; Weil, 2018; Cambell et al., 2019) and so is the case in Turkey. There are little Syrian migrants can do against wage theft, since there is limited collective representation, and/or other employment opportunities and a lack of employment laws providing protection for Syrian workers. Resultantly, the only agency Syrian workers are left with when experiencing wage theft is acceptance. Lastly, the micro-level of analysis has provided us with an understanding of the rationale behind accepting precarious working conditions in Turkey, with the main factor being that this is actually not a matter of choice, but rather a matter of necessity since there is a lack of alternatives in dealing with precarity at work and there is not much choice in terms of finding better employment that offers secure working conditions. Instead, many Syrians grapple for survival on a daily basis. A further finding points to the importance of networks held by an individual. Although attaining jobs via co-ethnic social networks expedites the employment process, it also creates limitations such as obtaining the necessary skills to increase employability. Thus, co-ethnic networks may also intensify and contribute to migrant precarity.

Lastly, our study shows that on the micro/individual level religion and religious faith constitute an important part of Syrian workers coping strategies with precarity, in that it is used to minimise the individual experience of adversity by creating a positive stance within Turkish society and a sense of belonging through the Islamic faith, which is the dominant religion in Turkey. However, as the participants indicate, it also creates an increasing precarity since the Islamic faith religiosity values gratitude, the migrants' will to negotiate to ameliorate work conditions diminishes. Additionally, religious affiliation is viewed by the majority of participants of this study as helping with finding employment opportunities. Faith and religion are the underexplored aspect of migrant precariousness (Nyamnjoh et al., 2021). They provide essential survival support and minimise economic challenges. The relevance of religion and religious faith for not only coping with precarity but also for the development of belongingness in the host country is a very interesting finding and something that should be studied further since it constitutes a major difference in the context of other major refugee receiving countries, such as for example Germany, where the majority population is predominantly of Christian faith. Also, many studies pertaining to the integration of immigrants in Germany and other countries discuss the religion of migrants, in particular, if they are of Muslim faith, as hindering their integration into the host country, instead of questioning how the host country receives Muslims to their shores and what stigmatists are attached to Muslims that leads to for example discrimination.

The firm stance of the nation-state as the manifestation of the sovereign identity is fragmented through a heightened level of migration, curtailing the concept of cultural singularity and creating challenges. Traditionally Turkey has been a country of emigration, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. Only recently Turkey has become a country of immigration and hence immigration, as well as integration policy and equality and inclusion measures, remain underdeveloped, leaving many migrant workers at the mercy of employers who have little interest to provide secure employment to them, without legal enforcement. Like many other countries before, Turkey will have to come to terms with being an immigration country and with the fact that the majority of its migrant and refugee population will remain in Turkey and become part of Turkey's population. Having a large

minority ethnic population requires a regulatory framework that provides protection from precarity as well as a long-term labour market integration policy that fosters equality and inclusion. Migrants in Turkey experience hardships such as working in hazardous jobs, earning less, and being subjected to social exclusion. The Turkish "Law on Foreigner and International Protection" tries to alleviate the adverse conditions, yet the growing evidence of inter-communal hostility exacerbates migrants' grapple of survival. It will require political will to implement legislation that not only protects minority ethnic workers from precarity but also creates equality and inclusion in the labour market, which is required for the successful labour market integration of minority ethnic workers.

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