

PAPER DETAILS

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PAGES: 719-738

ORIGINAL PDF URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/3311870>

CIRCULAR MIGRATION EXPERIENCES OF THE ELDERLY TURKISH MIGRANTS IN
BELGIUM: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Zeynep TEKİN BABUÇ*

ABSTRACT

The Turkish migrants in Belgium is one of the largest migrant population in Belgium and Europe. For the Turkish community in Belgium, maintaining social and emotional ties with the homeland is still of great importance, and their life in Belgium is not completely disconnected from Turkey. On the contrary, most of the Turkish population in Belgium, especially elderly Turkish migrants, have a circular migration dynamic in which they spend almost half of the year in Turkey and the rest of the time in the country of immigration. This circular migration dynamic has some social and economic benefits for the first and second generation Turkish migrants in Belgium, who are mostly in their aging process nowadays. Besides these benefits, experiencing to be an elderly circular migrant between Belgium and Turkey may also cause some challenges. This study aims to explore the experiences of elderly Turkish migrants regarding being circular migrants. Consistent with the purpose of the study, 14 elderly Turkish migrants, who have a circular migration dynamic between Belgium and Turkey, participated in the study. The qualitative interviews of the study were carried out in the Emirdağ district of the Afyon province of Turkey, where the Turkish population migrated to Belgium in the 1960s reside heavily. The findings of the study show that, despite some challenges encountered, circular migration occurs as an effective strategy for the elderly Turkish migrants in Emirdağ in terms of benefiting the resources of both countries in the aging process.

Keywords: Turkish Migrants, Circular Migration, Elderly Migrant, Emirdağ, Belgium.

BELÇİKA'DAKİ YAŞLI TÜRK GÖÇMENLERİN DÖNGÜSEL GÖÇ DENEYİMLERİ: NİTEL BİR ANALİZ

ÖZET

Belçika'daki Türk göçmenler, Belçika ve Avrupa'nın en büyük göçmen nüfuslarından biridir. Belçika'daki Türk toplumu için anavatanla olan sosyal ve duygusal bağların korunması hâlâ büyük önem taşımaktadır ve Belçika'daki yaşamları Türkiye'den tamamen kopmuş değildir. Aksine, Belçika'daki Türk nüfusunun büyük bir kısmı, özellikle de yaşlı Türk göçmenler, yılın neredeyse yarısını Türkiye'de, geri kalan kısmını da göç edilen ülkede geçirdikleri döngüsel bir göç dinamiğine sahiptir. Bu döngüsel göç dinamiğinin, günümüzde çoğunlukla yaşlanma sürecinde olan Belçika'daki birinci ve ikinci kuşak Türk göçmenler için bazı sosyal ve ekonomik faydaları bulunmaktadır. Bu faydaların yanı sıra, Belçika ve Türkiye arasında döngüsel göçmen olmayı deneyimlemek bazı zorluklara da yol açabilmektedir. Bu çalışma, Türk kökenli yaşlı göçmenlerin döngüsel bir göçmen olmaya ilişkin deneyimlerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmaya, çalışmanın amacına uygun olarak Belçika ile Türkiye arasında döngüsel göç dinamiği yaşayan 14 yaşlı Türk göçmen katılmıştır. Araştırmanın nitel görüşmeleri, 1960'lı yıllarda Belçika'ya göç eden Türk nüfusun yoğun olarak yaşadığı Afyon ilinin Emirdağ ilçesinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları, karşılaşılan bazı zorluklara rağmen, döngüsel göçün Emirdağ'daki yaşlı Türk göçmenler için yaşlanma sürecinde her iki ülkenin kaynaklarından yararlanma açısından etkili bir strateji olarak ortaya çıktığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Göçmenler, Döngüsel Göç, Yaşlı Göçmen, Emirdağ, Belçika

1. INTRODUCTION

After World War II, many European countries entered the process of post-war reconstruction which created the need for labor force that could not be met locally due to war losses. As a result, in the early 1960s, the first generation of Turkish immigrants migrated to Europe by bilateral agreements signed with Turkey to sustain the labor demand of European countries starting with Germany (Wets, 2006). Following similar agreements with Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Sweden and Switzerland, Turkey had become one of the leading labor suppliers of European countries by 1970 (İçduygu, 2008). In the early 1970s, due to the oil shocks and economic recession, the immigration of non-EU guest workers was stopped (Maes, Wood & Neels, 2019). Also, the

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economic crisis in the coal industry caused Turkish workers unemployed who mostly came to Belgium to work in mines. With the new restrictive immigration policy, those unemployed Turkish workers with no Flemish or French had to face challenges to adapt to socio-economical life (Maes et al., 2019). Despite these challenges, most of the Turkish migrants chose to stay in Belgium and also continued to increase their community there by family formation and reunification (Wets, 2006; Maes et al., 2019).

After 60 years since the signing of the bilateral agreements, the Turkish population in Belgium now constitutes one of the largest minority populations of Belgium and Europe (Lodewijckx 2007; as cited in Van Eechoud et al., 2017:2). However, despite their long migration history, there is a lot of doubt about the extent to which Turks are integrated into Belgian society (Wets, 2006). For the younger generations, it can be said that the socio-cultural integration has taken place more because of being educated and socialized in Belgium, and accordingly have the opportunity to actively participate in social, economic and political life of the host country. But, especially the first and second generation migrants, who are currently in their old age, have experienced sociocultural integration challenges, which are closely related to unknowing the local languages (Hava, 2018). The figures show that only 16% of immigrants of Turkish origin speak the official languages of Belgium and language proficiency is much lower in older age Turkish migrants (Vancluysen et al. 2008; as cited in Van Eechoud et al., 2017:2).

Language barrier and sociocultural integration challenges can be factors that make it difficult for migrants to adapt to the values, norms and sociocultural practices of the country of immigration and reinforce the need to maintain psychosocial ties with the country of origin. Preserving the social and emotional ties with the homeland is still very important for the Turkish society in Belgium, and their life in Belgium is not completely disconnected from Turkey. The need to preserve the social and emotional ties with Turkey can be seen in the everyday life practices of Turkish migrants in Belgium. They usually live in Turkish- populated neighborhoods which allows them to protect their native language, family and social ties and as well as their lifestyle they live in Turkey (Yaylacı, 2014). Establishing similar neighborhoods in Belgium as they have in Turkey may also reflect the desire of maintaining their ties with the homeland and preserve their culture and identity (Yaylacı, 2014).

In addition to maintaining a life and daily practices similar to Turkey in Belgium, an important factor that ensures continued ties with the homeland is that most of the Turkish migrants in Belgium have a tendency to spend half of the year in Turkey and the rest of the time in the host country (Baykara-Krumme, 2013). They prefer this circular migration to benefit from the health system and economic advantages of the two countries and also to maintain the social ties they already have in the country of origin and the ones they built in the host country (İçduygu, 2008). Circular migration is a form of mobility in which migrants regularly move between two or more geographies and are exposed to different practices in socio-cultural, economical and health systems (Bilecen & Tezcan-Güntekin, 2014). Circular migrants mostly live between two nation-states and organize their lives according to these different systems (İçduygu, 2008). The causes and benefits of circular migration may vary depending on the stage of the migrant's life. While at a young age and as an active member of the workforce, returning to the homeland can be a way of coping with the unemployment period; in midlife, the motive may be to build a house in the country of origin where you want to spend your retirement; and in old age, it may be to enjoy the social ties that exist on both countries (İçduygu, 2008).

Although the circular mobility between the homeland and the host country is a common pattern in the elderly migrant population, the intersectionality of circular migration and old age is a research area that has been addressed more broadly only recently in social sciences (Baykara-Krumme, 2013). The mobility of elderly migrants differs from younger generations in the way that their decision to return, stay, or migrate between the

countries as a circular migrant is made by their past experiences, their current financial, psychosocial and environmental needs and the challenges they experience regarding the old age (Baykara-Krumme, 2013). In this context, exploring the circular migration experiences of elderly migrants is important in terms of revealing the different social, economic and psychological dynamics caused by the intersection of old age and immigration.

The proportion of aging migrant population is rising in Europe and this number is expected to increase day by day (Lodewijckx 2007; as cited in Van Eechoud et al., 2017:2). Turkish migrant population is one of the largest non-European older immigrant groups who came to Belgium as young labor immigrants on 1960s and have settled in Belgium since 1980s (Lodewijckx 2007; as cited in Van Eechoud et al., 2017:2). The subject of this study is to explore the experiences of elderly Turkish immigrants, who constitute the first and second generation of Turkish migrants in Belgium and whose experience is a topic worth exploring because of the circular migration pattern they carry on between the two countries on a seasonal basis. They are undergoing an aging process neither fully in Belgium nor completely in Turkey, and they may experience some social, economic and psychosocial benefits as well as challenges in their dual lives. Within this regard, in this study, it is aimed to understand and analyze the experiences and challenges of Turkish elderly migrants aging both in Belgium and Turkey as a circular migrant in the light of the relevant literature on the sociology of migration.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method to explore the circular migration experiences of the elderly Turkish migrants in Belgium. Qualitative research methodology, which is inquisitive and has an effort to understand the research problem deeply, expresses a subjective-interpretive process for dealing with natural phenomena realistically (Seale, 1999). The research process has been carried out with a biographical perspective which is one of the qualitative research methods that enables to focus on the life stories of participants including their past and present experiences of events and their expectations for the future (Nilsen, 2008). Biographical research has advantages for both the participant and the researcher in the way that while the participants are allowed to tell their own stories in their own words, it also helps the researcher to understand the culture and history the participants have lived in and it gives in-depth information about the participant's story, perspective and reality (Kakuru & Paradza, 2007).

Consistent with the purpose of the biographical research, participants were asked questions about their past and present experiences, and their challenges regarding the social, psychological and economic dimensions of their lives in Belgium and Turkey as circular migrants. The data was collected by using a semi-structured interview form which includes questions on the participants' migration stories, their marital, educational and vocational histories, the everyday life practices and challenges experienced in Belgium and in Turkey. Ethics committee approval (No: 2023/8/2) was obtained from Osmaniye Korkut Ata University Social Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee for the study.

The participants of the study consist of elderly individuals (over 60 years old), who have immigrated from Turkey to Belgium and who have a circular migration dynamic between the two countries. The Turkish population in Belgium, especially the elderly Turkish population has a tendency to spend half of the year in Turkey which corresponds to the summer season. In this context, the field study of the research was carried out in August 2023 and in the Afyon Emirdağ district, where the first and second generation Turkish migrants who migrated to Belgium in the 1960s and 1970s reside heavily in the summer season. The Emirdağ district of the Afyon province is one of the regions that have quite a large number of circular migrant populations in Turkey, as the first migrant workers began to be recruited to Belgium were mostly from Emirdağ district. Today, the

population of Emirdağ citizens living outside of Emirdağ is 3.5 times higher than the population of Emirdağ residents, and a large part of this outsider population consists of Belgium immigrants (Dağdemir et al., 2018).

The coffee shops in the center of Emirdağ district, where the elderly population spends most of their time in Turkey, were visited to be able to reach the target sample group. Interviews were held with 11 elderly male immigrants through coffee shops. In order to reach the female circular migrants, the villages in Emirdağ district where the Belgian immigrant population resides heavily during the summer months were visited. With the help of the village headmen and local people, 3 Turkish female immigrants who met the inclusion criteria were included in the study. The number of female participants remained low as few female circular migrants agreed to be interviewed. A short description of the sociodemographic information of the 14 participants of the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Sociodemographic Information of Participants

Participant Code	Gender	Age	Education	Marital Status
P1	Male	65	High School	Married
P2	Male	67	Primary School	Married
P3	Male	81	Secondary School	Married
P4	Female	62	Primary School	Married
P5	Male	67	Secondary School	Divorced
P6	Male	65	Primary School	Married
P7	Female	63	Secondary School	Married
P8	Male	75	Primary School	Married
P9	Male	65	Secondary School	Married
P10	Male	64	Secondary School	Married
P11	Male	68	High School	Married
P12	Male	67	Secondary School	Married
P13	Male	64	Secondary School	Married
P14	Female	72	Primary School	Married

Semi-structured interviews of the study were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, and the transcribed interview data was analyzed with a thematic analysis process using manual coding techniques. The codes that emerged as a result of the thematic analysis were organized and interpreted under the themes presented in Table 2. In the findings and discussion section, the quotations of the participants used to explain the findings of the study were presented with the associated codes as P1, P2 and P3 in order to keep the personal information of the participants confidential.

Table 2. Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Building A Life in Belgium	Socio-demographic Background Integration Challenges Citizenship and Identity
Aging As a Circular Migrant	Circular Migration Pattern Everyday Life Practices Challenges of Circular Migration

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As a result of the analysis, two main thematic frameworks have emerged as “Building A Life In Belgium” and “Ageing As a Circular Migrant”. In this section, the findings that emerged as a result of the thematic analysis are discussed in light of the relevant literature.

3.1. Building A Life In Belgium

3.1.1. Socio-demographic Background

Migration from the Emirdağ district of the Afyon province have started in the 1960s and became one of the largest migration flow from Turkey with the interaction between migrants from the same region. While the first migration flow was supposed to be a temporary one, it turned into a permanent stay with family unification and imported marriages in the following decades (Kartal, 2013; as cited in Dağdemir et al., 2018:153). All the participants of the study consist of first generation or second generation immigrants who migrated to Belgium from Afyon Emirdağ district. While some of the participants went to Belgium as workers, some of them immigrated as children of workers through family reunification. The female participants, on the other hand, immigrated to Belgium through family reunification, either as children or as spouses.

Findings show that the ratio of co-ethnic marriages from the country of origin is high among the first and second generation Turkish migrants in Belgium (Timmerman, Lodewyckx & Wets, 2009; Hartung et al., 2011). There is a similar trend regarding marriage in the second generation Turkish population in Europe (Huschek et al., 2012). The tendency towards co-ethnic marriages and marriage with relatives, which is also common among Turkish migrants in Belgium, may stem from the beliefs that cultural differences of partners can create problems and marrying with a Turkish partner enables one to maintain the cultural identity abroad (Yaylacı, 2014). Similarly, the participants of this study have mostly preferred to marry Turks from their hometown.

In terms of their educational background, while some of the participants received education in Turkey, some of them took part in the education life in Belgium, albeit for a short time. In general, primary and secondary education is the most common education level among the participants and there are no participants who have gone to university:

P6: “I migrated to Belgium at the age of 15. My brothers went there at first and took me with them there. I went to vocational school there for 2-3 years.”

P10: “I have been in Belgium for 50 years. My father was from the first generation and then he took us there as family reunification.”

P13: “I have been in Belgium for 50 years. My father migrated as first generation. I went to primary school there for 1-2 years.”

Unemployment and poverty were the main factors that pushed the first generation of Turkish migrants to migrate (Dağdemir et al., 2018:153). The first generation of Turkish migrants mostly worked in low-paid unskilled jobs as blue-collar workers in sectors such as service, agriculture, horticulture, metal-lurgy and the waste processing industry (Wets, 2006). The work history of the participants in this study is also limited to working in blue-collar jobs in Belgium. Working in white-collar jobs has begun to take place mostly with third and fourth generation immigrants who were born, raised and educated in Belgium. While all of the male participants of our study (n=11) have experience of working in various blue-collar jobs in Belgium, the female

participants (n=3) have been involved in working life for a short time as blue-collor workers or not at all.

The Turkish female migrants with a work history were mostly employed in unskilled jobs such as cleaning. Today, almost all participants are either retired or awaiting retirement:

P2: "I migrated to Belgium in 1971 when I was 15 years old. I worked as a painter, in construction, in a cigarette factory, in a wood factory. I did every job."

P3: "I went to Belgium in 1966. At first, I worked in a spinning factory. Then I entered a coffee factory. I worked in construction as a mold maker."

P5: "I migrated to Belgium at the age of 17. I worked as a worker there. I worked at every job. I recently worked in construction. I am retired."

P7: "I left Turkey when I was 8 years old. My parents were there. I worked for 32 years. I am waiting for retirement. I am now receiving a sickness deposit."

P12: "I have worked in constructions in Belgium for over 45 years. I am retired."

P14: "I got married and went to Brussels at age 18. I worked in cleaning. My husband was a construction worker. Me and my husband are both retired."

Most of the Turkish migrants in Belgium who are not retired yet live on a so-called unemployment benefit. Those whose incomes are not sufficient also receive monthly financial aid, which is given to people with low income. The unemployment rate tends to be much more higher in the Turkish migrant community in comparison with other migrant communities living in Belgium and overall Belgium's unemployment rate (Wets, 2006). Indeed, the higher unemployment rate of the Turkish migrant population seems to have a relation with the social policy of Belgium that brings some benefits to the unemployed ones. The unemployment insurance paid to those who have been in the labor force for a certain period and then have been laid off creates an unemployment trap by discouraging the re-entering of the labor market (Wets, 2006). Many of the participants in our study continue their livelihood with unemployment benefits or sickness deposits while waiting for retirement:

P1: "Rents are too high there. I am currently receiving unemployment benefits."

P6: "Both my wife and I get a salary from the sickness deposit. I'm waiting for my day for retirement."

P7: "I worked in Belgium for 32 years. I am waiting for retirement. I am now receiving a sickness deposit."

While Turkish migrants generally have a lower employment rate with respect to native Belgians, the employment rate gap and underrepresentation in higher positions are higher in Turkish female migrants in comparison with male Turkish migrants (Jacobs et al., 2022). First generation and second generation Turkish female migrants who had little or no exposure to the Belgian educational system often stayed unemployed or worked in unskilled jobs with no requirement of literacy or professional qualifications. In a study examining the participation of first and second generation immigrant women in the labor market in Belgium, the low level of entering and sustaining in the labor market in both generations was found to be related to insufficient work experience, lower wages and part-time employment which may be a result of low human capital and language barrier (Maes et al., 2019). Although the limited number of the female participants in this study have partial working experience, it can be said that the female participants of the study have stayed in the job market for a shorter time than men, and as a result, they experience language barrier and sociocultural adaptation problems

more deeply in their daily lives. In connection with socio-cultural integration challenges, the factors affecting the integration of first and second generation Turkish immigrants are discussed in the following section.

3.1.2. Integration Challenges

Integration is not a concept that can be easily defined and is not a process that can easily be called complete. While integration has many dimensions such as social, cultural, economic, political and structural, the indicators to evaluate the level of integration will also vary with respect to the target migrant group and their varying generations (Wets, 2006). Also, the national integration policies and the point of view of the host society towards migrants may also vary according to the current political and sociocultural atmosphere (Wets, 2006).

Although worker migration flow to Belgium was planned initially as a temporary one, many of the first and second generation Turkish migrants have chosen to stay in Belgium for the advantages of living abroad. The participants of this study and their families are also among those who have permanently built a life in Belgium. One of the important factors in the preference of immigrants to switch from temporary to permanent status was the economic advantage of working abroad instead of their country of origin whose economic promise was not as good as Europe (İçduygu, 2008). Also, the host countries who planned a temporary migrant acceptance, found some benefits in the permanent stay of migrant workers in terms of the ongoing need for an outside labor force (Castles, 1984; as cited in İçduygu, 2008:2). As an example of this fact, some of the elderly Turkish migrants of the study declared that they were very welcomed by Belgium people despite the language and socio-cultural barriers because there was a huge need of labor force at that time:

P7: "We, the first generation, were very valuable to them. They loved us very much. There weren't many migrants at that time and they treated us with so much love and respect."

P8: "As first generation migrants, we worked at the hardest jobs in Belgium. If they can travel comfortably now, they should be thankful to us. We were the ones that built those railways and asphalt."

Due to the expectancy of their return to the homeland, not much has been done in terms of integration of first generation immigrants (De Tavernier & Draulans, 2018). While the Turkish community in Belgium continues growing and become more permanent, the Belgian government initiated new integration policies in the mids of the 1980s including regulations to facilitate the citizenship of the immigrant population and encourage their integration process (Wets, 2006). In addition, language courses for migrants have been started to be practiced by the Belgian government since the late 90s (Ahaddour et al., 2016). However, the first and second generation immigrants who came to Belgium as workers or through family reunification have shown a low interest in these courses, and they mostly tended to live in Turkish neighborhoods in Belgium without learning the local languages. The statements of the participants of our study also confirm the reluctance of Turkish immigrants to learn the official languages of Belgium:

P9: "Turks do not prefer to learn local languages. When I came, there were vocational courses and language courses. The government gave us money to encourage to attend these courses. When you finish these courses, you become a qualified personnel. But most Turks did not prefer to attend them. They showed no interest."

P10: "I learned the language at school in Belgium. My wife did not learn the language. In general, our Turkish society did not need a language because they mostly stood together. Those in need took either their son, grandson or acquaintance with them. My wife also worked for a while even though she doesn't know the language."

P13: *"My wife doesn't speak their language but she didn't even need to learn. There are evening courses if you want to learn the language. If an expatriate wants, he/she can go there and learn a language, but no one has such an enthusiasm."*

The first and second generations of Turkish migrants were mostly illiterate, worked in unskilled jobs and deeply experienced the language and socio-cultural barriers. They have developed some strategies as carrying onion peels or eggshells in their pockets to use while shopping, but these strategies for coping with the language barrier were not sufficient for their sociocultural integration:

P3: *"The first arrivals from the employees did not learn the language. We carried egg shells and onion peels in our pockets. We used to shop by showing them."*

P8: *"Life was heavy for us when we were young there. We couldn't explain what we wanted. There was no language. We used to walk around with onion peels in our pockets."*

The first and second generations overcame the language barrier in time with the help of the youngest generations who were born and raised there. The elderly Turkish immigrants in this study also express that they receive support from younger generations in overcoming language barriers. Although their lives have become easier thanks to the younger generations who can speak the local languages, their sociocultural life have still been largely confined to their co-ethnic community due to the language barrier:

P6: *"Those who went first could not get along with local people because of the language problem. Everyone had withdrawn into their shell. In the past, the elderly used to hire translators for official works, now they bring their sons and grandchildren."*

P9: *"Turkish people are everywhere now in Belgium. In hospitals and government institutions. It is no longer necessary to take someone who speaks the language with you. The real difficulty was experienced by those in the first generation in terms of language."*

P14: *"I don't have enough language to tell my problem. I have to have someone with me when I go to the hospital. Usually, my children and grandchildren help me."*

Due to the lack of language proficiency which is mostly acquired by education and the early socialization process, this would be hard for the first generation of Turkish migrants to adopt new socio-cultural values and practices in Belgium. In this context, the language barrier emerges as one of the most important obstacles to social integration. These difficulties related to social integration also affect the sense of belonging and identity of Turkish immigrants in Belgium. In the following section, the views of first and second generation immigrants in Belgium regarding belonging and identity will be discussed in the context of citizenship.

3.1.3. Cizenship and Identity

The first and second generation Turkish migrants in Belgium have generally settled in very old residential areas with old buildings. They mostly live in co-ethnic neighborhoods which helps them to receive solidarity from their fellow townspersons and fulfill their needs for unity and connection abroad (Yaylacı, 2014). Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse-ten-Noode Municipalities in Brussels, and the cities of Antwerp, Gent, Genk, Liège and Charleroi are from the regions where Turkish immigrants live most densely in Belgium (Yaylacı, 2014). While living in old neighborhoods was a factor that facilitated their economic livelihood, living in an almost entirely Turkish neighborhood also made their socio-cultural lives easier. For migrants, living close with people

from similar ethnic backgrounds helps to fulfill the need for belonging and security, and it facilitates coping with the uncertainties experienced in a country whose practices, rules and values are unfamiliar. While these co-ethnic concentrated neighborhoods enable the residents to use their native language, living in these areas may demotivate them to learn and use the language of the host country (Van Tubergen & Kalmijn, 2005).

Similarly, all of the participants of this study live in Belgium in the neighborhoods where Turks and more specifically Afyon Emirdağ immigrants have settled. In this context, their neighborhoods in Belgium consist of people they know and share the same language and culture. While this makes their lives easier, it also prevents them from social contact with the local people:

P1: "We live together in a neighborhood called Schaerbeek, right in the heart of Brussels. 4 out of 5 houses are from Emirdağ. There are no Belgians there. Everyone speaks Turkish where we stand. Our grocer is also Turkish, and our butcher is Turkish. Our doctor is also Turkish. I sent my wife to the language course. What will happen if you send a 60-year-old woman to a language course? She couldn't learn. It doesn't get in the head. She doesn't need either."

P12: "There is a distance with the Flemish people. We greet each other, we are respectful to each other, but the cultures are different, the language is different."

The phenomenon of living within a community of the same ethnic origin, which has made language acquisition and socio-cultural contact relatively unnecessary, especially for first and second generation immigrants, is also a factor that facilitates the tendency of the Turkish population in Belgium to preserve their Turkish identity. In a study examining the identity perception of Turkish immigrants in Belgium, it was found that there is a public-private dichotomy in the language use in the way that while Turkish immigrants use the official languages of Belgium in the public sphere, and they use Turkish in the private sphere, which includes their family and close social ties (Hava, 2018). Especially for elderly second-generation Belgian Turks, these fragmented linguistic and social spheres lead to a dual and in-between sense of identity, which affects their inability to fully integrate into Belgium (Hava, 2018). The participants of this study also stated that Turkish is generally spoken at home and Turkish channels are watched, so new generations can learn and speak Turkish:

P3 "Turkish is spoken at our houses, and Turkish channels are watched."

P8: "Our communication at home is always in Turkish with children and grandchildren. Our generations all know Turkish."

A field study on identity perceptions of Turkish migrants who migrated to Belgium from Afyon, Emirdağ show that Turkish migrants prefer to define themselves mostly as a "Turk" rather than a "Belgian Turk", and they have an effort to sustain their own culture there and a desire to preserve their social ties in the homeland (Yaylacı, 2015). The findings of this study also show that the rate of self-definition of a Turk, rather than "Belgian Turk" decreases in new generations. But in general, they perceive to be defined as Belgian-Turk as an attack against their ethnic identity, and preserving their native identity doesn't seem an obstacle for them while living in their co-ethnic concentrated neighborhoods in Belgium (Yaylacı, 2015). The participants of this study also care about defining themselves as Turkish, and they even stand in a biased position toward Belgian citizenship as an indicator of preserving their Turkish identity:

P2: "I did not accept Belgium citizenship. All but one of my children are citizens. In my first times here, they said to me, are you being "gavur" (a Turkish phrase meaning infidel), so I said okay then I don't want it."

P14: “Neither me nor my husband are not citizens. We did not want to be citizens.”

Despite this ethnic faithfulness, nationalisation is also common among Turkish migrants which are regarded as a functional and pragmatic acquisition than an identity issue (Yaylacı, 2015). Although many Turkish migrants applied for citizenship with the simplification of the naturalization process, some first and second generation Turkish migrants preferred not to be Belgium citizen. They claim that Belgian citizenship does not provide many benefits other than political rights. In their terms, the ones who have residency and work permit can benefit from social and economic rights as well as a citizen. The participants who have obtained Belgian citizenship also stated that they preserve their emotional attachment to Turkish identity and that Belgium citizenship is much more a practical issue for them:

P1: “I am also a Belgian citizen, but we are still the same Turks there.”

P3: “There is no advantage in citizenship, but I am a citizen. The residence permit goes everywhere.”

P5: “The conditions are the same whether I am a citizen or not. That's why I didn't get citizenship.”

Although the Belgium born and raised Turks have much more interaction and cultural knowledge of Belgium than their grandparents, they still have high levels of ethnic faithfulness and tend to define themselves with their ethnic heritage, socialize with friends from the same ethnic backgrounds and engage in activities and behaviors similar to their ethnic group (Yaylacı, 2015). The statements of the participants in the study also show that there is an effort of elderly migrants to adopt the Turkish identity and culture by the new generation:

P1: “Since we come from Anatolia, my daughters were born here, in Turkey. We give them this culture at home as much as they can. Grandchildren are studying at university. But they are like us, thank goodness.”

P3: “Our new generation also knows Turkish. This is not the case with Arabs. They do not speak their mother tongue in new generations”.

Another important factor in the continuation of the preservation of Turkish identity and culture between both old and new generations is the ongoing mobility of Belgian Turkish immigrants between Turkey and Belgium. With the help of their seasonal circular migration pattern, most of them still preserve their kinship and social ties in Turkey. In the next section, the experiences and challenges of the dual life of Turkish circular migrants between Turkey and Belgium will be examined .

3.2. Ageing As A Circular Migrant

3.2.1. Circular Migration Pattern

The popularity of circular migration is associated with its being an effective strategy that lets migrants optimize their income and investments, and it helps to improve their social, economic and personal well-being (Constant, Nottmeyer & Zimmermann, 2013). While it has seasonal and non-seasonal forms, the seasonal migration between low-income and high-income countries which allows to maximize the economic income and savings is the most prevalent form of circular migration (Constant, Nottmeyer & Zimmermann, 2013). For the participants of this study, there are both economic and social factors that affect their mobility between Belgium and Turkey. The main economic factors are the continuity of the unemployment or sickness benefits they receive in Belgium and some financial aid that are given to the ones with low incomes. In order for these aids and incomes not to be cut off, they have to return to Belgium within certain periods. Participants mentioned this compulsory mobility based on economic reasons in their statements:

P1: *"We're splitting the year in two. 3 months there, 3 months here. I took financial aid, approximately 380 Euros. But when you receive this aid from Belgium you can't stay in Turkey for more than three months. The aid will be cut off. They are giving you this aid so that you can live there. But if you are retired and get a pension, you can stay in Turkey as much as you want unless you don't receive any other aid."*

P6: *"We are usually here for 6 months. We come in April or May and stay until the 9th month. We have to return before 6 months to be able to take our sickness deposit. If you're receiving aid, you have to return to Belgium before 3 months. If you receive aid from a state institution, you cannot stay in Turkey for a long time."*

P7: *"Our life is well both here and there. But we prefer to be here. But I have to return before 3 months because I receive aid."*

P13: *"Since I am not retired yet, I live here for 3 months and in Belgium for 3 months".*

Circular migration also has some social benefits as well as economic benefits. For instance, the participants of the study can maintain the social connections they have both in Turkey and Belgium by circular migration. In addition to its social benefits, the fact that there are many sunny days in Turkey, unlike Belgium, was also stated by the participants as an important factor affecting their seasonal migration pattern:

P3: *"Old people don't have a problem in Belgium. Everyone is in their own business. All they care about is coming here. We are happy when we come to Turkey."*

P6: *"I prefer to live here in Turkey. The weather is fine. Food is good, water is good. I do not have health problems."*

P8: *"We cannot give up the air and water of our homeland, but we cannot leave our life there either."*

The Turkish migrants in Belgium experience a dilemma of conflicting desires (Declercq et al., 2006; as cited in Ahaddour et al., 2016:1222). While on the one hand, they want to return to their homeland for climate and nostalgia, on the other hand, they want to reside in Belgium due to the presence of their children and grandchildren as well as the social and financial security they have abroad (Declercq et al., 2006; as cited in Ahaddour et al., 2016:1222). Although they dream about eventually returning to their homeland, they do not want to risk the economic, social and emotional ties they have established in their lives in Belgium. Especially the first and second generation Turkish migrants in Belgium, who are mostly in their aging process nowadays, have still significant social networks such as relatives, neighbors and friends in their villages or hometowns in Turkey. But at the same time, they have deeply rooted family ties, as well as economic and social gains that they cannot easily give up in the host country. Accordingly, circular migration may occur as an effective strategy for the elderly migrant population to benefit the resources of both countries and fulfill their psychosocial needs in their aging process.

The situation is also similar for the elderly Turkish migrant participants in this study. Although they prefer to live in their hometowns, it does not seem possible for them to return permanently. The fact that their children and grandchildren are there appears to be the most important reason for the first and second generation immigrants not being able to make a permanent return to their homeland. Another important factor is the financial gains and social rights they have acquired there:

P1: *"My family is there. If I come here, it will only be me and my wife here. I have 12 grandchildren there."*

P2: *"If it were up to me, I would consider returning in 3-5 years, but we cannot think of returning because the children are there. The children are there, the grandchildren are there."*

P5: *"I can't return here permanently. I cannot leave my children. I'll live in both countries as long as my health allows. I have children and grandchildren there. I miss here as well, but after a while, you have to go. You have a life there, too. We're used to coming and going."*

The Turkish migrants of Emirdağ have never completely lost their economic, social and cultural ties with their homeland (Dağdemir et al., 2018). With the help of their seasonal circular migration pattern, most of them still preserve their kinship and community relationships. Due to the social and economic ties that bind them to Belgium, they intend to continue the circular migration as long as their life and health allow. While aging in this circular migration experience is an effective strategy for them, they want their permanent residence, namely their graves, to be in Turkey:

P3: *"I would like to grow old and die in Turkey. All old people in Belgium want to be buried here."*

P7: *"My mother passed away there and we brought her here. I would prefer to be buried in Turkey, too. There is a Muslim cemetery there, but everyone prefers to be buried in Turkey. This is our homeland. Our prayer is being read on our heads."*

The elderly migrant population in the retirement period may be regarded as more independent than younger generations in choosing their place of residence as the children have grown up and the work-related obligations have disappeared, and as a matter of fact, return migration to the place of birth later in life is common in elderly migrant population (Lundholm, 2012). In the case of the Turkish migrants in this study, they seem not to plan a return migration to the homeland for now and in the future. Instead, they want to pursue their seasonal circular migration dynamic between Turkey and Belgium because this two-way residency helps to fulfill their psychological and social needs.

3.2.2. Everyday Life Practices

For immigrant groups, who are exposed to two different cultural perspectives, it may be difficult to adapt to everyday practices that they cannot internalize due to cultural differences. A study on the attitudes of Turkish migrants towards the health system and patient rights issues found that Turkish migrants in Belgium who are from Emirdağ tend to preserve the beliefs, rules and values of Turkish culture (Korkmaz & Demirsoy, 2022). Another study exploring the experiences of "place" among older migrants living in deprived urban neighborhoods in Europe states that by engaging in their communities and in places that reflect their religious and cultural practices, older migrants reconstruct and transform their neighbourhood into a transnational place to create a "sense of home" (Buffel & Phillipson, 2011). The continuity of a similar everyday life with the homeland enables them to live in a secure, supportive and meaningful place which may create a sense of "social insideness" (Rowles, 1983; as cited in Buffel & Phillipson, 2011:17).

Similarly, the findings of this study also show that first and second generation Turkish migrants prefer to maintain daily life practices in both countries which mostly represent the social norms and values regarding elderly individuals in Turkish culture. Male Turkish migrants mostly socialize in local coffee shops which are used just by men. Also, going to the mosque is a part of everyday life practices for many elderly Turkish male immigrants. As a view of traditional gender roles, elderly women migrants usually spend their time at home and with housework. Elderly female participants of this study also mostly socialize with neighborhood and relative visits in their everyday lives. Interestingly, both females and males of Turkish migrants have similar everyday

life practices in Belgium and in Turkey. Most of them state that their lives in Turkey are as if a continues part of their lives in Belgium, and there are no big changes except the sunny weather here that is hard to find there:

P1: "My day passes between the mosque and the house. I am empty because I do not have a job. I pass my time in the mosque, I see my friends there. Then I come home, time passes in front of the TV. Since my wife does not work, she takes care of the daughters and grandchildren. She does housework."

P3: "My life goes on between home and the mosque."

P4: "I spent time cooking and housework. Grocery shopping is not a problem. It's the same when I am in Turkey."

P5: "Women are mostly at home and the men are in the coffee shops. The life of Turkish people here is just like there".

P10: "We mostly went to coffee shops. Not so much in the pandemic. We've been to the parks at pandemic times."

According to the findings of a study, elderly Turkish migrant men often use outdoor spaces such as coffees or teahouses to socialize, which are defined by them as "male spaces"; whereas the older Turkish migrant women prefer to spend time especially in their home or in the homes of family or friends (Buffel, et al.,2013). This gendered division of public space is also revealed in the findings of this study. The daily life occupations of male participants are seen to be limited to spending time in coffee shops and mosques. For female participants, they are mostly preoccupied with home and close family members. But these everyday life preferences are not a matter of the limited social facilities in Belgium. As the participants stated, although there are many opportunities for various social and sportive activities, the interest in alternative social life activities seems low among Turkish elderly migrants. Therefore, life in Turkey and Belgium does not differ greatly for most of the first and second generation elderly Turkish migrants. Their expectations regarding the socio-cultural needs are similar in both countries:

P6: "Every municipality has green areas and sports fields. But Turkish people usually do not use these facilities. Our people only go to mosques and coffee shops."

P9: "The Belgian government thinks of everything about old people. The elderly Turkish people don't have much demand either about social life or cultural activities. They are happy with their lives as far as I can see."

P11: "Our name is expatriate, but we are not expatriate here or there. Everyone here is already there in the winter. There is no difference in our social life in Belgium and Turkey."

P12: "There are mosques, associations, sports fields, parks. There are many opportunities for those who want to linger."

The fact that elderly Turkish immigrants have a similar socio-cultural life in both Turkey and Belgium seems to be a factor that provides continuity in their dual lives as circular migrants. Circular migration can lead to a risk of being seen as transient or as an outsider who belongs neither to the host community nor to the country of origin (Constant, Nottmeyer & Zimmermann, 2013). While this betwixt and between position can create feelings of alienation in the country of origin, this splitted life can also lead to an unwillingness for sociocultural and economic integration in the host country (Constant, Nottmeyer & Zimmermann, 2013). The reluctance to adopt

new habits regarding the socio-cultural life and everyday practices of the country of immigration is also observed in the participants of this study.

For first and second generation immigrants, who have mostly experienced language barriers and socio-cultural integration challenges, maintaining their habits and being in contact with the Turkish community in Belgium have provided them with a space of comfort and security in a foreign and unfamiliar culture. However, this need for continuity of social and cultural ties may diminish for the new generations who were born and socialized in Belgium. In this context, while the expectations of the elderly immigrants regarding social life in Belgium and Turkey are based on maintaining the daily practices and social ties they are accustomed to, Turkey is started to be seen as a holiday place by the new generations. The desire to maintain their socio-cultural ties in their homeland may be lower among younger Turkish migrants with respect to older generations. In support of this view, the participants of the study stated that young generation Turkish migrants prefer to go to holiday resorts in Turkey instead of coming to their hometowns:

P5: "Teenagers stay shorter. They get bored of staying here too long."

P6: "They don't want to come here. Even if they come, they prefer to go to Antalya."

P9: "Young generations don't want to come to Emirdağ anymore. They get bored here. To live in Afyon is only attractive for the elderly."

3.2.3. Challenges of Circular Migration

The causes and benefits of circular migration can vary depending on the life stage of a migrant (İçduygu, 2008). Circular migration at young ages may include benefits such as transferring the knowledge, skills and technology gained abroad to the homeland and as a result contributing to the economic and social development of the country of origin (İçduygu, 2008). However, the circular migration that takes place in the older ages generally includes more psychological and social dynamics such as continuing the social ties they have in both places and benefiting the resources of both countries in retirement days (İçduygu, 2008). In this context, although the economic and technological return of older immigrants to their homeland is not like the contribution of younger generation migrants, their spending and investments in their homeland can be an important input for the local economy.

The contribution of circular migrants to the local economy is also very important for the Emirdağ district which receives a huge number of Turkish migrants, especially in the summer season. However, the Turkish migrants can be perceived by residents of Emirdağ as an economic opportunity and when immigrants arrive, some artisans can try to maximize their income by raising current prices. The participants of the study stated that being approached only as an economic source of income in their home country affected them negatively:

P13: "Everything is getting more expensive when we come here. When you complain about something, people here say "then go and live there". We are also people of Emirdağ, but they see us as foreigners here. They are only interested in our money."

Although circular migration is still a preferred dynamic by the first and second generation elderly Turkish migrants, with the increase in the economic cost of circular migration, it seems to be a less and less preferred trend for the younger generations whose socio-cultural ties with the country of origin are weaker than the upper generations. According to the participants of the study, being seen as an economic source of income and feeling

that they are economically exploited in their hometown are from the main reasons that weaken the connection of new generations with Turkey:

P2: *“There is no sea here. There is no place for entertainment. Our children don't want to come anymore. Young people want to travel when they come. And here is so expensive. When expats come, they immediately increase the prices. Our family is an old and well-known family here. Because they know us, they can't screw us even if they want to.”*

P11: *“In my opinion, the future generations won't come here anymore, unless they just look at us as a source of income. We are trying to instill patriotism in our children, but when they come here, young people see the truth. We experience difficulty everywhere. We are foreigners there, but we feel more foreigner in Turkey. We have a lower reputation here. Young people don't want to come anymore. They come for 10-15 days and go back. They prefer to go to other countries to take a vacation.”*

Another important challenge experienced by the participants of the study regarding circular migration is that they encounter too many legal and administrative procedures during their arrival and departure processes. They have a demand from Turkish authorities for simplified procedures and regulations that will provide flexibility in facilitating their arrival and departure:

P1: *“If you buy the worst car from here, it costs at least 200.000 TL. Not everyone has this money. We would be very comfortable if we had the right to bring a car from there indefinitely.”*

P5: *“I want to bring a car from there, but the Turkish government brings lots of difficulties. Ok, it is my hometown, I like being here, but I can't even bring a car.”*

P9: *“Here you can use your phone for 2 months. Then it shuts down. You could bring your car for a maximum of 6 months, now it has increased to 2 years. Here we face more obstacles.”*

P11: *“We can't use our cars comfortably here. If we want to buy a new car here, it is not that little money either. There should be no customs tax, just the insurance.”*

P14: *“Here, you need to bring insurance paper from the social security institution for going to hospitals. We do it every time we enter here. It is difficult. This procedure can be simplified.”*

The participants of the study also experience another difficulty regarding the high round-trip costs, especially in the summer months. They state that the prices of plane tickets increase exorbitantly as demand is high in the summer months, and the increased prices force them to come to Turkey by car. Unfortunately, the preference for the roadway instead of the plane leads to increased accidents or safety risks on the roads:

P10: *“While flights are cheaper in the winter, they become expensive in the summer. A 300 euro flight will cost 1000 euros in summer. These prices should not matter in summer or winter. Turkish Airlines' fleet is large and they fly all over the world. They can add additional flights in summer. If the plane tickets were reasonable in price, everyone would come by plane. These accidents do not happen on the roads.”*

P11: *“Air tickets are very expensive. In summer, prices are doubled. Expatriates have to come by car, then. There are accidents on the road, there are deaths. Also, the roads are not safe. More flights should be organized for expatriates.”*

In this respect, although the motivation to spend their old age between the country of origin and Belgium with seasonal migration is still high among the first and second generation immigrants, it seems that this circular mobility may gradually decrease in the next generations. The elderly circular migrants in this study state that the cost of coming and staying in Turkey is increasing day by day, and they feel that they are economically exploited by the local people. Therefore, without reducing the economic costs of circular migration and increasing its economic and socio-cultural gains for all parties, circular migration may lose its attractiveness for the Turkish migrants in the near future.

4. CONCLUSION

As many European countries, Belgium exported a very large Turkish migrant worker group, who are called the first generation Turkish migrants, to sustain the need of a labor force after World War II. Most of the Turkish first generation migrants migrated from central Anatolian provinces with the leading of Afyon, Eskisehir and Kayseri; and among these, Afyon Emirdag district stands out to give intensive immigration to Belgium as representing nearly one-third of the Turkish community in Belgium (Wets, 2006). Migration from the Emirdağ district, which started in the 1960s as a part of worker recruitment agreements with European countries, grew rapidly with the interaction between migrants from the same region and with family unification in the following decades (Kartal, 2013; as cited in Dağdemir et al., 2018:153). Although this migration flow was aimed at meeting a short-term labor need in the first place, the number of incoming workers increased over time and their situation in Belgium returned to a permanent one (Wets, 2006). During the 60-year history of the Turkish immigrant population in Belgium, most of the first generation immigrants have built a new life in Belgium and they formed a rooted community together with the new generations born and raised there.

Most of the Turkish migrants in Belgium have a circular migration dynamic in which they exhibit a regular seasonal mobility between their homeland and Belgium. This circular migration has some social and economic benefits, especially for the first and second generation Turkish migrants in Belgium, who are mostly in their aging process nowadays. Besides these benefits, experiencing to be an elderly circular migrant between Belgium and Turkey may also cause some challenges. In this study, it is aimed to explore the experiences of elderly Turkish migrants regarding being circular migrant. Consistent with the purpose of the study, 14 elderly Turkish migrants, who have a circular migration dynamic between Belgium and Turkey, participated in the study. The qualitative interviews of the study were carried out in the Emirdağ district of the Afyon province of Turkey, where the Turkish population migrated to Belgium in the 1960s reside heavily.

As a result of the thematic analysis, two main thematic frameworks have emerged as “Building A Life In Belgium” and “Ageing As a Circular Migrant”. Under the first theme, the sociodemographic background of the participants, integration challenges and citizenship and identity issues were discussed; and under the second theme, the circular migration pattern of the participants, their everyday life practices and challenges of circular migration subthemes were discussed in light of the relevant literature.

The first and second generation Turkish immigrants, who are in elderly ages now, have highly experienced the language barrier and sociocultural challenges while building a life in Belgium. The participants of this study show a homogeneous socio-demographical background in the way that they were mostly illiterate, worked in unskilled jobs and deeply experienced the language and socio-cultural barriers in their life abroad. While entering a university was not common in the first and second generation, the third generation Turkish population has a tendency to attend university and this created a new generation of skilled Turkish population working in various sectors such as health, medicine, economics or politics (Wets, 2006).

Although vocational and language courses were opened for immigrants and various incentives were given to those who attended these courses, learning the local language was not essential in the daily life of Turkish workers and their spouses who were mostly housewives (De Tavernier & Draulans, 2018). The integration process cannot only be achieved by the host country's policies that embrace diversity and facilitate integration. The guest society should also be willing to use these opportunities and be motivated to integrate. The findings of this study show that although the language and educational barriers experienced by the first and second generation Turkish population have made sociocultural integration difficult for them, their efforts and motivation to overcome these barriers were low. According to the statement of the participants, the number of Turks who are trying to learn a language or acquire a qualified profession by taking advantage of these courses has been very few.

As being the group that experiences language and socio-cultural barriers the most, first and second generation Turkish immigrants seem to have not fully integrated into Belgium compared to younger generations. They have tried to reduce the impact of these difficulties with strategies such as living close to the Turkish community where they felt more comfortable and getting help from new generation immigrants in language. However, these strategies have also forced them to live in a closed community and in a limited socio-cultural environment in which they mostly continue their everyday life practices in Turkey. In this regard, the expectations of elderly Turkish migrants on socio-cultural life both in Belgium and Turkey seem to be based on continuing the everyday life they are accustomed to. These social practices mostly include going to coffee shops and mosques for men, and taking care of the home and close family members for women. The findings of this study also show that obtaining citizenship in Belgium has never been a phenomenon that largely affects the economical and social lives of Turkish migrants in Belgium. On the contrary, protecting the Turkish identity and culture continues to be a sensitive and important issue for Turkish elderly immigrants in Belgium.

Elderly migrants who have a tendency for circular mobility within the host country and country of origin generally benefit from the resources in both countries, and their circular mobility eases their lives socially and economically in both countries (Strumpen, 2012; as cited in Bilecen & Tezcan-Güntekin, 2014:5). The circular migration behavior of the elderly migrant population may also emphasize their need to maintain their psycho-social ties with the homeland. Despite the benefits of being in Turkey, most of the Turkish migrants prefer to continue their dual life within Belgium and their homeland due to the social ties and financial security they have abroad (Declercq et al., 2006; as cited in Ahaddour et al., 2016:1222). Similarly, the findings of this study show that circular migration occurs as an effective strategy for the elderly Turkish migrants in Emirdağ in terms of benefiting the economic and social resources of both countries in the aging process. They do not want to give up their lives in Turkey that represents their roots, nor their lives in Belgium which represent the ties with their children and grandchildren. In this way, while they can fulfill the needs of being close to loved ones, specifically children and grandchildren, they can also enjoy the sunny weather of their hometown which is also an important factor in spending a long period of time in Turkey. In addition, the fact that the first and second generation immigrants could not achieve full socio-cultural integration in Belgium may be an effective factor in their preference of a circular migration pattern. Especially for the elderly migrant population who mostly have experienced language and socio-cultural barriers in Belgium, spending almost half of the year in Turkey may provide a greater sense of comfort and security.

Although circular migration seems to be an effective strategy for elderly Turkish migrants, it may not be as popular as it used to be unless it continues to be economically and socially advantageous. To continue its popularity, it should have some benefits for the migrants such as being able to maximize the purchasing power of their incomes by spending their host-country earnings in a low-cost destination country and to preserve their

homeland socio-cultural assets and mother tongues for themselves and the younger generations (Hugo, 2013). As a matter of fact, circular migrants need to experience fewer obstacles in their mobility between their country of origin and the host country. The statements of the participants in this study show that despite their desire and motivation to spend almost half of the year in their homeland, some of the economic and social difficulties they experienced in Turkey upset them, and these challenges also distract new generations from their attachment to their homeland. Feeling to be economically exploited in their homeland and being seen as a source of income even by their local neighbors make them question their position and identity in Turkey. Also, the increasing economic cost of travel between the two countries and the inadequacy of regulations facilitating the use of their cars and telephones in Turkey are also important factors that make their lives as circular migrants more difficult. Although circular migration is still highly preferred by first and second generation migrants, young generations may not continue this migration dynamic due to the decreasing social and economic benefits of being in the homeland. Therefore, there is a need for practical regulations, simplified procedures and measures against economic exploitation to facilitate the circular migration experiences of Turkish migrants.

This study focuses on immigrants who migrated from Afyon Emirdağ to Belgium as blue-collar workers, and in this respect, it deals with a socio demographically homogeneous social group. However, as revealed in the study, it is predicted that the circular migration experiences of third and fourth generation immigrants born and raised in Belgium will be different from the experiences of the first and second generation immigrant groups. In addition, there are also elderly Turkish immigrants who have immigrated to Belgium as qualified immigrants and who have worked in white-collar jobs. In this study, there were no participants representing the profile of educated and professionally qualified elderly immigrants. In this regard, there is a need for further research that examines the circular migration dynamics of different Turkish migrant generations and different elderly migrant profiles.

Knowing the characteristics and motivational factors of circular migration is a powerful and effective tool for the authorities to implement a beneficial migration policy (Constant, Nottmeyer & Zimmermann, 2013). In addition, knowing the qualitative aspects of circular migration experiences of migrant populations and therefore understanding their perspectives and motivations regarding their migration process can provide an important resource to sustain its continuity for the next generations. In this respect, it is thought that this study has significance in terms of revealing the experiences of elderly Turkish migrants who are one of the dominant actors of circular migration in Turkey. It is also taught that it will shed light on social policies that increase and prioritize the interests of both parties which include the circular migrants, the host country and the country of origin.

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Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı: Bu çalışmada taraf olabilecek herhangi bir kişi, kurum veya kuruluş arasında bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

Destek ve Teşekkür: Çalışma için herhangi bir kurum ya da kuruluştan finansal destek alınmamıştır.

Etik Kurul Kararı: Araştırmaya yönelik etik kurul onayı, Osmaniye Korkut Ata Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu'ndan alınmıştır. (Kurul Onay Tarihi: 02.08.2023 / Karar No: 2023/08/2).