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SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF IRANIAN IMMIGRANTS IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to study the migration experience of Iranian immigrants and asylum seekers living in Turkey by exploring their social, economic, and cultural integration along with the barriers they face in assimilating to the host society. Iranians moved and settled in Turkey mainly due to political reasons through three primary waves of migration since the Islamic revolution in 1979. They mainly arrived in Turkey intending to cross to western countries; however, once they faced the difficulties of transition to west, they built a diasporic space up in Turkey to balance their re-imagining of Iran as a home and their desire to build a home in a foreign country. Therefore, this thesis uses a qualitative approach by employing semi-structured interviews with 41 Iranians living in various cities of Turkey to gain an in-depth perspective on their background in Iran, their decision to leave the homeland, their migration journey, their main problems, and their resettlement in Turkey.

The findings reveal that Iranians face serious challenges and barriers in integrating into the new society, even though Turkey is considered as one of the best destinations for them due to its geographical and cultural proximity. These challenges range from obstacles in involving in the labor market to having access to health services. Furthermore, Iranian immigrants and asylum seekers' daily lives and their future plans are continuously being influenced by the changing migration policies in Turkey. I provide

managerial insights to decision-makers in migration management to develop strategies for reducing the barriers in the social integration of Iranian immigrants.

Keywords: *Migration, Asylum seekers, Iranian migrants*, *Integration, Turkey*

Öz

Bu tez, Türkiye'de yaşayan İranlı göçmenlerin ve sığınmacıların göç deneyimini ev sahibi topluma entegre olmada karşılaştıkları sorunları sosyal, ekonomik ve kültürel faktörleri de dikkate alarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. İranlılar, 1979'daki İslam devriminden bu yana başlıca üç göç dalgası yoluyla siyasi nedenlerden ötürü Türkiye'ye taşınmış ve yerleşmiştir. Çoğunlukla Türkiye'ye batı ülkelerine geçmeye niyetlenen İranlılar, batıya geçişte zorluklarla karşılaştıklarında, İran'ı bir ev olarak yeniden hayal etmişve yabancı bir ülkede bir ev inşa etme arzularını dengelemek için Türkiye'de diasporik bir alan kurmuşlardır. Bu tez, Türkiye'nin çeşitli şehirlerinde yaşayan 41 İranlı ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yaparak İran'daki geçmişleri, anavatanı terk etme kararları, göç yolculuğu, yaşadıkları ana sorunlar ve Türkiye'ye yerleşimleri hakkında derinlemesine bakış açısı kazanmayı hedefler.

Bulgular, Türkiye'nin coğrafi ve kültürel yakınlığı nedeniyle kendileri için en iyi varış yerlerinden biri olarak görülmesine rağmen İranlıların yeni topluma entegre olma konusunda ciddi zorluklarla ve engellerle karşılaştığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu zorluklar işgücü piyasasına dahil olmanın önündeki engellerden sağlık hizmetlerine erişime kadar uzanmaktadır. Ayrıca, İranlı göçmenler ve sığınmacıların günlük yaşamları ve gelecek planları Türkiye'deki değişen göç politikalarından sürekli olarak etkilenmektedir. Bu araştırma, göç yönetimindeki karar vericilere İranlı göçmenlerin sosyal entegrasyonundaki engelleri azaltmak için de stratejiler sunar.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Göç, Sığınmacılar, İranlı göçmenler, Uyum, Türkiye*

To my beloved husband

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Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all of the participants of this study. They all dedicated their time and they shared their most personal life stories and their experiences without any expectation. I hope this thesis contributes positively to their life quality in this society and facilitates the migration experiences of all immigrants around the world.

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Chapter I

1 Introduction

1.1 General overview

As a result of globalization and political and socio-economic transformations in various parts of the world, international migration movements are becoming an integral part of the researcher's agendas in human mobility studies. International migration is a complex phenomenon that affects almost every state and policymakers. In recent decades, the increasing waves of migration have affected both receiving and sending societies. Over the last four decades, Iran has seen various trends of migration among Asian countries.

The history of large-scale Iranian immigration dates to the 1970s and 1980s. The main reason for migration waves can be traced back to the Islamic revolution and the political and social changes that followed the revolution. The first group of Iranians leaving the country consisted of the affiliated groups to the previous regime, the religious minorities. Following the revolution, many incidents accelerated the migration tendency of different socio-economic groups leading the migration of many highly skilled and highly educated Iranians to different countries throughout the world. Iranians' immigration can be categorized into three main waves since the revolution. Most of these movements were related to the political and social policies of the Islamic government.

Turkey has a long history of both receiving and sending immigrants. Although there had been a mass migration of non-Muslims during the early years of foundation in

1923, Turkey was not considered as a migration sending country until the 1960s. The emigration which started in the 1960s were influenced by economic factors and resulted in the migration of 100,000 workers each year to European countries until the stagnation of 1974. The history of Turkey's emigration continued in five decades. As a result, today there are several considerable Turkish diaspora communities in many European countries (İçduygu, 2009).

During the recent decade, intense migratory movements towards the country have changed Turkey to a "country of immigration and transit". Turkey has received flows of immigrant groups (transit migrants, irregular workers, highly skilled immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees) from various ethnic and religious backgrounds who left their country for various purposes (İçduygu, 2009; Kirişci, 2007). In recent years, Turkey also hosted the largest number of Syrian refugees in the world with a population of 3.6 million (Adalı and Türkyılmaz, 2020).

Turkey was one of the main destinations for Iranian immigrants since the 1980s. During the early years of the revolution, Turkey acted as a transit country for Iranians in reaching western countries. Thousands of Iranian refugees and immigrants used this country to reach their ultimate destination. Although Turkey still acts as a transit country for some Iranians, especially students and asylum seekers, it has been generally considered as a country of settlement rather than a country of transit for many Iranians. This fundamental change in the perception of Iranians toward Turkey can be explained by the increasing number of Iranian tourists who traveled to Turkey and observed the modern lifestyle and cultural proximity of two countries which resulted in deciding to continue their lives there. The better economic situation of Turkey and its political and economic stability compared with Iran is among the top pull factors for Iranians immigration to choose this country as their temporary or permanent destination.

Taking the recent official data into account, it is estimated that around 120 thousand Iranian immigrants are living in Turkey. Iranian immigrants in Turkey are forming a cosmopolitan community encompassing different ethnic, political, social, and economic backgrounds. Iranians are legitimizing their stay in Turkey by using different kinds of documents like residence permits, Turkish citizenship, touristic visas, or asylum-seeking certificates. This group of immigrants is considered to be more educated than immigrants from other countries. In this study, the growing number of Iranian immigrants and refugees in Turkey and their community is deeply studied to provide policy suggestions for governmental authorities.

Iranian diasporas in different parts of the world, especially in the US, has been attracted the interest of migration scholars all around the world. There exist significant publications explaining the different features of these diasporas and their formation history (Bozorgmehr, 1998, 1988; Ghorashi, 2018, 2009; Mobasher, 2018). Although Iranian diasporas in different countries have distinct characteristics, they have shared similar features including socio-economic aspects of its members, the internal cohesion, similar identity formation, and integration process.

Despite the long history of Iranians migration to Turkey since the Islamic revolution and the increasing number of immigrants in recent decades, the number of research concerning them is very limited in the international migration literature. The most relevant research works in Turkey studies the transit and illegal immigrants (İçduygu, 2012; 2005; 2003; Kirişci, 2007; Zijlstra, 2014) and asylum seekers, especially religious minorities (Akcapar, 2010; 2006). The experiences of documented and settled Iranians in Turkey have not been attracted enough attention from research scholars yet. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive study of Iranians immigration to Turkey and their integration process in the host country. In doing so, first, the migration journey of Iranians to Turkey is explored. Subsequently, their daily experiences in Turkey and their socio-economic integration in Turkish society have been

analyzed. Besides, for the first time, this study will explore the Iranian community in Istanbul from the perspective of diaspora studies to contribute to the existing literature on Iranian diaspora.

1.2 Aims and objectives

This thesis aims at studying the migration experience of Iranian immigrants and asylum seekers in Turkey. The main objective of this study is to understand their integration and settlement process in Turkey by studying the barriers and obstacles that they are facing. In particular, the main research question of this study is the following explanatory question:

- What are the experiences of Iranian migrants and asylum seekers in Turkey?

Following the main research question, the sub research questions of this study are as follows:

- What is the context and considerations that shaped migrants' decision to travel to Turkey?
- How was the migration journey and settlement process of Iranian migrants to Turkey?
- How is the integration process of migrants and asylum seekers in the host country? (in terms of language, cultural adaptation, etc.)
- What are the main problems and barriers that Iranians are facing through their socioeconomic integration?
- What are the future plans of migrants about living in Turkey?
- What actions can policymakers and government officials take regarding this group of immigrants in Turkey?

1.3 Research methodology

In this study, a qualitative data collection method was adopted, and qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. In this context, 41 Iranian immigrants and asylum seekers have been interviewed between January 2020 and March 2020. In these interviews, in-depth information was collected, and in the data interpretation step, the collected data were analyzed under different themes.

The interviews held mostly face-to-face with Iranian immigrants living in Istanbul. Some interviews were held through telephone and the internet. Telephone and online applications were used to contact with asylum seekers living in other provinces of Turkey. Most of the interviews were conducted in Persian, the official language of Iran. The Azeri Turks were interviewed in their mother tongue, Azeri, as well. All the interviews were tape-recorded by the consent of interviewees. Before starting interviews the participants also assured that their identities will be confidential. The average length of the interviews was one hour. The interviews were conducted in calm places based on participant's preferences like cafes, their houses, or their workplaces.

All the participants were reached by using the snowball sampling method which is based on forming a network with the references. This method is selected because it was hard to reach diverse groups of immigrants in the first place. Social networks of the researcher have been used, and thanks to this network, Iranians with diverse socioeconomic characteristics have been contacted. Subsequently, based on the assistance of local Iranian businesses, Iranians living in other regions of the city were contacted. These networks helped in providing the heterogeneous sample for the study.

For me, being an Iranian student was a huge facilitating factor in establishing a trustful relationship with Iranian immigrants. I am a graduate student in sociology coming from an Azeri city of Iran, Tabriz. Being native in both Persian and Azeri language enabled me to have deeper communication with my participants.

Other sources of information for this research were social media groups of Iranians. In some applications like Telegram, Iranians have ample meeting groups where they are very active in sharing their daily experiences. These groups and their posts were carefully monitored for five months to gather information about migrants' and refugees' experiences and living conditions. Moreover, I had the chance of announcing my research topic in one of the most significant Telegram channels of Iranians living in Turkey. Therefore, I reached many different immigrants and asylum seekers who had different migration stories to share.

As it is argued in the literature, the purpose of qualitative studies is not to generalize the findings of the study to the target population. Rather, they aim to provide a deep and contextual understanding of specific aspects of human experience through an intensive examination of particular cases (Polit, 2010). Likewise, this study is not intending to make generalized claims about Iranian immigrants living in Turkey. Rather, it tries to understand the unknown migration journey of Iranians, their living conditions, their needs, and expectations by making a comprehensive and in-depth analysis.

In this field research, interviews were constituted from six different parts. These parts were including different open-ended questions about the migration experiences of Iranians. The first part of the questions collects demographic information of immigrants and asylum seekers. The second part gathers information about the migration decisions of Iranians, their reasons for choosing Turkey as a destination, and their migration journey. Following these themes, the daily lives of immigrants, the problems, and barriers they are facing and the coping strategies they adopt in dealing with these problems were asked. Finally, the information about future plans of immigrants and their expectations from the Turkish government were collected. The items of the questionnaire are provided in Appendix A.

A significant part of the participants was over 18 years old living in Beylikdüzü, Istanbul. This province is hosting a large number of Iranians living in Istanbul. Other participants were selected from different socio-economic status and Iranians living in different provinces. As a result, a heterogeneous number of participants were involved in the study. Accordingly, a summary of the socio-demographic information of the sample group is summarized in Table 1. Moreover, the detailed information of participants is provided in Appendix B. Considering age, gender, ethnicity, education level, socioeconomic status, and type of resident documents in Turkey, I tried to choose a sample that represents the different characteristics of Iranians in Turkey.

Table 1. Socioeconomic information of the participants

Gender	% (N)	Marital status	% (N)
Male	%51,2 (21)	Single	%32 (13)
Female	%48,8 (20)	Married	%54 (22)
		Divorced	%15 (6)
Age		Education	
18 - 25	%2,5	High School	%33,5 (15)
26 - 35	%37,5	BA	%36,6 (15)
36 - 45	%47,5	MA	%17,1 (7)
46+	%12,5	Ph.D.	%9,8 (4)
Legal status		City	
Short-term residence	%46,3 (19)	İstanbul	%76 (31)
International protection	%22 (9)	Niğde	%10 (4)
Work permit	%14,6 (6)	Eskişehir	%7 (3)
Student	%9,8 (4)	Denizli	%5 (2)
Turkish citizenship	%7,3 (3)	Adana	%2 (1)
Ethnicity			
Tehran	%51,2 (21)		
Tabriz	%24,4 (10)		
Other	%24,4 (10)		

1.4 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides general information about the current study, its aims, and its research methods. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework for the study. It discusses the classical theories of international migration, their strength, and weaknesses in explaining international movements. Additionally, lifestyle migration theory is discussed because of its explanatory power in explaining Iranians migration. Furthermore, the literature concerning the social integration of migrants is discussed. In this way, previous concepts of assimilation, acculturation, and multiculturalism are argued. Finally, the concept of diaspora is explained in order to provide a framework for studying the Iranian community in Istanbul.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature about Iranian immigrants living in different parts of the world. It first reviews the literature on Iranians in the US as the most important diaspora of Iranians. Consequently, the characteristics of Iranian diasporas in European countries and the UK is reviewed. Moreover, the literature on Iranian migrants in Australia and Canada is discussed. Finally, the history of Iranians migration is argued in this chapter while providing information about the three main waves of migration from Iran.

Chapter 4 examined the current statistics and scholarly works about Iranian immigrants in Turkey. The characteristics of different groups of Iranians in Turkey like asylum seekers, transit, illegal and legal immigrants is identified while discussing various legal documents that the Turkish government is authorizing for Iranians. In this chapter, the official data about Iranians is analyzed to provide anticipation about future increases in the number of Iranians in Turkey.

Chapters 5 and 6 represent the results of the interviews. Chapter 5 considers the migration journey of Iranians by analyzing their decision-making process and choosing

Turkey as their final destination. Chapter 6 argues the settlement process of Iranian immigrants and asylum seekers in Turkey by considering their daily lives in turkey. This chapter provides information about the barriers and obstacles that these immigrants are facing during their socioeconomic integration.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by referring to the main themes, motives of migration, and settlement process. This chapter provides policy suggestions for governmental authorities about this invisible group of immigrants.

Chapter II

2 Theoretical and conceptual framework

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed discussion of international migration theories and their causes, the concept of social integration, and conceptualizing diaspora by exploring the historical and contemporary uses of this term. To this end, this study does not try to produce a novel and comprehensive theory of migration, integration, or diaspora formation. Moreover, it does not try to analyze these subjects using one or more conventional theories without questioning and examining their explanatory capabilities. Instead, it rather attempts at providing a well-organized theoretical-conceptual framework for studying the case of Iranian immigrants in Turkey from a multi-dimensional and a multi-factorial point of view.

2.1 Theoretical approaches to international migration

International migration has been explored from several different points of view and by diverse disciplines in the academic world. As a result, representatives of various social-scientific paradigms have developed different theories in explaining the migration phenomena. Theoretical studies of Massy et al. (1993) outline a couple of models to demonstrate the development of migration theories over time and to integrate the contemporary models of international migration. Castles and Miller (2009) classify these theories into three main categories: (*i*) neo-classical economic equilibrium theory, (*ii*) the historical-structuralist approach, and (*iii*) migration systems or network theory. In his book, O'Reilly (2012) criticizes migration theories. He believes these theories are

"perceiving migration as a one-off move to a new, permanent destination". He provides different classification by adding multiple categories like forced migration, domestic labor migration, and lifestyle migration. Although these categorizations are providing some clues about possible motives and intentions of immigrants, each theory itself may fail in explaining the specific issue of international migration. Hence, more than one theory may be required for analyzing a specific case of immigration. In the following, the theories are classified and reviewed under the general rubrics of *economic theories*, *historical-structural models*, and *system-network approaches*. Besides classic theories of migration, the following subsection focuses on *lifestyle migration* because of its power in explaining Iranians migration to Turkey.

2.1.1 Economic theories of international migration

Focusing on the labor market, employment, and wage differences, **macro-level neoclassical** economic theories consider income maximization as a singular explanation of international migration. This theory proposes that migration happens because of the different levels of supply and demand between the labor markets of the emigration and immigration countries. These approaches are generally assuming that international mobility will cease if the wage differences of countries will be omitted (Massey, et al. 1993). However, unlike macro-level neoclassical notions, the **microeconomic neoclassical model** proposes that income differences among countries is not the only factor that forms the stream of international migration. People may also choose to migrate as a result of their cost-benefit calculations. Castles and Miller (2009) argue that these theories are parts of general push-pull theories of migration. Push factors involve large scale demographic growth, political unrest, lower living standards, economic crisis, and political repression. On the other hand, pull factors involve the need for labor, wage rates, good economic opportunities, and political freedom. Generally, these theories are focusing on individual decisions in migration. Thus, they have been criticized for being "individualist and ahistorical". Nonetheless, the **new economics of migration** *theory* raised to question the assumptions of neoclassical economic theories. This theory

assumes that the migration decision-making process is not confined to individuals. Rather, it is made by larger and collective units like families or households to reduce the risks to their incomes and family economies. Therefore, considering this explanation, the wage differences between countries are not the sole explanation for migration occurrence (Massey et al. 1993: 433; Castles and Miller, 2009).

Theories focusing on income maximization in explaining the migration flows and decision-making process of migrants have been criticized for being simplistic and unqualified in explaining actual movements or predicting upcoming ones because we should expect the migrants to be disadvantaged individuals moving from poor countries to developed ones if we focus on these theories on explaining global mobility (Castles and Miller, 2009: 37). However, empirical studies show that migrants are usually individuals from the middle-class social status from areas that are undertaking economic and social change (Castles and Miller, 2009). Furthermore, these theories are also incapable of explaining phenomena like forced displacement because this type of mobility has no association with economic misbalance of countries, rather, it is related to human rights.

Similar to other controversial cases of human mobility, economic theories of migration are unable to provide a comprehensive framework for studying Iranian immigrants in Turkey since the reasons for their movement cannot be clarified simply by the means of economic distinctions and financial needs. However, it worth noting that the most recent economic crisis in Iran, which is mainly derived from economic sanctions of the United States, can be considered as a pull factor for Iranian citizens to leave their own country. Especially in recent years, Iranians are moving to Turkey as a result of the cost-benefit calculations to increase their income and to stabilize their economics. Nevertheless, these theories can only be partly beneficial in explaining recent migration from Iran since none of these economic theories are capable of explaining the increasing

migration of Iranian middle-class individuals and students who are leaving their country to relief from the political pressure and unstable situation of Iran.

2.1.2 The historical-structural models

In contrast with economic explanations of migration which underestimate the historical and structural features of migration, both historical-structural and world system theories are focusing on the power relationships between the developing and developed countries to clarify the transfer of wealth and capital among these countries. In this circumstance, the developing countries provide an inexpensive labor force to the industrialized countries. The **historical structural theory** mainly originates from Marxists' political and economic perspectives. They focus on the unequal distribution of economic and political power in different parts of the world to clarify the international movements. Migration in this perspective is seen as a way of providing cheap labor force for capital (Massey et al. 1993). However, as Castles and Miller (2009) argue, many scholars criticized this theory because they claim that it will be hard to explain the numerous shifts of migration policies of governments if the logic of capital interest were dominant (Massey et al. 1993; Cohen, 1996).

The **World-System theory**, which is originally built in the work of Wallerstein (1989), recounts the political and economic structure of the global market and studies the effect of penetration of capitalist economies to the non-capitalist colonies in explaining global migration. The world system theory argues that migration occurs when land, raw materials, labor, and ideological links of the colonial societies come under the influence of capitalist markets during colonialism (Massey et al. 1993: 444). Similarly, the **dual labor market theory** concentrates on the labor demands of developed countries in explaining international migration. The core element of labor mobility in this perspective is the government policies in industrialized societies for labor recruitment. However, whenever the market fulfills, the migration wave will continue even when restrictions and controls of the government continue (Castles and Miller, 2009). Although this theory

posits a divided structure and a dual pattern of economic organization for advanced industrial societies, it has proved that it is difficult to empirically confirm this segmented market structure in practice (Massey et al. 1993: 440).

Similar to the neoclassical economic theories, these theories are seemed to be one-dimensional in analyzing the great complexity of contemporary migrations. They often saw the interests of capital as the all-determining factor of migration by paying inadequate attention to the human agency and individual motivations. Considering the same justification, these theories have an insufficient perspective to understand and evaluate the case of Iranian immigrants in Turkey since the situation of Iran and Turkey is not an opposing position as discussed in the above theories.

2.1.3 Migration system and network theories

Another major group of theories tries to understand the continuance of migratory movements when the original push and pull elements cease to be as active as before. In fact, these theories propose a different category of effective factors for the persistence of international migrations. The popular theories in this classification are namely the institutional theory, migration system theory, network theory, and the theory of cumulative causation. These approaches and theories can be placed under the comprehensive title of **migration system theories** because they all argue that "migration flows acquire a measure of stability and structure over space and time, allowing for the identification of stable international migration systems. These systems are characterized by relatively intense exchanges of goods, capital, and people between certain countries and less intense exchanges between others" (Massey et al. 1993: 454).

The **migrant network theory**, which is based on the works of Portes (1989), focuses on the role of interpersonal ties that connect migrants and non-migrants. These networks increase the possibility of international mobility since they reduce the expenses and risks of the migration by increasing the expected profits from movement.

Later, the momentum that is started by the migration network will be enhanced by the lower associated expenses and the 'institutionalization' of the migration procedure. The 'Institutional' theory argues that when the process begins, it automatically develops and expands its related organizational services and facilities in both host and home countries while the control over the number of entrants, visas and their conditions gradually transfer to these institutions as middle organizations (Massey et al. 1993; Cohen, 1996).

There exist a bulk of research on the role of migrant networks as the indicators of migratory movements. For instance, Haug (2008) approves the role of social networks on the decision-making process of migrants as stated in social network theories. He argues that the social capital and social network at the destination country have a positive and encouraging impact on migrants' intentions and decision-making and they act as a push factor for migration. However, these networks and links at the host country act as a pull factor, thus, it can be said that the social network at the home place has negative impacts on migrant's decision making. To explain this, the author takes advantage of rational choice theory and argues that "actor's point of view toward migration decisions implies that migration processes are explained by an individual's behavior". Apart from discussed research, a rich body of literature on the dynamics and changing aspects of international migration emphasize the significance of families and friendship networks in determining and maintaining the migration. This emphasis is not new. It is now widely accepted among scholars that networks based on family, friendship, and community link the sending and receiving societies and provide a consistent structure for populations of migrants (Gurak et al. 1992).

Cumulative causation theory argues that there are numerous reasons that lead to migration and mobility by explaining global migration from a more comprehensive perspective. Migration scholars argued that there exist six different socioeconomic factors that are potentially affected by migratory movements in this cumulative manner: "the distribution of income, the distribution of land, the organization of agriculture,

culture, the regional distribution of human capital, and the social meaning of work". Other factors may also exist; However, they have not been systematically discussed by this theory. This theory defines international human mobility as a cumulative social procedure. According to this theory, both in the country of origin and in the country of destination, international migration produces important social, economic, and cultural transformations (Massey et al. 1993: 451). Finally, **Migration systems theory** indicates that migratory movements usually happen due to the existence of previous connections between migration sending and receiving nations due to the incidents like colonization, political relationship, business, financing, or religious and cultural links. Countries within this system are not necessarily required to be geographically adjacent as migration flows reflect political and economic associations rather than physical ones (Castles and Miller, 2009). However, Massey et al. (1993) argue that although proximity clearly facilitates the construction of exchange relationships, it does not guarantee them.

2.1.4 Lifestyle migration theory; scaping to the good life

Another important perspective in the theoretical framework of this study is the **lifestyle migration** approach. Beside conventional theories, this approach is being used due to its comprehensive ability in explaining the Iranians decision-making process in migrating to Turkey. As it is conceptualized by O'Reilly and Benson (2012), life-style migration can be defined as the spatial movement of individuals to the places that offer the potential of a better quality of life. In this respect, lifestyle migration includes an offer for freedom from previous restrictions, and in this respect, it turns into exploration or project that encompasses diverse destinations, desires, and dreams. The lifestyle migration is all about the scape from something and somewhere. This type of migration involves an escape from personal and community histories, or from changing conditions, and the opportunity for self-realization. Therefore, migration in this sense is defined as "making a fresh start" or "getting out of the trap".

Although this perspective fails in offering a comprehensive understanding of Iranians migration to Turkey due to its broad usage, it provides a valuable framework in categorizing Iranian migrants in Turkey. Similar to what O'Reilly explains in their book about lifestyle migration, the interviews of this study are full of tales of escape from political and religious restrictions toward a more free life. These stories of migration are full of dreams in building a better future with a higher quality of life for them and their children. Therefore, the theory of lifestyle migration seems to be a suitable perspective in conceptualizing the experiences of these groups of Iranian immigrants. As a result, the idea of the existence of better living conditions outside of Iran persuades many Iranians to leave their home country for achieving their goals and ideals. That is to say, they intend to rebuild a new life in the destination country, full of the rights that they believe they had lost in Iran due to the governance of Islamic government.

Nevertheless, this perspective in studying migration falls short in explaining the movement of different groups of Iranians like asylum seekers and forced migrants. Furthermore, in parts of the book, the authors refer to lifestyle migration as a kind of "downsizing" or mobility of relatively affluent individuals in searching for a relatively "simple" life to escape from the social problems of modern life (O'Reilly and Benson, 2012:3). In this regard, various similarities can be found within lifestyle migration and leisure migration or retirement migration.

In conclusion, the above evaluation of core migration theories has demonstrated the reality that there is no solid theory below the heading of 'migration theories', which could explain human mobility without being criticized seriously. As Arango (2018) argues, the current migration theories are all limited and inadequate in explaining the complicated phenomenon of migration. He states:

> "As often happens in the social sciences, theories tend to make 'grand claims', out of proportion with their applicability and

> explanatory potential. The ambition to provide the explanation for migration, or for international migration for that matter, often betrays them. The aspiration at general applicability that can be presumed of a theory is generally neither met nor disclaimed" (Arango, 2018: 112).

It is also clear that the above-mentioned theories have often failed to adequately address the Iranian migration experiences in Turkey since they ignore the non-monetary elements influencing the migration decision making and settlement process. This gap is especially crucial in understanding Iranian migration due to different reasons such as socio-political complications like the Iran-Iraq war, the Islamic revolution of 1979, and current corruption in the government. Theories that focus on income and economic factors fail to explain this specular migration flow because available research on Iranian migrants represents that the majority of migrants from Iran are not involved in low-income employment prior to their move (Bozorgmehr et al. 1996; Mahdi, 1999). Therefore, I can conclude that these models do not explain the migratory movement of Iranians as accurately or as adequately as the literature has suggested.

2.2 Integration of immigrants

The development of social integration theories can be traced back to the writings of Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, and especially Emile Durkheim in the last half of the nineteenth century. The key themes in Marx's books are the division of labor on the social level and labor practice. It is also the same for his treatment of class struggle and social conflicts, as it is for his theorization of the conflict between the forces of production and relationships of production. Moreover, Spencer's concept of evolutionary change was founded on three basic rules of integration, differentiation, and definiteness, thus social evolution was believed to be modeled by increasing social diversity and the new forms of integration (Gough and Olofsson, 1999). Emile Durkheim, however, examines the forms and impacts of social difference in the book "division of labor", whereas, in his another book "suicide", he provided a concept of social

integration by examining the absence of integration, which leads to anomie from social life (Gough and Olofsson, 1999: 1-2). Even though these classic thoughts have been reconsidered in previous years in both policy debates and sociological discourses, regarding the requirements of this piece of work, the concept of social integration will be examined in relation to migration studies rather than sociological studies in the following sections.

In a wide range of academic literature, it is discussed that there is not an agreement on the precise definition of the social integration term, even today. Castles et al. (2002: 114) state that “there is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration. The concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated”. Due to this complexity of integration concept, it will be beneficial to review the historical perspectives to immigrant’s adoption to the new society which initially is explained by assimilation theories and later by concepts like multiculturalism. The majority of sociological inquiries point to assimilation, adaptation, and multiculturalism as constitutive aspects of the problem of integration of immigrants in the host community. Therefore, in this section, the two controversial concepts of assimilation and multiculturalism are reviewed to better understand the concept of immigrant integration.

Until the late 1960s, the assimilation concept was utilized in social science to describe the straightforward adaptation of immigrants to the mainstream of the host society. Although the initial conceptions of assimilation were used to understand the experience of Americans at least from colonial times, the centrality of this concept is traceable to the Chicago School in the early twentieth century to the studies of Park (1928) and his colleagues Alba and Nee (1977). In 1921, Park and Burgess introduced an initial explanation of assimilation: "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in

common cultural life" (Alba and Nee, 1977: 828). In other words, I can say that Park (1928) considers assimilation as a spontaneous and natural procedure that reduces cultural and social heterogeneity in society.

In recent literature on assimilation, Park (1928) has been criticized for portraying assimilation as an inevitable consequence in multiethnic societies (Alba and Nee, 1977). This complexity among various interpretations of assimilation in sociological literature has continued until Milton Gordon's book, "Assimilation in American Life" (1964), is published. This book is considered as one of the most influential studies of classical assimilation theory. It provides a systematic exploration of the concept based on the study of immigrants in the United States in the 1960s. In this book, Gordon provides a classification of assimilation that contains cultural, structural, marital, identification, attitude-recreational, behavioral, and social assimilation. He believes that immigrants should adapt themselves to their new host society by assimilation or acculturation. However, attaining acculturation does not necessarily mean that immigrants are assimilated into their host society. Therefore, structural assimilation is essential for this goal to take place. He defines structural assimilation as "entrance of the minority group into the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society at the primary group level" (Ibid: 80-81). Gordon (1964) argues that the phases of assimilation are delayed by the characteristics of minority ethnic groups. A frequent perspective of assimilationism spins around the claim that distinct ethnic features, such as old customs, the language of origin, and ethnic communities, discourages the assimilation of immigrants into their new host society.

Theory of segmented assimilation which is developed by Portes and Zhou (1993), not only considered the joining of migrants to the mainstream of society but also considered the class as an essential social marker. This approach shared some parallels and similarities with integration theories by challenging the main assumption that claims the incorporation of immigrants into host society occurs in a linear way. This perspective

argues that second-generation migrants may choose various paths of inclusion into society by choosing which segment of society they want to be part of. Migrants may opt to integrate into other segments of society, such as the working class, or their own ethnic community not necessarily mainstream or common layers of society (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997).

Based on critiques toward assimilation theories, the concept of multiculturalism has been developed throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century. This concept clearly rejects the notions of assimilation. Castles (2000) neatly summarizes the main concerns of this concept and argues that multiculturalism concerns "abandoning the myth of homogeneous and mono-cultural nation-states" and "recognizing rights to cultural maintenance and community formation and linking these to social equality and protection from discrimination."

There is a considerable body of studies on the concept of multiculturalism (Modood, 2007; Gutmann, 1994; Taylor, 1994). However, Vertovec (2001) points out that multiculturalism is linked with a variety of divergent and overlapping discourses, policies, and institutional structures that are using the term in many different ways. Therefore, multiculturalism was subject to considerable criticisms both as policy and as philosophy since it came to the forefront in the public sphere in the 1970s. In particular, Grillo (1998: 195) defines six frequently identified problems with theories and practices of multiculturalism: "(1) the implicit essentialism of multiculturalism; (2) it's underpinning systems of categorization; (3) the shape that multicultural politics take;(4) the ritualization of ethnicity that is mainly associated with it; (5) the elision of the race (and class) that it appears to entail; and (6) the attack on the 'common core' which it represents". Baumann (1999) mentions that many of the correct observations and criticisms by Grillo "stems from a focus on culture".

Furthermore, Favell (1999) observes another feature of multicultural debates and policies that concerns bounded nation-building project. He states that:

> "...Ethnic minorities are offered cultural tolerance, even 'multicultural' rights, and institutions, in exchange for acceptance of basic principles and the rule of law; they are imagined as culturally-laden social groups, who need to be integrated and individualized by a public sphere which offers voice and participation, transforming them from 'immigrants', into full and free 'citizens'; they are to become full, assimilated nationals, in a nation-state re-imagined to balance cultural diversity, with formal equality of status and membership."

As a result, the transnational challenges to multiculturalism indicate that a real recognition of 'diversity' should include simple notions of cultural difference or community belonging. It should also encompass more complicated ideas surrounding multiple or hybridized identities. More importantly, it should also include the diversity of attachments and belongings which describe the people, places, and traditions outside of the limits of nation-state habitation (Vertovec, 2001).

Similar to the concepts of assimilation, acculturation, and other concepts that are used to describe relationships of immigrants with the host country, the integration term is a controversial and debated term both in theory and in policy implications. Also, it is used differently by policymakers, immigrants, members of receiving societies, and researchers. Like Castles, Robinson (1998: 118) also noted that "integration is a chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most". Not only this term differs in the definition concerning who uses that, but it also differs according to the different groups of immigrants. For instance, the integration of labor immigrants differs from refugee integration based on different migration motivations and their situation in the host society (Phillimore, 2012).

Some definitions of integration are traced back to the works of Marx and Weber. For instance, Favell (2016) considers integration as an umbrella concept that holds a wide range of processes and ideas around social inclusion and "value integration". Besides, The Chicago School applied this concept in the study of ethnicity by conceptualizing integration as a procedure in which immigrants pass the route to assimilation. However, social scientists like Berry (1994, 1997) define integration as a process in which both the immigrant population and host society change, and new identities emerge during this process. Therefore, integration is a component of the acculturation process. Berry (1997) argues that integration happens where individuals have an interest in both preserving their original culture and participating in daily interactions with the host society.

Moving forward, from sociocultural definitions of integration, some social scientists and migration scholars have tried to identify different aspects of integration. They also mentioned the need to study integration as a multidimensional procedure in which individuals, migrants, and refugee organizations, institutions, and society all have an important role (Portes, 1997; Ray, 2002; Zetter et al. 2002; Schibel et al. 2002). For instance, Fyvie et al. (2003) mention some functional dimensions of integration, like housing, education, labor market, and health as crucial factors for immigrant integration. They argue that progress in these areas is critically required for the integration process to start. Besides, Ray (2002) provides an important classification of tangible and measurable factors of integration as follows: linguistic, labor market, civic/political, educational, and residential integration.

In general, both the academic community and migration policymakers emphasize on concrete and quantifiable aspects of the integration process or structural and organizational elements of this process. However, immigrant and refugee' individuals tend to use this concept in different ways and at different speeds, depending on factors such as their ability to speak the language of the host country, their employment history,

and other similar factors. Therefore, it is argued that research on immigrant and refugee integration should allow them to convey their views and experiences by allowing questioning the subjective nature of the process (Korac, 2003; Ray, 2002).

Finally, Phillimore (2012) argues that although there is no single definition for integration, it is possible to identify some common themes and dimensions from the relevant literature. Integration indicates the development of a sense of belonging in the host society, with some renegotiation of identity by both newcomers and the host community. It also includes the development of social relationships and various kinds of social networks, and the tools and confidence to use their rights to access resources such as education, job, and housing. Therefore, there is a strong need for research around immigrant and refugee integration to focus on a variety of dimensions, their interconnectedness, and the way these dimensions are experienced.

To sum up, as it is thoroughly discussed in the literature, the concepts concerning the relationship of immigrants with host societies and their settlement process are controversial and debated terms. These concepts range from assimilation, adaptation, and multiculturalism to integration, which is the most prevalent term in recent years. Therefore, this study will use the integration term as its conceptual framework to convey the settlement issues of Iranian immigrants in Turkey and their relationships with their host society. The concept of integration is more suitable for the present study since it has concrete and quantifiable dimensions as discussed. Therefore, in the following chapters, the results of the collected data will be discussed based on these dimensions and corresponding categorization.

2.3 Conceptualizing diaspora

The term diaspora originates from the Greek word *diaspeirein* which refers to an unexpected but spontaneous process. It describes the scatter of seeds from the parental body that both disperses and reproduces the organism (Toloyan, 1996: 10). However,

for more than two thousand years, this term was used to demonstrate the traumatic disruption of the Jews when they exiled from their home country. This controversial concept also referred to the experience of Armenians as well. However, the newer usage of diaspora has often described religious or national groups living outside their homelands. These recent notions of the diaspora are more comprehensive than the classical explanations and envision diaspora as the dispersion of any group for any reason, including trade or work opportunities whose members preserve continuous cross-border connections to both home and host countries (Mobasher, 2018).

One of the most important criticisms of the classical explanations of the diaspora is that it is mostly based on the historical experience of Jews and other religious minorities. Furthermore, it is criticized for contributing to the exclusion and marginalization of immigrants, minorities, and ethnic communities by failing to consider the current global developments, political environments, and citizenship disputes that involve all diasporic groups. Therefore, to overcome these deficiencies, new definitions and explanations for the diaspora evolved. For instance, Carment and Bercuson (2008) argue that any group that can reside in two places and can play a coincident role in two communities is considered as a diaspora. Therefore, they include any group of ethnic immigrants like refugees, students, guest workers, and even second and third-generation immigrants into the definitions of diaspora. They also believe that the twentieth-century diasporas are differing from historical ones due to the new advances in communication technologies and easy travel opportunities. They conclude that these advances offer a new form of “hyper-connectivity between the diaspora and their home communities”.

One of the most prominent statements indicating the start of contemporary diaspora studies was Safran’s (1991) definitions of diaspora term. For him, members of a diaspora preserved a “collective memory of ‘their original homeland’; they idealized ‘ancestral home’, were committed to the restoration of ‘the original homeland‘, and

continued in various ways to 'relate to that homeland'". In addition to dispersal and myth of returning to the idealized home country, Safran (1991) also believes that diasporic groups believe they will never be completely accepted by their new host communities and will remain "partly alienated and insulated" from them. This problematic relationship with the dominant society originates from their belief that they should continuously contribute to the preservation or restoration of the homeland, so they keep strong ties and relationships with the home country.

Safran (1991) contributes to the diaspora studies by listing the main characteristics of diasporas. He believes that no modern diaspora would have all the requirements. However, he argues that the concept of a diaspora can be employed when members of minority groups share a number of the following characteristics:

- "They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original 'center' to two or more foreign regions.
- They retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland including its location, history, and achievements.
- They believe they are not – and perhaps can never be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate.
- Their ancestral home is idealized, and it is thought that, when conditions are favorable, either they or their descendants should return.
- They believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and
- They continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship. (Safran, 1991: 255)."

Cohen (2008) agrees with Safran's criteria but adds four other elements that concern the feature of individuals in their countries of exile. The first element states that we should incorporate "groups that disperse for colonial or voluntarist reasons" into the term of diaspora. Secondly, there should be an acknowledgment of "the positive virtues of retaining a diasporic identity" than what is suggested by Safran's initial list. The tension between ethnic, national, and multinational identity is mostly a creative and enriching one. Thirdly, diasporas usually "mobilize a collective identity", not just a place of residence or imaginations of the homeland. They provide solidarity and bonds of culture, language, and religion that formal citizenships may lack. Finally, he suggests that that in some restricted circumstances, the term 'diaspora' can be used as "describe transnational bonds of co-responsibility even where historically exclusive territorial claims are not strongly articulated". This feature applies mainly to groups that have been displaced multiple times or to groups that their homeland is lost or some religious communities.

To conclude, as Sheffer (2003) argues, all diasporas, whether contemporary or classical, voluntary or enforced, are maintaining their ethnic identities as a foundation for ethnic solidarity. They also establish sophisticated ethnics and national organizations for support in their host societies. Their members involve in economic activities in their host countries while preserving cultural and political exchanges with their homeland and other diasporic countries of their national origin and established ethnonational diasporic groups to fight against possible hostility and discrimination in their host countries.

As a relatively new diaspora, the Iranian community in Istanbul is carrying numerous characteristics of global diasporas as discussed above. Therefore, Chapter five of this thesis will document the emergence of this Iranian diaspora in Istanbul by focusing on different characteristics of this community and by reliance on discussed theoretical frameworks. The conceptual framework of the diaspora will be used since the experience of Iranian immigrants is a compelling story that discloses the strong relationships

between a globally-dispersed population, the home country, and the receiving host societies. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by studying their case in Turkey from the perspective of diaspora studies as well since their migration and their diaspora formation as a consequence of the indelible traumatic Iranian Revolution of 1979 and a total post-revolutionary cultural transformation that forced thousands of professionals, industrialists, students, experts, political activists, journalists, artists, members of religious minorities, and disenchanted and alienated intellectuals to leave their homeland. Therefore, while the current chapter reviews the major characteristics and theories of the diaspora, chapter five will analyze the Iranian communities in Turkey from this perspective.

Chapter III

3 Worldwide Iranian diaspora

The International mobility of Iranians and the formation of their diaspora was a major consequence of the indelible Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the post-revolutionary religious, political, and cultural transformation. These incidents forced thousands of disenchanted intellectuals, professionals, entrepreneurs, students, political activists, journalists, artists, and members of religious minorities, to abandon their country and live in exile. Considering the Iranian revolution as one of the critical factors for Iranians' immigration, the existence of literature exploring Iranians' migration and their formed communities has only emerged in the last 15 years (Ghorashi, 2009; Mobasher, 2018: 4).

As it is a relatively recent diaspora, there are limited precise statistics that reveal how many Iranians have migrated from Iran. The Iranian government estimates that between 2 to 4 million Iranians are living and working outside of Iran. Other reports by international associations such as the United Nations and independent researchers estimate the number of Iranians in the diaspora to be between 3.5 to 4 million with diasporic communities dispersed across the US, Europe, Australia, and Canada (Mobasher, 2018; Sheffer, 2003; Ghorashi, 2005, 2009).

Iranian immigrants around the world have been constantly affected by the diplomatic relationships between the US and Iran. Since the Islamic revolution and the

hostage crisis of the US embassy in 1979, the two countries had a turbulent relationship. Much like US-Iran diplomatic relations, the diplomatic relations between Iran and most other major Western countries was interrupted intermittently after the hostage crisis. Although not as deep-rooted and long-lasting as with the US, Iran has had turbulent and limited political and diplomatic relations with Canada, UK, Germany, Netherlands, and France since the Iranian Revolution and the hostage crisis. Even countries such as Italy and Australia, which maintained continuous diplomatic relations with Iran after the revolution, imposed tough economic sanctions against Iran in recent years (Mobasher, 2018: 10).

Apart from the revolution and hostage crises, the terroristic attacks in the US on September 11, 2001, negatively influenced the international image of Iran and increased the number of Westerners who viewed them unfavorably. These unfavorable images of Iran have had consequences for Iranian immigrants in the diaspora. By imposing ongoing various sanctions on the Iranian government, Western countries unintentionally have been squeezing and penalizing Iranian immigrants by denying them from the same legal, economic, and educational opportunities enjoyed by other dual nationals. All these events suggest the inhospitable and rough sociopolitical context under which the Iranian diaspora has been developing since the Iranian Revolution (Ghorashi, 2009; Mobasher, 2018: 10).

3.1 Waves of migration from Iran

Although Iran is historically shaped on the basis of Aryan's migration to Iran plateau, it has not experienced a large-scale movement until the contemporary period. Official data and studies on Iranian communities abroad demonstrate that three distinctive waves of Iranian migration can be identified. These movements were always related to Iran's changing political and socio-economic conditions.

The first wave of Iranians migration dates back to the 1960s and 1970s. many young Iranians, particularly from the middle- upper-class families seek out qualifications in the Western countries mainly aiming at improving the infrastructure of the homeland. During the 1970s, Iranians from different classes were studying abroad. The largest group of these students were studying in universities in the US (36,220 enrolled students), while the rest were receiving education in universities in Europe, the UK, Canada, and Austria. This initial wave of emigration was prompted by the resumption of oil manufacture after World War II leading to the recovery in Iran's economy. Furthermore, in this period, the political relationship between Iran and western countries was at their best and the king of Iran was openly persuading Iranian students to pursue an education in western countries. Nevertheless, due to the start of the 1979 revolution, most of these students did not return to Iran which led the country to endure the immense 'brain drain' (Raji, 2010; Mobasher, 2018).

Subsequently, the second wave of immigration from Iran, which was the most large-scale migration began in 1979, occurred as a result of the formation of the Islamic regime. This large mobility has consisted of two different groups. The first group of Iranians which left the country in the first years of the revolution were monarchists and those associated with the Pahlavi regime, namely the 'royalists' (Ghorashi, 2005, 2003). Starting from the summer of 1978, the high ranked officials, influential industrialists, investors, financiers, and entrepreneurs fled from Iran with their extensive accumulated capital. This pre-revolution migration was continued by the movement of ethnic and religious minorities and the remaining Pahlavi related people after the Islamic clergy's victory in February 1979 (Ahmadi Lewin, 2001).

The next group, which was the largest group of Iranian immigrants, started to abandon the country during the 1980s. This group was considerably more diverse than the first group and was constituted by army commanders, religious and ethnic minorities, and political activists. Their motivations for leaving Iran were related to the

difficulties and oppression that they experienced because of the revolution. This wave of migration accelerated by the start of the Iran-Iraq war where many of the young people escaping from the military service joined to flow of the refugee and left the country. This wave also consisted of people who lost their means of leaving due to the new economic circumstances and women who left their homeland because of the gender restrictions of the Islamic regime (Kelley, 1993; Ghorashi, 2009; Ahmadi Lewin, 2001).

Lastly, the third wave of Iranian migration started from approximately 1995 to the present. This wave of mobility was encompassed two different groups of immigrants. The first group was a continuance of the previous wave that included educated and highly skilled Iranians leaving universities and higher education system. The second group of this wave, however, included the labor and economic migrants from working-class backgrounds who had a lower level of education and fewer skill and proficiencies (Hakimzadeh, 2006). Overall, it can be said that Iranian international immigration originated from political reasons in the 1980s, while it has gained a more economic characteristic since the mid-1990s (Bozorgmehr and Sabagh, 1988).

Another distinguishing feature of this migration wave is the increase of asylum claims submitted by Iranians. In 2004, Iran rated tenth between the main source countries for asylum seekers. Only in 2001, there was a 300% increase in the amount of Iranians asylum applications in Great Britain. Moreover, in 2004, Iranians were the top nationality of asylum seekers in the UK. Their requests were constituted 10% of all applications (Hakimzadeh, 2006).

3.2 The Iranian diaspora in the United States

Despite the tumultuous relationship between the two countries, the US was one of the main destinations of Iranians since the end of World War II. Iranians started to enter the US in increasing numbers as early as the 1960s. During these years, the number

of Iranian short-term visitors to the US exceeded 1,000 individuals per year, which is equal to the number of Iranian migrants in the US In 1966. Furthermore, in the following years, the number of non-immigrants and students arriving in the US rapidly increased from an annual average of about 1,400 in the 1950s to 6,000 in the 1960s. The rapid growth in the number of Iranians in the US after the 1960s can be clarified by the changing aspects of sociopolitical conditions in Iran along with improved levels of financial prosperity in many middle-class families (Modarres, 1998; Bozorgmehr and Sabbagh, 1988).

The increase in the number of Iranian nationals in the US starting in 1975 was more accelerated by the lunge of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Following this trend, the migration of Iranians to the US visited its peak in 1981. Although it was hard for Iranians to migrate after the revolution and it was nearly impossible to receive a US visa after the 'hostage crisis', the number of Iranians in the US has reached its second peak by the mid-1980s. This flow of immigration has continued until 1990 reaching the highest number of all time. According to the official statistics, a total of 248,952 Iranian immigrants was entered into the US from 1950 to 1993 (Modarres, 1998; Bozorgmehr and Sabbagh, 1988).

As will be discussed later, Los Angeles hosted an important proportion of Iranians residing in the US. Considering this fact, it is not unexpected that the majority of research on Iranian immigrants in the US has taken place in this city. One of the very first significant books published on this topic was "Irangeles: Iranians in Los Angeles" collected and edited by Ron Kelley in 1993. This piece covered a range of topics including Iranians migration, their religious and ethnic diversity, family, gender rules, political persuasions, and popular culture in Los Angeles. This book was the first important in-depth study of Iranians living outside of Iran. The book depicts the fascinating portrayal of a community caught between two different cultures. It offered a novel perspective in

Iran and its citizens as well as on immigrant communities and diasporas in general (Kelly et al. 1993).

Bozorgmehr argues that Iranians living in the US are one of the most highly educated ethnic groups. Likewise, many of them hold professional occupations status and speak the English language very proficiently. Although their lives in the host country were always affected by the prejudice and discrimination toward Iranians due to the hostage crises, 9/11 backlash, and long-lasting political tension between Iran and the US, their economic and educational success was always remarkable (Bozorgmehr, 1988). Moreover, Bozorgmehr and Ketcham (2018) argue that this educational success is continuing through second-generation Iranians as well. They believe that the main reason for this success is the resources provided by educated Iranian parents, Iranian cultural beliefs, and the close ties with the Iranian community.

Irangeles and its networks

One of the main destinations of Iranians migrating to the US was California. It has the biggest and probably most diverse intensity of Iranians in the diaspora. The large flood of Iranians into Los Angeles –mainly referred to as second Iran or 'Tehrangeles'- has added a significant and distinct minority to the population of this metropolitan area. It is estimated that around a quarter of Iranians in the US have resided in Los Angles which makes the largest concentration of Iranians in the US (Sabbagh and Bozorgmehr, 1986). Iranians in Los Angles are commonly believed to be immigrants who left Iran within the second wave of migration, with their accumulated capitals, education, and professions required to get the well-paid job opportunities. The majority of these immigrants were politicians, prominent artists, actors, singers, and media performers. They were able to maintain their activities out of the country and use their previous experiences in Iran to found new networks of communication (Ghorashi, 2005). Another feature of Iranians in Los Angeles is the presence of a sizable number of students. In

1980, 29% of Iranians living in Los Angeles were students (Sabbagh and Bozorgmehr, 1986).

Iranians in Los Angeles are very heterogeneous groups in terms of religion and ethnicity. This group of immigrants consists of Jews, Assyrians, Armenians, Bahais, Zoroastrian, Kurds, and Shi'a Muslims. However, Ghorashi (2009) argues that, for the majority of the Iranians, political identity, despite the religious or cultural identity, had been the crucial distinguishing factor in the way they originally linked to Iran. The fact that many Iranians in the US had been politically active during the Islamic revolution and that many had to abandon their country because of their political ideologies, explains the significance of political identity for many of the first generation Iranian immigrants (Ghorashi, 2009).

Despite these differences in political ideology and sociodemographic characteristics, the dominant remembrance of Iran for immigrants living in exile was based on the concept of the repressive and authoritarian regime in Iran. The symbol of old Iran and the pain of losing a homeland for Iranians has been the central theme that connected a sizable group of Iranians all together. Irangeles was created as a symbol or group of characteristics that represent a home that does not exist anymore, for these immigrants Irangeles was a more 'realistic' and bearable portrayal of their Iran than the actual country of Iran under Islamic authority (Ghorashi, 2009; Naficy, 1993).

This sense of common loss led to the creation of a shared identity which increased the formation of virtual communities between Iranians in exile and even Iranians inside Iran (Ghorashi, 2009). Naficy (1993) discussed that the initial creation of the Irangeles community and its relationship to the homeland was sustained mainly through popular culture. He also mentions that by the means of radio and television programs, film and music productions, musical performances, and concerts, they

managed to establish a symbolic community and collective nostalgic identity, which repeatedly circulated the representations of home (Iran) before the Islamic revolution.

Another important way in which this community and network of Iranians established was through different organizations that had different activities such as political activities, preservation of the cultural heritage of Iran, or fundraising activities to support children, women, and the disabled in Iran (Ghorashi, 2009; Biparva, 1994). One of the most important aims of these organizations was maintaining Iranian traditions and to establish a connection between Iranian and American culture. Nowruz, Iranian new year, is the most popular national celebration among Iranians in the US. This celebration practices by many of Iranian associations as well as other cultural rituals. Ghorashi (2004) argues that the cultural and transnational activities of these Iranian organizations are more about creating a position in the new country rather than dwelling between the country of origin and the new society as it is often assumed.

To sum up, as Mobasher (2012) concludes in his book based on his sample from Iranians in Texas that the story of Iranian immigrants living in the US particularly in the past 30 years, has mainly been a political epic with themes of loss, involuntary displacement, political asylum, and resistance against oppression. These issues were originating from the consequences of the Islamic revolution, as well as tones of discrimination, prejudice, and social exclusion. The main causes were the tumultuous relationship of Iran and US after the revolution and persistent media headlines that portrayed Iranians as religious zealots, terrorists, and hostage-takers. These themes of alienation are best reflected in the poetry produced by Iranian in exile. Iranian poetry and other different forms of art in the diaspora express the collective pain, grief, and uncertainty that Iranian have undergone in the US since the Islamic revolution.

3.3 The Iranian diaspora in Europe and the UK

Since the 1990s, research on Iranian immigrants in Europe has been developing and sociologists have started to study the Iranian community and the experiences of Iranians and their children in European nations which are hosting a significant number of the Iranian population. Common themes are emerging in these studies about Iranians in Europe, including the creation and preservation of racial and ethnic identity, discrimination and marginality, assimilation, integration, and migrants' networks in diaspora (Darvishpour, 2002; Ahmadi Lewin, 2001; Mobasher, 2018).

There are several studies emphasizing how ethnic, religious, and political identity influence Iranians' settlement experiences in several European countries. These studies also highlight that not all Iranian diasporic communities across the world have a similar sense of community explained in Los Angeles. In European countries, Iranian communities have a profound sense of individuality and are harmed by internal opposition (Safi, 2010; Sadeghi, 2018). It also represented that the development of powerful ethnic identity between Iranian immigrants in Europe has been constrained by widespread suspicion and distrust to the larger Iranian community. Distance from co-ethnic and religious associations mainly happened because of sociopolitical disagreement within this community which ultimately caused the social gap and disconnection among Iranians living in European nations (Ghorashi, 1997).

Iranian immigrants in Germany

Germany is one of the major countries hosting Iranian immigrants in Europe. It almost hosts the greatest number of Iranian migrants amongst European countries. According to the German census, between 1981 and 1990, 67,022 Iranian immigrants were admitted to Germany. This number is approximately five times higher than the size from the previous decade. Furthermore, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in Germany estimated that between 2000 and 2013 a total of 75,237 Iranian immigrants were admitted to Germany (Hakimzadeh, 2006). In addition to

Iranian migrants, Germany remains to be a major destination for Iranian asylum seekers. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2015), between the years of 1995 and 2011, 44,806 Iranians seek out asylum in Germany. However, the recent statistics show that, of the 148,750 Iranians resided in Germany, 73% retain German citizenship and 27% maintain Iranian citizenship (Sadeghi, 2018). Nevertheless, given that Germany remains to be a major destination of migration for Iranians and their children, the empirical research on this country is limited, unlike the studies about Iranians in the UK, Netherlands, and Sweden.

Iranians in Germany have established many different industrial, academic, social, cultural, and religious associations. For example, 'the German Iranian Chamber of Commerce', founded in Hamburg in 1952, intends to promote independent economic relations between Germany and Iran. Besides commercial and industrial organizations, Iranians all over Germany have also established several academic and professional associations like the 'Association of Iranian Scientists and Engineers' in Berlin, the 'Association of Iranian Faculty Members and Academics' in the city of Hurth. Moreover, several organizations exist aiming to help Iranians residing in Germany as well as those in Iran. For example, Bonyade Kudak, a charity organization placed in Germany, provides economic, medical, and humanitarian assistance to poor and disadvantaged children in Iran. The Iranian people in Germany have also funded several associations and organizations to enhance the social welfare, social integration, and cultural engagement of all Persian speaking individuals in Germany. All these ethnic organizations, associations, groups, and events underline the growing networks and channels that are available to the Iranian community in Germany (Sadeghi, 2018: 57).

Similar to the findings of other researchers on Iranian diaspora, Sadeghi's research on Iranian immigrants in Germany shows that most of these immigrants find themselves in a national context that they commonly consider as unwelcoming toward immigrants. She mentions that Iranian immigrants identify Germany to be a place that is

required to accept asylum seekers but is not responsive toward immigrants. They also believe that unlike the US, Germany is not an immigrant welcoming country, and immigration is not a component of Germany's national identity or history. Her findings also suggest that although many Iranians in Germany have attained high educational qualifications and skilled professional experiences, the antiforeigner prejudice and racism often restricts their ability to reach better opportunities and professional improvements (Sadeghi, 2018).

Iranian migrants in Sweden, Netherlands, and France

Another major destination for Iranian immigrants in Europe is Sweden, the Netherlands, and France. However, despite the long history of Iranians migration to these countries, the research studying the experience of these immigrants is very limited. Furthermore, the current literature on Iranian immigrants in Europe indicates that communities of Iranians in European countries are sharing the same characteristics and are almost dealing with the same issues and challenges. Therefore, the diaspora of Iranians in three main countries will be discussed in the following subsection under a single heading

Over the last four decades, there has been a dynamic and diverse migration flow of Iranians to Sweden, which has included asylum seekers, irregular immigrants, family reunification, labor migration, and student mobility. According to the census of 2016, the Iranian nationals in Sweden numbered somewhat more than 70,000 (Khosravi, 2018). Along with Iranian skilled labor migrant and asylum seekers in Sweden, there has been a recent influx of Iranians pursuing education. The free university education system in Sweden, which was accessible until 2010, attracted several thousands of Iranians hoping to achieve higher education. Therefore, Since the mid-2000s, the number of Iranian student immigrants in Sweden increased significantly (Khosravi, 2018).

Many of the Iranians in Sweden are well educated from urban areas and middle-class social backgrounds. Their demographic features make Iranians an important minority within different educational backgrounds at all levels. Education is generally considered by Iranians as the means of social improvement and mobility. As it is stated before, Higher education has long been the motivation for temporary immigration from Iran to obtain qualifications that help to achieve a kind of professional job. Therefore, many Iranians in Sweden demonstrate a reluctance to take manual employment. Also, this attitude could be comprehended within the remarkable decrease of status many have endured as a consequence of migration (Graham and Khosravi, 1997). Over 40% of Iranians who are working in Sweden think they are over-qualified for the position they are working in (Hosseini-Kaladjahi, 1992).

In Sweden, there is a common belief that Iranian migrants are easily integrating into the host society. This public imagination is partly correct because as stated before, the social and economic background that Iranians come from is not very different from the Swedish one. Furthermore, unlike many other migratory groups in Sweden, Iranians do not live in an enclave and community form. For example, compared with the Turkish population in Greater Stockholm, Iranians live in less ethnically separated neighborhoods. Therefore, based on the ideas of Swedish citizens Iranians simply fit the notion of 'good migrants'. They are considered as spatially integrated, highly educated, and entrepreneurial. Iranians are one of the most educated migrant groups in Sweden. Young Iranians in Sweden are continuing their educations in the university more than any other ethnic group. However, higher education does not certainly open the door to the labor market for them since they are facing many difficulties in the job market in achieving proper jobs based on their educational and professional background (Khosravi, 2018).

Originally, due to the language obstacle and a lack of historical connection among the two countries, the Netherlands was not the most suitable country of immigration for

Iranians. Nevertheless, in the 1990s Netherlands started to be a more popular destination for Iranians mainly because of its liberal asylum policy. In 2013, 35,395 Iranians were recorded in the Netherlands by the Central Bureau of Statistics (Ghorashi, 2018). This number, however, does not include Iranians residing in refugee centers with awaiting asylum applications. Similar to other European countries, Iranians in the Netherlands tend to live in urban areas and are considered as a highly educated ethnic group. A recent study by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research in 2011 concluded that Iranians are generally well educated and have earned more advanced degrees than even the native Dutch. Almost 60% of Iranian immigrants have attained higher education in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, despite their education and their integration, Iranians have placed relatively high in the unemployment ranking in the Netherlands (Ghorashi, 2018).

Once again, like other Iranian diasporas, Iranians in the Netherlands are not living in a concentrated way in particular areas of the cities but are scattered throughout the country. This seems to be a common feature of the Iranian diaspora in European countries, the USA, and the UK. However, unlike the common sense of community discussed in Iranians diaspora in Los Angeles, the political, social, and cultural activities of Iranians in European countries are sporadic. Ghorashi (2003) explains Iranian assemblies in the Netherlands as 'incidental' which lacks a strong sense of community. Furthermore, there are noticeable internal divisions underlining a profound sense of individuality, along with a sense of marginalization in the host society. This absence of community is ascribed to the conservation and suspicion which exist among Iranian people in the Netherlands (Ghorashi, 2003).

Another major country of destination in Europe for Iranian migrants has been France. In 2006, the number of Iranians in France was estimated to be between 24,000 and 26,000. Even Though the size of Iranian residents in France is pretty smaller than other European countries, they have played an important role in the cultural, political,

and intellectual development of the Iranian diaspora. France has historically hosted a large number of well-known intellectuals and famous political figures and activists from Iran. Moreover, France has been a vital place to produce Persian texts outside of Iran since the Islamic revolution of 1979. These texts were written primarily by secular intellectuals and writers (Nanquette, 2018). An exceptional characteristic of the Iranian community in France, the same as other Western countries, is the high degree of education among its members. It is reported that 78.5% of Iranians in France have at least a university degree. However, despite this remarkable figure around 46% of them are unemployed and many highly qualified Iranians are unable to find suitable jobs (Nassehy-Behnam, 2000).

Iranians in the United Kingdom

Currently, there exists limited literature considering the presence of Iranian diasporic communities in the UK. Spellman (2004) provides valuable, previously unrecorded social and demographic information about the Iranian community in the UK In her research she mentioned that it was very difficult to achieve particular demographic data about Iranians residing in the UK because 1) Iranians are not settled in focused areas like other minority immigrant groups in the UK, 2) they are not visible in census records because many of them have attained British Citizenship, and 3) typically they are not a population that makes social complications for British society, consequently, they generally do not catch the public eye.

The 2011 British census results record 84,735 Iranian-born inhabitants all over the UK with 79,985 residents in England, 1,695 in Wales, and 2,773 in Scotland. These statistics do not involve the children born to Iranian parents or the immigrants and Iranians whose applications for refugee status are not determined yet. Many British Iranians have successfully attained higher education degrees and professional or skilled jobs (Gholami, 2015). According to BBC Born Abroad, 24.19% of Iranians living in Great Britain are employed in well-paid jobs, gaining more than £750 per week (Poots and Gholami, 2018).

Like the wider Iranian diaspora, the initial considerable movement of Iranians to the UK was started before and after the revolution. This migration encompassed mainly prosperous, well-educated Iranians who were almost fluent in English language settling into prosperous areas like Kensington, Chelsea, Knightsbridge, Richmond, Hampstead, and Swiss Cottage (Spellman, 2004). During the 1980s and 1990s, sporadic migration from Iran to the UK continued and involved economic migrants and religious minority groups who were looking for relief from political and economic circumstances and religious discrimination in Iran. However, the most recent wave of Iranian migration to Britain occurred during the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from 2005 to 2013, especially after his heavily debated victory in 2009 in the second round of elections and the social movements that followed (Poots and Gholami, 2018).

Similar to what observed in the Netherlands and Sweden, it can be concluded that there exists a powerful element of distrust between Iranians living in the UK during the 1980s mainly because of complex political circumstances in Iran. Hence, during the 1980s and 1990s, there was an insignificant attempt by Iranians to preserve a cohesive collective identity or to build a unified community (Spellman, 2004). Nevertheless, despite this sense of individuality, some groups of Iranian migrants in London made a considerable effort to build organizations and associations to help Iranian migrants and refugees and reserve the Persian culture. For instance, groups like *Iranians Associations* helped many newly arrived Iranian immigrants in adjustment process settlement experiences. Moreover, Iranian professional and ethnic organizations and networks have played essential social, cultural, and economic roles in the Iranian community in the UK. Organizations like the *British Iranian Business Association* and *British Iranian Medical Association* aimed to offer platforms to exchange ideas, accelerate networking through generations, and improve the profiles of British Iranians. It is worth adding that London is commonly acknowledged as having the largest intensity of Iranian organizations and businesses in the UK and possibly in Europe as well (Poots and Gholami, 2018).

3.4 Iranian migrants in Australia and Canada

According to recent population census data, Australia is hosting nearly 35,000 of the approximately 4 million Iranians living abroad (Fotouhi, 2018). By canceling the White Australia Policy and accepting a Multicultural Policy, the Australian Government produced an opportunity for individuals from different parts of the world, including Iranians, to move and settle in Australia. The arrival of Iranians into Australia since the late 1970s has added a unique minority to the existing multiplicity of the population in this country (Adibi, 2008).

Despite their minor population, Iranians in Australia have tried to create a restrained sense of community amongst themselves. This has been created partly through establishing and joining to the cultural and intellectual activities. Annually in Australia, there are frequent events that attract Iranians from distinct backgrounds. They include celebrations of non-religious national incidents such as Nowruz, Yalda night as well as Mehregan. There are also several musical events each year by Iranian artists in Australia and by those living in other countries. Besides, there exist many small and informal groups, including writing classes and book clubs, that initiated numerous ongoing creative and cultural events over the recent years (Fotouhi, 2018).

Evaluation of data confirms that the Iranian community in Australia is significantly diverse and multicultural. This ethnic group includes various religions, languages, and people from different socio-economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, a common feature of Iranians in Australia is that they share an identity based on cultural heritage and a common sense of ethnic honor (Adibi, 2008). For example, Aidani (2010) observes the importance of cultural and artistic activities among a group of Iranian asylum seekers and refugees in Melbourne. Aidani's study addresses the particular activities, like reading and writing poetry, singing, and participating in drama and performance among migrants to preserve a sense of shared cultural identity.

Since the first wave of migration, Canada also hosted many Iranian immigrants. Canada was believed to be a suitable destination for Iranians due to its migration history and the foreign-born population. In 2001, 18.4% of the population in Canada was foreign-born. Since the colonization of Canada by Britain and French, many immigrants have settled there, particularly from the colonizer countries. However, comparing with other migrant groups Iranians nationals are almost newcomers to Canada. During the following years of World War II, there were only a dozen of Iranians living in Canada (Garousi, 2005).

The first important group of Iranian immigrants came to Canada during the 1970s, however, in 1978 the number of Iranian immigrants increased from 100 to 600 per year. Subsequently, after the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979, the amount of Iranians immigration to Canada expanded to several thousand per year. The majority of Iranians came to Canada due to political reasons. Similar to Iranians in other destinations, they were fleeing the religious pressure of the Islamic government and the fear of the Iran-Iraq War. The Iranian migration to Canada was facilitated by the shift in immigration policies, which judged immigrants on a particular point system based on their education, skills, and occupation. The main destination of Iranian immigrants was Ontario and more explicitly the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). There is also a large community of Iranians who resided in Vancouver, British Columbia (Garousi, 2005).

To sum up, at this point, studying the literature concerning different diaspora of Iranians all over the world reveals that the Iranian diaspora remains internally differentiated by political ideology, ethnoreligious affiliation, gender, generational status, home orientation, class, and period of arrival. Regardless of the nature and the extent of their diversity, members of the Iranian diaspora continue to have a problematic relationship with their previous homeland and their new host societies due to the mentioned factors.

The most important similarity of these communities and diasporas is that they largely shaped by the 1979 Iranian Revolution and its post-revolutionary consequence, national policies, and diplomatic relations with other countries. As it was clear in the literature review, the Iranian diasporas in Europe, Australia, and the US which are mainly formed after the revolution are composed of middle-class and upper-middle-class educated professionals from urbanized areas with quite large resources and human capital. It seems that Iranian immigrants are predominantly activated in highly professional and well-paid jobs while living in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods. Unlike other immigrant groups in studied countries, they are not living in a dense neighborhood. In particular, they are living in scattered districts. Studies conducted on second-generation Iranians represent the same level of educational and professional success too.

Nevertheless, despite their advanced educational degrees, professional skills and proficiency in knowledge of host country's language and successful socio-cultural integration into their host society, the majority of Iranians in the studied countries are facing relatively similar political and social barriers and suffer from the same identity crises between assimilating to the new culture and preserving their cultural heritage while concealing their religious identity by deemphasizing the Islamic heritage.

Another similarity of immigrant's experience in these countries is that, although they seem to be successful in achieving educational degrees, they face many barriers and discrimination in entering the labor market. This could be explained by the working permit restrictions that some countries like Turkey involve in their immigration policies. Furthermore, the unfavorable labor market experiences of Iranians in European countries compared to the US and the UK can be explained by the fact that learning European languages are much more difficult than learning English for Iranians. Their experiences also represent the powerful impact of national contexts and immigration

policies in their integration process and demonstrate that even high-status immigrants can face discrimination and would be excluded and marginalized from the host society.

Besides the obvious and strong similarities in the diasporic communities of Iranians, there are particular differences in the collective experience of these immigrants in terms of income, employment, entrepreneurship, housing, education, citizenship status, political involvement, and network organization. Obviously, these distinctions are embedded in the economic, political, and social structures along with migration policies of the host societies where Iranians have settled. This can be better understood while studying the first- and second-generation Iranians in the US who seem to have integrated into host society more successfully than Iranian immigrants in any other country.

Lastly, reviewing the literature on Iranian immigrants and their diasporic communities represented that, there exists a huge difference between the experience of Iranians in western countries and Iranians in Turkey. Iranians who are settled in Turkey are mainly from the third wave of migration who generally left the country due to economic difficulties and political issues and the majority of them did not have the access to educational and economic resources like the ones settled in other regions. Furthermore, the working permit restrictions of the Turkish government inhibit immigrants and asylum seekers from getting proper jobs suitable for their skills and led them to work illegally with minimum wages. The geographical limitations that Turkey adopted in the 1951 refugee convention make Turkey an unwelcoming destination for asylum seekers and refrain them from having access to their basic rights and needs. Besides these differences, however, there are similarities of the Iranian diaspora in Turkey with worldwide Iranian communities. Like other countries, Iranians are spread all over the turkey and they barely live in close and dense neighborhoods. Additionally, like European immigrants, there is a very strong sense of individuality and suspicion among the Iranian community in Turkey which prevents them from forming a unifying community. The characteristics of this diaspora and issues of Iranian immigrants in

settlement and integration to Turkish society will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Chapter IV

4 Iranians in Turkey

Traditionally, Turkey was considered as a country of emigration rather than a country of immigration. Since 1961, as a result of an agreement signed by Turkish and German governments, a large number of Turkish citizens migrated to European countries. This migration wave continued until the contemporary period in forms of family reunification and asylum track. However, it later started to become a transit country to the European Union for legal or illegal immigrants from countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan. Turkey also acted as a country of refuge for asylum seekers from middle eastern countries (Kirişci, 2007). More recently, starting in April 2011, Turkey also hosted the largest number of Syrian refugees in the world with a population of 3.6 million (Adalı and Türkyılmaz, 2020).

Since the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran, Turkey has been always one of the main destinations of Iranian immigrants, either as a transit country or as a destination country. After the Islamic revolution, many political activists and religious minorities were obligated to leave their homeland and many of them selected Turkey as a transit country to reach to western countries while a large proportion of them opted to stay and settle in Turkey.

The migration of Iranians to Turkey is a complex phenomenon that needs to be explored both from a historical and contemporary point of view. Kirişci (2007) pointed out the historical importance of Iranian's migration by distinguishing between "old

migration" and "new migration". He believes that new migration is started by the migration of non-Turks to Turkey and it is symbolized by the arrival of Iranians after the Islamic revolution. Moreover, İçduygu (2000) reveals that Iranians are the first large scale group of non-convention refugees who arrived in Turkey. An important reason that facilitated Iranian migrants' entry into Turkey is the fact that a visa-free travel agreement was signed between Turkey and Iran in 1964. Moreover, this agreement permits the Iranian to stay in Turkey without visa obligations 3 months after their entry to Turkey (Kirişci, 2000).

In the remainder of this chapter, I will first explain the history of Iranians' migration to Turkey in forms of transit or illegal migration. Subsequently, I will provide a review of the research background and current statistics of Iranians in Turkey by focusing on distinct types of immigrants including documented migrants, illegal migrants, and asylum seekers.

4.1 Turkey as a station to the west

After the 1979 Islamic revolution, the main wave of Iranian migration to Turkey had begun. Initially, parts of former regime affiliates left the country. These groups had not been able to leave the country in the last months leading up to the revolution. Subsequently, individuals who concerned about the formation of a new regime fled to Turkey. Finally, with the beginning of the repression of the opposition groups, especially the Marxist and Mujahideen groups, many members of these organizations also fled to Turkey in order to find a way to reach Western Europe and the United States (Mobasher, 2018).

The discussed Iranian asylum seekers arrived in Turkey with or without legal documents by mainly aiming at using Turkey as a transition to western countries. A small part of this group employed the UNHCR services to resettle in a western country, while the majority of them opted for using their network in reaching their destination (İçduygu

and Yükseker, 2012). İçduygu (2000) estimates that almost one million Iranians have used Turkey as a transit country where one to two hundred thousand of them settled in Turkey after this transition. The Iranians who remained in Turkey have either attained Turkish citizenship or obtained long-term work permits and residence permits. Most of the discussed immigrants were middle class, educated, and professional individuals. Iranian Azeris received Turkish citizenship much easier due to the settlement law of 1934 (Daniş, 2006). In a report prepared for the international organization of migration (IOM) by İçduygu, interviews have been conducted with these transit Iranian migrants. 70 percent of them reported that their intention for migration was a reaction to the political changes and Islamic fundamentalism in Iran, which affected their social and professional lives (IOM, 1995).

Apart from being a transit country for Iranian immigrants, Turkey has been dealing with illegal immigrants from Iran since the 1980s. İçduygu (2005) makes the point that Iran is among five source countries and one of the earlier origins of irregular migration to Turkey. This illegal passage is mainly aiming at reaching western countries and well protected EU borders via Turkey. Likewise, in 2003, IOM published the findings of their research about irregular migration which included interviews with Iranian illegal migrants. The interviewees reported that the main reason for illegal mobility for Iranians was political and economic reasons. The geographical proximity and their information about Turkey were a critical factor in their decision-making procedure for moving to Turkey (İçduygu, 2003).

As existing literature represents, migration of Iranians after the Islamic revolution was mainly in the form of transit and illegal migration. Although this type of immigration never ceased completely, the Iranians' migration to Turkey signifies completely different characteristics in recent decades. The following parts will discuss the current statistical profile of Iranian immigrants to better comprehend their migration intentions and their experiences in moving to Turkey.

4.2 The statistical profile of Iranians in Turkey

The migration of Iranians to Turkey continued in all forms of documented, transit, illegal, and asylum-seeking since the 1980s. In recent years, due to the increasing number of touristic travels to Turkey, Iranians perception of Turkey has been changed from being a transit country to the west to a country for settlement. While the previous wave of Iranian immigrants stayed in Turkey for a short period of time and sought their final destination in a country other than Turkey, a new generation of Iranian immigrants has chosen this country as their second homeland. This new wave of immigration to Turkey, which has also been facilitated by new immigration laws, has several primary features. The migration of Iranians to Turkey is now less political than before. The goal of their movement in the recent decade is seeking individual- and social freedom, along with having the goal of achieving economic stability and escaping from the recent economic crisis in Iran (Mobasher, 2018).

According to the official statistics of Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), which published in 2019, about 67,164 Iranians are living in Turkey. This number only represents the number of documented migrants. The number of Iranians living in Turkey was 44,313 in 2018. So, there is a 51% increase in only one year in the number of documented Iranian immigrants living in Turkey. Due to the current economic and political complexities of the country, it is expected that this number will be growing in the upcoming years.

4.2.1 Legal Iranian immigrants in Turkey and their variations

Despite the presence of a significant number of documented Iranians in Turkey, there is limited information about their migration and settlement experiences. The academic literature on Iranians immigration to Turkey mainly focuses on transit migrants and asylum seekers. However, there are very few indicators for the settled Iranian community and diaspora in Turkey. Iranians have several legal statuses in Turkey. They

use different strategies to obtain these documents where they face various challenges and barriers in remaining a documented migrant in Turkey. The statistical information of Iranians in Turkey in 2019 is reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Statistical information of Iranians in Turkey in 2019

Topic	Number	Rank
Number of entrances from the border gates	2.024.658	6
Iranians holding a family residence permit in Turkey	2.547	9
Iranians holding short term resident permit in Turkey	55.745	3
Iranians holding work permit in Turkey	3.410	4
Iranians holding student resident permit in Turkey	5410	3
Total number of resident permits issued for Iranians	67.164	5
Number of apprehended Iranian illegal immigrants	8.753	9
Number of asylum applications by Iranians	3.558	3
Number of received Iranian illegal immigrants	55	8

Source: DGMM, 2019

From 67,164 legal immigrants, 55,745 are using short term residence permit to stay within Turkish borders (DGMM, 2019). Iranians are the 3rd citizens among citizens using this type of document. Short term residence certificate is a document issued by DGMM for a short period of time, which spans usually one to two years, for residence purposes such as learning Turkish, conducting research, being under treatment, etc. The applicants for this type of documents should have one of the 14 criteria that DGMM has indicated on their website[1]. However, according to the recent announcement of DGMM, immigrants who are using short term residence permit for one year or more, should

[1] Types of resident permits https://www.goc.gov.tr/ikamet-izni-cesitleri (Last access: 18 June 2020)

provide another acceptable reason for their stay rather than tourism to be able to extend their residence permit. If they do not provide an acceptable reason for another type of residence permit, their application for tourism resident permit will not be accepted anymore, being effective from 01.01.2020. This new regulation affected the lives of approximately 55,000 Iranians in Turkey who were using this document type to stay legally in Turkey.

Besides short-term residence permits, many Iranians are using student or work permits to legitimize their stay in Turkey. Student residence permits and working residence permits are being issued with the application of universities or employers. Therefore, the process of getting them is easier than receiving short term residence permits. 5,234 Iranian students are living in Turkey with a student residence permit. After Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan students, Iranians are the third-largest group of students in Turkey (DGMM, 2019). The majority of these students are continuing their education in higher education institutes.

Many Iranian students are considering Turkey as a bridge to the western educational system. They usually continue their graduate studies abroad after completing their degree in Turkey. Zijlstra (2014) argues that many young and educated Iranians left Iran after the 1999 student protests and the 2009 'Green Movement'. She mentions that these groups often used Turkey as a transit stop to western countries similar to the first wave of Iranian immigrants in Turkey.

By the end of 2019, there were 3,410 and 2,547 Iranians using work permits, and family residence permits to stay in Turkey (DGMM, 2019). Obtaining a work permit is the most challenging kind of residence permit since it requires the employers to apply for employees, and it brings special and challenging responsibilities for employers. Kalaylıoğlu (2014) studies the settlement experience of Iranian students and workers living in Ankara and the strategies they are using to remain documented. She argues that

even high skilled Iranians are facing many problems in the process of transition from education to work, especially in the procedure for application to work permits.

Apart from different types of residence permits, it is possible for Iranians to receive Turkish citizenship under certain circumstances. The easiest way to achieve Turkish citizenship is to purchase a house with a minimum net worth of 250 thousand dollars. Receiving such citizenship comes with a few challenges as well. For instance, the house should be purchased only from a Turkish citizen or a Turkish company. Foreigners are able to receive citizenship in a short period of time (around three months) by purchasing a house from an authority. This kind of citizenship has been getting the attention of a rich group of people in Iran as a low-risk investment with side benefits. Another method to receive Turkish citizenship is to stay within Turkish borders with a student or working visa for a minimum of 5 years while not leaving the country for more than 6 months during this period. If foreigners satisfy these conditions, they can apply for citizenship with the required documents. After a favorable evaluation of their application, they will be able to receive citizenship. This process may take approximately one to two years.

Due to this new rule and increasing economic problems in Iran severely, Iranians are looking for ways to secure their money and to receive a Turkish nationality by purchasing assets in Turkey. According to the data released by the Turkish statistical institute (TUIK), Iranians bought 5,423 houses in 2019. This number was 3,652 in 2018. They also purchased 2,230 houses in the first five months of 2020 which make them first among the foreign nationalities buying houses in Turkey. Turkey, on the other hand, is one of the destinations for Iranian companies to circumvent sanctions. The Turkish government's regulations for the investment of foreign legal or real individuals have been difficult in the past. However, in recent years, due to the country's economic downturn, investment rules have generally softened to attract foreign investors to bring their money into Turkey. Meanwhile, the number of Iranian investors has risen sharply, reaching more than 3,500 companies operating with Iranian investors in Turkey. This

number is expected to be doubled in the near future (Iran Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2019).

Figure 1 represents the detailed statistics of Iranian migrants in Turkey in 2016, 2018, and 2019. Note that I excluded the data for 2017 as no data was provided by authorities for that year. While a big proportion of Iranians are staying with short term resident permits, the number of various residence permits increased in all cases during 2016, 2018, and 2019. Apart from short term residents, other variants of residence permit for Iranians include student residence permit, work permit, and illegal migrants (those who are captured by Turkish police). Compared with 2016 and 2018, the number of Iranians who applied for any kind of residence permit in Turkey in 2019 has been increased by 319.77% and 51.56%, respectively. According to Figure 1, Iranians constitute a significant part of migrants in Turkey and various types of resident permit applications are increasing since 2016 (excluding 2017).

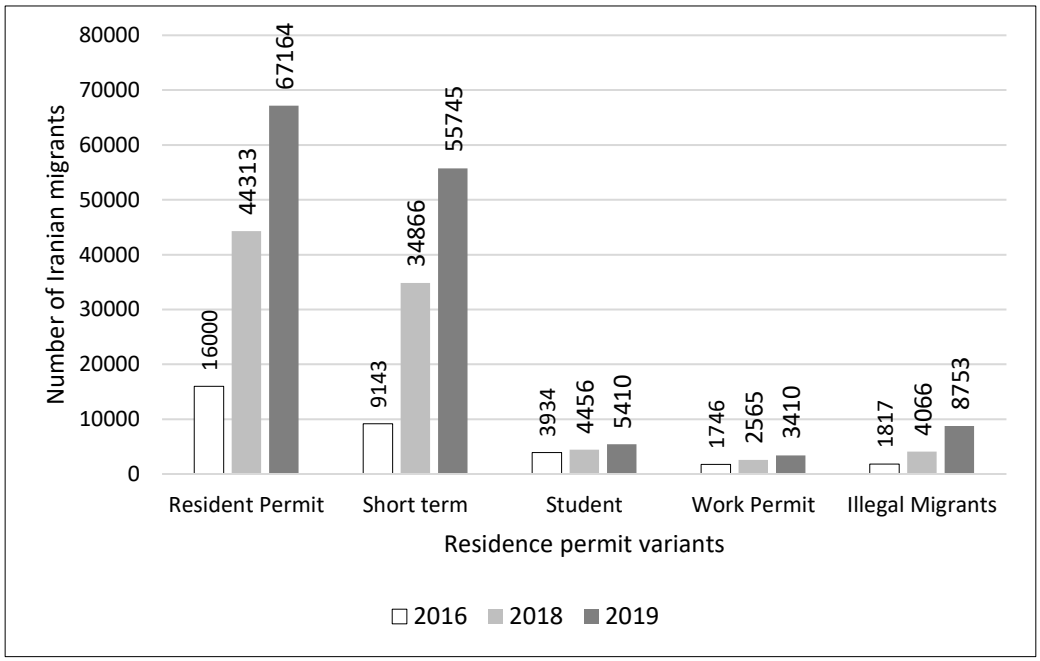

Figure 1. Statistics of Iranian migrants in Turkey in 2016, 2018, and 2019 (Source: DGMM, 2019, 2018, 2016)

While the statistics of Iranian migrants in Turkey is a significant indicator of their importance in migration literature, observation of entries and exits of Iranians into Turkey could be of interest. Figure 2 represents the entries and exits from Turkey in 2016 and 2019. While the number of entries has been increased by 15.44%, the number of exists increased by 14.93%. This means that more Iranians prefer to stay in Turkey in 2019 compared with 2016. That is to say, while the difference between exits and entries is 8,503 in 2016, this number raised to 21,788 in 2019, which indicates a 156% increase. All in all, apart from the theoretical analysis of Iranian migrants, historical data suggest that number of Iranian migrants in Turkey will be increasing in the upcoming years.

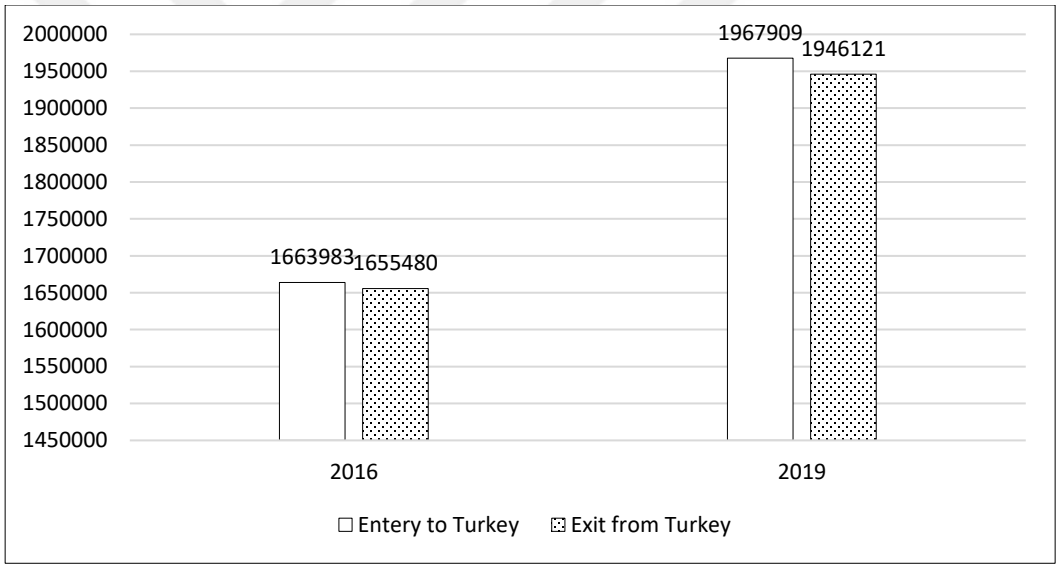

Figure 2. Entries and exits of Iranians to Turkey in 2016 and 2019 (Source: DGMM, 2016, 2019)

4.2.2 Iranian asylum seekers in Turkey

Another important group of legal Iranians living in Turkey are asylum seekers who applied to UNHCR offices in Turkey for international protection purposes. The presence of a UNHCR office in Turkey and the geographical proximity of Iran and Turkey makes it the most popular and convenient country for Iranians to apply for resettlement. After Turkey signed the 1951 refugee convention and the 1967 protocols, it started hosting

many Iranians. According to the recent data of UNHCR, 39,000 Iranian asylum seekers are currently living in Turkey. Iranians submitted a total of 30,689 asylum applications to UNHCR in Turkey between 2001 and 2012. From 1995 to 2010, Iranians were the largest group of asylum seekers residing in Turkey. Their applications were constituted 45.8% of all applications (Zijlstra, 2014). Iranians usually had a high recognition and acceptance rate by UNHCR. From all applications 61.4% of them accepted and the majority of them resettled in Western countries. These asylum seekers resettled in the US (46%), Canada (22%), and Scandinavia (17%) (Kirişci, 2012).

Iranian Asylum seekers are generally waiting in one of the satellite cities of Turkey in the Anatolian part until the results of their application to third countries are disclosed. This waiting time differs from 2 to 10 years usually. Denizli is the province that hosts the largest numbers of Iranians. Niğde, Eskişehir, and Adana are among other host provinces for Iranian asylum seekers in Turkey. Historically, applicants from Iran was always one of the biggest groups of asylum seekers in Turkey. Between 1995 and 2009, Turkey received around 70,000 asylum applications. From these applications, 47% of them are filled by Iranians (İçduygu and Yükseker, 2012).

One of the main groups of Iranian asylum seekers in Turkey is the ones who changed their religion from Islam and are seeking refuge due to fear of persecution. Akcapar (2006, 2010) also focused on Iranian asylum seekers who are using religion conversion from Shi'i Islam to Christianity as a strategy for getting asylum in a third country. In her interviews with 43 Iranian asylum seekers in different cities of Turkey, she finds 20 of them converted their religion to receive refuge. This conversion is also used for getting benefits from the networks attained from religious institutions to ease their transit migration. Moreover, Biner (2016) droves the attention to other Iranian ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey; The Kurds and Bahais. She argues that Iranian Kurds are in the most difficult situation among other Iranian asylum seekers since the authorities in Turkey are concerned about accepting these refugees due to the

challenges in the country about Kurds. Nizam (2017) argues that non-European refugees in Turkey, including Iranian refugees, are deprived of basic refugee rights. As a result of this deprivation, the basic services on health, accommodation, and employment are granted for them as a favor rather than basic rights services.

After submitting their asylum application to UNHCR and settling in a satellite city, these asylum seekers are not being given a work permit. They are forbidden from working legally. Therefore, many of them are working illegally in the black market in order to pay for their expenses during their waiting time in Turkey. They are also working without necessary health insurance despite the risky jobs they are working in. For instance, Topateş et al. (2018) explore the position of Iranian asylum seekers in the labor market of Denizli city within the discrimination and labor exploitation that they are experiencing. The results of their research indicate that these groups of people in the city are preferred as a cheap labor source, especially in the textile sector, while they are in the waiting process. The authors indicate that Iranian asylum seekers are deprived of social rights and they are exposed to many risks both as migrant and a worker in the labor market of Denizli.

4.2.3 Illegal and transit Iranian immigrants in Turkey

As discussed before, Turkey was being affected by illegal migration from Iran for a long period of time. These illegal migrants are not only Iranians but Iraqis and Afghani immigrants and refugees who often use the Iran-Turkish border to arrive in Turkey. The number of illegal Iranian migrants that have been captured by police since 2014 is depicted in Figure 3. The data is based on official reports of Turkey government (DGMM, 2019). The black squares indicate the corresponding numbers for each year. Given that the migration policies between 2014 and 2019 remained almost the same, this data can be comprehended as a trend for the migration of Iranians to Turkey. While the long-term total trend is increasing, there is a decrease in the number of illegal Iranian migrants in 2016. This can be linked to signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCOPA)

between Iran and 5+1 countries. According to the details of this agreement, Iran was able to grow its economy significantly by joining the international trade organization. Most of the individuals who were planning to migrate to not only Turkey but also other countries, withdraw their decisions and stayed in Iran as everybody had a positive vision regarding the social and economic situations in Iran. However, after the US terminated JCOPA, a clear increase in the number of illegal Iranian migrants can be seen in the graph. Between the years 2017 and 2019, the number of illegal Iranian migrants in Turkey nearly quadrupled.

Another interesting observation in Figure 3 is the trend line, which is illustrated by blue dashed lines. I applied the linear regression on the given data to understand the long-term pattern. As can be seen in the left chart in Figure 3, the slope of the regression line is positive. That is to say, in a 10-year time-windows, it is expected that the number of Iranian migrants in Turkey increase ($R^2 = 0.7811$). To extend my analysis, I also carried out a second-order regression to fit the curved data better. The polynomial regression (the right chart in Figure 3) predicts an even higher number of migrants in the near future ($R^2 = 0.9287$). I also tested other regression types (exponential, power, etc.) to ensure that there is no overfitting. The results were the same as the other two methods, which suggest an increasing number of Iranian migrants in Turkey.

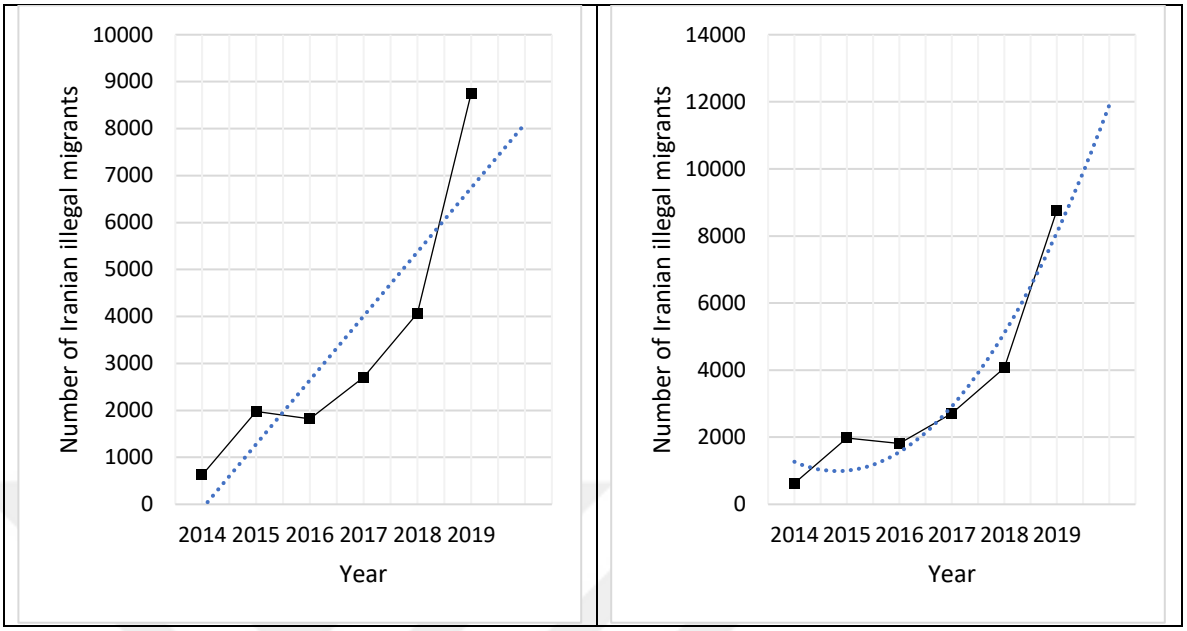

Figure 3. Number of Iranian illegal migrants

Beside illegal migration, the transit migration of Iranians was more prevalent in the post-revolutionary years of Iran. However, by reviewing the recent statistics of international migration in Turkey, I can claim that this type of migration to Turkey from Iran is still continuing. Especially, After the 2009 presidential elections and the ensuing events, a wave of immigrants and asylum seekers arrived in Turkey. During this period, the Iranians fled to Turkey again to find their way to the West and countries providing refuge. According to the statistics revealed by TUIK, between 2016 and 2018 total of 31,922 Iranian nationals were living in Turkey. The same statistics represent that in the same year, 9,242 Iranians left Turkish borders.

Among 67,000 of Iranians living in Turkey, approximately 36,000 of them chose to reside in Istanbul metropolitan. After Istanbul, the most popular cities for Iranians to stay include Antalya, Ankara, Izmir, and Denizli. Many Iranians are attracted to Turkey to experience the modern and secular lives with more individual freedom. Therefore, Istanbul is the most popular destination for these groups of immigrants. They became familiar with this city mainly from media before their arrival. In recent years in Istanbul,

Beylikdüzütown is the most popular place for Iranians to stay. Figure 4 displays a building in Beylikdüzüwith many Iranian firms promoting their business.

Figure 4. Iranian diaspora formed in Beylikduzu, Istanbul (Photo taken by author)

Beylikdüzüis a suburb district on the European side of Istanbul, located near to the Marmara Sea. Beylikdüzüis far from the city center. It is hosting the large housing sites in recent years. Beylikdüzüis one of the most cosmopolitan districts of Istanbul which hosts a significant number of foreigners from different countries and even internal migrants from different parts of Turkey. The newly built housing projects which have a reasonable price, a calm living environment, transportation possibilities like Metrobus which allows easy and fast access to the city center, and the presence of the Iranian community are among the factors that pull Iranian migrants to settle in this neighborhood.

The Cumhuriyet neighborhood in this district is a place where can be mentioned as Iranian diaspora due to the large numbers of Iranian immigrants living in this area. In different streets of this neighborhood, there exist plenty of restaurants, supermarkets, tailors, and hairdressers representing Iranian identity and culture. Moreover, there exist plenty of places which are running by Persian speaking Iranians which offer different services like real state or legal consultancy. There are also health care centers and Iranian health specialists working in this area. Figure 5 represents an example of the environment in the Iranian diaspora and network built in this neighborhood by Iranian residents.

Figure 5. The environment of the Iranian diaspora (Photo taken by author)

Beylikdüzü is not the only neighbor in Istanbul that hosts Iranian immigrants. The migrants from the first wave of immigration from Iran after the 1979 revolution resided

in neighbors like Aksaray and Beyoğlu. The Iranian businesses in Aksaray are among the most prevalent foreign local businesses there. Daniş (2006) mentions the popularity of Aksaray among Iranian immigrants. She argues that Iranians know this region even before their arrival due to the various services like travel agencies, restaurants, and hotels. She states that this region also serves cheap accommodation for illegal migrants, especially single men. However, the findings of this research reveal that the popularity of Aksaray may have been changed during the time and currently Beylikdüzüis the most popular place for Iranians especially the ones who aim at staying in Turkey for a long period of time.

Reviewing the existing statistics and scholarly works about Iranian immigrants in Turkey highlights the fact that this group of immigrants is very heterogeneous in terms of sociodemographic characteristics. As their migration to Turkey took place separately in forms of transit or illegal migration, it continues to encompass various forms of mobility in the contemporary period. The movement of Iranians from Iran to Turkey is in distinct forms of refugee movements and asylum-seeking, student mobility, labor mobility, and even illegal migration.

Chapter V

5 New Arrivals: migration journey of Iranians

In discussing the migration of Iranians to Turkey, the aim of this chapter is to evaluate the storied migration journey of Iranians to Turkey. In a similar way to the majority of migration studies, this chapter will begin with tracing the origins of this wave of migration by discussing the push factors in Iran that lead individuals to leave their homeland. Consequently, it will argue the pull factors in Turkey as a host society and the reasons behind the migration of Iranians to this country. In doing so, the theoretical framework that migration theories are providing will be utilized to better comprehend this increasing mobility from Iran to Turkey.

5.1 Motives for Iranians to leave their homeland

Migration researchers and migration theories try to find general frameworks and theories to explain the causes and patterns of international movements. These theories are based on many factors that affect the decision-making process for migration. For example, as push-pull theories of migration argue, the factors leading people to migrate are Increasing income, decreasing income risk in families, maintaining social and family ties, and demand for labor in industrial countries (Massey et al. 1993). There are several factors that affect the Iranian's decision to immigrate to foreign countries.

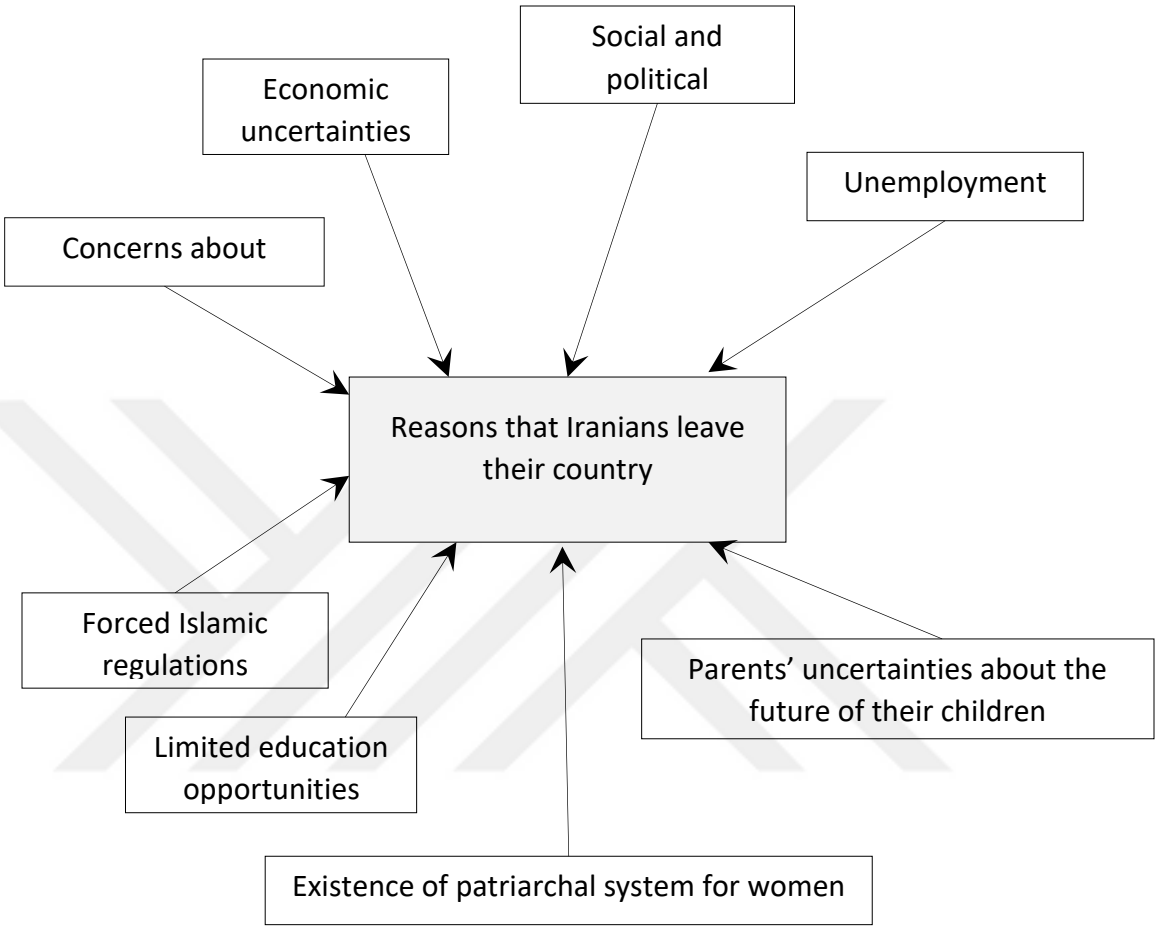

Figure 6. Reasons for migration of Iranians

5.1.1 Being hopeless about future

One of the most important factors that was mentioned by participants of this study was the strong influence of Iran's political and economic issues and the repressive policies of the government in people's migration decisions. Almost 70 percent of respondents mentioned that the reasons for leaving their homeland stemmed from social, political, and economic problems related to the current governmental system. Such issues and the worsening of these problems every day cause people to increase the uncertainty about the future and break their hopes. In this case, leaving their homeland is becoming the last option for them. They are migrating to seek better living conditions and a more stable future. As an instance, this hopelessness of Iranian citizens is

observable in the story of the 53 years old participant living in Istanbul. He moved to Turkey in 2012. He was a lawyer in Iran who had a good governmental job in Iran. A stressful and uncertain future with the frustration of social and political pressures in Iran led him to leave his home country. He explained his migration decision with the following statements:

> "I had a high-level job in Iran. I was working for the Ministry of Transportation and I had a very high income. I had very good living conditions and proper facilities. However, the job stress and the complex political issues of the country had forced me to emigrate to Turkey eight years ago, together with my family. I have a small market here and my income is much lower than Iran. Nevertheless, here I am not dependent on the government and I make the decisions of my life by myself. I'm not in a good financial situation, but at least I live in peace and my future is secured."
>
> Male, 53, Ph.D.

Along with social and political problems, the ongoing high inflation rate in Iran and the US sanctions that cause a significant recession in the country's economy have seriously affected ordinary people and workers who are dependent on the government's support. These economic problems create many question marks on the mind of Iranians about the future of the country and whether they should seek opportunities in other parts of the world. One of these people was a 45-year-old civil engineer, who had been awarded multiple governmental projects in Iran. The engineer, who could not get the refunds for the project he worked for in the last five years, was under a serious debt burden. After losing his family, the only remaining way for him was to escape from Iran to Turkey.

> “When I arrived at Istanbul, I had only 3 Turkish Lira in my pocket. I cannot imagine what would have happened to me if I came late, even one day later. I lost all my assets and family because the government could not manage the budget. I did my best and I sued from government several times, but I never got a refund for the project I was working on. I resisted until the last minute not to leave my homeland, but I found the last solution to flee to Turkey. There are million-dollar robberies every day in this country, but I cannot take my own rights. I will continue to work and do whatever I have to do to survive in Turkey, but I will never think about going back to my country. "
>
> Male, 45, BA

The social pressure in society and the lack of individual freedoms is a major factor in deciding to migrate, especially among the young population. Similar issues are often highlighted by the participants of this study. Many Iranians are disturbed by social and political pressure. One of the participants emphasized the importance of the lack of freedom in decisions to immigrate. Describing his migration process, he indicated that the first reason for migration from Iran is "the presence of a seriously restrictive society which leads young people like me to escape from the country to find a place to breathe".

> “I came here for freedom, but not for simple freedoms like the ones that other young people are demanding. Like drinking, or things like this … Yes, they were important for me, but I have not been to the bar or disco more than 10 times in one and a half years since I came. I am looking for freedom of thought in a place far from the Iranian system.

> Life is very difficult here, sometimes I think Iran is a better place with all its problems, but once you migrate, it is very difficult to return."
>
> Male, 35, BA

5.1.2 Migration of women

The Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 brought certain controls over women's daily lives, their clothing, and their social lives (Osanloo, 2009: 38-39). Osanloo argues that women in Iran are constantly concerned about their lives or their girls' future lives. In patriarchal societies, laws and institutions are generally arranged in favor of men. Nevertheless, by globalization, women are affected by western and liberal lifestyle and they object to the lifestyle offered by the government in traditional societies like Iran. They want to have basic rights and being able to make their own decisions about their lives. An Iranian hairdresser living in Istanbul made the following explanation about Iranian women and their migration story:

> "Because of my job, I meet with dozens of Iranian women here every day. Many of these women are running away from a specific thing in Iran. They escape from their spouses, families, and sexist rules of society. Women in Iran are even afraid of the police in their daily lives... For women like us, Turkey and Iran are not different. I can say that the living conditions here are even worse; however, there is freedom for us here and we all leave our country for this… I left Iran for my daughter. The social environment in Iran could have even dragged him to death. At least I believe she can have a good life here."
>
> Female, 37, High School

Although the revolution committee in Iran promised to bring more freedom to people and especially women, in a very short time after the revolution, it turns out that there was no change in the situation of women in Iran. For many women who did not live in line with the regime's ideology, the rules on dressing became a pressure factor. With the law that makes it necessary to wear a headscarf, the working of women who do not meet the clothing conditions specified by the state is restricted. This decision was strictly enforced in schools, universities, and all other public places. Besides, the regulations in civil law and inheritance in Iran damage women's equal rights significantly. All these inequalities forced a large number of women to seek a better life for themselves and their families by immigrating to other countries. According to the interview data, in some cases, women stated that immigration really improved the marriage conditions and that their spouses changed their attitudes towards home and family. This, of course, may be related to the change of individuals' ideas and lifestyles, as well as to laws in the host country and more egalitarian culture. In addition, family reunification is another factor influencing Iranian women's decision-making process. Three women who participated in this research indicated that they did not have any role in deciding to leave the country, but their husbands decided to emigrate to Turkey. One participant explained her migration process as follows:

> “Five years ago, I moved to Turkey ... I personally preferred not to emigrate from Iran, where we had a good business opportunity and a luxury lifestyle. I had to separate from my family and my work in Iran due to my husband’s decision to live in Turkey… In the first year, it was very difficult for me, because I was not prepared for a change. I didn't speak Turkish and I had no work permit, so I was in a very difficult situation. I was very alone and I was starting to get depressed.”
>
> Female, 34, MA

Another reason for Iranian women to migrate to Turkey is marriage. In this study, I interviewed two married Iranian women living in Turkey. These women married with Iranians living in Turkey to get rid of the social and cultural repression of marriage in Iran. They explained this factor as follows.

> "I was 21 when I got married. My husband used to live in Turkey, and I knew that marriage could provide me a new life in a new society... I felt unhappy in my own country and I had a lot of problems. In the city of Mashhad, where I was born, my friends and I always encountered restrictions. For example, our appearance, laughing on the street, having a party... I was tired of all these restrictions and I thought about leaving Iran. When I met my husband, I was sure this a very good opportunity for me to move abroad."
>
> Female, 32, BA

5.1.3 Children's future

The main problems such as social and religious pressures in Iranian society, economic problems, the possibility of war, and mandatory military duty concerns parents about the future of their children. In a study conducted by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) on second-generation immigrants, they found that parents' concerns about their children's future affect their decision to immigrate. Despite the difficulties of living abroad, the research findings show that parents do not want to raise their children in a country overwhelmed by the pressures. So, they preferred the environment in Turkey that has more freedom. Many participants stated that they wanted to establish their future plans according to their children's future. They also mentioned that they wanted to live in an environment where they could get a good education far away from Islamic education and suitable to their own ideologies.:

> "I am the father of two children. There was no future in Iran for my kids at all and I was not able to teach the culture and values that I want them to learn ... It was difficult for them to adapt to schools in Turkey and to learn the Turkish language, but at least they grow up in a free environment ... Here the Iranian parents, they all think like me… They believe that If the government changes in Iran, they all return to their country."
>
> Male, 36, BA

In summary, migration is an opportunity that a limited number of individuals can achieve it. Although it is a difficult decision to take, providing a better life for children is one of the main factors that direct people to migrate. Many immigrants are looking for better lives and better futures for themselves and their children in another country due to the current social, political, and economic conditions in their home country. Women immigrants are also leaving the country due to the existing patriarchal society and its rules.

This type of immigration from Iran can be better understood with the frameworks of lifestyle migration (Oreily, 2012). This theory argues that lifestyle migration is a unique type of migration that lead people to change their country in order to find better opportunities and reach to modern and western ways of living.

5.2 Turkey; The second-best choice for Iranians

Since the Islamic revolution of 1979, Turkey has been one of the most popular destinations for Iranian immigrants. Iranians who aim at leaving their host country may face many obstacles in reaching to western countries. In Particular, the difficulties of achieving an American or EU Schengen visas in recent years depict Turkey as a suitable

opportunity for Iranian migrants. The visa-free deal between Iran and Turkey and the opportunity of staying in the country for three months without residence permit provides an easy travel experience and decision-making process for migrants. Furthermore, the geographical proximity within shared cultural and religious practices between Iran and Turkey is among the most important pull factors of this destination for Iranians who opt at living in a foreign country. These factors mentioned frequently by the participants of this study as well.

Furthermore, as stated in previous research, in the following years of the Islamic revolution, Turkey is used as a transit country by Iranians. The results of this study reveal that Turkey is still acting as a transit country to the west for Iranian immigrants since many of interviewees stated that Turkey wasn't their final destination and they aimed at using it as a transit to west, However, due to difficulties of passing to Europe or U.S they chose to settle in this country. One of these immigrants was a 42-year-old participant. She tried to move to Germany for 2 years since she wanted his son to receive an education in a European country. However, after facing some difficulties in receiving a Schengen visa, they chose to stay in Turkey:

> "My son had no future in Iran, I believe that He is a very smart kid and He wants to get an education in the management field. However, unemployment is very high in Iran even the educated ones are not getting a job. I also didn't want to risk his life and send him to force military service. Therefore, we did everything to send him abroad and even I left my family to be with him. We chose to move to Germany at first. We even learned German for 2 years. However, after Warsaw issues, it got even harder to receive a visa. They told us to wait in Turkey for a few

> months but when we started to live here, we liked living in this country and we don't want to leave anymore."
>
> Female, 42, High School

As mentioned before, geographical proximity is one of the main pull factors that motivate Iranian migrants in choosing Turkey to build a life in it. Many of my participants were agreed on the advantages of this proximity. For instance, Mohammad stated that:

> "Turkey is so close to Iran and it is really easy to go and visit Iran in a budget and in a short time. There are flights to Iran almost every day at a good price and it gives us a sense of confidence. Also, it is easy for our family to visit us whenever they want to because there is no visa required for Iranian passengers."
>
> Male, 53, BA

Along with geographical and cultural affinity between Turkey and Iran, another important pull factor for Iranian migrants is the purchasing power of them in Turkey compare to western countries. In particular, Iran's and Turkish currency are correlated in some sense. That is to say, Iranians can live better with their savings in Turkey as most of them can satisfy their basic needs. However, when they have to exchange their money to EURO or USD, the value of their money decreases significantly. Therefore, they prefer to move to a country that allows them to live in the same quality of life. The participant also stressed this point several times during conversation:

> "As I mentioned before I am living with my son for his education… We are running our lives here by the money that our family is sending us from Iran… if we were

> migrated to a European country due to the dramatic currency difference, we had to live a very low-quality life. However, here in Turkey, I am almost living the same quality of life plus my child is receiving a good education and I am more hopeful about his future. “
>
> Female, 42, High School

To sum up, as the results of the interviews confirm, Turkey is one of the popular choices for Iranian immigrants due to important factors that have been mentioned above. Lastly, the sentence that I’ve heard most when asking my participants about choosing Turkey as their destination was that “ Turkey is enough abroad country that keeps us away from all the problems and insecurities of Iran but is also enough close to our home that we barely feel homesick in this country. Overall, it is enough far and enough close”.

Chapter VI

6 Integration of Iranians in their new host society

6.1 Interaction of Iranians with the host community in Turkey

When looking at the interaction and integration of immigrants with the community in the host country, the most important factor that determines this interaction is the knowledge of the language. Proficiency in the language of the host country facilitates both daily communication and participation in the education and labor market. Moreover, language and accent can be considered as a symbol of belonging or exclusion to the host community. Esser (2006) emphasizes the importance of language knowledge in migrants' social integration. The immigrants involved in the interviews of this research often highlight the difficulties caused by the language barrier:

> "To live in Turkey, the biggest challenge for us is to speak Turkish. Sometimes even our simplest daily activities are very difficult. For example, when I want to go somewhere using a taxi, or when I want to communicate with officers in necessary official offices it is very hard for me to tell them about my needs… Sometimes I can't explain my problem when I go to a hospital. I even contact my customers who want to have a tattoo here with sign language. ”

Female, 32, High School

Many factors can influence immigrants' proficiency in the host country's language. For example, age, duration of stay in the host country, and education level can be considered as the most important factors. When it comes to second language acquisition, a higher level of education in immigrants or their families is an important advantage (Esser, 2006). There are many factors that negatively influence language knowledge. Many studies in the migration literature also shows that established networks and diasporas negatively affect the language proficiency of migrants (Bauer et al. 2005). The findings of this study also support this observation in the literature. Iranians who usually live in Beylikdüzü state that they do not need to learn Turkish very much since many Iranian employees and friends in the neighborhood manage to meet their daily needs easily. For example, the participant living in Beylikdüzü made such a statement about Turkish learning:

> "It has been eight years since I came to Turkey, but I never face any problem due to the lack of Turkish knowledge. I know English and Arabic very well, but I do not need to learn Turkish. So, I don't want to force myself and learn a new language."
>
> Male, 53, Ph.D.

Iranians, who are living out of this established new diaspora, learn Turkish faster. They see Turkish as the most important way to live easily. However, even speaking Turkish fluently does not guarantee that these immigrants will be integrated into society. Apart from the language barrier, there are many immigrants who have difficulties in communicating with the host community.

> "I live in Turkey for ten years. My language learning skills are very good so I learned Turkish very fast due to my job and now it is almost impossible to detect whether I am a foreigner when I speak Turkish... Even though I have lived here all these years, I have no Turkish friends. When we have a relationship with Turks, it is, in fact, a very superficial relationship where I can never experience the sincerity that I had with my friends in Iran... Turks' behaviors vary depending on where people come from... Although I learn their language and obtained Turkish citizenship, I always have that feeling of strangeness."
>
> Male, 35, BA

One of the primary factors in the integration of Iranians in Turkey is their ethnicity and the place they were born in the original country. As mentioned before, Azeri Turks constitute about 18 percent of Iran's population. Azeri language has some similarities with the Turkish language but in general, it is a distinct variant of Turkish. It also accounted for the largest part of Iranian Azeri Turks living in Turkey. It is very easy for Azerbaijanis to learn Turkish because of their language affinity which results in quick proficiency in speaking Turkish. In addition, the cultural similarity between the two communities also facilitates post-migration integration. A participant of this study is an Azeri from Tabriz and has been living in Istanbul for two years. He talks about his communication experience:

> "I did not make much effort to learn Turkish and I made many friends here. Because I am a person who communicates very easily, but still there are important cultural differences between us which affects our relations with the local community. When we have guests in Iran,

> we cook a wide variety of foods in large portions. Our guests here were very surprised to see we prepared this amount of food. Such small differences affect our lives here."
>
> Male, 31, BA

Although Iranian immigrants cannot establish serious relations with the Turkish community due to fundamental cultural differences with the host community, there has been no significant problem between the Turks and Iranians for years. Many participants describe the host community as "welcoming and kind-hearted" people. For example, a female participant mentioned that her neighbors are always trying to communicate with her. Another woman stated:

> "If my children get sick one day, school friends and their families call our home and ask about their health situation. Turkish children know how to behave and communicate with foreigners very well when they do not speak Turkish."
>
> Female, 41, High School

During the field research, Turkish people's thoughts and positive opinions towards Iranians are remarkable. For example, in the meeting held with the "Mühtar of Cumhuriyet Mahallesi". His general opinion about Iranians are as follows:

> "Unfortunately, I cannot share official information with you, but as a citizen, I can say my own experience. I have been here for a very long time and I know Iranian society very well. I have never seen them get involved in a crime or any criminal incident. These people are very educated

> and cultured people and they know how to behave in society very well."

Even though this interaction in Istanbul seems to be smooth with all barriers, the experience of the refugee group living in other provinces is a different story. An important part of Iranian asylum seekers is religious minorities and LGBT groups. When such groups settle in a small conservative city, communication problems can occur between the two communities. An asylum seeker explains this struggle in communication as follows:

> "I changed my religion before coming to Turkey. I refused to be a Muslim and preferred to be a Christian. Then I saw violence from my parents. This forced me to come to Turkey to apply to UNHCR. For years, I have been living alone in Niğde as a woman, and since I am not a Muslim, I see very bad behaviors from the local people around me."
>
> Female, 25, BA

The settlement of migrants and asylum-seekers in these cities can also change the structure of the city and its neighborhoods. This change can have different effects on the host community. A Turkish participant who was born and raised in Denizli explains the effects of immigrants and asylum seekers in the city as follows:

> "Denizli is one of the most conservative provinces in Turkey. The wave of immigrants changed the structure of this city many years ago… For example, there was a very elite neighborhood where my brother went to school there. However, after the immigrants came to Denizli, the

> structure of this neighborhood changed completely. There are Iranians here that I and my family also know them. They are multicultural and educated people. Many people were forced to come and live here because of political and social issues."
>
> Female, 27, BA

6.2 Main problems and difficulties of Iranian immigrants in Turkey

The problems that immigrants and their families face when they settle in the new host country mostly depend on the personal situation of the individuals as well as the characteristics of both the country of origin and the host country. Immigrants may face many different problems during the settlement process. The migration stories of Iranian immigrants in Turkey include similar experiences, even though each has a very different situation. In this section, the problems experienced and encountered by immigrants will be examined in detail.

6.2.1 Economic integration

Economic integration is one of the main problems that immigrants face in the new society. Due to language barriers and cultural differences, immigrants face difficulties in entering the labor market of the host country. On the other hand, according to the commonly accepted trend in the labor market, immigrants are forced to work in labor-intensive, low-wage, insecure, and non-standard jobs that normal citizens do not want to work. As a result, the unemployment rate is generally high in these groups (Heilbrunn et al. 2010). generally, there is an agreement in migration literature that the absence of valid certificates and diplomas in host countries hinders immigrants' employment chances and human mobility. However, problems such as structural inequalities, prejudices and discrimination, and weak social networks with the community in the host country also reduce the chances of immigrants to integrate into

the economy (Cohen et al. 2008; Kogan, 2007). The biggest problem of Iranian immigrants living in Turkey, like many immigrant communities, is their inability to integrate with the economy and the labor market. When the data of the DGMM is examined, it has been observed that only three thousand of the 67,000 Iranians, excluding students, have a work permit, which indicates that a large group of Iranians is unemployed or informal workers. A participant who has been providing legal advice to Iranians for years made the most comprehensive statement regarding the participation of this group in the economy:

> "We can think of migration from Iran to Turkey as a funnel. One may move from Iran to Turkey and stay here easily. However, it is very difficult to achieve economic success in this country. The first concern of the Iranians in this country is business. Even people with capital, education, or expertise do not know what to do. There are two explanations for this. The first is that Iranians make migration decisions based on very unplanned and inaccurate information. The second explanation is Turkey's state policy and the lack of an appropriate plan for this group of immigrants when Iranians are coming to Turkey, they should first evaluate by the government. sometimes migration offices in Turkey may reject a person who can be very beneficial to society and sometimes they permit those who need to return to Iran. Even in Iran, there are planning programs suitable for foreign investors. They can be a burden… For example, unemployed and unplanned immigrants can be dragged into crime sectors."
>
> Male, 45, BA

One of the biggest obstacles to the inclusion of Iranians living in Turkey into the labor market is the conditions and regulations of the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services for obtaining work permits for foreign employees. According to the official regulation, in order to employ a foreign worker, at least five Turks must be employed in the same institution. Even though there are some exemptions, in general, according to the regulation, when more than one foreigner is allowed to work in the same workplace, following the first foreigner who has been granted a work permit, five Turkish citizens must be employed for each foreigner. Besides, the paid-in capital of the workplace should be at least 100 thousand TL. The lowest figure for the gross sales amount should be 800 thousand TL. Otherwise, the number of exports in the last year should be at least 250 thousand dollars. These harsh conditions prevent migrants from working officially and create problems for immigrants. They also create a burden on the state due to the unsecured and tax-free employment of these groups. If foreigners obtain a work permit, there are many restrictions on this permit. Iranian workers with work permits in Turkey accept the challenges of these restrictions. For example, a male employee explains his experience as follows:

> "When a company or an institution applies for a work permit for us, we have no chance to change our job. When there is a difficulty or unhappiness in that working environment, we have to endure all of them, and we don't have the freedom to work like other people. This is a situation that bothers me a lot."
>
> Male, 35, BA

6.2.2 Access to the healthcare system

Numerous studies have been conducted to evaluate the level of access of migrants to health services in different countries. These studies show that immigrants

have unequal and inadequate health access compared to the host community (Pitkin et al. 2004; Derose et al. 2007).

The social protection in Turkey is a complicated issue due to the to changing economic and political conditions in Turkey and its complex migration history. Aysan (2020) summarizes the conditions in which immigrants in Turkey can access to social protection. He argues that employment and residence status in Turkey determines the rights of having access to all parts of social protection and health care in particular. If immigrants in Turkey have legal status through their employment status, they will benefit from a majority of social benefits that are available for Turkish citizens. Finally, family benefits from social protection also vary based on nationality, employment, and residence status of immigrants.

Like other groups of foreigners in Turkey, the issue of access to free health services for Iranians is one of the important issues that affect their daily lives. The high cost of healthcare for Iranian immigrants and asylum-seekers worries them, especially those with children:

> "I went to a public hospital in the past months because of the pain in my body. These services, which are free to Turkish citizens, are very expensive for us. I paid 300 Turkish Lira for just one examination and one serum. Most of the time, doctors don't even take us seriously when I go to the hospital. I can give another example from my child's condition. Last year he fell to the ground. We took him to the emergency department of the hospital. We paid 50 Turkish Lira for a single tape. It is very difficult for us to pay such fees. We already pay around 300-400 Turkish lira of

> health insurance per year, but these payments are unfair for our simplest health needs."
>
> Male, 36, BA

All foreigners living in Turkey need to have compulsory health insurance for years to get a residence permit. This type of insurance is usually made by different companies at an affordable price for foreigners, and in some private hospitals it covers up to 40 percent of the total cost of health care. However, it can be very difficult for immigrants to pay unpaid expenses for insurance. For this reason, in practice, this compulsory insurance is not useful for them. Family health centers are the only free health system that is easy to access for Iranians living with a residence permit. However, only four of the 41 people who participated in the study were aware of the existence of such health service. Another concern of families with children and babies is that babies are not able to get their vaccinations. Many mothers who do not know Turkish language, experience great difficulties in this regard and do not know in which organization the babies should have their vaccinations.

Being unaware of healthcare fees and available facilities forces many immigrants to use home treatment methods when they face health problems. The interviewees during the research mostly stated that they brought the necessary medicines from Iran. Similarly, it is common for Iranians to sell prescription and non-prescription drugs on social media groups. Figure 7 shows the sale of drugs on the social media platform of an Iranian immigrant.

Figure 7. Drug sales on social media

Some Iranian asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR also stated that they have had great difficulties in obtaining health services recently. The free health services, which were previously provided by the Social Security Institution, were changed at the end of 2019. Paragraph “Access to Aid and Services” of the Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection was replaced by new regulations on 24.12.2019. As a result of this arrangement, the Immigration Administration made the following announcement:

> " The health insurance for the applicants of international protection has been terminated for all 18 years and over individuals who completed one year from the date of registration in Turkey. However, if the foreigners, who have the status of international protection application,

> apply with the documents showing their special needs, general health insurance will continue to be covered without seeking a one-year time limit."

The new arrangements in health insurance lead asylum seekers to face different problems in accessing the health system. The treatment processes of many patients with special needs were stopped. For example, an Iranian asylum seeker who has been living in Isparta for five years explains his struggle with the health system in his video on his social media account:

> "I was diagnosed with lymph cancer four months ago and I started to be treated in hospitals here. I was feeling much better because of the treatments I received, but since the beginning of March, our health insurance was cut, and I could not continue my treatment. I have received three chemotherapy so far, and this month I had to take the fourth one. The drugs used in this treatment are very expensive. They demanded a fee of 36 thousand TL for only one chemotherapy session. I do not have the ability to pay such a fee. So, I went to the Migration Administration, but they said that cancer is not in the category of special diseases under the new law. I also reached UNHCR and ASAM offices and they said they cannot do anything for me…"

6.2.3 The process of obtaining official documents

Migrants need a residence permit to stay legally in Turkey. Obtaining a residence permit is a long, complicated, and difficult process for some immigrants. There are three important stages of obtaining a residence permit. The first is the online application, the

second is the preparation of the required documents, and the third is the interview. Immigrants face many different challenges in the entire process. These challenges include language insufficiency, ignorance of the rules, and the presence of people who try to misuse immigrants in this process. Due to these issues, some migrants may lose part of their money and must return to their country. Others may stay illegally in Turkey.

For immigrants who do not speak Turkish, this process can be much more complicated, and they may encounter unforeseen problems. While these troubles are emphasized by many participants, it is understood that the troubles experienced by everyone are different from each other. However, it can be said that most of these difficulties are due to the lack of language or lack of accurate information about the process. However, most of the participants blame state institutions as a responsible side for their problems.

> "The biggest source of stress for me and Iranians I know is the process of getting the residence permit. Because I do not know how to apply online, I give money to consulting companies. Every year they ask for new documents, for example, they asked for a health report last year. It took me 20 days to obtain this health report…. They gave the appointment three months later, and four months later, my residence permit card came. So, it only takes seven months to get an ID."
>
> Male, 32, MA

For Iranians who are not Azeri Turks, the language barrier is an important challenge in this process. Many participants stated how difficult this process is and how much money intermediaries want to gain from this procedure. For example, a woman

participant explained the difficulties of obtaining a residence permit even though she is a university graduate:

> "Last year, I went to a consulting company to get a short-term residence and I paid 200 dollars just to apply through the system. On the day of the appointment, I could not agree with the officer in any way because I did not speak Turkish. There weren't even English-speaking people there…. This language barrier is problematic everywhere in Turkey and I really don't know how to deal with it"
>
> Female, 27, MA

Although the written rules of the Immigration Administration regarding the residence permit and Turkish citizenship are clear, the information and documents they want can be very complicated by the officers who evaluate the documents in practice. One participant explains her experience as follows:

> "When I went to deliver my citizenship documents, they asked me to have an original document of my marriage. Since I got married in Iran, I had to get this document from there. My situation was not suitable for traveling, so I had a hard time going to Iran and getting the document. When I went to the Police Department again, there was someone else at the box office. When he delivered the document, he said why did you bring it, there was no need for it…"
>
> Female, 27, BA

In addition to such problems, constantly renewed laws and policies make it impossible for immigrants to plan their future. For example, new decisions to renew the work permit make it impossible for some migrants to stay in Turkey. As a result of such changes, the foreign faculty members in Turkish universities face uncertainties and insecurities in their careers.

> "I just graduated from Koç University this year and I wanted to be an academic. I had job offers to become a member of faculty from various universities in Turkey. I wanted to start a full job, but when the university applied for a job for me, the application was rejected by YÖK and the reason for this was the new rules set by YÖK as of 15 July."
>
> Male, 30, Ph.D.

6.2.4 Social support mechanisms

There are many studies exploring the role of social networks in easing international migration and settling in new countries in recent years. These social networks can influence immigration decisions, finance immigration movements, and provide accommodation, employment, material, and moral support for immigrants. Thus, social networks can be a key element that facilitates the formation and permanent settlement of immigrant communities. Thanks to the close trust and mutual ties, these networks can be considered as sources of social capital and social support. These resources can provide a balance against the disadvantages that immigrants may encounter in the host community (Ryan, 2011).

According to the findings of the interview, even though Iranian immigrants have certain established social networks, it is not possible to talk about a strong and widespread social support network based on mutual trust, as mentioned in the

literature. On the contrary, a significant part of the participants cannot trust other Iranian immigrants and state that they have negative experiences in this regard.

> "Before coming to Turkey, I called a friend living here for years to get information. He said to me, "You can trust Turkish citizens that you don't know, but never trust an Iranian there." The Iranians do not have empathy for their citizens here, and perhaps many problems we experience can also be caused by this."
>
> Male, 32, MA

There can be many reasons for this weak relationship. Iranians have a very heterogeneous nature of the migrant communities in Turkey. They have very different ethnicities, socioeconomic status, and political ideas. The gathering of this cosmopolitan society may have caused some prejudices, disagreements, and even discrimination. Besides, as mentioned above, economic problems can cause some pre-settled migrants to approach and deceive new arrivals as a source of income.

> "When we came here first with my family, a person living here helped us. He rented us home and applied for a residence permit. After few years, we realized that he had received the house rent for three months from us for a month… I think an invisible cycle was established here. Every newly arrived immigrant needs to spend a certain amount of money to settle down, and after settling, he tries to extract this money from the newly arrived immigrant. These evils have no limits, sometimes they deceive each other even for 5 or 10 Turkish Lira. I do not

> want to denigrate my citizens. Maybe they are doing these things because of economic difficulties."
>
> Female, 39, High School

Recent regulation in Turkey which makes it possible to get citizenship of the Republic of Turkey provides the Iranians the opportunity to purchase more homes in Turkey. However, this situation has been a source of fraud for some malicious Iranians and results in the deceiving of Iranians who want to buy a house. A legal adviser, an Iranian participant, explains:

> "The issue of buying a house is very sensitive because it has certain rules. Iranians have been suffering a lot in this regard in recent years and there is a huge loss of property. I have witnessed many cases. They show the house with less value worth than 250 thousand dollars and sell it to Iranian citizens. They sell a house bought from a foreigner. Unfortunately, I witness such issues very much and I cannot solve the cases. Iranians trust others very quickly due to their cultural structure, which causes their victimization."
>
> Male, 45, BA

When the responses of participants on this topic are reviewed, it can be said that social networks have turned into a barrier for the Iranians in the process of integration and harmonization rather than a facilitating factor of the migration process. This leads to increased distrust in society, many legal troubles, and victimization. The most important reason for this relationship may be that the Iranians had to live with uncertainty and distrust due to the rapidly changing political conditions for years. Also, Iranians often show insecurity in personal relationships. Individuals should always be

prepared to protect themselves because they are constantly afraid that others will benefit from them. Trust-based relationships exist only in family members and lifelong friendships (Jalali, 2005).

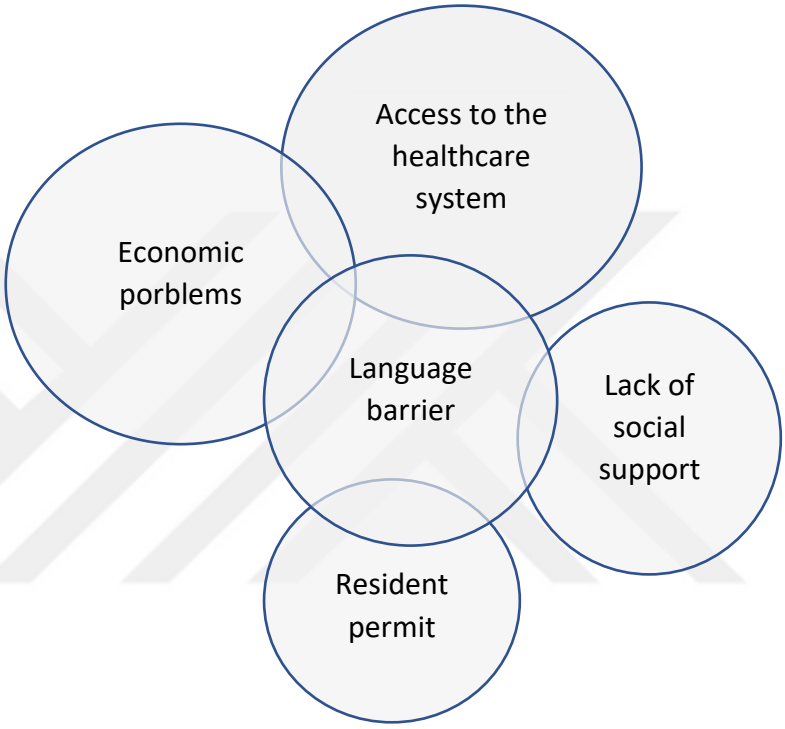

Figure 8. Main problems of Iranians in Turkey

Figure 8 summarizes the findings of this section by representing the biggest problems of the Iranians that live in Turkey, namely the language barrier, relevant economic cohesion with job opportunities, access to health care, experiencing residence permit-related issues, and lack of social support. These problems and barriers may vary depending on the resources and skills that people have; however, it can be said that almost every immigrant encountered at least one of a few of these problems. These barriers are always interrelated. As mentioned earlier, not knowing the Turkish language aggravates many problems from employment opportunities to obtaining residence permits. On the other hand, if economic opportunities are sufficient, immigrants can learn the Turkish language faster and get benefit from health services more easily.

6.3 Expectations from the Republic of Turkey

The research on this topic indicates that trust in government institutions may depend on citizens' expectations rather than objective indicators of economic and political performance (Röder and Mühlau, 2012). For example, one reason for the decline in political confidence in most democratic countries is the growing expectations of citizens rather than the decline in public performance (Miller and Listhaug, 1990). However, immigrants' expectations are likely to be shaped not only by the issues they face in their host countries but also by their experiences in their own countries (Röder and Mühlau, 2012). Most of the immigrants are leaving their own country because they expect better opportunities in the target country. As long as the conditions in the host countries are better compared to their situation in the home countries, it will cause them to make a more positive assessment of the host country than other people who have no chance of comparison (Suárez, 1987).

As frequently mentioned in the literature, like other immigrant societies, Iranian immigrants' views and expectations from the state mostly stem from their experience with the Islamic regime in Iran. Therefore, even though the living conditions for migrants in Turkey is more difficult than Iran, they reside in Turkey since they are able to present their ideas. There is freedom of expression, and they hope to build a more reliable life, which makes their assessment positive.

As previously mentioned, the biggest problems of Iranian migrants and asylum seekers in Turkey consist of finding an appropriate job, health care, application to resident permits, and legal process. Not getting a work permit for immigrants, working without permission, or informally makes life seriously difficult for them. However, this situation is more difficult for asylum seekers than other immigrants because they do not have the option to live in a city other than the satellite cities they live in. A refugee expresses this problem as follows.

> “As the refugees, our only expectation from the government is giving work permit to us. Because we are in a very unfair situation. As long as we live here, we have to work and earn money, but when we work in this way, our salary is not given or given less than the amount we work ... Our expectation from the government is to let us live like normal people, that is all ... So, all we want is the natural rights that other people have ...”
>
> Male, 38, High School

In some cases, asylum seekers are able to obtain a work permit; but the ban on leaving the city poses a major obstacle to their work or other activities:

> “I have been an asylum seeker for five years and I live in Niğde. I tried very hard and an employer from another city got a work permit for me. However, I have been trying for two months to transfer to another city, but it does not happen. If I delay a few more days, my boss is likely to fire me ... I do not want anything too big from the state. I would tolerate people discriminating against us. As long as we stay in this country, all we want from the state is not to make our lives more complex. When they do this, everyone is pushed to criminal organizations and substance exchange, and then the state needs to deal more.”
>
> Male, 32, High School

They also find it a very long and difficult process in Turkey to standby application for international protection. In this process, they cannot make any plans for their future. Since 2018, UNHCR examined the cases, and the final decisions on protection applications in Turkey are given by the Immigration Administration Directorate General (UNHCR, 2019). After this transfer, the response processes of asylum seekers have slowed down, and even those who have been accepted are not receiving resettlement in the third country. A participant in a similar situation state:

> "My expectation from Turkey and Migration Administration of the country is to make quick decisions about our situation. Especially the situation of women living alone and mothers with children is very bad and I want them to be given a priority. We live here like prisoners and we cannot work too... Now I am waiting for four and a half years in Turkey and still, there is not a decision about me. "
>
> Female, 28, BA

As mentioned earlier, cutting off the general health insurance of refugees has put them in great trouble. Stopping the treatment of people with special health needs is an important problem. For this reason, many asylum seekers are expected to re-activate their health insurance. Health insecurity also applies to immigrants with and without a residence permit. Some immigrants may not be able to meet their most basic health needs and medicines. They expect the state and health institutions to satisfy these needs.

Another point that immigrants and asylum seekers emphasize is the difficulties in their relations with the Turkish society. In order to overcome these difficulties, they

demand the creation of platforms that will enable the government and official institutions to meet with the host society and socialize more. A male participant expresses the problem and adds a solution suggestion:

> "A good guest wants a good host. We have been living in this society for years without disturbing anyone and we are very grateful to the hosting of the Turks. But there is a huge gap between these two communities. This is especially felt in cities such as Eskişehir. The state can provide cultural exchange centers for our communication in city centers."
>
> Male, 40, BA

Another participant wants to be given opportunities for the two cultures to get to know each other more closely:

> "There is nothing we can do other than waiting here for a few years. We became a refuge in this country because of the difficulties we experienced, but sometimes we are very humiliated. Maybe if we are given some opportunities, we can unite with the host community and be useful to this community. Maybe we may have the opportunity to promote our own culture. Sometimes they ask very strange questions. For example, there are those who ask if there is fruit in Iran. This shows how much we do not know each other and our culture."
>
> Male, 25, High School

In summary, the expectations of asylum seekers and immigrants from the state are spinning mostly around career and health issues. However, these expectations become more important for asylum seekers living in more difficult and uncertain conditions. As stated before, the biggest challenge for immigrants is that the government does not have a clear plan for them, and the rules are constantly changing. These rules can be laid down by fixed regulations which clearly stated in their pre-migration stage to assist them better in decision making. It could be also beneficial to integrate more easily into Turkey after migration. Likewise, a clearer expression of the rules that will affect them in any direction can ensure immigrants to get accurate information on required procedures.

Chapter VII

7 Conclusion and policy recommendations

Taking the current and updated data into consideration, there are around 120 thousand Iranian immigrants living in Turkey. This community consists of Iranians from different ethnic, political, social, and economic backgrounds. They continue their lives in Turkey in many different ways, such as short and long-term residence permits, waiting for obtaining citizenship, tourism, irregular migration, or asylum Immigrants. Their education level is higher than immigrants from other countries and they had migrated to Turkey due to economic, political, and social reasons. They tried to establish a better future for themselves and their children here.

Even though the most serious wave of immigration in the modern era from Iran has occurred after the 1979 Islamic revolution, the first generation has seen Turkey as a transit country. A large part of this group soon migrated to European countries and the US and Canada. During the last decade, in the perception of Iranians, Turkey has become a final destination rather than a transit country. In this period, legal and illegal migration to Turkey from Iran has increased rapidly. There are several reasons for this change in the migration pattern. The ongoing economic embargo, high unemployment rate, and worsening economic crisis against Iran are at the top of the reasons for this wave of migration. Along with this, social, cultural, and religious oppression of the regime as well as Iranians' expectations for a better future play a crucial role in the Iranians' migration flow to Turkey.

The relative freedom in Turkey is one of the main motivations for choosing Turkey as a destination country. Moreover, the geographical proximity of Iran and Turkey, the fact that Iranians do not require an entrance visa, cultural similarities, common religion, and presence of Azeris are the main reasons for preferring Turkey. In addition, better living conditions than Iran and the opportunity to live cheaper than European countries are among the reasons for preferring Turkey. Recently, the government of Turkey provides the opportunity of obtaining Turkish citizenship for those who invest at least 250 thousand dollars in real estate which attracts rich and middle-income Iranians. Also, the presence of the UNHCR office in Turkey is another reason for migrating to Turkey as a temporary place for asylum seekers.

A large number of Iranians living in Turkey are staying legally in Turkey. About 56 thousand of Iranians (the largest Iranian groups) are staying in Turkey with a short-term residence permit. Approximately 9 thousand Iranians are studying or working in Turkey. About 40 thousand Iranians are made up of asylum seekers who have applied for international protection. In recent years, the reluctance of classic asylum countries for accepting asylum seekers along with political and economic situations of emigration countries resulted in an increase in the number of asylum seekers mainly from Syria and other countries. Therefore, the number of Iranian asylum seekers who are waiting in Turkey for resettlement have been significantly increased.

Iranian immigrants are facing problems in Turkey, which varies according to their personal characteristics. Even though the stories of Iranian migrants are similar to each other, there are clear differences among them: problems in employment, obstacles related to the health system, disruptions created by the frequent changing of official required documents and regulations, language barriers, and social support-related constraints are the main issues that stand out for the Iranians who participated in the interviews. These problems particularly affect women and asylum seekers.

The Iranian migrants have specific expectations from the Government of Turkey to solve their basic problems. They expect Turkey's government to provide a more comprehensive health care service, to establish language courses, to create platforms that enable them to socialize with Turks and amongst themselves, to not change the regulations frequently, and to support mechanisms in language education and legal issues.

Within the framework of the research findings, Turkey's government can create social adaptation activities, can provide training seminars, and can provide health services for all immigrants in general and Iranian immigrants in particular. All the above suggestions can be made separately by the government or in cooperation with some NGOs. This cooperation can provide faster and more efficient activities for Iranians and their changing needs.

Even though many NGOs carry out activities regarding immigrants, the main task falls on the government with its legislative, regulatory, and controlling qualifications. Many of the problems mentioned above can be reduced by the government taking the necessary decisions and controlling them. Policy suggestions for government can be listed as follows:

First and foremost, Turkey's government should quickly establish a clear, sustainable, and transparent migration policy. The general procedures and micro objectives of migration should be determined within the framework of the country's future strategies. These strategies should also be diversified according to the original country of immigration. Moreover, Governmental authorities should focus on increasing immigrants' potential contribution to the host society without creating new economic, social, and political risks, as well as increasing the social welfare of immigrants in this process. In other words, the state should take the necessary precautions to transform migration into a "win-win" game for the host society and the immigrant community.

To facilitate the settlement of immigrants, confusing migration arrangements should be simplified, and it should be ensured that incoming migrants can easily access public institutions, especially the Migration Offices throughout the country. Additionally, the government should increase the contribution of immigrants in the labor market. For instance, qualified immigrants should be ensured to continue their jobs without difficulty and burdening bureaucracy within the framework of certain conditions.

Irregular migration is the most dangerous type of migration for states. These groups can pass the border through illegal organizations without any control, some groups make trafficking in human beings, some may spread infectious diseases, some may bring weapons, illegal goods such as drugs to Turkey. This vulnerability is not acceptable for any sovereign country. Entries and exits to Turkey in this context should be checked more intensively. The easy entrance of irregular migrants to Turkey must be prevented seriously.

The most basic needs of immigrants such as health, social services, education should be provided accordingly, and relevant expenses should be covered with the support of the general budget or with the contribution of the NGOs. In order to accelerate the integration of immigrants in Turkish society and more importantly, to provide an opportunity for them to accept Turkey as their new home, the government should not deny its support from immigrants.

Quick and easy arrangements should be made to ensure the formal work of foreigners in the labor market. Highly educated immigrants, in particular, should be able to work formally and contribute to the social security system by paying contributions. Finally, the structure of educational institutions should be reshaped such that migrants' children can catch up better and adapt to society more easily.

It can be said that migration movements will continue increasingly in the crisis environment that the world passes through. Immigrants from many different countries, not only Syrians, come to our country legally or informally. It is important to consider an Iranian participant's sentence to understand how they position themselves in Turkey and their future plans: “Turkey is enough far away from Iran for us, but also it is so close to our country that we do not feel like a stranger”. Within this framework, a targeted, proactive, and sustainable migration policy should be implemented as soon as possible with the participation of multiple NGOs and research scholars.

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Appendix A: Interview questions

Demographic information to be collected:

- Age
- Sex
- Marital status
- Education level
- Year arrived at Turkey
- Duration of residence in Turkey
- Job
- Income
- City of origin
- Religion

Open ended Questions

Questions measuring **determinants of the decision to migrate**:

- Can you please describe you are your migration story from Iran to Turkey?

- The reasons that made you decide to migrate.

- The process that led you to choose Turkey as a migration destination.

Questions measuring **integration process**:

- What do you think about Turkish society and their culture? How much you are active in this society?

- What is the level of your Turkish language and how much do you feel comfortable in using this language?

- How long did it take you to settle in and find a job?

Questions measuring **migration experience**:

- What are the daily experiences you are having in Turkey?

- Can you please talk about the ups and downs or the problems that you faced here and the ways you coped with these issues?

Questions measuring **long-term plans of migrants**:

- What are your future plans for Turkey? Are you planning to stay in Turkey for the rest of your life or do you plan to live in another country?

- If yes, where do you plan to go and why?

Questions for **getting insight on policy suggestions**:

- Are you using any of public services here in Turkey? Health services etc.?

- Which services do you need here in Turkey?

- What can government and NGOs do here to increase your life quality and help you to live in a better situation

Questions for **Survival Strategies**:

- What are the strategies you are using to deal with your economic problems?
- What are the strategies you use to communicate in Turkish with your Turkish community?

Appendix B: Participants demographics

Table 3. Detailed information of participants

ID	Name	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Education Level	Entry year to Turkey	Job	Income	Origin	Ethnicity	Meeting Place
1	Parisa Tajahmadi	27	F	Married	BA	2011	Persian language instructor	4000-5000	Tabriz	Azeri	Maltepe
2	Amin Pourfeizi	35	M	Married	BA	2009	Physiotherapist	6000-8000	Tabriz	Azeri	Maltepe
3	Azadeh Faghih	42	F	Married	BA	2019	Not working	-	Shiraz	Persian	Ataşehir
4	Mohammad Melki	53	M	Married	PhD	2012	Grocer	-	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet
5	Anonymous	39	M	Married	High School	2019	Grocer	1000-2000	Gilan	Persian	Cumhuriyet
6	Ruya Kurt	41	F	Married	High School	2012	Persian language teacher	-	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet
7	Kazemi	52	M	Married	High School	2017	Real state	-	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet
8	Reza Hasani	45	M	Married	BA	2012	Turkey portal manager	-	Zanjan	Azeri	Cumhuriyet

9	Arezou abdi	34	F	Married	MA	2015	Education consulate	3000-4000	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet
10	Farrokh Montazeri	45	M	Divorced	BA	2018	Real state	2000-3000	Tabriz	Azeri	Kağıthane
11	Mahtab	25	F	Married	BA	2018	Hairdresser	1000-1500	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet
12	Farideh	37	F	Divorced	High School	2017	Hairdresser	1000-1500	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet
13	Mansure Ghasemi	38	F	Married	High School	2019	Tattoo artist	1000-1500	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet
14	Amir ali	35	M	Single	High School	2018	Tattoo artist	1000-1500	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet
15	Farzad	36	M	Married	BA	2018	Real state	1000-3000	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet
16	Mahsa	30	F	Single	BA	2014	Tour leader	1000-3000	Mashhad	Persian	Cumhuriyet
17	Mohsen	36	M	Single	BA	2018	Real state	1000-3000	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet
18	Shahriyar Arjmand	31	M	Married	MA	2017	Psychologist	-	Tehran	Persian	Cumhuriyet

19	Nasim	25	F	Single	BA	2018	UN applicant	500-600	Tehran	Persian	Niğde-phone
20	Zhale	27	F	Single	MA	2011	Computer engineer	2000-3000	Tabriz	Persian	Avcılar
21	Soheil	42	M	Married	BA	2014	UN applicant	-	Tehran	Persian	Eskişehir-phone
22	Afsaneh	40	F	Married	High School	2019	Not working	-	Tehran	Persian	Bahçe şehir-Phone
23	Hasti	36	F	Married	High School	2017	Not working	-	Shiraz	Persian	Beylikdüzü
24	Alireza	31	M	Married	BA	2016	Real state	3000-4000	Tabriz	Azeri	Beylikdüzü
25	Vahid	37	M	Divorced	BA	2014	UN applicant	-	Tehran	Persian	Niğde-Phone
26	Morteza Ahmadpour	35	M	Married	MA	2013	PhD student	-	Tabriz	Azeri	Boğazici university
27	Ilmaz	30	M	single	High School	2020	Tourist	-	Tehran	Persian	Adana-Phone
28	Simin Alavi	35	F	Married	MA	2014	Masters student	2000-3000	Khoy	Azeri	Kartal
29	Aezou Rahimi	35	F	Single	MA	2012	PhD student	3500	Tabriz	Azeri	Levent

30	Siyamak Khayatti	27	M	Single	PhD	2014	Post-doc	4500	Tabriz	Azeri	Levent
31	Sanam Taghipour	32	F	Married	MA	2017	Not working	-	Tabriz	Azeri	Üsküdar
32	Mohammad Babayi	21	M	Single	High School	2015	BA student	-	Tehran	Persian	Kartal
33	Rozhan	31	F	Divorced	High School	2016	UN applicant	Below 1000	Tehran	Persian	Niğde-phone
34	Ali Shaygan	57	M	Divorced	High School	1983	Manager	-	Sarab	Azeri	Ataşehir
35	Masoud	31	M	Married	PhD	2010	Assistant professor	5000-8000	Tabriz	Azeri	Maltepe
36	Malek	40	F	Married	High School	2017	Not working	-	Tehran	Persian	Eskişehir
37	Farzad	38	M	Single	High School	2016	UN applicant-musician	1000-2000	Tehran	Persian	Eskişehir
38	Adel	35	M	Single	High School	2014	UN applicant	Below 1000	Tehran	Persian	Niğde
39	Farideh	25	F	Single	BA	2013	UN applicant	500-700	Isfahan	Persian	Denizli
40	Nilufar	29	F	Divorced	PhD	2011	Post doc	5000-7000	Isfahan	Persian	İstanbul
41	Mahsa	27	F	Single	BA	2010	UN applicant	-	Gilan	Persian	Denizli