Chapter 10
Analysis of The Economic Effects of Syrian Migration on Turkish Labor Market

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ABSTRACT

Migration is a multifaceted problem with social, economic, and political dimensions. Following the Arab Spring, Turkey has experienced very strong migration flow in from Syria since March 2011. Due to its dimensions of humanity, the problem of migration has become a problem that requires taking measures on a global scale. The Republic of Turkey has assumed considerable responsibility to host Syrian immigrants. As immigrants to Turkey exceeds 3.5 million people, various policy measures are taken with regard to incoming Syrian immigrants. Adaptation of these migrants at the job market has many obstacles. This research aims to examine the effects of immigration on economy. The global economic effects of immigration are analyzed by means of detailed statistical data. Considering the theories stressing the importance of immigration as an opportunity that creates significant changes in social structure, migration theories are discussed, causes and economic effects of migration are analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is an act of individual or collective displacement between countries or regions. The migration movement, which is also called population movement, can be defined as the movement of people with the intention to leave the country of origin due to political and economic reasons and take refuge in other countries. There can be many political, religious, economic, cultural and social factors encouraging migration flows. During mass migration flow taking place between the borders, the host country is also receiving various economic, political, cultural and social problems. The way to combat all these kinds of problems arising from migration flows is through interdisciplinary studies and cooperation.

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When fundamental human needs such as security, shelter and nutrition are not properly met in one’s own country individuals may choose to go beyond borders by using various channels, legal and illegal ones. Therefore, migration flows either depend on personal preferences of individuals, or arise as a necessity compelled by political and economic conditions in the country of origin. The most common migration factors include the desire to escape natural disasters, conflict or war, to avoid political and economic tensions within the country and to increase own prosperity and welfare.

According to theories that link migration movement to economic conditions, the wage differences between two countries stimulate migration. The labor force, in search of higher welfare incline to countries with higher wage opportunities. Therefore, the inadequacy of domestic labor supply in the countries where labor demand is higher triggers labor force movements. Along with the changing global conditions, the demand for highly qualified human capital has increased, as compared to demand for unqualified labor. As developed countries demand highly skilled labor force, better working conditions, higher wages and better education opportunities in developed countries evoke migration movement which is frequently described as brain drain.

Labor market conditions trigger migration flows. The fact that there are not enough job opportunities in emerging countries creates migration pressure on millions of young men and women every year. Growing population entering the labor force in emerging countries and aging population and labor shortages in developed countries creates labor migration flows from former countries to the latter. In addition, with the development of communication technologies, easier access to information about the global labor market triggers labor flows from other countries (ILO, 2014, p. 16).

Violence, oppression, war, terrorism and long-lasting political and economic instability are the main reasons for forced migration. In other words, individuals who want to be happier, peaceful, safe or to have higher standards of living and seek prosperity can leave their countries for high income, even if this means undertaking great risks. However, getting used to new conditions, finding opportunities, inclusion into the local community can be both challenging and time consuming. The world wars of the previous century, wars and conflicts in the Middle East, disintegration of the USSR, invasion of Afghanistan, tension on the Balkans and the recent Arab spring events are among the events that have led to significant mass migration.

Turkey has experienced very strong migration flows from Syria following the Arab Spring of March 2011. Due to its humanitarian dimensions, the problem of migration has become a problem that requires taking measures on the global scale. Republic of Turkey has undertaken the responsibility to host Syrian refugees. Turkey’s economy has a major problem about the Syrian refugees whose number already exceeds 3.5 million. Thus, it becomes imperative to take serious political and economic measures regarding Syrian immigration.

This study aims to discuss the reasons behind migration movement, its effects on economies and the related policy recommendations. Theoretical explanations of migration movements are explored and recent changes in the global migration statistics are analyzed. The study also examines how Turkish labor market is affected by Syrian immigrant flows. The study provides both statistical indicators and policy recommendations on integration of the immigrants into the economy.

In the following parts of the study theoretical definitions of migration will be introduced and types of migration will be discussed. Then, a brief summary of migration theories will be presented and the effects of migration on economies will be analyzed. Finally, global migration statistics will be used to highlight the distribution and economic size of migration across the world and in the case of Syrian refugees at Turkish labor market in particular.