

“Being educated is a distant dream to us.”

Dom and Abdal Children’s Education in Turkey:
The Cases of Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa



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The Cases of Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa**

KIRKAYAK 
K Ü L T Ü R 

 **HEINRICH
BÖLL
STIFTUNG**
DERNEĞİ TÜRKİYE
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ABBREVIATIONS

MoFLS	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services
UN	United Nations
OHCHR	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
NEBL	National Education Basic Law
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

GENERAL DEFINITIONS & CONCEPTS

In this report, the term Gypsy was used to cover the entirety of the Peripatetic groups such as Roman, Dom, Lom and Teber people defined by Middle Eastern and Anatolian peoples with generic terms such as Nawar, Zott, Ghajar, Bareke, Gaodari, Krismal, Qarabana, Karaçi, Abdal, Aşiret, Qurbet, Mıtrıp, Gewende, Gypsy (Çingene), Tanjirliyah, Haddadin, Hacıye, Arnavut, Halebi, Haramshe, Kaoli.⁽¹⁾

There are many different Peripatetic groups living throughout today's world such as Dom, Rom/Roman, Lom, Teber/ Abdal who are referred to with the name Gypsy. Such naming outside of the generic terms used by those not of these people constitute the self-original naming by the peoples.

Kırkayak Kültür considers that the original internal naming of the groups provides the most appropriate definition in regard to the contexts and names used.

(1) Yılgür, E. (2017) Türkiye'de Peripatetik Gruplar: Jenerik Terimler ve Öz-Etnik Kategorizasyon Biçimleri (Peripatetic Groups and Self-Denomination Forms). *Nişantası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 5 (1), 1-25.

FOREWORD

Kirkayak Kültür has been realising rights-based studies together with disadvantaged communities under social and cultural risk and coexistence based social cohesion activities in the framework of dialogue and solidarity for society against discrimination and prejudice towards such communities since its founding year of 2011. While doing so, activities that put forward culture and art are realised. The Centre conducts studies on the humanitarian problems generated through political and social developments in the Middle East geography as well as migration, refugee situations, disadvantaged social segments and cultures and presents such studies to the attention of national and international public.

Kirkayak Kültür currently continues at institutional level to realise culture-arts and migration studies in two different places within Gaziantep, namely, *“Art Centre”* and *“Migration and Cultural Studies Centre”*.

Kirkayak Kültür Migration and Cultural Studies Centre conducts studies towards ensuring improvements regarding socioeconomic conditions, education, residence, health, employment, and preventing discrimination and human rights and accessibility to social and public services for the Dom peoples and other relevant groups of the Middle East in the countries they live. It is our primary concern that Dom groups become effective members of the society in the countries they settle, and participate and contribute to the economic, social, cultural, civilian and political life of their countries. Our Centre’s main objective is ensuring that such communities that face social and cultural risk and disadvantage display socio-cultural development, conducting integration activities in the framework of coexistence, dialogue and solidarity against the prejudices upon such communities, and realising social, cultural and artistic activities in this alignment. The Centre generates strategies and action plans and aims to realise cultural studies particularly together with public institutions and non-governmental organisations in this framework in the countries where Dom people and other relevant groups live.

In all activities realised by Kirkayak Kültür, the idea of “Coexistence” is taken as the main reference point. Kirkayak Kültür considers that there is need for a novel understanding within which the migrant newcomers live together with the older inhabitants in a humane environment and the diversities are accepted as richness, and through which no one is left behind in all fields, particularly fundamental rights and services, and realises actions in this regard.

Gypsy people (Rom, Dom, Lom) coexisted with the other people in the Middle East geography for hundreds of years. They created crafting tools for the peoples they lived together, often became bearers of their cultures, practiced traditional family medicine and dentistry and provided many services to them in tens of different fields. They are living today and will continue to do so in the future in these ancient lands. For them to be able to live a dignified life in the countries they dwell, there are important roles required to be played particularly by the governments in these countries and also UN and EU institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations.

In these days of crisis when the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on various social groups, it is seen that minority communities, disadvantaged individuals and marginalized groups suffer discrimination even more openly and that such vulnerable communities face the risk of being left outside of emergency measures and excluded from humanitarian actions. COVID-19 pandemic makes even more vulnerable the Roman, Dom, Lom communities, and certain other societal segments such as refugees, migrants, and displaced peoples.

History tells us that we are going through days when we have to defend the rights to live of such communities as the most fundamental human right.

Through the report titled **“*Being educated is a distant dream to us.*”: Dom and Abdal Children’s Education in Turkey: The Cases of Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa**” generated by Kırkayak Kültür, the Centre aims to contribute to the literature by revealing the present state in regard to the problems faced by Dom and Abdal children in terms of accessing education.

Let this study be a gift to all who we have ever met in the field. We are grateful to the Dom and Abdal families, women and children from Syria and Turkey who opened their homes, tents and streets to us. We extend our thanks to the principals, vice principals and teachers we were able to meet with in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa for their contributions.

We extend our gratitude to Heinrich Böll Stiftung Association that supported the project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kirkayak Kültür carries out rights-based advocacy actions regarding the Dom People and other peripatetic communities living in Turkey and the Middle East. In addition to the advocacy actions towards ensuring accessibility of such communities living in Turkey and the Middle East to fundamental human rights for their rights to live to be protected, the Centre also conducts studies in regard to their access to fundamental services such as education, healthcare, residence and employment and prepares reports accordingly. It carries out rights-based advocacy activities on national and international platforms through the scientific data collected from the field towards ensuring access of Dom and other peripatetic peoples to fundamental rights and services and towards having social policies developed on such topics.⁽²⁾

This report aims to contribute to the literature by revealing the present state in regard to the problems faced by Dom and Abdal children in terms of accessing education within the context of the project titled **“Being educated is a distant dream to us.” Dom and Abdal Children’s Education in Turkey: The Cases of Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa**” carried out by Kirkayak Kültür. Furthermore, it aims to open to discussion the field meanings of “ensuring” their rights to education as in the national and international conventions and legislations, and how such meanings emerge or not emerge in practice.

The purpose of the study is to reveal Dom and Abdal children’s relationship established with the school, their enrolment and attendance to school in the perspectives of the families, children and schools. Our objective consists of both seeing the meaning of education for the children and the families, and compare through the interviews with schools to see whether or not such meanings have any substance to them.

Education is an indispensable component of fundamental rights. For these groups, education is a field that, besides providing certain conveniences in daily life, is devoid of future expectations due to the discrimination practices historically faced by the groups. We consider that this negative perception may only be broken through education, and thus great efforts should be made with great patience.

The report is a pilot project striving to reveal the present education status of the school age children of Dom and Abdal communities.

(2) Kirkayak Kültür’s published reports on Dom. (online) <https://bit.ly/3b7pPZb> (access date: 03.03.2020).

Field works of the study were carried out in districts and neighbourhoods the Dom and Abdal people live in concentration. School interviews were also conducted near the neighbourhoods where Dom and Abdal families live in concentration and at the elementary and secondary schools where children are enrolled via the e-School system.

Qualitative research methods were utilized for the study. The spaces for the interviews we made with the families and children occurred to be either tent areas or neighbourhood alleys and streets nesting with houses. "Fluid interviews" were carried out with approximately 75 adults and 30 school age children in Gaziantep. Again in Gaziantep, semi-structured interviews were realised with a total of 6 school principals, 4 vice principals, 1 primary school teacher and 1 school counselor at 6 schools. In Şanlıurfa, "fluid interviews" were conducted with approximately 30 adults and 20 school age children. Through the school interviews in Şanlıurfa, semi-structured interviews were realised with a total of 3 school principals, 2 vice principals, 1 primary school teacher and 1 school counselor at 3 schools.

Carrying out the interviews with disadvantaged / marginalised / vulnerable groups necessitated questioning the state of being a member or not to such groups. This questioning opened to discussion the assumption of community members being closed to the outside within the framework of the topic of how the borders in the field are drawn by both the researchers and the participants. The families saying "...we never revealed our secrets, you are somewhat from among us, that's why we told you..." while we are questioning the borders in the field and understand the positions of families, children and us, ourselves, became a result of the relationships we established with the families in line with such questioning. In this course, the field always reminded us of this: while working with vulnerable groups, some acts you do or some expressions you utter may coincide with the discrimination such groups suffered for years. For this very reason, working with vulnerable groups required being aware of this historical fact.

Children being/not being included in the present education system was assessed through a rights-based framework in the analysis of the field data. In the light of the data obtained from the subjects of the topic at hand, diverse reasons were discussed for the children being enrolled/not enrolled in school, attending/not attending school, leaving/not leaving school and the fact that children going to school and completing their education remains as a shared desire. Such reasons were handled as both separate conditions and intertwining conditions over the economic circumstances, traditional and cultural codes, and the circumstances at school.

Within the context of this report, interviews were made also on the access to education and education perception of the refugee Dom and Abdal families who came from Syria to seek asylum in Turkey. Such immigrant families live in this day mostly in the neighbourhoods where Roma, Dom and Abdal people live due to their willingness to live in the neighbourhoods of those excluded and discriminated against like themselves and where they will feel discrimination the least in terms of spatiality. Although there has been a significant intertwining of lives due to the reason such communities lived in the same neighbourhoods and streets and use the same public spaces during the 7-8 year period that passed, the extremely low access to education borne by the children of such families push them further down and leave them behind due to being refugees. This multi-layered state of social exclusion also constitutes a challenge against the integration of immigrant families. And this in turn brings along issues such as malnutrition, inhumane living conditions, homelessness, difficulty in accessing education, inaccessibility to access healthcare services, and being left without care at older ages for these families.

Kırkayak Kültür carries out a programme on the axis of “coexistence” in the migration studies conducted. Therefore, it makes efforts towards allowing the newcomers to live in equality and coexistence with the older inhabitants. In this report, the educational issues faced by the children of Dom and Abdal families from Syria at the end of the 9-year period were handled together with the families of Turkish Republic citizens in accordance with the principle, “Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises the right to education of children and deems the party states responsible of making primary education compulsory and available free to all, organising secondary education in various forms of general and vocational education, and making these available and accessible to all children”.

While making interviews with the Dom and Abdal families of Turkey and Syria regarding the education status of their children, it was known that most of the children of the Syrian Dom / Abdal families in both Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa do not go to school. The families cannot access the most fundamental rights such as food, housing, healthcare, employment and temporary protection document besides the right to education. It is clearly expressed in the interviews made with the families that children cannot go to school due to their disability to access all these rights. For Dom and Abdal families of Turkey, although there is school enrolment over the system, the families do not use a clear expression on whether or not their children go to school. No clear response was given as either “yes, our children go to school” or “no, our children do not go to school”.

The reasons why no child who regularly attends school and participates in all educational activities could be observed were listed as follows in the context of the field study;

“Families Economic Conditions / States of Poverty”:

Dom and Abdal families who are peripatetic / craftsman communities are unable to make their traditional jobs under the conditions brought by our day due to the changing socio-economic, cultural and social conditions. In our day, the families dominantly work in informal jobs such as scrap collector, paper collector, seasonal agriculture worker, peddler, tasbih (prayer bead) seller, or again as scrap collector or paper collector after seasonal migration to other provinces. The irregular work hours and lack of regular income for whom the needs of livelihood take precedence over education cause challenges in accessing an institution such as school which has regularity at its core and lead to a significant obstacle against children’s access to education.

“Traditional and Cultural Codes”:

The disbelief for the possibility of gaining a profession by going to school among the families also defined the relationship formed with education within the communities.

The dominance of the opinion that the children are not intelligent enough within the expressions of the communities regarding why the children will not be schooled squeezes the relationship formed between the child and the school into a narrow framework from the very beginning.

“The Situation at School”:

Within the general look into the failure to school Dom and Abdal children that was expressed usually as “our deep wound” by the school administrators and teachers, the low level of school enrolment, and the high level of school drop-outs and non-attendance seen among Dom and Abdal children were the prominent subjects during the school interviews.

The economic conditions of the families was expressed to be the main reason to why the school enrolment rates are low and non-attendance rates are high. Furthermore, the discriminative discourses on the life style, culture and ethnicity of the Dom and Abdal peoples come out as a reason that obstructs the children’s access to education.

Therefore, if the economic conditions of these families are not secured, if the information taught in schools are accepted to be generated for all children throughout the world, if the participation and representation of Dom and Abdal children are not included in the curriculum and practices, and if the national / international education policies and practices are not shaped in consideration of localities, the conventions the country is party to will be void.

Finally, in accordance to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, let us conclude by;

Being aware that there are children who live under very harsh conditions and thus require special care in all countries throughout the world,

Taking in consideration the importance borne by each people's genuine traditions and cultural values in regard to the protection and cohesive development of the children,

Being conscious of the significance borne by international cooperation for the improvement of the living conditions of the children in all countries but especially in the developing countries, and remember the Article 28 of the Convention.

Article 28:

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
- Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
- Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
- Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
- Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries. The needs of developing countries are particularly taken into consideration in this regard.



INTRODUCTION

To whom the right to education belongs?

As a fundamental right, the right to education was tried to be “assured” through countries being party to international conventions and through their own constitutions. In international law, the right to access education is mentioned under Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) ⁽³⁾ as “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.”, while similarly, Article 28 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)⁽⁴⁾ defines the responsibilities of the countries with the provision “(States Parties) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all. Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.”. In Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, yet another convention agreed by the United Nations General Assembly (UN) ⁽⁵⁾, besides including similar responsibilities, it was stipulated as follows for full actualisation of the right to education, “Fundamental education shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education.”.

As a country party to the aforementioned international conventions, Turkey defines the right to access to education in its national law with the following provision under Article 42 pf the Constitution of the Grand Assembly of the Turkish Republic (TBMM)⁽⁶⁾: “No one can be denied the right to education and learning... Primary education is compulsory for all citizens whether men or women, and is free of charge in public schools.”. Furthermore, for regulating the right to education, Article 7 of the National Education Basic Law with no. 1739⁽⁷⁾ includes the provision “All Turkish citizens have the right to receive primary education.”

Throughout all of these legal texts, rendering education high quality and

(3) Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (online) <https://bit.ly/3gGq5Gg> (access date: 18.06.2020).

(4) Convention on the Rights of the Child, (online) <https://bit.ly/3jqQxPw> (access date: 18.06.2020).

(5) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (online) <https://bit.ly/3b5qdHI> (access date: 18.06.2020).

(6) Turkish Republic Constitution, (online) <https://bit.ly/2QAvfT1> (access date: 18.06.2020).

(7) National Education Basic Law, (online) <https://bit.ly/2ECEq2X> (access date: 18.06.2020).

accessible to all children and adaptable in regard to disadvantaged groups were also highlighted in relevant articles (UDHR Article 26 (2); UNCRC Article 29 (c)) while stipulating the states' responsibilities for a free and compulsory education. Articles 4 and 8 of the National Education Basic Law also handles equal opportunities in education against any and all discrimination that may be experienced in education: "Education institutions are open to all without discrimination on the grounds of language, race, gender, disability or religion. No person, family, group or class may be granted privilege in regard to education." "All citizens, whether man or woman are granted with equal opportunities in education... Special measures are taken for raising children who have need for special education and protection."

Although aspects such as education being open and accessible to all, the necessity of regulating education policies in order to cover the special cases and needs of all people and equal opportunities for education are highlighted in national and international legislation, the right to access to education does not present a similar picture in practice. Similar to worldwide education statistics⁽⁸⁾ revealing children who do not have equal access to school due to social, cultural or economic grounds, there are certain problems present also in Turkey in regard to access to education. We observe that as of the 2017-18 education year ⁽⁹⁾ in Turkey the overall net schooling ratio occurred to be over 90% and that this ratio is seen to be 91.5% for primary school, 94.5% for secondary school and 83.6% for secondary education. However, the statistics do not appear to be sufficient for clearly indicating who the schooling ratios include/do not include, and to which extent the school non-attendance and school drop-out follow up are reflected in these numbers.

While there are studies being conducted on poor children, girls, children with native language other than Turkish, children living in rural areas, children with learning disabilities, children of seasonal agriculture worker families, Roma children and Syrian children under temporary protection for the purpose of revealing the uncertainty of the children experiencing problems in access to education and attendance to school for various reasons in Turkey ⁽¹⁰⁾, we would like to draw attention to the problems in access to education

(8) UNESCO (2018) *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, not Walls*. Paris: UNESCO.

(9) Eğitim Reformu Girişimi (2019) *Eğitim İzleme Raporu 2017-18 (Education Monitoring Report 2017-18)*. (online) <https://bit.ly/34liuho> (access date: 28.02.2020).

(10) Eğitim Reformu Girişimi (2017) *Eğitim Hakkı ve Eğitimde Haklar (The Right to Education and the Rights in Education)*. (online) <https://bit.ly/3hFbZQn> (access date: 19.06.2020). Kalkınma Atölyesi (2012) *Mevsimlik Tarım İşçiliği ve çocuklar: Sorun Analizi ve Politika Önerileri (Seasonal Agriculture Work and Children: Problem Analysis and Policy Recommendations)*. Ankara: Kalkınma Atölyesi. (online) <https://>

and attendance to school faced by Dom and Abdal children from Turkey and Syria through this report. While doing so, we also would like to contribute as a priority to the limited number of studies related to access to education and attendance for Dom and Abdal children in the literature.

There are discussions and studies in the literature related to the education of Roma children as a community similar to Dom and Abdal communities. The common point of these studies occur to that these children are unable to exercise their rights to education due to economic and exclusion-based grounds. According to European Union Progress Report 2018 ⁽¹¹⁾, it is observed that the non-attendance and school drop-out ratios continue to be high among Roma children, and the report includes the recommendations to develop a system towards reducing the ratios and make education more inclusive particularly for Roma children. Roma people, who are at the bottom layers of society in terms of class and suffer also a spatial exclusion, are unable to benefit from equal access to education. In the Roma people instance, education is not revealed to be a space for equalisation to alleviate the social class differences but instead as a space for stratification that reproduce such differences. The main reason behind this is education ceasing to be a public service from which everyone is to benefit equally as citizenship right.⁽¹²⁾ The exclusion / discrimination going on for long years and the lack of special inclusion policies issued by the state for Roma people is observed to be one of the main reasons why Roma children do not have equal access to education. Roma children who start primary education become obligated to leave the school due to lack of necessary state support, and the humiliation and discrimination they face at the school environment ⁽¹³⁾ Also, the community seeing education life just as a tool for becoming literate, the children having to work due to poverty and the discrimination the children

bit.ly/2YOcrEu (access date: 19.06.2020). Alp, S. and Taştan, N. (2011) *Türkiye’de Irk veya Etnik Köken Temelinde Ayrımcılığın İzlenmesi Raporu (Report on Monitoring Race and Ethnicity Based Discrimination in Turkey)*. İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Publication. (online) <https://bit.ly/3lw9YYQ> (access date: 19.06.2020). Ataman, H. (2008) *Eğitim Hakkı ve İnsan Hakları Eğitimi (Education Right and Human Rights Training)*. İzmir: Human Rights Agenda Association. (online) <https://bit.ly/2YJub3R> (access date: 19.06.2020).

(11) European Commission (2018) *Commission Staff Working Document: Turkey 2018 Report*. (online) <https://bit.ly/31JjeRP> (access date: 03.06.2020).

(12) Akkan, B. E., Deniz, M. B. and Ertan, M. (2011) *Sosyal Dışlanmanın Roman Halleri (Roma Aspects of Social Exclusion)*. İstanbul: EDROM, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Politika Forumu ve Anadolu Kültür.

(13) Alp, S. and Taştan, N. (2011) *Türkiye’de Irk veya Etnik Köken Temelinde Ayrımcılığın İzlenmesi Raporu (Report on Monitoring Race and Ethnicity Based Discrimination in Turkey)*. İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University. (online) <https://bit.ly/31FKZi> (access date: 19.06.2020).

experience in school are among other reasons.⁽¹⁴⁾ As Akkan and et al. mention in their studies titled "Roma Aspects of Social Exclusion"⁽¹⁵⁾, Roma people are among the groups that have the most disconnected from education within the society. It was observed that Roma children could not learn reading and writing due to low school enrolment ratios and high school drop-out and school non-attendance ratios. In connection with the problems faced by the Roma people, the children got disconnected from education. At the top of the problems comes the reason children become obligated to leave school due to the poverty faced by their economically challenged families. This means that the families do not have the economic capacity to have their children go to school and also that the children have to work in order to support the families struggling with poverty. Another reason Roma children do not attend school is the social exclusion they suffer at the schools. This exclusion is practiced upon Roma children by both their classmates and their families, and the school administrations. Such exclusion faced increase the Roma children's school non-attendance and drop-out ratios and cause them to get distanced from school. In regard to this social exclusion, the total absence or lack of models continuing their education lives within the Roma people indicates that the community's forced disconnectedness from education has already been internalised and that the community members have no belief in education. Early age marriage was pointed out in the same study as yet another reason for Roma children's disconnection from education. In addition, continued nomadic life was observed to be a circumstance to be taken into consideration as a reason why Roma people cannot be included in the formal education system.

Education took first place among the prioritized fields under the National Strategy Document for Social Inclusion of Roma Citizens issued by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (2016-2021).⁽¹⁶⁾ It is aimed to ensure that all Roma children have equal opportunities in education and access to high-quality education services and that young Roma people are to complete at least their compulsory education.

(14) Kaya, N. (2012) Türkiye'nin Eğitim Sisteminde Azınlıklar ve Ayrımcılık: Kavramsal Çerçeve ve Temel Sorunlar (Minorities and Discrimination in Turkish Education System: Conceptual Framework and Fundamental Issues). In Kenan, Ç. and Müge, A. C. (eds.), *Ayrımcılık Çok Boyutlu Yaklaşımlar (Discrimination Multidimensional Approaches)*. İstanbul: Bilgi University Publication.

(15) Akkan, B. E., Deniz, M. B. and Ertan, M. (2011) *Sosyal Dışlanmanın Roman Halleri (Roma Aspects of Social Exclusion)*. İstanbul: EDROM, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Politika Forumu ve Anadolu Kültür.

(16) Aile, Çalışma ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı (undated) *Roman Vatandaşlara Yönelik Sosyal İçerme Ulusal Strateji Belgesi (2016-2021) (National Strategy Document for Social Inclusion of Roma Citizens: 2016-2021)*. (online) <https://bit.ly/3luB3M3> (access date: 07.03.2020).

At this point, certain objectives are listed:

- Disconnection from education that emerge at all stages of compulsory education in the form of early school drop-out and non-attendance shall be prevented and the people -particularly young people- who previously had to discontinue their education due to various reasons shall be enabled to continue their education.
- The knowledge levels of Roma families in regard to the social and economic benefits of education and the social assistance granted for education shall be increased.
- Social connections between Roma parents and students and the school, teachers and peers shall be strengthened.

In this document prepared as a “A Social Inclusion Strategy Document for Roma Citizens”, (17) Roman, Dom, Lom, Abdal and other peripatetic communities -who are Gypsy communities- are grouped together under the name Roma. However, compared to the studies conducted on Roma people, the studies on the school enrolment, school non-attendance and drop-out ratios of Dom, Lom and Abdal children are very limited.(18) The qualitative data obtained from field studies indicate that these groups remain devoid of their rights to education. In the doctorate study of Önen (2011) titled “Citizenship Rights of the Gypsies in Turkey: Studies on Roma and Dom Communities (Türkiye’deki Çingenerin Vatandaşlık Hakları: Roman Ve

(17) Marsh (2008:22-23) mentions that the Gypsies in Turkey consist mainly of three groups: Roma, Dom and Lom people. Roma people share common culture, language and economic characteristics with European Gypsies and dwell mostly in the western parts of Turkey and Thrace region. Dom people are a branch of Middle Eastern Gypsies, who settled within the Southwest of Turkey (Antep, Urfa, Antakya, Mardin, Diyarbakır) back in the 11th century. And the Lom people are possibly a group that got separated from “the Roma people in the 11th century and remained at the eastern parts of Anatolia instead of moving west during the Seljuk and Ottoman eras. In our day, the Lom people mostly comprise of those people who were forced by the Russians to migrate to Turkey during the ethnic cleansing realised after the conquer of Caucasian region in the 1870s” (Marsh, 2008:23). See: Marsh, A. (2008) Türkiye Çingenerinin Tarihi Hakkında (A brief history of Gypsies in Turkey). In E. Uzpeder et al. (eds.), Biz Buradayız! Türkiye’de Romanlar, Ayrımcı Uygulamalar ve Hak Mücadelesi (We are here! Roma People, Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights in Turkey), İstanbul: Helsinki Citizens’s Assembly.

(18) Eğitim Reformu Girişimi (2018) *Bir Arada Yaşamı ve Geleceği Kapsayıcı Eğitimle İnşa Etmek (Building Coexisting Life and Future through Inclusive Education)*. (online) <https://bit.ly/31Dlh8t> (access date: 03.03.2020).

Kırkayak Kültür (2018) *Domlar, Suriye’nin Öteki Sığınmacıları: Ayrımcılık, İzolasyon ve Sosyal Dışlanışlık (Dom People, The Other Asylum Seekers of Syria: Discrimination, Isolation and Social Exclusion)*. (online) <https://bit.ly/3bh3E2H> (access date: 03.03.2020).

Dom Topluluklarının Çalışmaları)" (19), we observe that Dom communities benefited from education at very limited rates, and even this began after their transition into settled life after the years 1992-1993. Likewise, Yıldız et al. (2015)(20) found out through their studies on the access to education by Abdal people in Kırşehir that besides discrimination being an important obstacle, their irregular income situations also limited the relationship between the children and school. It is an important finding that as poverty and social exclusion prevented Roma, Dom and Abdal people from equally exercising their education rights, such communities also occurred to be able to utilise their social rights less than the others at all times .(21) The discrimination / exclusion suffered by the communities against participating in social life also close their path to equal opportunities in regard to access to education. Dom and Abdal people continue to live this process historically.

In this report, we aim to contribute to the literature by attempting to reveal the present situation of what are the problems experienced by Dom and Abdal children in regard to their access to education. In addition, we will open to discussion the field meanings of "ensuring" their rights to education as in the national and international conventions and legislations, and how such rights emerge or not emerge in practice. In line with these purposes, we will initially handle with criticism the concepts of childhood and education, and introduce our approach regarding education.

Inclusive Education

Making schooling compulsory was attempted to be guaranteed through national and international laws and legislations as mentioned above for the children who are seen as the "citizens of the future" and "building blocks of nations" to be shaped through the education process, or in other words, for "leaving no one behind". Furthermore, the responsibility to ensure the children's access to school was discussed frequently under the title of education problems; because there are inequalities persisting in our day on

(19) Önen, S. (2011) *Türkiye'deki Çingenerin Vatandaşlık Hakları: Roman Ve Dom Topluluklarının Çalışmaları (Citizenship Rights of the Gypsies in Turkey: Studies on Roma and Dom Communities)*, Unpublished Doctorate Thesis, Ankara.

(20) Yıldız, R., Nazenin, Ü., Özcan, O., Altaş, M., Doğan, A., Çöl, H., Güney, G. and Özkan, Ü. (2015) Kırşehir Abdallarının Eğitim Hakkının Önündeki Engeller (Obstacles Against the Education Rights of Abdal People of Kırşehir). *Eğitim Bilim Toplum*, 13(49), 100-126.

(21) Önen, S. (2011) *Türkiye'deki Çingenerin Vatandaşlık Hakları: Roman Ve Dom Topluluklarının Çalışmaları (Citizenship Rights of the Gypsies in Turkey: Studies on Roma and Dom Communities)*, Unpublished Doctorate Thesis, Ankara.

economic, gender, race or disability axes in regard to which children are to access or not access education. In this section where we are to discuss how this result is closely connected to the fact that both childhood and education were founded in modernist perspective, we will attempt to reveal how to handle education and certain concepts related to education with a critical point of view.

Seen as one of the most fundamental tools in shaping the society within the nation state approach, education⁽²²⁾ got institutionalised and drew the children from the public space to school space that is built as a special space. In this schooling process shaped with modernisation, the child who is not seen to be different from the adult, as doing the same works the adult do and share the same public spaces with the adult⁽²³⁾, was started to be recognised as a separate category. This separation process was further accelerated by important changes such as the transition of family structure from extended family into nuclear family through industrialisation, and the increase of rural-to-urban migration. With the nuclear family, the child was started to be illustrated as the “subject” who needs to be protected and not meant to be in working life anymore, instead expected and wished to be receiving education at school.⁽²⁴⁾

The childhood illustrated through the modernist perspective shaped with the social changes experienced along the industrialisation process recognises children as “blank slates” waiting passively to be shaped and defines ideal childhood with the values and judgments of the Western world. While doing so, this perspective conceptualised the children as “non-completed individuals” who are “undeveloped” with the need to pass certain developmental steps to be complete individuals. This approach made the idea of making plans upon the child convenient to be rendered applicable for the nation-states. As the perspectives of positivist approach linear development understanding and children’s linear development steps tracking complete each other, the question of what kind of child do we want brings up a childhood idea that puts to its centre Western, middle class, white and heteronormative values. Today’s education policies and applications that are universally founded upon the process of building up the

(22) Althusser, L. (1991) *İdeoloji ve Devletin İdeolojik Aygıtları (Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses)*. Translation Y. Alp and M. Özışık, İstanbul: İletişim Publications.

(23) Aries, P. (1962) *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. New York: Knopf Publishing.

(24) Eraslan, L. (2019) Çocukluk Sosyolojisine Giriş (Introduction to Childhood Sociology). *Çocuk ve Medeniyet*, 4 (7), 81-103.

child over such values failed to let their implementation absorb sufficiently that children have different life experiences, historical contexts, and most importantly different subjectiveness. Mainstream education rather aimed to reproduce a certain type of childhood definition in line with the dominant discourse. This situation goes hand in hand with the definition of education as a learning process devoid of politics and historical processes through the positivist perspective.

This study approaches critically to the definitions offered by the positivist perspective in regard to the conceptualisation of both childhood and education. As childhood is seen as a social construct shaped by inherent historical conditions, children are seen to affect their environment and get affected by their environment with their subjectiveness instead of being shaped by the social life as passive recipients throughout this shaping process.⁽²⁵⁾ In a similar manner, we embrace an education approach that puts to the centre the differences and subjectiveness of the children and prioritises the children's representation, needs, and participation at all stages of the learning processes. Our approach to the process of education's conceptualisation coincides with a dialogue process that considers the children's and families' cultural and class differences rather than a process merely based on the policies and curriculum to be defined by certain authorities.

Inclusive education, which aims to minimize the inequalities at school based on differences such as class, age, gender, race, religion, language, disability, and ethnicity⁽²⁶⁾, guides this study with respect to problematizing the traditional applications at school. Inclusive education, while seeing teachers, parents, children and families as parts of the school through a holistic approach, also provides the opportunity to question the education received at school not merely by the quantitative education statistics but also qualitative characteristics. We will also try to comprehend the considerations of school and family and children in order to allow a similar holistic perspective. For instance, when we say access to education, we will not be mentioning access regardless of the enrolment, attendance, and learning processes, based merely on statistical enrolment. Furthermore, we will attempt to reveal what kind of a relationship these communities establish or cannot establish

(25) James, A., and Prout, A. (1997) *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. London: Falmer Press. Mayall, B. (2002) *Towards a sociology for childhood: thinking from children's lives*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

(26) Eğitim Reformu Girişimi (2016) Türkiye'de Orta Öğretimde Kapsayıcı Eğitim Durum Analizi (Situation Analysis of Inclusive Education at Secondary Education in Turkey). (online) <https://bit.ly/34QLjrY> (access date: 05.05.2020).

with the dominant discourses at school as the next stop of access.

We are handling the fundamental right to education as a right that puts to its centre the localities beyond just being a universal construct. Therefore, we consider that the circumstance of being devoid of the right to education is not independent of the aforementioned perspectives due to the present education approach's concern for being 'universal'. While we recognize the significant role of rights in making visible the unheard and unseen individuals, we have reservations regarding the discussion of such in an out-of-context and separate from values within a rights-based approach because rights should be means rather than icons.⁽²⁷⁾ Revealing what the present education applications coincide / not coincide with within the lives of families and children while attempting to comprehend who are unable to exercise their rights to education and the reasons for the same will be important at this very point. This approach that constitutes the basis of our design of families and children as the subjects of our study will be detailed throughout the methodology discussion of the study and will aim to render visible the values and needs of Dom and Abdal children in Turkey. And it will do so by attempting to answer the questions below:

1. *What kind of course does children's access to education have on the axis of enrolment, attendance and participation to education processes?*
2. *What are the reasons of non-attendance and (non-)participation to education that persist within the current situation?*
3. *What kind of routes could be considered for ensuring access of children to education and access of education to these children?*

(27) Dahlberg, G., and Moss, P. (2005) *Ethics and politics in early childhood education*. London: Routledge Falmer.

METHODOLOGY



This project that investigates Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa's cases in order to comprehend the present education status of children within Dom and Abdal peoples from Turkey and Syria was designed as a qualitative study. Utilizing qualitative study methodology provided this study with the opportunity to see the unpredictabilities of the field as a dynamic and transformative data collection process, and offered a flexible road for the field to shape the methodology of the study. This section of the report handles such dynamic and flexible capabilities of qualitative research as to cover the field design, field study, and post-field processes, and offers a methodological discussion based on the topics of access to the field, methods of the field, power relations on the field and data analysis processes. Prior to all these, we will introduce Dom and Abdal communities and the field regions of this study and present the context of the study.

Nomadic Craftsman (Peripatetic) Societies: Dom and Abdal Peoples

Nomadic craftsman (peripatetic/Gypsy⁽²⁸⁾) communities, named by themselves as Roman, Dom and Lom, Abdal communities, lived together with the other communities for centuries. They crafted work tools such as plows, spuds, sieves, etc. for the settled peoples to cultivate soil and process the produce, they played music at their weddings and festivals, and they often became bearers of their cultures. They performed traditional medicine and dentistry. They offered services and crafted different tools through horse breeding, harness crafting, ironworking, and tinsmithing. These communities spread to different geographies around the world in order to perform their crafts and divided into groups performing different crafts within themselves. Each crafter group consisted of extended families within. Their learning of the past professions such as ironworking, tinsmithing, dentistry, circumcisionism, etc. within the group since their childhood enabled them to perform such special crafts and especially producing such work tools while living closed to the outside without establishing communication with other communities except offering their services.

Throughout history, peripatetic communities were often known with generic terms given to them by other communities such as Karaçi, Aşiret, Qurbet, Mitrip, Poşa, Gewende, Çingene, Nawar, Gajar instead of their own names. These generic names usually included stigmatising and exclusive attributes

(28) In this report, the word "Gypsy" encompasses Rom / Roma, Lom, Dom and all other subgroups of peripatetic communities.

that accommodated prejudices and othered nomadic crafter communities. These communities name themselves internally as Rom / Roma, Lom, Dom and Abdal.⁽²⁹⁾ These real names, as the internal naming of nomadic crafter communities, that come from the languages spoken by them have not been used very frequently until recent times although being protected within the communities.⁽³⁰⁾

The beginning of utilization of the concept of peripatetic⁽³¹⁾ in a widespread manner within the social sciences literature occurred essentially within the second half of the 20th century. The concept may be translated to Turkish as crafter nomads (zanaat göçbeleri). Ironworking, tinsmithing, copper working, tumbler, musician, jeweler, dentistry, public medicine, and circumcisionism are only some of these crafts. They may happen to perform different professions in different regions based on the demands from client communities, the knowledge and skills employed by crafter nomads and the distinctness of the geography.⁽³²⁾

Through peripatetic production methods, these communities lived a nomadic life through diverse geographies for centuries in order to provide services to settled agriculture communities and other nomadic communities dealing in animal breeding activities and delivering what they produce to such communities. The need to frequently move in order to sell what they produce and perform their crafts also raised the mobility levels of nomadic crafter communities. As the groups continued their nomadic lives due to their production relations, they got to almost all corners of the world as a result of this system that persisted for hundreds of years. However, as the production relations and forms changed, and as industry and technology developed, their craft lost significance. This consequence also reduced the nomadic crafter communities' mobility levels because everything they had

(29) Yılıgür, E. (2018) "*Balkanlar, Anadolu ve Mezopotamya'da Zanaat Göçbeleri (Peripatetik Topluluklar) Üzerine Bir Deneme (An Essay on Crafter Nomads (Peripatetic Communities) in Balkans, Anatolia and Mesopotamia)*" <https://bit.ly/3qLXoRR> (access date: 05/05/2020).

(30) Based on the studies conducted previously, Kırkayak Kültür Association considers that the internal naming of the groups provide the most correct definition in regard to the concepts and names used, and thus it also uses such names. There are many peripatetic communities such as Dom, Rom/Roma, Lom, Teber / Abdal peoples living around the world who are referred to with the name Gypsy. These names that are outside of the generic terms used by non-Gypsy peoples are the genuine names of the communities. The name Gypsy was used to cover all of such genuine names.

(31) Preserving the peripatetic naming in its current state within the academic literature will be a more appropriate attitude.

(32) Yılıgür, E. (2018) "*Balkanlar, Anadolu ve Mezopotamya'da Zanaat Göçbeleri (Peripatetik Topluluklar) Üzerine Bir Deneme (An Essay on Crafter Nomads (Peripatetic Communities) in Balkans, Anatolia and Mesopotamia)*" <https://bit.ly/3qLXoRR> (access date: 05/05/2020).

produced was now being produced at factories and workshops and reached even remote mountain villagers with speed. Traditional medicinal crafts such as public medicine, dentistry and circumcisionism became professions that are taught in schools and universities. Only music performance remained as a profession of such groups that is somewhat valid in our day to perform at events and weddings. They became unable to compete with their small scale production and traditional crafts against this new production system. In time, they steered towards different professions, settled at the peripheries of cities in order to perform such new professions, and thus became part of the cities.

As the crafts they performed in the past began to decline, they steered towards new professions and works. The decline of the crafts they performed all together for centuries, and the market they offer services not needing them anymore caused each individual that comprised nomadic crafter groups to become an unqualified worker. The exclusion and discrimination they suffer were one of the most important obstacles they faced against entering the labour markets in the countries they live in. Although they attempted to steer to new professions to not lose their historical markets and to supply the new demands of the market, this strategy has been unsuccessful for the most part. The reason was that this new circumstance included not only the failure to provide services but also social exclusion and discrimination. The ancient crafts they provided in the past were somewhat indispensable for the buyers of services. The fear of the settled people against the nomadic - vagrant people was a fear that was always kept fresh. Settled people receiving services from nomadic people did not mean they embraced the latter, on the contrary, it meant they lock their doors tighter and take stronger measures to keep an eye on all their properties. As a result, their crafts losing their significance caused them to also lose the statute granted by such crafts to the nomadic crafter communities by way of production relations back in the time, and thus be pushed to lower statute and layers by the other side in time. Nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles and the strong anti-Gypsy sentiments within states and societies significantly prohibited these communities' access to public services.

In our day, most of the community members deal in daily works and seasonal agriculture works, or scrap-waste collection, second-hand goods purchase and sale, peddling, carpet, or curtain sale as small scale commercial activities that yet again require high mobility. In recent times, particularly young individuals started to work with no qualification at the bottommost works at shoemaking, plastics, knitting, and textile workshops within the informal labour market.

The peripatetic communities of the past has been begun to be referred to as “Late-Peripatetic” communities by social scientists with the transformation of their livelihood strategies changing in terms of production relations due to capitalism, urbanisation and modernisation.⁽³³⁾ Late Peripatetic era also indicates the era where the communities are at their weakest in terms of their livelihood strategies. A new craft to put in place of the lost crafts could not be gained, and the serial production at factories and workshops replaced individual production. This era may also be defined as the era when Gypsies could not possess any land, livestock to transform to capital or other economic capital due to being nomadic and when the “anti-Gypsy sentiments”, discrimination and intolerance within other communities had risen up the most.

21th century has been the beginning of a new process triggered by many reasons such as war, conflict, violence, and climate change, within which migration changed its form. This new era, within which the poverty - exclusion cycle got more and more tangible and the communities are stigmatised as the “others” of the new era, bears even more risk against the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups within the migrants. The Dom and Abdal communities coming from Syria are excluded and discriminated against due to also being “Gypsy” in addition to all other challenges, poverty drags them more and more to the bottom every passing day, and they are forced to live in a deep state of poverty.

Within the context of this report, interviews were made also on the access to education and education perception of the refugee Dom and Abdal families who came from Syria to seek asylum in Turkey. Such immigrant families live in this day mostly in the neighborhoods where Roma, Dom and Abdal people live due to their willingness to live in the neighborhoods of those excluded and discriminated against like themselves and where they will feel discrimination the least in terms of spatiality. Although there has been a significant intertwining of lives due to the reason such communities lived in the same neighbourhoods and streets and use the same public spaces during the 7-8 year period that passed, the extremely low access to education borne by the children of such families push them further down and leave them behind due to being refugees. This multi-layered state of social exclusion also constitutes a challenge against the integration of immigrant families.

(33) Yilgür, E. (2015) Kuştepe Mahallesi’nde Geç-Peripatetik Gruplar: Katmanlar, Etkileşim ve Bütünleşme (Late Peripatetic Groups in Kuştepe Neighbourhood: Layers, Interaction and Integration). *SAV-Katki*, 1(1), 25-44. Yilgür, E. (2016) *Roman Tütün İşçileri (Roma Tobacco Workers)*. Istanbul: Ayrıntı Publishing.

And this in return brings along issues such as malnutrition, inhumane living conditions, homelessness, difficulty in accessing education, inaccessibility to access healthcare services, and being left without care at older ages for these families.

The Field Study: The “Other” Neighbourhoods

Centuries of nomadic lifestyle employed by the nomadic crafter communities had kept away them from living a settled life. The decline in the demand for traditional crafts and services through the spread of capitalist relations caused the mobility levels between peripatetic communities and client communities to also decline, resulting in peripatetic origin communities integrating with urban structures.⁽³⁴⁾ Although integration of peripatetic communities with the urban structures occurred within the framework of different settling strategies, it was frequently mentioned during interviews made with the community that they had used such lands for migration purposes before settling down, and that they carried from generation to generation the memory inherent to such spaces.

The tents they called home during their nomadic times were thus replaced with makeshift houses with few rooms. Even though such neighbourhoods sometimes remained in the middle of growing cities, they were removed from such areas and pushed to the periphery of cities in time. Usually such neighbourhoods were left deprived of the infrastructure and other services provided by central governments and local administrations. Such places were called “Gypsy neighbourhoods”, reflecting spatial stigmatisation. Constant complaints regarding access to public services in these places are received from those who dwell in the neighbourhoods.

(34) Yılğür, E. (2014) Peripatetik Gruplar ve Kentsel Mekana İlişkin Yerleşme Stratejileri: Ihlamur Deresi, Küçükbakkalköy, Hasanpaşa, Unkapanı ve Kuştepe Örnekleri (Peripatetic Groups and Settling Strategies in terms of Urban Spaces: Ihlamur Deresi, Küçükbakkalköy, Hasanpaşa, Unkapanı and Kuştepe Examples). *Toplum ve Bilim*, (130), 189-213.



Photograph 1: Secondhand goods market, Şanlıurfa

The families, although spending a long part of the year in these neighbourhoods, live a semi-nomadic lifestyle from time to time for seasonal agriculture works or daily works. This situation causes such neighbourhoods to be quite dynamic also in terms of population mobility. Although there are still some who continue to perform music as a profession within these neighbourhoods, daily works such as portering, scrap-waste collection and market stallholding etc. occur to be the main sources of livelihood for those who live in these neighbourhoods. Dwellers in these neighbourhoods with very high unemployment rates are obligated to live in a world where they are devoid of any alternatives other than developing life strategies towards saving the day.

These migration spaces near cities and settlements turned to urban neighbourhoods in time due to growing cities. They became permanent spaces for nomadic crafter groups rather than being spaces for short stopovers. In this period, such neighbourhoods are places with slums and urban poverty areas where such communities live in poverty and exclusion from social life, “stigmatised” as “Gypsy neighbourhoods”.

The field interviews of this report were also conducted in the aforementioned urban neighbourhoods and quarters. Şirinevler, Ünalı neighbourhoods, and Nizip Yunus Emre neighbourhood and tent area in Gaziantep and Kamberiyeye, Asya, Yenice and İmam Keskin neighbourhoods in Şanlıurfa were selected for being places where especially Dom and Abdal communities dwell.

Although Dom communities of Gaziantep historically dwelt in different quarters of the city, they live majorly in these three parts of the city.



Photograph 2: Şirinevler neighbourhood, street wedding, Gaziantep



Photograph 3: Şirinevler neighbourhood, Gaziantep

Şirinevler Neighbourhood: Şirinevler neighbourhood, as one of the peripheral neighbourhoods of the city, is one of the historical migration sites of Dom communities. Tents in which Dom families dwell may be observed at the place called Şirinevler Forest especially in winter months. In the interviews conducted with the elderly dwelling in the neighbourhood, it is mentioned that this space turned into a «migration site» where Dom groups set up tents after being pushed to the periphery of the city due to city's

growth especially after the year 1950, and turned into a neighbourhood due to construction of shanty houses in time. Today, it exists as a neighbourhood where Dom people live together with Kurdish, Turkmen and refugees from Syria. In recent years, some multi-storey apartment blocks were built by TOKI at the periphery of the neighbourhood, and thus new residents also arrived from outside of the neighbourhood.

The Dom families living in the neighbourhood are defined with the generic name Gurbet / Qurbed by other communities. The community members living in this neighbourhood mostly spend part of the year outside of the neighbourhood and Gaziantep for seasonal agriculture works, and 3-5 families migrate together for such seasonal agriculture works particularly in Central Anatolia and Eastern Anatolia during the summer months. The Dom families have houses owned by them in this neighbourhood, where they spend the winter months. Other than the dwellers of the neighbourhood, families coming to winter dwell in the shops at the bottom stories of such houses, inside construction spaces or in tents they set up at the forest area. The neighbourhood shelter hundreds of Dom families during winter months and these families migrate to different cities for seasonal works with the coming of spring months.



Photograph 4: Ünalı, Barış Neighbourhood, Gaziantep

Ünalı and Barış Neighbourhoods: These are the two neighbourhoods at the Ünalı region where interviews were conducted. These neighbourhoods are located within the historical area of Gaziantep that underwent shanty housing especially during the 1970s, set up on the high ground in the south

of the industrial area with Ünalı weaving workshops. These neighbourhoods and adjacent neighbourhoods are known as neighbourhoods where Abdal communities live in concentration. The community members living in this area comprise mostly of Abdal peripatetic communities who had performed entertainment music with drums and shrill pipes in the past. Although they still try to continue this craft of theirs in our day, they have become unable to perform their art due to widespread wedding halls and thus traditional street weddings not being preferred or being prohibited by local administrators. Therefore, community members occurred to earn their livelihood by dealing in scrap-waste collection, second hand goods trade, and seasonal and daily works in recent years. While there are people within the young generation who work in sectors such as plastics, shoemaking, knitting and textile at the workshops in Ünalı region, they are mostly employed within informal labour. These neighbourhoods come at the top of the places where also refugee Abdal communities coming from Syria and seeking asylum in Turkey recent years lived in concentration, and nomadic communities come and dwell especially in winter months.



Photograph 5: Nizip, Yunus Emre Neighbourhood, Tent Area, Gaziantep

Nizip Yunus Emre Neighbourhood: This is the neighbourhood consisting of two parts in Nizip district of Gaziantep where Dom and Abdal communities live together. This is a quarter where also Syrian Dom and Abdal communities has come to settle since the year 2012. Although there are those who performed traditional dental work in the past among the Dom families dwelling in this neighbourhood, the families steered towards different

professions due to the prohibition of such craft. Seasonal agriculture works, pistachio harvest and daily works are the main works performed. In the other part of the neighbourhood, the Abdal community dwells, whose traditional craft was music performance. Although there are still individuals in the neighbourhood who perform music, those who work as scrap-waste collector and seasonal agriculture worker constitute the majority. There are also approximately 20-30 families belonging to Syrian Abdal community who has been living in the tents they set up next to this neighbourhood since the year 2012. These families work as scrap-waste collectors, seasonal agriculture workers and daily workers.

Kamberiye neighbourhood in Şanlıurfa, and Asya and Yenice (İmam Keskin) neighbourhoods in Eyyübiye are places where Dom families and Dom and Abdal community members coming from Syria to seek asylum in Turkey live in concentration.



Photograph 6: Kamberiye alley, Şanlıurfa

Kamberiye Neighbourhood: This is one of the historical neighbourhoods in Şanlıurfa where Dom communities live together with Arabs and Kurds. There are also Syrian refugees living in concentration in the neighbourhood since the year 2012. There are also Syrian Dom families among these. The families who traditionally performed traditional dental work in the past have steered to different professions as a result of their craft being prohibited and invalidated, as they indicated during the interviews. In this day, the

Dom families living in the neighbourhoods perform seasonal agriculture works, going to Ordu for hazelnut harvest, to Central Anatolian provinces for hoe works and other agricultural works, and to Mediterranean region for greenhouse works. Some other families sell second-hand goods, curtain and home textile, or in other words they perform peddling and portering. Also, some family members work at the shoemaking, knitting and textile workshops in provinces such as İstanbul and İzmir.



Photograph 7: Yenice, Asya Neighbourhoods, Şanlıurfa

Eyyübiye/Asya/Yenice Neighbourhoods: Known also as İmam Keskin, this is a region located on the road to Akçakale where Syrian refugees live in concentration. Historically, this region is one of the migration sites used by Dom communities, and there are still Dom families setting up camps at the periphery of these neighbourhoods during especially the mid-season periods of fall and spring. These are among the neighbourhoods where Syrian Abdal and Dom families have dwelt since the year 2012. The presence of numerous construction sites and empty buildings enable families to dwell in the tents they set up inside these sites. Also, the second-hand goods market set up in this quarter is used intensively by the communities for shopping purposes. A group of Roma families who come from Osmaniye to work at this market area set up in these neighbourhoods also live and spend most of the year here. The families living in these neighbourhoods usually earn their livelihood by seasonal agriculture work, collecting alms in the streets or working as porters and performing similar daily works.

Before the Field

In this section where we will discuss the processes of reaching out to the participants in these neighbourhoods and the schools located in these neighbourhoods, we will also mention reflexivity practices we experienced before the field. Initially, we attempted to design the field study with a setup in which we would include both the families and children and the school. Therefore, we would be able to observe the meaning of education for these groups and also compare whether this has any return with the situation at school or not.

We reached out to our participants by going to the primary and secondary schools where the children of our selected regions are automatically enrolled. Having a researcher working at the university created a field of trust due to public working partnership, and the fact that the subject of this research directly pointed out one of the “concerns” of these schools became one of the aspects supporting the voluntary participation of principals and vice principals. In addition, we may mention that the legal field permits obtained from the Provincial Directorates of Family and Social Policies⁽³⁵⁾ made it much more convenient for doors to open to us. Although the final decision-makers in regard to (not) contributing to the study were not permits but persons, having a legal permit for the study played a supportive role for the researcher to feel safe and give confidence.



Photograph 8: Historical migration spaces, Gaziantep

The biggest role in reaching out to the participants in neighbourhoods belonged to the familiarity of many participants due to the studies conducted previously by Kırkayak Kültür in these regions. We find it meaningful to include some discussions in regard to reaching out to socially marginalised

(35) Making house visits was permitted within the Permission and Approval Request made to the Provincial Directorates of Family and Social Policies.

groups before detailing the topic of what kind of a path we drew for reaching out the Dom and Abdal families and children. One of the discussions faced frequently in literature regarding reaching marginal groups is that these groups are handled as “hard to reach” groups.⁽³⁶⁾ In general sense, we may mention that two aspects come prominent that’s making these groups “hard to reach”: The assumption that community members comprise a group that establish close relations within themselves while being closed to the outside, and the fact that the researcher attempting to reach them usually be someone who is not one of them. We may mention that these two aspects related with each other significantly shape the processes of reaching the field and conducting the research.

We may initially begin by asking the question of how the borders of the inside and outside are drawn by those inside and outside the group during the study process in order to understand the meaning of Dom and Abdal communities being closed to the outside. However, it is important to indicate that we will focus mainly on how the borders are drawn by the researcher because the topics of how the researchers are seen from the inside and how the borders are drawn by the participants cannot be discussed here through the perspective of the participants. Undoubtedly, attempting to answer this question over the dichotomies of those on the inside/Gypsies or those on the outside/non-Gypsies would bear the risk of reproducing the separation but does it not illustrate that the inside/outside borders begin to be already drawn with the researcher -who is usually non-Gypsy- having concerns on how he/she is to conduct the study with a group he/she assumes to be ‘closed’ to the outside even before reaching the field? Can what makes it challenging to reach the Gypsies be setting forth with such an assumption?

The subject of how the researcher should handle such concerns of his/her that are obviously not independent of the perception of socially excluded, nomadic living and rule violating Gypsy makes it mandatory for establishing close relationship with the reasons that create such perceptions. Reflexivity, one of the important tools of feminist methodology, has a critical importance in regard to how the researcher obtained such perceptions, how to disrupt them by looking at from different perspectives and expanding the borders of being/not-being Gypsy in the field.⁽³⁷⁾ Throughout the course of the study,

(36) Bhopal, K. (2010) Gender, Identity and Experience: Researching Marginalised Groups. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 33:3, 188–195. Brown, P., & Scullion, L. (2010) “Doing research” with Gypsy–Travellers in England: Reflections on experience and practice doing. *Community Development Journal*, 45, 169–185. Myers, M. (2015) Researching Gypsies and Their Neighbours: The Utility of the Stranger. In Ross, D. and Kalwant, B. (eds.) *Researching Marginalized Groups*. New York and London: Routledge.

(37) Bhopal, K. (2010) Gender, Identity and Experience: Researching Marginalised Groups. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 33:3, 188–195.

we, as four researchers, frequently discussed such perceptions and applied reflexivity practices. Our circumstances of working at an association dealing in rights-based advocacy and our concerns of producing critical academic studies were aspects that fed our circumstance of being constantly questioning the inequalities suffered by these groups within the society. We may mention that Zuhale being Dom herself, Kemal having a research background with Dom and Abdal people for over 20 years, Fatma having a relationship she established with Dom and Abdal people recently, and Nehir having no experience with Dom and Abdal communities occurred to be a circumstance that enriched the reflexivity practice. For instance, Zuhale made it possible for us to see the differences among Dom people while sharing her own experiences with us, while Vural mentioned that his habit from having worked with Dom and Abdal people for years caused him to miss certain details, Nehir's unfamiliarity with the groups provided the opportunity to look inside with a different perspective, and Fatma's previous works as providing consultancy to these groups in some matters made it possible to establish close relations.

Both the familiarities Kiryakak Kültür established through its previous studies and the reflexivity practices of the researchers played important roles in reaching the field and gaining the trust of participants. We should not mention that we face a "difficult to reach" group in regard to sometimes attempting to reach participants with whom we have no familiarity. On the contrary, this study strongly inherits the importance of highlighting that including such groups that have either no door or doors that never close is so much more possible compared to many other groups. This study, which we conducted at tents, shops converted to homes or homes with always open doors, appeared in the form of spaces that we entered many times without even knocking on the 'door', the first border that separates 'home' from 'outside'. These spaces with flexible borders enabled us to also adopt a flexible route in the shaping of the field methodology, and this circumstance will become clearer with the methodology we used and the power relations that come up detailed in the next section.



Photograph 9: Şirinevler Neighbourhood, Gaziantep

At the Field

We visited the neighbourhoods and schools of the regions we selected during the field study we conducted back in October - November 2019 .⁽³⁸⁾ At the field where we visited the schools once and the neighbourhoods several times, sometimes we first interviewed the schools and then visited the neighbourhood or sometimes we did the reverse, thus trying to patch together what was told by both sides. At schools, sometimes we made one-to-one interviews with the principals and the vice principals, and sometimes we made interviews attended by the principals, the vice principals and the counselor teachers. Regarding the part of field study we conducted with the families and the children, saying we used the interview method would be lacking in respect to revealing the difference brought to the interviews by the dynamic time and space perception of peripatetic groups. Thus, in this section, we would like to open to discussion how we conducted school interviews in connection with how the researchers were positioned at the field and how we used the fluid interview method instead of the interview method with families and children.

(38) Aliases will be used throughout the study instead of the real names of the schools and all participants in the field.

Regarding the part of the field study we conducted with the schools, we provided no preliminary meeting or prior debriefing to the participants. The participants accepted us in all of the visits that we conducted at around 10 o'clock before noon time, and we carried out the semi-structured interviews together with Fatma, Zuhail and Nehir. We arranged our questions mainly under three categories: information and thoughts about the communities we are studying, experiences inside school, and recommendations for what could be done for the participation of these children into education. Some of the principals also invited other personnel and persons whom they thought would contribute to the topics handled at the interviews. Many times this made the interviews more efficient because some principals had just started working at the region in question and thus had limited familiarity with the groups. During the interviews, we took notes -with permission from participants- instead of using voice recordings for the purpose of gaining the trust of the participants.



Photograph 10: Şirinevler Neighbourhood, Gaziantep

The neighbourhood part of the field study followed a different course compared to the interviews we conducted at schools with defined persons at certain times and spaces. First of all, we made more than one visits to the neighbourhoods. Our first visits had the objective of providing an opportunity to meet with people in order to prepare ourselves for the area and the area for ourselves. Therefore, we were able to announce to the

dwellers of the neighbourhoods the news on what we are to do by way of our former familiarity. Even if there were no former familiarities, we sought after the opportunity to create such during these initial visits. In our later visits, we made interviews with many people collectively or sometimes with several people in front of a door. Before detailing how these interviews were carried out, we will open to discussion how the participants positioned the researchers from the inside.

■ Researchers from Within

We may mention that some circumstances of being seen from within have become prominent since the very first visits at the neighbourhoods. We experienced many moments where we were seen by participants familiar with us rather as “people bringing aid”, and by participants not familiar with us as both people bringing aid and the “officers of the state”. Besides these, we also experienced some disadvantageous situations caused by our circumstance of being seen as researchers.

It was not surprising that participants tried to give answers towards avoiding suffering the sanctions of the state in response to the researcher’s questions. For instance, some families we interviewed in Yunus Emre neighbourhood of Nizip - Gaziantep told us that they just came from migration and that their children would start school the very next day. Them telling that the children are to go to school the very next day did not seem independent from the concern about whether or not we would impose a sanction to the families regarding children not sent to school, through the association they made with the family visits conducted as a practice by the Ministry of National Education.

We may mention that the circumstance of being seen as the person bringing aid is a very familiar circumstance for both the disadvantaged groups and those who conduct studies with these groups.⁽³⁹⁾ During this study, the background of Kırkayak Kültür having delivered certain supports to these groups within the scope of the studies conducted in cooperation with national and international non-governmental organisations in addition to certain assistances in the form of consultancy within the scope of rights-based advocacy has caused us to be positioned far from the role of researcher by the participants. The participants in the neighbourhoods were experienced in explaining their problems to researchers and those working in non-governmental organisations. The participants who were concerned

(39) Okely, J. (1983) *The Traveller-Gypsies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

with understanding what is being aimed through these interviews and what kind of assistance they can gain from there were quite numerous also in our interviews. For instance, during an interview we made collectively with women and children in Barış neighbourhood, Sıdika told of the problems of her grandchildren at school and in the end asked whether it is possible to arrange aid, or not and when we told her we did not come for offering aid, she requested to go home, saying 'Then can I just go, my dear?'. Some others thought that we were conducting a preliminary selection study for offering aids and structured their talks generally over their suffering throughout the interviews. Aid, while bearing the possibility to enable power balance between the researcher and the participant, also bears the possibility to disrupt the circumstance of participants participating in the study with free will.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Our reason why we did not offer any aid is related rather to the fact that we did not meet with fixed people in fixed situations in the scope of our research methodology, and to the purpose of preventing the emergence of a circumstance of conflict between people interviewed and not interviewed within these groups who closely shared their collective life practices.



Photograph 11: Families wintering in tent within construction site, Şanlıurfa

Although it is difficult to mention that all participants could distance themselves from such perceptions, we may mention that many participants were able to accept us rather as researchers through our increased meet ups and exchanges, and participated in the research after purging the subject from these concerns. However, this role produced yet another problem. Some participants who heard that we came for research complained that this does

(40) Brown, P. and Scullion, L. (2010) "Doing research" with Gypsy-Travellers in England: Reflections on experience and practice doing. *Community Development Journal*, 45, 169–185.

not benefit them at all. Halit, who migrated from Syria to Şanlıurfa, mentioned that he is agitated of people constantly coming and asking questions and recording their status, and put up the condition that we should convey what he told us 'to those above, to Ankara'. Circumstances similar to that of Halit was mentioned by Robinson⁽⁴¹⁾ as participants who are 'tired of research' and expect 'less talk more work', while Smith and Pitts⁽⁴²⁾ conceptualised the circumstances of researchers visiting the field and obtaining the necessary information, never to appear again as 'helicopter research'. We experienced such tiredness and the desperation of not (being able to) touching the lives of the participants frequently during the field study. We experienced the situation reported by Nimer⁽⁴³⁾ where the researcher's looking out for the good of the participant conflicted with the participants having to constantly repeat the problems they face during the interviews during many moments when we requested the participants to tell of the fundamental challenges they faced for access to education.

These circumstances of being seen from inside caused us to frequently question our position and feel sometimes desperate and sometimes hopeful. We were conducting a study with a certain budget and taking the time of disadvantaged people in the scope of a project. The responsibility of requesting the participants to allocate some of their time with which they could have worked and earned money somewhat became more invisible especially with these groups who had flexible work hours. Although we tried to conduct our interviews rather according to hours appropriate for the participants, we were not giving any aid against them allocating their free time to us as mentioned before. Even though Kirkayak Kültür's background of assistance and constant relationship with these groups alleviated the weight of making a helicopter study, we could not feel the same for the participants who were in migration, who we will not be able to see again. The project we conducted carried the purpose of enabling the children's access to education rights and improving their education status but it did not give a guarantee whether or not they would see the result of such purpose in the long term. Besides this, we were able to be hopeful as we heard Elif, who wanted to go to school, started school after our interviews. Having the voices of these disadvantaged groups heard and reporting the thoughts of

(41) Robinson, V. (2002) Doing research with refugees and asylum seekers. *Swansea Geographer*, 37: 61-67.

(42) Smith, A. and Pitts, M. (2007) *Researching the Margins: An Introduction*. In M. Pitts and A. Smith (eds.) *Researching the Margins: Strategies for Ethical and Rigorous Research with Marginalised Communities*. London: Palgrave.

(43) Nimer, M. (2019) Reflections on the Political Economy in Forced Migration Research from 'Global South' Perspective. (online) <https://bit.ly/2Ga9LKO> (access date: 19.06.2020).

these groups who had very low literacy rates was one of the hopeful sides of the responsibility we felt for the participants.

■ Methods of The Field

We did not make strict decisions on with whom, where and how we would conduct our interviews once we entered the neighbourhoods. The reason for such uncertainty was both avoiding steering the field through a route determined solely by ourselves and considering that selecting and separating certain people among this community due to limited time and resources would create challenges in gaining their trust. Undoubtedly, this circumstance of uncertainty did not change the fact that we were inside a field study process that has started through the initiative of the researcher and in which the participant's consent has been shaped through certain expectations, but still it made it possible to hear everyone who had something to say and for the participants to draw us to areas they feel comfortable about. On the other hand, talking with these groups who had the collective acting practice in all aspects of their lives in line with this very collective sense and at places and rhythms they wanted was a necessary condition in terms of gaining their trust.

Once in the neighbourhoods, we usually entered the crowds sitting in front of doors and, asking how they are doing and telling why we are there, we began chatting. We rapidly comprehended that conducting an interview with a fixed person at a fixed space would not be very easy even if we entered the tents or homes, or we were in the streets of the neighbourhood because someone could always suddenly come in the middle of the interview and enter the chat, or we could suddenly be drawn into a house and find ourselves in the street again. In such instances, we chose neither to not include the incoming person nor to fix the space we were in. Leaving aside the concern to strictly track with whom, where and how much we talked, we preferred to follow anyone who wanted to tell us things. Usually we conducted interviews that are rich within the crowds, albeit hard to keep track of. Through this approach, we conducted interviews in the streets, houses, association building and tents of the neighbourhood as four people who were sometimes separate but usually together.



Photograph 12: Şirinevler Neighbourhood, Gaziantep

We conducted our interviews within which we carried on an approach of conversation and asked our semi-structured questions along a fluid course. Thus, we were able to call our methodology neither semi-structured interview nor focus group interview because the rapid flux of persons and spaces were always able to expand the borders of the interview. Likewise, calling the method ethnographic interview also came short of defining what we were doing because we were able to make short-timed interviews without sufficient depth. So we found it appropriate to call our method the fluid interview method, considering that the path to producing the most efficient contact with such groups with semi-nomadic life practices would be to join in their fluidity.

The consequences that made our interviews fluid were sometimes people and sometimes spaces. While we were conducting an interview, new people included themselves in the interview and even this inclusion enabled further inclusions. For instance, as we asked Safiye of her education history, she called her mother and also included her in the event and then called one of her own children and the child also told of his story, enabling us to understand the subject over various people. Or Suat, with whom we made interview in the street of Şanlıurfa Kamberiye neighbourhood, happened to make us start talking with his neighbour with his questions and disappeared himself. Conducting the interviews usually in the streets where anyone passing through might get included caused a state of hearing a chorus sound instead of fixed sounds. During the interviews we conducted in Nizip neighbourhood, the women we started talking in the streets, then the women's children, and then more relatives would get included. Also, the

doors of the houses and tents being always wide open made these spaces extensions of the streets and brought mobility to the interviews with people suddenly joining and leaving conversations. With these groups who have intensive collective use of space, sometimes we were not able to discern which participant's house we were in.



Photograph 13: Yunus Emre Neighbourhood and Tent Area, Nizip, Gaziantep

■ After the Field

At the end of the field study, we had the voice records of fluid interviews, Interview notes from schools, and our personal field notes. The stage of compiling the field data into reports was a part that required the researcher to exercise the reflexivity practice just as much as other stages the researcher to exercise the reflexivity practice just as much as other stages because whose words are to be rendered visible in the data and which subjects are to become prominent involves a process shaped with the subjectiveness of the researchers. So we exchanged our notes with each other, listened to some recordings together and frequently discussed what we heard or not heard more, what we found or not found more important while establishing the codes together that are fundamental to the analysis of the data.

During the data analysis process, we frequently discussed access, discrimination, economic concerns etc. codes and grouped all data under certain titles. During this process, we had difficulty in keeping track of the voice records. Although the circumstance of fluidity brought along many enriching aspects we may say that it made listening to the voice records somewhat difficult. Because the voices mixing together due to noise made it difficult to discern who was talking and to analyse the interviews. On the other hand, the recordings made it possible for us to hear a background voice we were unable to notice at that moment.

DOM & ABDAL CHILDREN'S EDUCATION



While attempting to comprehend the children's (non-)participation in the present education system through a rights-based framework, we will be presenting initially the children's school enrolment, attendance and drop-out states over the data we obtained from the subjects of the topic in the field study. Afterwards, we will mention that children's going to school and completing their education came up as a collective wish, and discuss numerous reasons lined up after "but"s to explain why this could not go beyond being a wish through a similar collectivity. We will attempt to explain these reasons under three main titles: economic conditions, traditional and cultural codes, and the circumstances at school. We are aware that there are many situations separating such reasons and also many situations intersecting them. For instance, we do not disregard the fact that the discrimination practices at school are connected not only to the children being a member of a group marginalised within the society but also to the economic conditions. Thus, we would like to indicate that we chose this title grouping as a practical way of presenting data.

■ Enrolling in School and Attendance

In the field, we observed that in general the children between 7 and 18 years of age among the Dom and Abdal peoples from Turkey and Syria had significantly low school enrolment and attendance rates. Especially for Dom and Abdal peoples from Syria had almost negligible ratios of children enrolling in and attending school. We have also faced a picture with significantly high school drop-out ratios after primary school among the groups from Turkey. Throughout all interviews, we have met no participant who completed or continuing high school education. We have only heard a few examples from people saying they had relatives who completed high school or carried on to university. Other than a few examples continuing secondary school, we have seen examples where most of the children either dropped-out at the beginning of secondary school or attended primary school intermittently or never went to school at all. We have never met a participant who regularly attended school and participated in all educational activities.

During the beginning of our field study, we have had difficulty understanding whether the children of Dom and Abdal peoples from Turkey really enrolled in or attended school or not because the replies we got when we asked whether their children go to school or not were never clear ones like 'yes, going to school' or 'no, not going to school'. The replies we got to these questions when asked to Dom and Abdal peoples from Syria could be clearer like 'no, not going to school' and the rate of going to school was almost

negligible among these groups. The reasons of such circumstance were given as nomadic lifestyles, absence of school also during their lives in Syria and the hard conditions created by fleeing the war and coming to Turkey:



Photograph 14: Children, Dom neighbourhood, Gaziantep

"We are not living anywhere to go to school at all." (Ahmet, 13, Syrian Abdal, Şanlıurfa)

*"I never went to school. I am from Syria. We never went to school there either. What would one do with school anyway."
(Zeynep, 14, Syrian Abdal, Gaziantep)*

*"Since this war, we forgot everything, just erased from our memory. We are living in fear. We came here, we are still living in fear. Whether they would throw us out, whether our children would be left behind? So we cannot send them to school."
(Seren, 33, Syrian Abdal, Nizip)*

On the other hand, it was observed, through rarely, Syrian groups also gave vague answers like Turkish groups. When we tried to clarify the answers, we observed that there was a differing perception on what it means to go to school and completing school. For instance, when Cemil from Şirinevler Gaziantep (40, Dom from Turkey, Gaziantep) told "I never went to school but I always had my children go to school. They did study well" or when Belgin (30, Abdal/Aşiret from Turkey, Gaziantep) told "I always sent the children to school. These are all out of secondary school", we had to avoid falling

for the assumption that the children received education within a linear education chronology. Because 'I had my children go to school' usually meant at most the children spent a few years in secondary school. And the meaning of being out of secondary school did not mean being graduated from secondary school but only completing primary school and then maybe enrolling in secondary school and attending from time to time for a few years, or even merely reaching the last grade of primary school and not ever being graduated.

Likewise we also should not evaluate the children's attendance in line with a classic school attendance approach. When during interviews we add the question of why the children were home in response to the answer they were going to school -usually hours that coincide with school hours- we usually received answers like 'they did not go today', 'they did not want' or 'they went in the morning and came back'. Or we understood that there was no regularity to the children's school attendance due to answers such as 'they were going to school we could not yet enroll them here after we came from work outside' or 'we came from the work outside just yesterday, they will begin tomorrow'.

Our interviews at schools also displayed a picture in line with such irregularities. According to the address based registration system, enrolment to school is regulated by students being registered automatically to the systems of the schools nearest to the regions they live. However, all the participants of schools we interviewed mentioned that they have a fixed group of students who were enrolled in their system but never come to school, a group of students who come and go during certain periods, and other students who come for a few days and do not come for others. School administrators indicated that they legally kept the records of the permanently non-attending students until 15 years of age but they deleted the records after 15 years of age, for instance those born in the year 2004. In addition to that, they told that they knew during which periods the children of families who earn their livelihood through seasonal works by going to other cities came to school, whom they referred to as temporary non-attending students. It was indicated that the temporary non-attending students usually come to school around November and attend until the end of March or this period can be coincided with different periods such as September - April. Besides these temporary non-attending and permanent non-attending students, those interviewed at school mentioned they also had irregular attending students. The participants from schools told that they used their initiative regarding all these attendance / non-attendance states, and they did not have the students fail due to temporary non-attendance and irregular non-attendance.

On the other hand, one should not think of the attending children's participation in educational activities at school in line with active participation. Usually, these temporary non-attending and irregular non-attending students were expected to initially gain reading and writing skills within the period they spend at school. The assumption that children going to school after first grade had gained reading and writing skill did not coincide with the facts gleaned in the field. When we started asking whether or not the children reportedly attending school knew reading and writing, we have learned that many children went to school for years without even learning reading and writing. So much so that children could be going to fifth grade of primary school without knowing reading and writing. Thus, when the participants said 'They went to school just fine', they were meaning the children learned reading and writing and finished their school lives around primary or maybe secondary school. In other words, if finishing school life happened together with learning reading and writing, it was defined as good or fine. However, if the child was going to school but could not learn reading and writing, then it meant the child did not learn fine.



Photograph 15: Child and City, Gaziantep

Would We Not Want Them to Study...

Despite all these uncertainties and the apparently low school attendance rates, all participants we talked with mentioned they would want their children to go to school and get educated. Even further, often when asked 'would you like your children to go to school and study?', the families gave out responses like 'why wouldn't I want?' or 'who wouldn't want that?', trying to highlight the presupposition that education is necessary for everyone. Likewise, people interviewed at schools indicated that they found it important for the participation of children coming from these groups to education to be increased and for them to be graduated. Only some of the children told us they did not want to go to school and that they did not like school.

During the interviews we made with the families, many people interviewed told of the gains from going to school by relating such with the suffering and education background of their own. The participants who considered they would not experience the disadvantages of their current lives if they had gone to school mentioned their stories about not being able to go to school.

*"Literacy cannot be seized away. I do not know reading and writing. I have faced many difficulties due to this, be it during military duty or at home. There is nothing as bad as not studying. Let the grandchildren go to school."
(Sait , 55, Abdal from Turkey / Aşiret, Nizip)*

Especially the women defined the fact they had to drop out of school or not even going to school due to having to work or marriage despite wanting to go as a background obstructing what they could have done. Even more, many woman participants asked us if there still was a possibility for them to learn reading and writing.

*"We lived in the village, they had to be busy with village works, village works (angrily). From old times. From fathers, grandfathers, they also blinded us. They were blind and they also blinded us. They sent us along their own paths. Back then, after crop work after pistachio work, after field works our hands would swell and swell. We used to go back home and drop asleep from exhaustion. We did not want to get up. I would not event want to change my clothes. My mother tired me so much, I will not tire my daughter."
(Seren, 33, Syrian Abdal, Nizip)*

In their responses to the question of why children should go to school, the families expressed their belief that education could be an intermediary to having conditions better than current living conditions. First of all, the children could learn reading and writing when they go to school. For the groups, the school first and foremost was the place to learn reading and writing. The thought of having to go to school to learn reading and writing was mentioned related to the suffering created with the lack of the same. However, these sufferings pointed out to circumstances that are shaped in accordance to gender roles. Although the groups argued there is not gender inequalities in regard to education, their gender role expectations confirmed the divide. For instance, reading was a necessity for most man and many women participants regarding going into traffic and understanding traffic rules. For these groups who had to constantly travel due to work, it was of importance to receive education enough for obtaining a driver's license and then for reading traffic signs when on the road.

"I did not ever go to school but I am having the children go to school. We are people travelling around, for our livelihood. We go by car. If they learn to read, they will know the way, read the signs. Get their driver's licence."
(Veli, 40, Dom from Turkey, Gaziantep)

Although an expression based on gender discrimination does not seem to be inherent in Veli's expression -and this may be interpreted as an indicator that the expectations already normalised- those who were expected to have such qualifications were mostly men rather than women. This was because not having these qualifications may create grievous suffering for their families, and the reason why women also highlighted this necessity may be correlated to them being part of such suffering. However, the challenges most women mentioned related to not knowing how to read and write were those they faced during social life. It was seen that women told of hospital or pharmacy experienced in their expressions through which we understood that mostly women undertook the responsibility regarding works involving care such as sickness.

"When we go to the hospital they send us to someplace, we do not have reading, so we asked so many people about where that place was. If we knew reading and writing, we would go by ourselves."
(Nazlı, 45, Dom from Turkey, Şanlıurfa)

Another answer striking attention among the answers given when we ask why the children should study has been that school was seen as a place to gain a profession. As Melek from Şanlıurfa (45, Dom from Turkey) indicated, if the child goes to school “he would have a profession and his life would be saved”. As the condition for being a public servant, for having a profession and working, education was seen as a way for making their uncertain work lives more certain.

“It would have been good if he went to school, he would have had a profession (meaning her unschooled child). They would be teachers, doctors, lawyers, anything. We also want this. They would establish their own business. But they do not go. Anyway there are no one going to school among us.”

(Özlem, 30, Dom from Turkey, Şanlıurfa)

We have met many participants, who, just like Özlem, had the belief that if one goes to school, one would get guaranteed work as teacher, doctor or lawyer etc. On the other hand, it was mentioned, although rarely, that going to school did not mean a guarantee to find work. For instance, Sevinç from Nizip neighbourhood (40, Abdal / Aşiret from Turkey) told us of the daughter of her far relative who had graduated from two two-year universities but had still been sitting unemployed at home. What made the situation direr for Sevinç was that this woman failed to find any work while also happened to fail to marry while trying to study. While marriage is observed in many examples as an obstacle against going to school, as will be discussed in later sections, in this very example going to school was observed to be an obstacle against marriage.

People interviewed at school also mentioned that including Dom and Abdal children into education was important for the future lives of the children. Besides specialized reasons such as getting driver’s license and acting freely in social life as mentioned by the families, the participants agreed upon the opinion that having children gain the fundamental skill of reading and writing was an important gain. Many administrators and teachers, indicating that it is necessary to ensure the access and attendance of these children just like all people, mentioned that they set the goal of graduating these children at least with the skill of reading and writing.

What we expect from these children and what we deem a success for ourselves is that they learn reading and writing and gain positive attitudes.”
(Tarık Önder Sayın Primary School, Ahmet Aslan, School Principal, Gaziantep)

“We brought together all the Gurbet students who did not know reading and writing at grade 5. We told our branch teachers to forget mathematics, English etc. and just teach them reading and writing.”
(Osman Yakabık Secondary School, Osman Yılmaz, School Principal, Gaziantep)

Despite the mutual agreement of families and participants at school on the consideration that education of children is important, some children in the field mentioned they did not want to go to school. When we asked of their reasons, the children either remained silent or abstained from answering, saying just “because...” In such moments, the families felt the urge to intervene and explain that they had nothing with these responses of the children. When their families tried to answer this question in place of the children, they mentioned not liking the school, getting bored at school, and problems arising due to conflicts with teachers or peers at school. On the other hand, many children mentioned they could learn reading and writing and have a job if they go to school, just like their families did.

“If we went to school, we could be doctors, lawyers. We did not, so what will happen, nothing will. We will just work. We will do laundry.”
(Berfin, 14, never went to school, Syrian Abdal, Gaziantep)

Except for a few of the children, children going to school was seen as necessary by most participants for improving their lives. However, many participants have had the belief that the possibility of Dom and Abdal children completing their education and gain a profession was almost negligible. We have heard frequently both from the families and school participants that ensuring the children to get a full education was difficult in present conditions but that it would be a gain if they learned reading and writing. When we started to talk about the reasons, we have come upon the circumstances as listed below in order of importance:



Photograph 16: Children cracking pistachio

■ (But) The Economic Conditions...

Most of the ‘we would want them to go to school but’ explanations were those grounded in economic conditions. For almost all the participants we interviewed, the concern of livelihood took precedence over education. For these families having difficulty in covering their basic needs, the child going to school meant retrenching from basic needs and emergence of yet another expenditure item. Families’ lack of sufficient resources for providing neither economic nor educational support towards enabling their children to access education and maintain attendance was correlated with the impossibility to continue certain professions performed in the past, the current jobs being informal ones without social security and limited contribution to livelihood, and the nomadic lifestyle they had for working.

As was mentioned in previous sections, the inability of Dom and Abdal people to continue the crafts they had performed in the past in this day's conditions has been mentioned also in the field study as one of the reasons for the economic issues. The fading of professions performed without diploma and state control in time with industrialisation and urbanisation processes necessitated the groups to mandatorily change their sources of livelihood. During the interview we conducted at Drum and Shrill Pipe Performers Association in Gaziantep Ünalı neighbourhood, we understood that the musicians who worked independently in the past were now unable to gain as much income as the past with the development of the wedding sector. Wedding halls employing their own musicians rather than drum and shrill pipe performers was mentioned to be the reason for not being able to participate in the sector.

*"I go to sell goods (he means second hand goods). My spouse plays shrill pipe. Nowadays that work is gone. Now there are groups of musicians. That work is gone too. So we earn our livelihood by going to scrap collecting and apricot harvest in Malatya in the summer, and staying here in the winter."
(Gülhan, 32, Abdal / Aşiret from Turkey, Gaziantep)*

In addition to that, the decision of prohibiting street weddings issued by the municipality was also mentioned as a situation restricting the income sources of these peoples.⁽⁴⁴⁾

*"There are 8-10 wedding halls in Ünalı. Now money issues are even harder. Before, we used to go to weddings. We were making both ends meet. Now it is harder. Outdoor wedding is prohibited. After the explosion. The form of weddings, the style of music changed. The meaning of them prohibiting this is that the state supports wedding halls. How will one earn his family's livelihood?"
(Kamil, 40, Aşiret / Abdal from Turkey, Gaziantep)*

Also, wedding business transforming into a sector caused the tradition of conveying the profession of musician from the old to the young to end, and directed the new generation to other professions for earning their livelihood. This transformation was seen also in the past, in the fading of

(44) As the result of the explosion that happened during a henna night celebrated in the streets on 20 August 2016, 56 people have died. After this incident, the weddings were prohibited to be made in outdoor areas as per Governorship decision. See <https://bbc.in/3hNOMv7> (access date: 20/06/2020)

other professions performed by Dom people such as traditional dental work. For instance, Muhammed from Kamberiye Şanlıurfa has mentioned that their fathers and grandfathers performed dental work in the past but this had become a profession last performed by last generations with the state's increased control over healthcare system.

"Our grandfathers were dentists. Afterwards, as the dental profession died away, as our government also prohibited that, they had to go for agriculture works. So and so it continued. Now it is time for us. And we are doing all we can do. We are peddlers. Selling curtain and stuff. They come from Antep from Diyarbakır and we go and sell them in villages. We also go for agriculture work."
(Muhammed, 30, Dom from Turkey, Şanlıurfa)

The participants, indicating they had to steer towards new lines of work, mentioned that they work usually in temporary works without social security and very low income, and that those works were nowhere near enough to cover the basic needs of their families, let alone education costs of the children. Lines of work such as scrap collection, seasonal agriculture work, peddling and prayer bead selling were the most frequently mentioned among them. The irregular working hours and irregular incomes of many such works performed informally caused problems to live a life compatible with an institution like school which embodied order at its core.

"We have around 1.500 - 2.000 tribes, they call us Aşiret. My profession is drummer, drummer profession is gone, we started scrap collection, that also is gone. If I send the child to school I would be hungry. We migrate out. We go to metropolitan cities like İstanbul or Ankara during 7-8 months of the year. We have no social security, no social assistance. I have 8 children, all have went to school up to 2nd or 3rd grade. If I send the children to school, I would be hungry. We cannot make a living. We are not receiving any social assistance. If we are to collect scrap from the morning to the evening, it does not even make 50 Liras."
(Şaban, 50, Aşiret / Abdal from Turkey, Gaziantep)

"No work for the stranger. Wherever you go, you are Aşiret. They scorn us. They don't even allow scrap collection. Some places we try to sell roses, they even prevent that. We cannot cover the children's needs, we cannot earn our livelihood."

(Durmuş, 28, Abdal / Aşiret from Turkey, Gaziantep)

"We have been here since the war. We go to scrap collection, olive, pistachio harvest, go to collect rocks from fields. Our state is obvious, we try something to work, eat and drink whatever we can earn. We can only do this. If we are to send the children to school, and a policeman comes and takes us away, they would remain here. Anyway we don't have money to buy books, notebooks."

(Songül, 33, Abdal / Aşiret from Syria, Gaziantep)

"We had chosen freedom once. One gets used to it going and coming back from outside for 30 - 40 years. How we could stay here, it is about money, we cannot make ends meet. For agriculture work, for scrap work, we have to go outside."

(Yaşar, 40, Dom from Turkey, Gaziantep)

The situation most reflecting this state of irregularity was that the families had to be in constant migration in order to work. The necessity of children having to migrate together with their families, as one of the gravest obstacles against access to education and school attendance, makes it challenging for the children to establish relationship with the school, to integrate. The families having to frequently relocate due to scrap or paper collection in addition to seasonal works makes the problem about children being temporarily non-attending to school at certain intervals even more blurry.

Article 5 of the directive published in the year 2016 by the Ministry of National Education in regard to the seasonal agriculture workers' and nomadic and semi-nomadic families' children to have access to education⁽⁴⁵⁾ enables the children to be able to enroll in schools as guest student in the region they migrate but we saw that this did not have much meaning for the participants in the field.

(45) See Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Mevsimlik Tarım İşçileri ile Göçer ve Yarı Göçer Ailelerin Çocuklarının Eğitime Erişimi Genelgesi (Ministry of National Education Directive on the Access to Education by Seasonal Agriculture Workers, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Families' Children) published in the year 2016: <https://bit.ly/2YQi30J> (access date: 24.04.2020).

"First he was going to school, they removed the registration. He was going as a guest. As they did not remove it then, our registration remained in Sivas. The school in here did not accept. He was seen to be going there. This school did not even take as guest. The child's registration is in Sivas but our home is here." (Sevgi, 25, Abdal / Aşiret from Turkey, Gaziantep)

"We just came from Ankara. We have recently enrolled them here. They were going to school in Ankara. They liked their teacher there too." (Çiçek, 35, Abdal / Aşiret from Turkey, Gaziantep)

"Children did not continue school, they dropped out. My address was different, far from school, and we were not in good terms with the neighbourhood. Going and coming back would also be costly, so I had them drop out." (Yusuf, 40, Dom from Turkey, Gaziantep)

School administrators, indicating the number of students attending school at the destination of their migration to be very low, stated that although a good practice, very few children could benefit from it.

"Students are 'Gurbet' but are referred politely as 'seasonal agriculture workers'. They go city by city. They return in winter, they go back again in March. School knows and accepts these families. We taught this to the families; that they should relocate their registered addresses to wherever they move. The child is seen to be enrolled in one school. The Ministry told 2 years ago that agriculture workers' children are to be accepted to school whether they have address or not. When they go to agricultural work and work all together with children and all, they receive some money. They harvest cotton, pepper, olive etc. One family is for instance 10 people, they all work."

(Nefike Atasoy Primary School, Ali Bulut, School Principal, Gaziantep)

Families constantly running after work instead of residing at a fixed location at the regions they migrate and the state of being constantly on the move according to products for seasonal works made it not possible to change the children's enrolment registry each and every time, leading to failure to actualise the practice.

"I send them away but they don't go to school. Also, we go to İstanbul, to Ankara. They remain behind the classroom, behind what was taught. They

forget whatever they learned. Children don't want to go. We go stay for 5-6 months. Buy and sell second hand goods. When we return, children don't go to school. Where we go, school is far, and I cannot send my children where I am not even familiar, I fear."

(Berna, 27, Aşiret / Abdal from Turkey, Gaziantep)

"Of course the child faces difficulty. He goes in goes out, of course he cannot learn. We are out of our house for 6 months. Of course the child forgets everything. Even adults forget everything. Why? From going to and returning to agriculture work. Sister, we go out on the 4th month, we don't come back until the 11th, 12th months. He cannot go during that time. Then he comes back, enrolls again, continues. When he studies for 2 months and not study for 10 months, of course his mind wanders to the eggplant, pepper in the field."

(Mustafa, 25, Dom from Turkey, Şanlıurfa)



Photograph 17: Fig Drying, Gaziantep

(But) We Have Learned This Way from Our Parents!

Other 'but's that we frequently faced pointed out the reason of children not going to school as the historical beliefs and habits since the past. Various reasons being finally connected to the attitude 'it was like this, it will be like this' weakened the presence of education within the families' lives. For instance, families attributed the fact that they had no one schooled in their families for generations so that there is no one for the children to see as a role model to education being positioned far from their lifestyles. In addition, the widespread practice of marriage taking the place of education after a certain age was mentioned as the reason that most commonly interrupts school attendance. Another widespread belief is that the children of the families were mentally inadequate to be educated.

Children's unwillingness to go to school was frequently linked to the absence of anyone educated to take as role models around them. Expressions such as 'Children don't want to go to school because that is what they saw', 'He did not see any educated person, how could he want', 'Well he does not have anyone around to aspire to anyway' highlighted that the children's social-sphere was of importance and that their sphere was not suitable for aspiration towards education. The rarity of going to school and completing compulsory education and the commonness of not being schooled for the families and children strengthened the belief that the children who come to school age will also continue this trend of not being schooled.

"School is good. Who goes to school becomes smart and learned. Look at me I have 60 - 70 years age. Back then there were no schools for the old folk. We used to make homes out of mud. The old folk had no schools. There was school in my children's time. We did not send them." (Sirma, 60-70 years old, Syrian Abdal, Gaziantep)

*"We have no one like that in our lineage, like someone educated. In our tribe, once you're 18, you marry. No school. No profession. Old ones are gone. Children do not go to school, do not do anything, they will crawl around and get old and die. That is how it ends."
(Fatma, 45, Dom from Turkey, Şanlıurfa)*

Participants interviewed at schools mentioned that the role models in the families were not pulling the children towards the school but on the contrary, they pushed farther. Parents and older siblings illustrated as those with illegal dealings, substance addiction and violence tendencies were indicated to be obstacles against the children establishing a healthy relationship with the school.

"The school has no meaning for the families. There are like 7-8 families who think education is somewhat important. Families are against change. There is violence against women, father and mother separate, no divorce but father's gone, there is much substance addiction. I see things in these families that I saw in TV shows. So they are not auspicious families. The family thinks children just go to school, we know where he goes that way, let him/her be a little separate from us."

(Leyla Sakalar Secondary School, Nimet Sağlam, Guidance Teacher, Gaziantep)

"They have semi-nomadic lives. Family earns money from illegal ways. Children also think this way. They also think they would at least sell scraps and somehow live.

(Mustafa Çağan Irmak Primary School, Servet Çetin, Vice Principal, Gaziantep)

"They do not like to be referred to as 'Kareçi'. They like being referred to as 'Kirve'. They are dangerous people. 1 person can suddenly be a group of 100. You give tea, you say 'you are the jewel of the crown', then no problem. Their relationships at school is always violence related. They have violence also among themselves, they have competition. Whoever is strong, he is the chief. They have no understanding of cleanliness. They sell the aids given to them, turn them to cash.

They have low intelligence. There is much inbreeding. They do not marry outside themselves. These children do not like reading and writing. They also grow fast. You look at a 4th grader, Tall and grown almost like high school student. They do not like reading. They are fond of entertainment culture. They dance the halay (Anatolian folk dance), you enter their halay, they like you too."

(Yavuz Timuçin Primary School, Metin Görmez, Form Teacher, Şanlıurfa)

Children not attending after a certain age came up to be a situation receiving more acceptance because one of the most important reasons of dropping out of school was 'having reached marriage age'. The abundance of marriages usually at 15 years and over offered an explanation to the scarcity of children, particularly at secondary school education. Coming to marriage age was not seen inappropriate although that age still coincided with compulsory education age. The question of why didn't you continue school has often been answered as 'I got married and didn't go to school again'. While women were depicted to have come to marriage age once they start getting their periods, no such beginning age was declared for men. However, the fact that we met with many male participants married at ages of 15, 16, 17 years may be mentioned to point out that women's getting their periods could have meant the same age range to be deemed appropriate also for men to get married. Marriage and getting children at early ages are seen as an important indicator of transition to adulthood for both Dom and Abdal communities. Dropping out from education early due to getting married was not seen as a consequence more important than getting late for this marriage period because 'once it's time, one has to marry'. Marriage as a traditional stepping stone to the transition to adulthood was mentioned frequently as an unavoidable circumstance.

"I dropped out because I got married. School does not give me money. We collect scrap and stuff. Who would feed 10 mouths if I go to school? I have to work." (Osman, 17, Dom from Turkey, Gaziantep)

"We have no one like that in our lineage, like someone educated. In our tribe, once you're 18, you marry. No school. No profession. Old ones are gone. Children do not go to school, do not do anything, they will crawl around and get old and die. That is how it ends." (Fatma, 45, Dom from Turkey, Şanlıurfa)

Participants, who thought that children failed to learn reading and writing at school and to get involved with lessons in later grades occurred due to mental retardation in children, depicted this mental retardation as an inherent characteristic of the children in these groups. Due to the discourse attributing the children's failure to learn reading and writing only on mental retardation without any other reasons, the families refer their children to

Counseling and Research Centres (Rehberlik Araştırma Merkezleri - RAM)⁽⁴⁶⁾

The families see this sometimes as an income channel due to their economic dilemmas. The belief that children are not adequate in terms of intelligence squeezed the relationship between the child and the school into a narrow frame even from the very beginning.

"I have one daughter... She went to school for 5 years, she failed at first grade. She never learned reading and writing. She failed again and again at first grade for 5 years, she did not even understand the letter A. So I said she should drop out. I obtained a report from the hospital and had her drop out."

(Ahmet, 40, Dom from Turkey, Gaziantep)

"I have 4 children. A daughter of mine is 13 years old, her mind is a bit in the clouds. She always failed. She dropped out in 4th grade. She couldn't put the lessons in her mind, her mind is somewhat retarded. She cannot put her mind to such things."

(Gülden, 32, Abdal / Aşiret from Turkey, Gaziantep)

"Education is not everything. These ones do not have intelligence, unfortunately they don't. They will never get educated. But there is need for intermediate workers. They have to be raised as intermediate workers. They are very inclined to handcrafts. We should on one hand provide vocational education as intermediary workers, and on the other hand we should indoctrinate with national sentiments, love for country and moral values. We can integrate them like this. They have no intelligence, I link it to genetics.

They have no capacity, no background for education. Our Holy God did not provide them with that. They do not go to school, they get married. They have to be inspired with moral values. Having them get vocations may be a solution."

(Yavuz Timuçin Primary School, Metin Görmez, Form Teacher, Şanlıurfa)

(46) See Milli Eğitim Bakanlığına Bağlı Okul Öğrencilerinin Kılık Ve Kıyafetlerine Dair Yönetmelik (Ministry of National Education Dress and Appearance Regulation (2012), <https://bit.ly/31CPe9n> (access date: 29.04.2020).



Photograph 19: Çıksorut Neighbourhood, Gaziantep

■ (But) The Situations at School...

In addition to economic conditions, and habits and beliefs persisting since the past, the relationships established, and experiences faced by the children and the families with the school were also presented as reasons for non-attendance and drop-outs. For the families, the school's distance to their homes and the fear that their children might be kidnapped while they are traversing this distance made the school an even farther place to reach. When this distance is overcome and the school is reached, the rules of the school such as wearing uniforms could be standing against the children. And when inside the school, both the problems children face in regard to participating in the classroom activities and the discriminative acts and practices they suffer constituted obstacles against maintaining attendance. The limited relationship between the families and the schools was mentioned by the schools as a situation that weakened the effort the schools made for maintaining the attendance of the children.

The distance between the school and the home often coincided with a distance different than a physical one. When the distance of the limited relationships formed with the public, outside life is added to the physical distance as the children go outside of the region they live, a long road to the school was envisaged. A two kilometers distance or a 500 meters distance could mean for the families a distance that would dissuade the children from going to school. For instance, as many families in Barış Neighbourhood in Gaziantep mentioned the school's distance as the reason why the children did not go to school, we got the impression that a different school was

meant instead of the school that we considered to be near. However, the school was far because this primary school was at a nearer location before, which was turned into a secondary school and the former primary school was moved a little further.

"They don't go to school because it's far. They don't go because it's far. They are enrolled but don't go. They don't go with the fear that something may happen on the road to the school. My son does not go. They fear the roads. They were enrolled. Recently, like 2 years ago they kidnapped a child from the school here. The school here was a primary school in the past, then it became secondary school. And now they don't go because it's far. We don't have the money to arrange a shuttle. If the school was here, they would go. They go but they go sometimes. In the winter they never go, in summertime they sometimes go. And then they don't go at all. They either beat the children or men get angry with them along the road. There are some who go here, their fathers take them by motorcycle. But the children in the neighbourhood don't go because it's far."
(Gül, 28, Abdal / Aşiret from Turkey, Gaziantep)

As such, the school that they already consider far occurred to be even farther. Because shuttle transport to the school was not an expenditure the families could cover, this also provided no alternative. How far the families go outside their families, the distances grew apace accordingly. Thus, instances in line with the expression of 'the nearer the better' continuously came up for the school. We saw the clearest instance to this at the tent area in Nizip. Both the children and the families said that the children would go to school if it was right next to their tents. Having a school where their children would not mix up with the other children was seen as a situation to relax them even more because the 'outsiders' were seen as a threat.

"I wouldn't send to another school, we fear. We would not send to far places. They don't like the children around here. The people of the neighbourhood. Children turn up everywhere. Sometimes children happen to go to the grocery store, they don't allow them."
(Selin, 28, Syrian Abdal, Gaziantep)

"I am 12 years old. I never went to school. I know my letter (she means the capital letter of her name). I did not want to go to school. We fear them, they beat us. But if in tent, we would go. If we were under my mother's

nose, we would go."

(Zeynep, 12, Syrian Abdal, Gaziantep)

The groups envisaging a school near their homes attended only by the children of the groups was correlated with the threats they may face in public space. For instance, the fear that the children may be kidnapped occurred to be one of the issues that came up most frequently about the distance to the school. This threat that increased by the moment one gets out of and far from house was a reason for not sending the children to school that generated much fear among the families. When we asked of the source for the kidnapping stories, the families most often mentioned the morning-noon time programmes in television, and also talked of stories they heard to have occurred in their own neighbourhoods. The even greater prevalence of such fear among the Syrian Abdal people was rendered meaningful due to their being foreigners to the outside. In other words, the more introverted the groups with more limited relationships with the public, the greater was the threat.

"There are children kidnapping incidents. Girls. My brother-in-law's daughter was kidnapped. That's why they don't send"

(Gülistan, 28, Abdal / Aşiret from Turkey, Gaziantep)

"I never went to school. We don't know to read or write. We cannot learn, sister. We lived in a tent back in Syria. We never went to school in Syria. Then I reached the of 17, and I got married. We won't let the children out of our sight. I won't send them to school. If our relatives would send, we also would. Nobody sends them. We are here since 7 years ago. We have identity cards. There is nobody among us who send the children. Those in Istanbul send them, they bear being far from the children. I cannot bear being far from my children. That is why we do not send them."

(Zerrin, 20, Syrian Abdal, Gaziantep)

The school as an institution and being a space also including 'outsider' children drew the school farther from the families, and the discriminative and exclusive discourses beginning on the street, along the road to the school and continuing at the entrance and inside of the school made access more and more difficult. For instance, the risk of children to be victim of bullying by neighbourhood children along the road to the school came up as a reason that made the road both longer and harder.

"Since this war, we forgot everything, just erased from our memory. We are living in fear. We came here, we are still living in fear. Whether they would throw us out, whether our children would be left behind? So we cannot send them to school." We fear. The call our children Syrians, Arabs, they don't know that our origin is Turkish, our roots are Turkish. When they go to school, they call the children Arab, Arab, we fear that they would get into fights. We are foreigners."

(Songül, 33, Syrian Abdal, Gaziantep)

"...They beat up Rabia last year. Children from the neighbourhood beat her. Then she didn't want to go to school again, her face was all bloody."

(Hatice, 45, Abdal / Aşiret from Turkey, Gaziantep)

When the road is overcome to reach the school, then the rule to wear uniforms came up against the children. Although all the schools we made interviews with mentioned that they did not keep it mandatory to wear uniforms due to the economic challenges of the families, some families told that this was brought up as an obstacle in front of them. The fact that schools cannot force students to wear uniforms according to the dress and appearance legislation⁽⁴⁷⁾ occurred to be implemented differently in a school at which we made interviews. We have heard from different participants in the same region that children could not go to school without uniforms due to the school principal. And the comments of the school principal confirmed that he used the uniform obligation for deterring the children from coming to the school.

"The thought in their mind for coming to the school is how they could get their hands on some aids. The school principal has to look after us, he has to buy things like books and notebooks. But we broke that mentality. We made them know that they should not come to school without uniforms. We obstruct those that come to school without uniform as much as we could."

(Osman Yakabık Secondary School, Gaziantep)

(47) See Ministry of National Education Dress and Sppearance Regulation dated 2012: <https://bit.ly/3bd51Zt> (access date: 29/04/2020).

There were times we had to hear prejudices like the example above sometimes also from the participants we interviewed at the schools. For instance, many participants frequently mentioned that we could discern who these children were, meaning they are 'different' from the other children immediately from their appearances. The transformation of such state of discernment into state of rejection was reflected sometimes as a teacher's disconnection with these children, sometimes as parents demanding such children to be removed from their children's classrooms, and sometimes as the will of administrators towards cleansing the school from these children.

"Teachers don't like these. Formerly the teacher-student relationship used to be close, now there is no touching, it could be interpreted wrong. Now there is no intimacy, it's good that there is none because these children smell. You cannot enter into dialogue with a smelly person."

(Yavuz Timuçin Primary School , Form Teacher, Şanlıurfa)

"You know these when you see them. They are pitch black, you'll know. They wear loose baggy trousers. Black suit, black shiny shoes. The women are also pitch black. They do not wear socks. Their hair are orange, with henna. The children are also pitch black."

(Yavuz Timuçin Primary School , Özlem Çam, Guidance Teacher, Şanlıurfa)

What we receive are the 'wastes of the neighbourhood', of both Syrian and Turkish. The families in the neighbourhood are remnants of livestock breeders. Richest among them are those employed at a factory with social security. They dealt in cattle business. They have inns. Below their houses there are still barns."

(Osman Yakabık Secondary School, Osman Yılmaz, School Principal, Gaziantep)

"The parents in the school who are not Aşiret sometimes say "You had my child sit next to Abdal kids, they are unclean". The mother says this. If the mother says this, the child's perception on Aşiret children does not change. The children play together but when they return home, their families are discriminative."

(Nefike Atasoy Primary School, Orhan Demir, Vice Principal, Gaziantep)

“The system distributes to schools automatically based on registry system. So they fall into schools with the systems. The regulation says they have to be kept at school until the age of 13. You keep the student mandatorily until the age 15. I cleaned the ones with the birth year of 2004. We do not implement non-attendance rule. The children do not know reading and writing. We say just let them pass, don’t see to the teachers.”
(Osman Yakabık Secondary School, Osman Yılmaz, School Principal, Gaziantep).



Photograph 19: Tents at City Periphery, Şanlıurfa

So, What to Do?

One of the points of views shared by all people was that to ensure the access to education and attendance in education for the Dom and Abdal children, their families have to be employed and transitioned into settled order. However, as this is defined as a multi-layered and systematical issue, it drove many participants to despair as mentioned before. For the families, having a regular job and not being discriminated against in public / social spaces constituted the main paths of access to education by the children. In addition, turning schools into a place that is near to them where only the children of their groups will go was brought out as a solution. The necessity to break down the discriminative discourses against Dom and Abdal peoples that lies at the foundation of these two issues was also highlighted. On the other hand, many participants at schools also recommended the solutions mentioned by the families, and they also indicated that certain ways proposed by MoNE were beneficial.

The most important way for the children's present education status to improve was for the families to have secure and regular jobs. And towards this purpose, the participants proposed recommendation solutions over their own means of livelihood. For instance Abdal people in Gaziantep pointed out that the necessity of them to have permanent jobs in wedding and music sectors may be provided by being made permanent staff of the municipality. Abdal people in Nizip mentioned that the scrap and paper collecting work had to be recognised by the municipalities and that they had to be employed in this sector. The participants dealing in seasonal agriculture works highlighted that they had to be provided with safe accommodation and support at regions they migrate to and their daily wages had to be improved. Another necessity where all these ways of solution crossed was that discriminative and exclusive behaviours that constitute one of the most important obstacles in relation to employment and economy should be changed.

"Why he loiters around without work is because no work is given to men. No work for the stranger. Wherever you go, you are Aşiret. They scorn us. They don't even allow scrap collection. Some places we try to sell roses, they even prevent that. We cannot cover the children's needs, we cannot earn our livelihood."
(Serap, 28, Abdal / Aşiret from Turkey, Gaziantep)

"This is not something that can be accomplished merely with schools. If the unemployment problem is solved, the man would find a job in permanent settlement. No one hires them. They do not care of their cleanliness. You go to a restaurant, a Gurbet person brings you tea and the edges of the glass are dirty, now would you drink it? These ones go to hedgehog hunting. They eat its flesh, they have nasty smells. Would you hire him?"
(Osman Yakabık Secondary School, Osman Yılmaz, School Principal, Gaziantep).

"The citizens here know these guys and don't hire them. These people suffered discrimination. Their grandfathers, forefathers had always been repressed, repressed as stateless people."
(Yavuz Timuçin Primary School, Metin Görmez, Form Teacher, Şanlıurfa).

"The families deal in scrap collection. They formerly dealt in drum and shrill pipe performance. Their profession is gone. Now they don't play drum even

at their own weddings, they bring organ. They have no work. The families get by with the money received for the children as social assistance.”
(Mustafa Çağan Irmak Primary School, Ahmet Aslan, School Principal, Gaziantep)

For the Syrian Dom and Abdal people, the uncertainty of whether or not they will return to their country was a concern that superseded their employment. The issues of earning livelihood that superseded the education of children was in turn superseded with the fear of being sent back to Syria from Turkey where being a citizen was very difficult and they lived under temporary protection status. Therefore, the solution for the families involved taking measures that would eliminate such uncertainty and providing them with jobs with security that will enable them to earn their livelihood.

The administrators at the schools mentioned practices that had been done and were still being done by the schools for having these ‘different’ children adapted to schools. Examples like making home visits to encourage the children to come to school, providing assistance in regard to clothing and stationery materials, and opening reading and writing courses are the most common among such practices.

“At school we also provide assistance to the children such as school uniform, stationery materials and shoes. These assistances allow for school attendance among the children.”
(Leyla Sakalar Secondary School, Serkan Yıldız, Vice Principal, Gaziantep)

“The assistances allow for school attendance among the children. We provide assistance to all my students. I tell the families not to raise the children with the mentality of a “beggar”. They know what to / not to extend their hands for.”
(Nefike Atasoy Primary School, Ali Bulut, School Principal, Gaziantep)

“Our work is group work. This is our power. There are 1.800 students. We have no ‘othering’ teachers. What we are capable of doing we do, we clothe them, we do this every year. Teachers rapidly provide accelerated reading and writing lessons, we try to bridge the gap. We have succeeded to bring back 360 out of 500 non-attending students to the school.”
(Nefike Atasoy Primary School, Ali Bulut, School Principal, Gaziantep)

The relationships between some schools and private assistance organisations or companies played important role in providing such assistance. We faced mostly negative remarks but, albeit rarely, more positive remarks in some schools regarding how successful or unsuccessful these practices carried out by the Ministry of National Education and private organisations have been in regard to enabling attendance of the children.

“Our job is to be of benefit to the students through ‘support education’. Primary School Raising Programme (İYP- İlkokul Yetiştirme Programı).” The education of children is supported by way of weekend courses. Children are subjected to exams as per their levels. A programme of 160 hours. There were voluntary teachers in the past, now they are paid for these activities. It is practiced in 3rd grades.”
(Nefike Atasoy Primary School, Ali Bulut, School Principal, Gaziantep)

“We had talked about installing public bath and washing machine under the social facilities, but it did not succeed. Then we said let us go to have fun instead of bathing at hot water pools at facilities. Let the girls come with mothers and the boys with their fathers. This activity was practiced 6 years ago. It was continued for 4 years. The person in charge of the bath, someone from Tokat told us

“Teacher, the water became pitch black.” I told the person that “if those children had their hearts broken for this, I will get you.”
(Nefike Atasoy Primary School, Ali Bulut, School Principal, Gaziantep)

“We say there will be fines for the families who don’t send their children to school, there are families who send them in fear of sanctions.”
(Nefike Atasoy Primary School, Orhan Demir, Vice Principal, Gaziantep)

Finally, as mentioned in previous sections, making the school close to them in terms of distance but ensuring that such closeness be also one where only children from among their communities are to attend as to eliminate the discrimination they face was proposed as a solution for the children to be able to continue their education.



Photograph 21: Scrap-waste worker, Gaziantep

NOISUTS CONCLUSION



Within the scope of the small scale field study we carried out in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa in order to open up a discussion space in regard to the present education status of the Dom and Abdal people of Turkey and Syria origins, we attempted to comprehend the processes of children's inclusion/non-inclusion into education and the reasons of their present non-attendance and school drop-out circumstances. In this final section of the report, we aim to present conclusions that come up in the light of field data and constitute the foundation of the recommendations section.

First of all, we have seen that the meaning of school, receiving education and going to school varied prominently for the schools (in the context of the legislation they are included and presented) and for the families/children. For instance, 'having good schooling' has meant graduating from primary school and dropping out after beginning secondary school for the families, while this has been deemed as failure by a school administrator. Or, while 'going to school' has been seen as necessary for the families regarding their driver's licence requirements to drive their vehicles along the roads they set forth for earning their livelihoods, this has actually been deemed necessary in international legislation towards protecting the children from child labour. In some other instance, while school administrations argued the families did not send their children to school despite having a school 'almost right in front of them', in fact a far school vision occurred for the Dom and Abdal families just as they moved out of their living spaces through the discrimination they faced in public spaces.

For Syrian Dom and Abdal peoples, the distance to education was compounded with coming from a country torn with war and living under temporary protection status in another, with the fear of being sent to Syria at any time. While having entered Turkey without registration meant for some families impossibility for enrolment, the possibility of relocating at any time also made it impossible to get included into a fixed school order. For these families, the concern for having a defined place to live and a job to do for earning their livelihood superseded education in terms of priority.

When we look into the reasons why education get shaped differently in regard to the Dom and Abdal families / children we interviewed in Şanlıurfa and Gaziantep and to the national / international education policies and practices, we have seen that the economic conditions of the families emerged as the fundamental obstacle for the families to establish relationship with institutional education as seen in the examples mention above. The inability to continue in this day their crafts of past times as peripatetic communities but still working in non-secure and irregular jobs in semi-nomadic state

such as scrap collecting, paper collecting and seasonal agriculture works position the school at a far location in the lives of the children. The children's inability to continue school at regions migrated in certain months of a year or going to school without displaying a regular attendance has come up as a consequence of having to migrate for earning their livelihood. Further, their restricted incomes has made it impossible for the families to cover the school expenses for the children. As such, the school became an additional expenditure item instead of a place where reading and writing could be learned and a profession could be obtained.

We observed the families of the rare children who attended school more regularly to be families who did not migrate but instead have fixed jobs, or families who left the children with the grandparents even if they themselves migrate. However, outside of these rare examples, we have observed that families separating and migrating as such was almost negligibly rare for Syrian families and for most of the families from Turkey. The circumstance of families never separating is in actuality connected to the circumstance that the communities never separating within just like a family. For instance, the regions where we studied in the field study were places known to be where Dom or Abdal people lived together. Likewise, Dom and Abdal peoples who had come from Syria also lived in regions where Dom and Abdal peoples from Turkey lived. In conclusion, the school as a space that makes it mandatory to unite with the 'outsider' in terms of spatiality did not conform with the families' utilisation of spatial separation as the most important strategy for being protected from the 'outside'.

Another important conclusion came up to be that working in 'informal' jobs deemed not legal in public space, and being marginalised within the society and suffering discriminative approaches in daily life occurred to be significant determinants in regard to being included/not included in the school. Children facing much prejudice and discrimination at school, which is one, often first, of the places the children meet with the public outside their own living spaces occurred to result in a circumstance that led to children preferring to stay out of school rather than to be included in the school. The families indicated that they preferred the children to not go to school at all instead of the possibility that they face exclusion from other children or teachers or that they may be victim of a bad incident on the road to the school.

We have observed that it was more possible for the children to continue their education at schools where there are administrators who could think outside of the traditional education approach and try to comprehend the

values and needs of these children. For instance, we met examples where children's attendance is supported through not making school uniforms mandatory or through providing clothing, shoes and stationery materials aids in order to minimise the issues produced due to economic conditions. Or examples where some schools developed strategies towards including the children into school by way of special reading and writing courses towards eliminating the problem of involvement in studies in later grades for the children who could not learn reading and writing in the first grade. However, we also found out besides such examples that school attendance of Dom and Abdal children was not supported in the schools with administrators and teachers who believed that they should be kept separate. The strategies of not including the children supported with the prejudice that school was not necessary for these communities due to their nomadic lifestyles and cultures emerged sometimes in the form of school uniform obligation and sometimes non-tracked attendance issues.

These limited relationships established with the school cause also the traditional early marriages to be continued. The reason is that the path to establish order in the lives of children was not seen in receiving education and obtaining profession but in getting married and having children. These persisting early marriages were seen as the stepping stone for the transition to adulthood, compounded with the lack of any role models who had received education, obtained profession and earned livelihood within the families. Going to school was seen as loss of time and not a way to earn money, while getting married with someone among their own tribes/acquaintances meant a step necessary to enter life and have a semblance of order. The fact that it was ordinary for marriage to enter the lives of the children beginning in ages around 15 caused that the schooling age coincided with younger ages.

In conclusion, as one of the participants Sait (55, Abdal, from Turkey, Gaziantep) put it into words "being educated is a distant dream" for Dom and Abdal people. School was illustrated to be a space that may be beneficial if reading and writing is learned but difficult to offer a possibility to be graduated and obtain profession according to the participants we interviewed. Because neither the practices at school represented these children nor the school's purposes provided any meaning in the lives of the children. The instances where children and school coincided the most with each other occurred to be those where mutual understandings and needs were taken into consideration. Thus, if the economic conditions of these families are not secured, if the skills and knowledge taught in schools are not questioned to be in regard to whose benefit is considered, if the participation and representation of Dom and Abdal peoples are not included

in the curriculum and practices, and if the national / international education policies and practices are not shaped in consideration of local conditions, being educated will continue to be a distant dream for Dom and Abdal people in Turkey. In line with this framework, we will attempt to list what could be done within the scope of the recommendations section below.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



In order to combat the issues experienced by Roma (Roma, Dom, Lom, Abdal) citizens in Turkey in accessing rights such as education, healthcare, employment, residence and social services, the steps taken previously towards the resolution of the issues faced by Roma citizens were reviewed and new efforts were commenced under the title of "Fundamental Rights and Liberties" within the context of the Year 2016 Action Plan issued by the 64th government on the date 10th of December 2015. In this direction, the Strategy Document and 1st Stage Action Plan for Roma Citizens was prepared under the coordination of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and with the contributions of relevant Public Institutions and Organisation and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) towards improving the living conditions of Roma citizens. In conclusion of the studies conducted in this scope, the 2nd Stage Action Plan (2019-2021) was commenced, and this plan placed education at the top of its priority fields. It is declared, "It has been understood that children are not able to benefit from education opportunities adequately, that opportunities to access education are limited, and school drop-out and non-attendance rates were significantly high in regions where Roma citizens of ours live in concentration." At this point, in order to provide equal opportunities for education and access to high quality education services for the children of all Roma (Roma, Dom, Lom, Abdal) citizens and to ensure they at the least complete their compulsory education, strategic objectives pertaining to education were defined as follows:

- Disconnection from education that emerge at all stages of compulsory education in the form of early school drop-out and non-attendance shall be prevented and the people -particularly young people- who previously had to discontinue their education due to various reasons shall be enabled to continue their education.
- The knowledge levels of Roma families in regard to the social and economic benefits of education and the social assistance granted for education shall be increased.
- Social connections between Roma parents and students and the school, teachers and peers shall be strengthened.⁽⁴⁸⁾

What should be initially kept in consideration prior to moving on to these policy recommendations is that "anti-Gypsy sentimentality" lies at the foundation of all issues experienced by these communities. A strategy for combating discrimination has to be formulated within both national strategy documents and other studies conducted in this regard. It is necessary that

(48) Strategy Document for Roma Citizens (2016-2021) 2nd Stage Action Plan (2019-2021) <https://bit.ly/32Garzh> (access date: 01/07/2020).

it should be kept in mind that anti-Gypsy sentimentality is a special type of racism that is expressed through hate speech, stigmatising, violence and discrimination, a type of non-humanitarian and institutional racism being fed through historical discrimination, and it has to be combated at all fronts and through all means. Social cohesion programmes have to be developed in order to combat discrimination at schools, and these programmes have to be prepared so that they cover also the teachers and children and parents who are not of Dom or Abdal origin. We may list the policies to be proposed in line with consideration to the Strategy Documents for Roma Citizens and the data obtained from the field analyses of this study as follows:

1. *The entire personnel of the schools (administrator staff, teachers, public servants and other employees) have to be made aware especially regarding the culture of these communities and provided with trainings on the subject of inclusive education in order to combat discrimination for the in-school discrimination faced by Dom and Abdal children to be prevented, their education participation rates to be increased and the non-attendance rates to be decreased.*

2. *The contents of the school lesson books should be purged of discriminative language so to represent the cultures of the families. Cliché expressions in the form of idioms and proverbs that would cause discrimination against Dom and Abdal peoples have to be scanned and removed.*

3. *Increasing the rate of literacy within the Dom and Abdal peoples would also increase the parents' sensitivity in regard to their children's education. Access to lifelong education has to be made convenient for willing adults.*

4. *Study centres have to be provided by local administrations for the children to go and do their homework within neighbourhoods where Dom and Abdal communities dwell, and the educational support the children are unable to receive at home has to be provided in these centres. In addition, the utilisation of such study centre has to be made widespread through activities that bring together the family members willing to learn reading and writing and the children.*

5. *In order to take into consideration individual learning differences and establish one-on-one communication with the children, individual curriculum practices have to be implemented in place of central curriculum, and the school attendance and drop-out circumstances of Dom and Abdal children have to be tracked with care and all measures towards preventing such have to be taken.*

6. *Measures towards ensuring that Dom and Abdal parents raise their awareness regarding the importance of kindergarten education, prevent their children from dropping out of school and prioritise the education of their children have to be taken and access to kindergarten has to be provided for all children. Thus, the children will be ensured to make a start at the first contact with the school with developed self confidence, heard and visible inside the classroom without feeling the discrimination.*

7. *Clothing, school lunch and stationery aids have to be provided to Dom and Abdal children due to their limited economic conditions. Furthermore, self-care costs of children to start preschool/kindergarten have to be covered.*

8. *The discrimination against Dom and Abdal children faced at schools has to be eliminated and the widespread practice of referral of the children to special education centres and issuance of reports from Counseling and Research Centres (RAM) has to be abolished, and mentally non-disabled children have to be placed in normal schools.*

9. *For communication to be established between schools and parents, parent-teacher associations have to be structured to represent these families, and a school mediation system has to be established that includes also these families.*

10. *Strategies and programmes to cover these families and children have to be developed through especially local administrations, and also non-governmental organisations and education institutions in regions where Dom and Abdal families live in concentration, and all such efforts have to include civil society representatives and opinion leaders.*

11. For the adaptation of the students to the school environment to be increased, the participation of Dom and Abdal children to games and contests within school club activities has to be encouraged, and the culture-arts and sports activities have to be supported for developing the social life and communication skills of the students and strengthening their connections with the school.

12. Measures have to be taken towards preventing child labour. The families have to be provided with information on the present aids for education and the education supports and programmes such as conditional cash assistance provided by Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations, and the families who are not benefitting from such assistances have to be provided with access to them in order to support education attendance. In addition, social assistance policies have to be developed, and the families in need of assistance have to be provided regularly with “basic citizenship income.”

13. Due to the fact that the limited time of girls left outside of home chores may reduce their participation to education, education has to be provided through home visits for these children.

14. Schooling ratio is significantly low among the refugee Dom and Abdal children who face discrimination due to their ethnic identities and lifestyles. Initially, the families within Syrian Dom and Abdal communities have to be provided with access to all services covered by the scope of Temporary Protection Status (temporary protection identity card, population registry processes, etc.). These children have to be enrolled in public schools and their families have to be informed regarding the education system. For ensuring the integration between Dom / Abdal children and local children, the awareness of teachers in public schools has to be increased and programmes have to be developed against any and all rights violation and discrimination these children face in public schools.



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