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My Daughter Said: Why Are We Here, Mom? Experiences of Parents With Special Needs

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WHO LEFT THEIR COUNTRY FOR THEIR CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Abstract

This study investigated the reasons why parents with children with special needs choose to leave their homeland with their children, the difficulties they encounter in their new countries, the services they receive for their children in new countries, and their level of satisfaction with these services. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 parents residing in various countries. The findings indicate that parents migrated to developed countries due to negative attitudes toward themselves and their children in Türkiye, discrimination, and dissatisfaction with educational services. These parents emphasized that their children were happy in the countries they migrated to and expressed satisfaction with the special education services they received. Furthermore, most of these parents do not intend to return to Türkiye permanently.

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My Daughter Said, “Why are we Here, Mom?” Experiences of Parents

Who Left Their Country for Their Children With Special Needs

Immigration is a global phenomenon that significantly impacts families with children with special needs, influencing their access to and experiences within the special education system. In general, families of children with special needs are happy with the services, support, and assistance they get from the countries to which they immigrate (Kaya, 2022). Children with special needs represent a heterogeneous population requiring specialized support and intervention strategies to address their unique challenges. These children may have different needs from those of their peers during their developmental periods. Special needs encompass a diverse range of conditions that impact an individual's physical, cognitive, emotional, or social functioning (Smith et al., 2005). These conditions may include developmental disabilities, learning disabilities, sensory impairments, chronic illnesses, and emotional or behavioral disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Children with Special Needs and Special Education

Education is a right for individuals with special needs and is an indication that no individual can be sacrificed, as well as an indication of the importance that society attaches to the individual by integrating people with special needs into society (Kauffmann & Anastasiou, 2019; Westbrook et al., 1993). It is often difficult for individuals with special needs to keep up with the education process in general education environments, and the educational needs of a certain portion of individuals cannot be met in general education environments (Finke et al., 2009). Therefore, these individuals lose their access to education by having to leave the education system and do not benefit from education enough to learn how to live their own lives independently (Alderson, 2018). Special education is an educational process in which unique materials, methods, and techniques are used for students who cannot benefit from the general education process at the desired levels. Specially trained

expert personnel are employed and they aim to enable students to live as independently as possible (Zigmond & Kloo, 2017). In simpler terms, special education aims to meet the needs of individuals to reach their highest learning potential. In special education, everyone is unique, and the education process is individualized for everyone, taking this uniqueness into consideration. In this regard, the focus is on designing an educational structure that can eliminate the disadvantages of individuals with special needs by revealing their potential and helping children receive quality education (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

Special Education and Support Services

Children with special needs require specialized support and intervention strategies to thrive in educational settings (Armstrong, 2012). Special education and support services play a crucial role in addressing the varied needs of these children and promoting their academic and developmental success (McLeskey, 2017). Special education encompasses a range of practices aimed at meeting the unique needs of children with special needs within the educational setting (Turnbull et al., 2013; Winter & O'Raw, 2010). The practice, of inclusive education promotes the integration of children with special needs into inclusive education settings, fostering social interaction and academic engagement (Friend & Bursuck, 2002). Inclusive education offers enriched learning environments by respecting everyone's differences and giving absolute value to the individual without distinguishing any individual (Angharad & Becket, 2009). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the inclusiveness of the system is examined under the headings of inclusiveness of access to education and social inclusion. In terms of inclusiveness, the education system, the school system, and everyone involved in the school system respond to the needs of each student. Inclusiveness of access to education can be defined as everyone having equal access to quality education, and social inclusion means that all stakeholders, including social policies, are in close contact (Şimşek et al., 2019). Inclusive

education involves creating learning opportunities that cater to the diverse needs of all students and members of society, while promoting the belief that every individual has the capacity to learn, regardless of their circumstances. Students' learning levels should be addressed at the maximum level in their learning processes, and every effort should be made to remove obstacles to students' failure in education. Inclusive education, which is part of an inclusive society that includes valuing everyone, gives a sense of belonging to the society, exhibits the culture and policies equally to everyone, minimizes the barriers placed by organizations, and prevents exclusion and inequality (Ainscow, 2020).

Assistive technology plays a crucial role in supporting children with special needs by enhancing accessibility and facilitating learning and communication. Examples of assistive technology include communication devices, adaptive equipment, and computer software designed to meet the diverse needs of children with special needs (Hopcan et al., 2023). In addition to particular assistive educational materials, various support services are available to address the diverse needs of children with special needs. Therapy interventions, including occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy, and behavioral therapy, target specific areas of development and help children acquire essential skills (Guralnick, 2017; Yingling & Bell, 2020). Parent training programs provide parents and caregivers with strategies and resources to support their children's development and advocate for their needs (Turnbull et al., 2013; Whitbread et al., 2007).

In addition to special education practices, various support services are available to address the diverse needs of children with special needs. Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of special education practices and support services in promoting positive educational outcomes for children with special needs. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are one of the strategies for supporting students with special educational needs, and relevant research has demonstrated their benefits in improving academic achievement and social-

emotional development (Fuchs et al., 2010). Inclusion practices have been shown to enhance social skills and promote acceptance among peers (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010).

Additionally, therapy interventions and parent training programs have been associated with improved communication, behavior, and overall functioning in children with special needs (Boot et al., 2018; Rogers & Vismara, 2008).

Special Education in Turkiye

Special education in Turkiye has undergone significant transformations over the years, reflecting changes in societal attitudes and government policies toward individuals with disabilities. The establishment of special education schools and programs in Turkiye dates to the late 20th century, with a focus on providing separate educational settings for individuals with disabilities. However, in recent decades, there has been a shift toward inclusive education practices, aiming to integrate students with special needs into inclusive education settings (Kutay, 2018; Ozturk, 2019).

The Turkish government has implemented various initiatives and policies to promote inclusive education and support services for individuals with disabilities. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) plays a central role in overseeing special education programs, curriculum development, and teacher training initiatives (Meral, 2015). Additionally, the Turkish Disability Law enacted in 1997 aims to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities and promote their inclusion in various aspects of society.

Despite efforts to promote inclusive education, several challenges persist in the Turkish special education system. These include inadequate resources and infrastructure, limited teacher training in inclusive practices, societal stigmatization of individuals with disabilities, and barriers to accessing support services in rural areas (Meral, 2015). Nowadays, even though families residing in rural regions of Turkiye exhibit the attributes of an extended family configuration, families in cities mostly display the characteristics of a nuclear family

(Kale & Sigirtmac, 2021). However, families of children with special needs in rural areas tend to immigrate to bigger cities, sometimes even developed countries, when they want better support services for their children.

Immigration and Special Education Laws in the United States

Immigration experiences can significantly impact the educational outcomes of children with special needs, affecting their academic achievement, social integration, and overall well-being (Giorguli et al., 2012). Immigrant children with special needs may face difficulties accessing appropriate services, receiving adequate support, and achieving educational goals (Conger & Grigorenko, 2009; Xu et al., 2022). Despite these challenges, immigration also presents opportunities for collaboration and support within the special education system (Jorgensen et al., 2021). Culturally responsive practices, community partnerships, and collaborative initiatives involving families, educators, and service providers can enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of special education services for immigrant children with special needs (Ozturk, 2017; Rossetti et al., 2017).

The intersection of immigration and special education in the United States (U.S.) is a critical topic that addresses how laws and policies influence educational access and equity for immigrant children with disabilities. Immigrant students, including undocumented and refugee populations, often face unique challenges in obtaining appropriate educational services (McBrien, 2005). Additionally, the special education framework in the US is designed to provide support to students with disabilities.

U.S. immigration law is primarily governed by federal statutes such as the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) which outlines the rights and responsibilities of immigrants. However, education for immigrant children, including undocumented students, is protected by landmark rulings such as *Plyler v. Doe* (1982). This Supreme Court case established that states cannot deny public education to children based on their immigration

status, ensuring that all children, regardless of their legal status, have access to free and appropriate public education (FAPE; Hernandez & Gildersleeve, 2013).

FAPE is a critical element of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 which guarantees that students with disabilities receive an education that meets their individual needs at no cost to the family. According to the U.S. Department of Education, FAPE includes special education and related services that are designed to meet the needs of each student as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met (Zirkel, 2015). FAPE must be provided per the IEP which outlines the specialized instruction, services, and supports necessary for the student to make educational progress.

The present study aimed to determine the reasons why families of children with intellectual disability/autism immigrated from their country. Relatedly, the main research questions were: (a) What are the reason(s) why families of children with disabilities emigrate to more developed countries? and (b) What are some challenges experienced by immigrant families and their children with disabilities?

Method

Phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research types, was used in this study. The phenomenon of this research is children with intellectual disability/autism who emigrated from their country. Qualitative research is a research method in which subjects are examined in their natural environments; more than one method can be used, and complex reasoning is explained holistically with participant interpretations (Creswell, 2014).

Participants

The participants of this study were selected via purposive criterion sampling. Participant criteria included (a) having a child with intellectual disability/autism, and (b) having emigrated from their country for their child. Fifteen parents who met these criteria

participated in the study. Research participants were coded as Immigrante Parent IP01, IP02... IP15. All demographic information about the participants is shown in Table 1.

Researchers

Both authors are academics working in the field of special education, and their postgraduate education is in the field of intellectual disability and autism.

Procedure

Individual interviews were conducted within a semi-structured protocol. For the relevant questions, expert opinions were obtained from three academicians with PhD degrees. After a pilot interview, all interviews were conducted via phone calls, with appointments made with the participants beforehand. The durations of the interviews are presented in Table 1. All interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants.

Ethics

The study was conducted with the permission of the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of the university where the first author works, under protocol number 2023.04.146. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without giving a reason. This information was also reiterated at the beginning of their interviews. Information that could potentially lead to the indirect identification of participants was processed in a manner that prioritized the safety and security of the individuals involved.

Data Analysis

We employed a content analysis technique to analyze the data. Content analysis is a research method that allows for replicable and valid inferences drawn from texts or other meaningful materials (Krippendorff, 2004). Researchers create codes, categories, and themes through their own efforts and close examination of the texts (Patton, 2002). We listened to the audio recordings of the interviews again in a computer environment and transcribed them. A

total of 179 pages of interview transcripts was obtained from the interviews that lasted an average of 37 min. Using the Adobe Acrobat Reader program, we coded the opinions of each participant using different colors to mark the sections that formed meaningful wholes. We subsequently collated within Microsoft Office Word software the meaningful units identified with the highlighter markers. The codes forming meaningful units were then combined by creating tables, thereby forming categories. Subsequently, we grouped the common categories into themes. The findings that emerged at the conclusion of this process consist of four themes and 39 categories.

Coding Reliability

This study investigated the conformability of validity and credibility. To ensure coding reliability, we applied the formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) which states that $\text{Reliability} = \text{Consensus} / (\text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement})$. According to this formula, coders should aim for a consensus of over 80%. To achieve coding reliability, another expert with a doctorate in special education recorded the transcripts of six randomly selected interviews. During this process, we reached consensus on 190 codes and disagreed on 28 codes, resulting in a coding reliability rate of 87.15%. The researcher and evaluator discussed the 10 codes that were excluded from the study and reached consensus on 18 codes where they initially disagreed.

Findings

Analysis of the responses to the semi-structured interview questions resulted in four themes. Figure 1 presents the themes, categories, and frequencies that emerged from the content analysis. As illustrated in Figure 1, four primary themes were identified: Reason, New Country, Child, and Parent. The theme with the highest frequency value was New Country, while Parent had the lowest frequency value.

Reason (For Moving to a New Country)

Figure 2 presents data on the reasons why immigrant parents who have children with autism or intellectual disabilities and emigrated from their country to another country. Parent participants stated that negative attitudes in Türkiye were influential in their decision to emigrate:

We received this reaction from the researchers at TUBITAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye), people who have become associate professors, people who have PhDs - parents. These people, who we think are educated, gathered petitions and signed a petition for my son to be expelled from the daycare center (IP05).

Parents also mentioned the quality of special education services provided in Türkiye: *In Türkiye, you know, special classes are not very common, and even if they are, it is usually a unit where retired teachers stand (IP14).* Parents explained that special education services in Türkiye are extremely expensive:

The cost of education is so high that we need to be a holding company or something to receive intensive education. We were receiving 30 hours of education a week and the concept of money was gone, but these are things that can happen if you can afford it. What should those who cannot afford it do? (IP04).

Parents also mentioned that the physical structures of their children's educational environments were not suitable: *My child's classroom was a photocopy room in the basement of the school (IP11).* Parents stated that they were intimidated and discouraged in various ways: *In Türkiye, a decision about your child can be imposed on you. In other words, you are forced into it by using certain discourses (IP11).* Parents also described economic problems:

Our financial situation in Türkiye was average. It is also average here. But there is a big difference between the purchasing power here and the purchasing power there. It is not only food and drink. I do not feel the need to say 'no' to our children here. But

in Turkiye, even if they needed it, 'Wait, my daughter, not now, we have to postpone it;' we do not have such a situation here (IP06).

Some parent participants explained that they were socially excluded in Turkiye:

I felt that my child and I were officially pushed out of society; that is, I felt like an individual who was unwanted in society, who had to do everything on his/her own, whom the state did not want to help in any way and did not help (IP03). Some parents

expressed their fear about what would happen to their children after they died in Turkiye:

Who will take care of these children after us? This was also my starting point. If something happens to us, if something happens to my husband and me, my child should have citizenship in a social state. If we pass away, this child should be taken care of in a humane way, not tortured (IP12).

Some of the parents stated that their children were subjected to peer bullying: *Our children were subjected to a lot of peer bullying at school; they were made fun of in class because they could not learn in Turkiye because their learning is delayed (IP06).* Some of the parents also cited the health system as one of the reasons for emigration: *We spent so much money, but we could not get an education, and we could not get any support in terms of health (IP07).* In addition, parents emigrated because they could not defend their rights, and their children were unhappy:

I now wish I could have been more resilient; I wish I had not let the shadow teacher go, because they had no right to do such a thing (IP05). My son was also very unhappy about going to the daycare center. Obviously, the child was not treated well at the daycare center. We were constantly leaving the house every morning with him saying, 'I don't want to go.' After a while I said there was no point in tormenting the child and I took him out of the daycare center (IP05).

New Country (New Country of Residence)

Figure 3 shows the categories and frequency values for the New Country theme.

Parents talked about the educational support they received in their new country of immigration: *Our child started school in the first week and has a special class. The school bus picks him up in the morning and after school. He has a one-on-one teacher (IP12).*

Parents also receive economic and social support:

We have very big lakes here, and there are boats. They are also free of charge.

Museums, pools, whatever you can think of, if it is state-owned, and most of the things here are state-owned, they are all free. We also get 1000 euros a month. Plus, twice a year in the State of Bayern, we get 1000 euros each (IP03).

Parents also mentioned social differences: *There is social pressure in Turkiye. When I walk on the street with my child, I can see a lot of looks on me. Interestingly, I do not see this here (IP11).* Parents also encountered different problems in the countries they immigrated to compared to their home countries:

Everything is free here. I mean, all the therapies we receive are free of charge.

Therefore, therapists do not feel the need to improve themselves much. They don't feel the need to follow new therapy methods, or, in terms of attitude, people in Germany are more culturally distant and cold (IP05).

Parents also mentioned inclusiveness in terms of both special needs and immigration:

Discrimination, there is no such thing in the minds of these people; it is as if such a section has not been formed (IP10). Parents mentioned the different perspectives of people in the countries they immigrated to:

You go somewhere, and the child starts jumping on the sofa, touching the man's things. There is a look as if to say, 'Take your child, '. Sorry, my son has special needs, that's why he does it, and they immediately take the wind out of their sails and say it's not a problem. There is understanding. (IP04).

Parents have seen that nongovernmental organizations are very active in the countries they immigrated to: *There are a lot of civil organizations here, by the way, that kind of support is free of charge* (IP13). Parents also talked about rules and rights:

I wrote a nice e-mail to the school district about a construction site near school, and I stopped that construction. It stopped immediately that day. Will it stop in Turkiye? No. They don't even care in Turkiye, but again it is not in my power, you know what I mean? It is not because I say such cool sentences. I have rights, and they give me my rights (IP04).

Some parents were disturbed by the very slow bureaucracy and waiting times in the countries they immigrated to: *The deadlines were too long, and the waiting times; it was a bit challenging for us and still is* (IP14). Some parents also mentioned the health system in the new country: *First of all, they looked at everything about his health, that is, they looked at his ears, eyes, teeth, everything, and of course, he was a little bit behind in terms of intelligence* (IP03).

Child (Child with Special Needs)

Figure 4 presents data on the children of parents who emigrated from Turkiye.

Immigrant parents reported that their children were happier in their new countries:

I swear, the aggression is completely over. His face is happier, and he is obviously happy to live here. He started to help me. He never did that in Turkiye. In Turkiye, on the contrary, he was breaking all the plates and bowls in the kitchen (IP10).

Parents stated that they liked their children's schools in the countries to which they immigrated:

My son's school is a public school; there is an occupational therapist, there is ABA, there is speech therapy, there are assistant teachers in the classroom. There is also a shadow teacher because my son has ADHD. I do not pay extra money for any of these

(IP04).

Parents compared the development of their children in Turkiye and in their countries of immigration:

There was nothing in Turkiye. In Turkiye, it was like his head was completely crazy. You put him on a bike, and he runs away, you can't keep up with him, he gets lost, you call the police, the police say, why are you calling us? There would be such nonsense. But there is nothing like that here. It's very organized and well-ordered. Because they care so much about education... For example, when we come to a red light, if the light is red, you can never let my son go through it (IP03).

Parents also explained the process of their children acquiring a new language:

Also the language issue was a bit exhausting. We started the children in a German-speaking kindergarten. Then they don't understand German at all. On the second day of school, we left the school and my daughter said, 'Why are we here, why are we not in a Turkish-speaking school?' (IP14).

Parents stated that unlike in Turkiye, schools have fewer vacations in their countries: *There is a 6-week summer vacation, 3 weeks of which are definitely for education (IP03).* Parents stated that children can be diagnosed earlier in the new countries: *For example, the state tests the children born to see if there are problems. These are compulsory tests, and this is also true for autism (IP12).* Parents expressed their satisfaction with the system of assistant teachers in schools: *For children in this situation, an assistant teacher is appointed and the state pays everything for this assistant teacher, from insurance to salary (IP05).* Parents explained that there are adult programs for their children's adulthood:

There are day programs. For example, there is no age limit for these adults. After the age of 21, they go there during the day. They do some activities there. For example,

they do job training, they do painting. There are some skill classes and so on (IP10).

Parents also described the immigration journey with their children:

We entered Mexico City from Colombia. We were caught there because of other Turks, and we stayed in jail for a night. I cried a lot, I cried until I got in and out. My son stood in front of me, and we said, 'Please don't be stupid. I mean, we came all this way; I don't want to go back to Turkiye, and I can stay in comfort. We can stay in the camp, Mom; no, we are not going back to Turkiye.' (IP07).

Some parents stated that only quality time for children was important in school activities:

"When I came here, I realized that show-off, we like it very much, let's inflate it a little bit, let's impress the parents a little bit; there is nothing like that here, they are only child-oriented (IP14).

Parent (Mother or Father of a Child with Special Needs)

Parents stated that they did not regret having emigrated to another country:

I have the biggest regret of my life right now; that I didn't come here 30 years ago. There is no such form of paradise. Maybe because of what they did to my son, this place seems abnormally beautiful to me (IP03).

Some of the parents applied for asylum in the new countries to which they migrated:

We came illegally; there is a health asylum here, we applied for asylum because of the health asylum (IP15). Because my son has autism, they gave us a very early court date. While other people's court dates were 2032 or 2030, mine was 2 months later (IP07).

Some parents also expressed their satisfaction in their new countries: *At least there is a school here where my child can go, and even knowing that he will not be excluded gives us comfort (IP05).* Parents also explained how they decided to emigrate: *80% and 90% of the decision to go to Germany was related to the education of the children, especially my son's education*

(IP14). While some of the parents wanted to return to Türkiye for themselves, almost all of them did not want to return for their children's sake: *5 years I have not been back, would you believe it? Does a person not see his/her mother for 5 years? I won't come* (IP09). Some parents received psychological support in their new countries: *They offered me psychological support in my mother tongue. Thanks to them* (IP03). Some of the parents, on the other hand, were saddened by having to leave their homeland despite everything: *As the saying goes, even if they put a nightingale in a golden cage, it will still say, 'Oh my homeland;' one's childhood, the places where they were born and raised are their homeland* (IP12).

Discussion

This study offers valuable insight based on the data collected from Turkish immigrant families of children with intellectual disability/autism. Additionally, this study provides an overview of the reasons for immigration because of a child with special needs from the perspective of Turkish immigrants.

In the theme of Reason, parents stated that negative attitudes in Türkiye were influential in their decision to emigrate. The findings of another study conducted with parents of children with disabilities in Türkiye demonstrated that the negative attitudes of society toward people with disabilities increased parents' anxiety levels (Davidov & Meuleman, 2012; Uskun & Gundogar, 2010). Unfortunately, there is a problem with social acceptance of disability in Türkiye, and that causes negative attitudes. Ozlu and Serin (2021) stated that negative attitudes from peers, teachers, and others involved in implementing inclusive education for students with disabilities can lead to feelings of loneliness and social exclusion for those students. Even health care workers such as nurses have negative attitudes toward people with disabilities (Uysal et al., 2014). Furthermore, parents mentioned that special education services in Türkiye are very costly, and they generally have economic problems because of the health system in Türkiye. Relatedly, Uskun and Gundogar (2010) reported that

parents of children with special needs have financial problems because they spend money on medical and educational expenses. Also, some family members, especially mothers, quit their jobs and dedicate themselves to their children (Czapanskiy, 2012). One of the current study's essential findings was parents' fears about what would happen to their children after they died. Consistently, Kruithof et al. (2022) reported that many parents desired to live longer than their children with disabilities, believing this was linked to their children's anticipated lower quality of life after their passing. The uncertainty about who would take on their parental responsibilities in the future added to parental worries and occasionally led to feelings of hopelessness. Our study indicates that bullying children with disabilities was another reason for emigrating from Türkiye. One of the results of the study by Eroglu and Kilic (2020) is that both the autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability groups encountered increased victimization through verbal and emotional bullying in Türkiye. Finally, another finding in the Reason theme is that parents emigrated because they could not defend their rights, and their children were unhappy.

In the New Country theme, the parents emphasized the educational support they received in their new countries. Relatedly, in a study conducted with Turkish immigrants in Germany, Kaya (2022) highlighted that parents were satisfied with the assistance, services, and support systems accessible for their children with disabilities. Many participants stated that they received economic and social support in their new countries. The findings of Brandt and Hagge (2020) also confirmed that immigrants have access to social support as well as several support providers within their networks. Participants also mentioned inclusiveness in terms of both special needs and immigration and the positive social experiences in their new countries. This finding is consistent with Cummings and Hardin's (2017) findings on families' understanding of disabilities and their experiences with special education and related services. Moreover, in this study, parents saw that nongovernmental organizations are very active in the

countries to which they immigrated, with low bureaucracy and better health systems. Adanu and Johnson (2009) also emphasized that migrants have better health status because of the health systems in their new countries.

In the theme of Child, immigrant parents reported that their children were happier in their new countries. Relatedly, in this study, parents stated that they liked their children's schools in the countries to which they immigrated. Similarly, Gonzalez-Falcon et al. (2022) reported the development of social and educational policies that make immigrant children and their families happy. When parents compare the development of their children in Türkiye and their countries of immigration, they see significant differences. Zuccotti et al. (2017) also stated that immigration benefits the Turks in terms of education. In the current study, parents stated some negative aspects of immigration for their children, such as difficulty in acquiring a new language, having fewer vacation periods, and missing their home country.

Finally, in the theme of Parent, these parents stated that they did not regret immigrating to another country. Relatedly, Sim et al. (2021) emphasized that parents with school-age children expressed immense relief when their children transitioned out of their home country's perceived stressful educational environment. Also, some parents applied for asylum in their new countries for the sake of their children.

Conclusion and Implications

This study presents the perspectives of parents who left their country of residence and immigrated to developed countries of the world (the US, Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom, France, and Canada) for the sake of their children with special needs. Parents immigrated legally and illegally to developed countries because of the perceived attitudes toward them and their children in Türkiye, discrimination, and dissatisfaction with Turkish educational services. They were quite satisfied with the opportunities for their children in their new countries. The parents emphasized the happiness of their children and expressed

their satisfaction with the special education services they received in their new countries. The findings show that for the sake of their own lives or the quality of life of their children, they did not think about returning to Türkiye. The following implications can be drawn from this study: (a) Services for children with special needs and their families in Türkiye should be improved, and (b) It would be beneficial to conduct studies on social inclusion for children with special needs and their families in Türkiye.

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Table 1.
Descriptive Data of the Participants

Code	Parent					Child			Duration of
	Age	Education	Country of immigration	Job ¹ Job ²	Marital status	Age	Disability	Gender	
IP01	52	Undergrad	France	Tourism Interpreter	Married	11	Autism	Male	24
IP02	50	Undergrad	United Kingdom	Thespian -	Married	17	Autism	Male	30
IP03	47	Undergrad	Germany	Manager Cleaner	Married	15	Autism	Male	36
IP04	42	Undergrad	Switzerland & USA	Advertiser ---	Married	8	Autism	Male	39
IP05	45	PhD.	Germany	Chemist Regulatory	Married	10	Autism	Male	43
IP06	29	High School	USA	Tourism Uber	Married	8	ID ⁴	Female	12
IP07	35	High School	USA	Welding M. Doordash	Single	16	Autism	Male	32
IP08	64	Primary School	Germany	Retired -	Married	8	Autism	Male	20
IP09	45	High School	Norway	Furniture Restaurant owner	Married	14	Autism	Male	43
IP10	65	Undergrad	USA	- Amazon drive	Married	34	Autism	Male	51
IP11	38	Undergrad	Canada	- -	Married	8	Down S.	Male	86
IP12	39	Undergrad	Canada	Teacher Painter	Married	9	Autism	Female	39
IP13	40	Master	United Kingdom	Software Software	Married	10	Down S.	Female	18
IP14	36	Master	Germany	Chinese teacher -	Married	8	Down S.	Male	62
IP15	28	High School	Germany	Pharmacist technician -	Married	4	Down S.	Female	22

¹ Indicates the participant's occupation in Turkiye. ² Indicates the participant's occupation in the country of migration. ³ Interview durations are shown in minutes. ⁴ Intellectual disability

Figure 1.

Themes, categories, and frequency

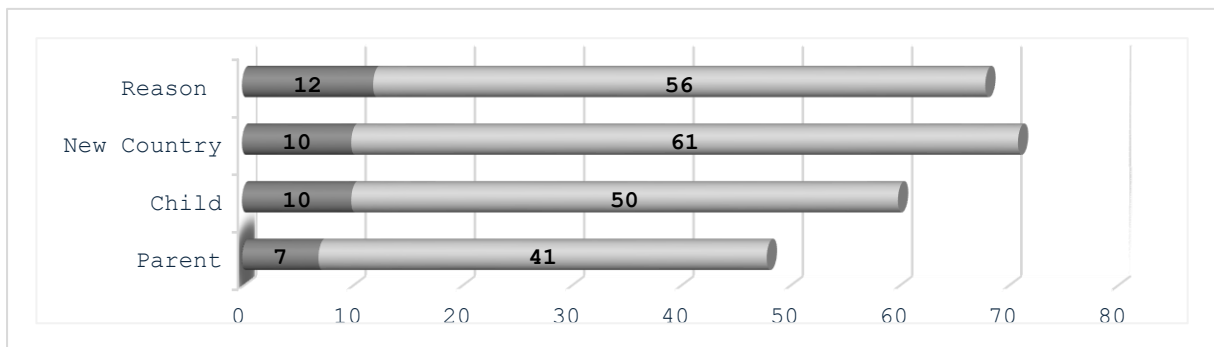


Figure 2.

Distribution of categories and frequency related to Reason

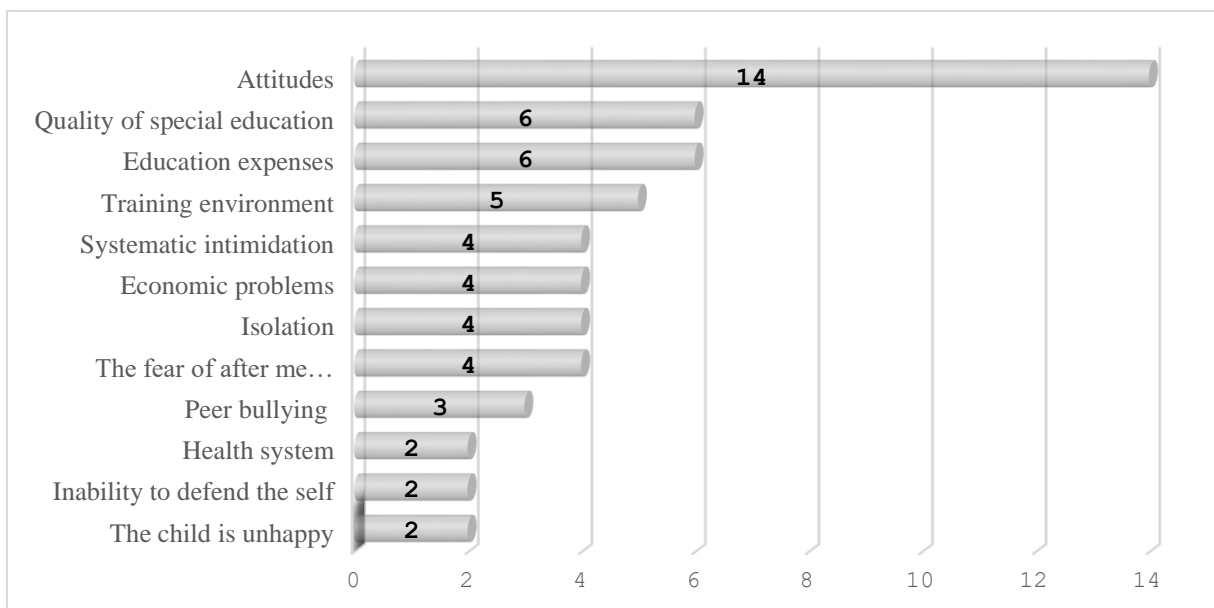


Figure 3.

Distribution of categories and frequency related to New Country

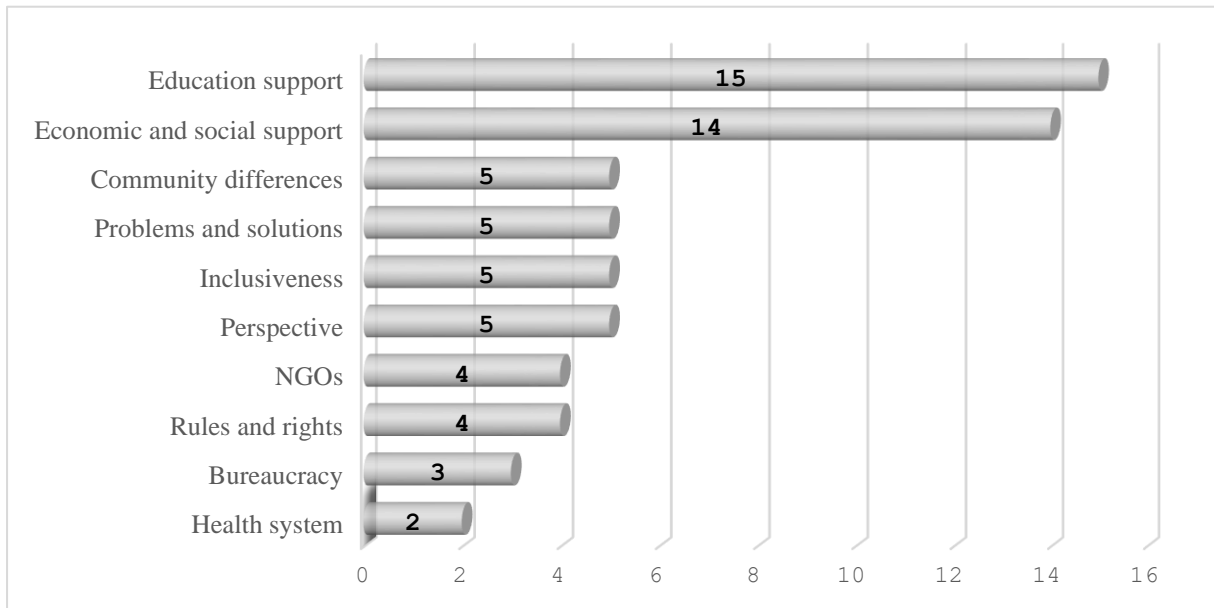


Figure 4.

Distribution of categories and frequency related to Child

