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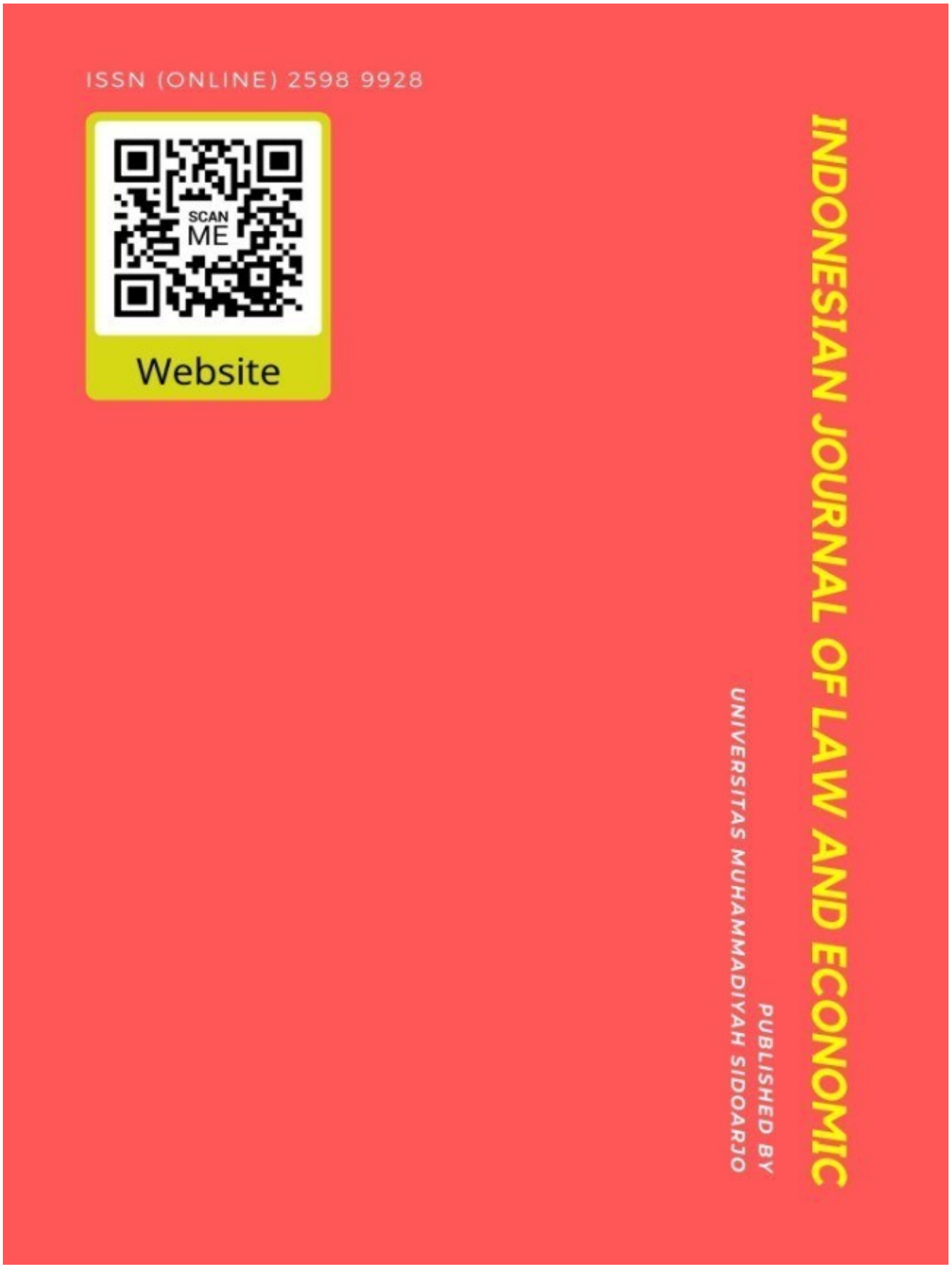

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Poverty As a Catalyst for Migration and International Asylum: An Analytical Study of Turkey's Experience for The Period (2010–2023)

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Abstract

General Background: Poverty and forced migration represent intertwined global development challenges affecting host-country stability. **Specific Background:** Turkey has become the world's largest refugee-hosting country amid rising poverty pressures since 2010. **Knowledge Gap:** Empirical evidence on the long- and short-term dynamics between poverty and international asylum in Turkey remains limited. **Aims:** This study analyzes the poverty–asylum relationship during 2010–2023 using an ARDL approach. **Results:** Findings reveal a significant long-term inverse relationship, with weak short-term effects. **Novelty:** The study integrates poverty and asylum within a unified econometric framework linked to SDGs. **Implications:** Effective policy requires coordinated poverty reduction and refugee integration strategies.

Highlights:

- A long-term inverse relationship exists between poverty rates and refugee numbers in Turkey.
- The short-term relationship between poverty and asylum is weak and statistically insignificant.
- The results underscore the importance of integrated policies aligned with SDG 1 and SDG 10.

Keywords: Poverty, International Asylum, Turkish Economy, ARDL Model, Sustainable Development

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Introduction

Poverty is a trans-temporal and trans-spatial structural phenomenon. It is one of the essential barriers on the way of economic and social development in any state and makes an enormous trace in the organization and the balance of the community. It is not merely an absence of income or resources, but a complex state of deprivation and inadequate access to education, healthcare services, and employment, and adversely affects the quality of life and the degree of human well-being.

On the contrary, one of the most visible phenomena associated with economic and social aspects is the migration and asylum because deprivation and a decrease in the opportunity to live decently drive people to finding other options to reside in countries where they do not live, which is why poverty is one of the most influential contributors to the development of this phenomenon in recent decades. Yet, besides being a humanitarian phenomenon, asylum is regarded as both an economic and political burden to the countries receiving it, as it causes financial and administrative costs to the state institutions and the local population.

It is a model worth studying this dual relationship because in the last decade, Turkey has been exposed to one wave after another of asylum, and it is the biggest nation, the recipient of refugees in the globe. These waves were accompanied by internal economic issues, i.e. high inflation rate, decreasing purchasing power and spreading regional income gaps, which made some social layers more vulnerable, in particular, in the regions where the refugees live.

Poverty as a factor and the phenomenon of asylum in the Turkish case have produced a complicated economic and social fact, where internal variables more than external pressures interact. The asylum and poverty relationship has changed to being a one way relationship to being a reciprocal relationship.. Poverty contributes to weakening the state's ability to absorb and integrate refugees, while the increasing number of refugees leads to increased levels of poverty in local communities as a result of pressure on resources, job opportunities, and services.

Based on this reality, this study seeks to analyze the nature of the relationship between poverty and international asylum in Turkey during the period (2010–2023), using modern standard analysis tools, with the aim of revealing the direction of this relationship in the short and long term, and indicating whether it represents a mutual causal relationship or an asymmetric effect between two interconnected phenomena that together constitute one of the most important development challenges of the twenty-first century.

Importance of research:

The importance of the research lies in the following points:

1- Bridging a knowledge gap in the economic literature that addresses the relationship between poverty and asylum in Turkey from a contemporary standard perspective.

2- Providing an analytical explanatory model based on real data for the period 2010–2023.

3- Linking results to sustainable development goals, especially the first goal (eliminating poverty) and the tenth goal (reducing inequalities).

4- An applied contribution that enables decision makers to design balanced economic and social policies.

Search problem:

The research problem is embodied in an attempt to understand the mutual impact between the phenomena of poverty and asylum in Turkey during the period (2010–2023). Turkey is no longer just a transit country, but a final destination for millions of refugees, facing increasing economic and social pressures. World Bank data indicate (2024, p. 52) National poverty rates rose from 9.2% in 2010 to 14.2% in 2023, in parallel with the increase in refugees from 100,000 to more than 3.8 million individuals.

From here emerges the central question: To what extent did poverty in Turkey affect the phenomenon of international asylum during the period (2010–2023)? What is the nature of the relationship between them in the short and long term?

Research hypothesis:

The research assumes a long-term inverse relationship between poverty rates and the number of refugees in Turkey, as high levels of poverty are expected to increase the drivers of migration and asylum or amplify the effects of receiving refugees. The hypothesis also suggests that the short-term relationship may be weak or statistically insignificant as a result of the influence of changing political and regional factors.

Research objectives:

1- Study of the time trend of poverty rates in Türkiye (2010–2023(

2- Analysis of the development of refugee numbers and their geographical distribution.

3- Testing the relationship between poverty and asylum using the ARDL model.

4- Interpreting the results of the analysis in light of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 1 and SDG 10.

5- Providing practical recommendations that enhance integration between social and economic policies in Turkey.

Research methodology:

The study is based on two main approaches:

1- The descriptive analytical approach to clarify the theoretical concepts of poverty and asylum and the dynamics of the relationship between them.

2- The quantitative standard approach to testing the experimental relationship between the two variables using the ARDL model, which allows studying the relationships in the short and long term between variables of different degrees of integration) (I(1)I(0),

(Ang, 2016, p. 108). The following data were relied upon: Poverty rates from the World Bank (World Bank, 2024). Refugee data from UNHCR (UNHCR, 2024).As for national income data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 2023).Development indicators from the United Nations Human Development Reports (UNDP, 2024). The statistical software EViews 14 was used to analyze the annual time series (2010–2023), after

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testing the stillness of the variables and verifying that there were no standard problems.

The first axis: the theoretical framework of general concepts

First: The concept of poverty

Poverty is defined by the World Bank (p 10.,2024) as "a state of material and moral deprivation that prevents individuals from reaching the minimum decent standards of living".

In the Turkish context, Erdoğan (2023, p. 66) Poverty goes beyond the financial dimension to include poor social integration and spatial disparities in educational and employment opportunities.

Recent studies agree (Demir & Gökçe, 2025, p. 24) However, poverty in Turkey has become structural, linked to factors of production, an unregulated labor market, and geographical disparity in growth.

Second: International asylum and its economic and social dimensions

Turkey has been the world's largest refugee host country since 2014 (UNHCR, 2024, p. 18). The economic effects of this phenomenon varied between positive and negative.

On the positive side, refugees have contributed to increased economic activity in some urban areas. On the negative side, competition in the labor market has increased, the cost of public services has increased, and the level of wages in labor-intensive sectors has declined (World Bank, 2024, p. 58).

The study by Kaya & Kirishci (2025, p. 22) However, the impact of refugees on the Turkish economy varies by region; the negative effects are more pronounced in areas that already suffer from high poverty and poor development.

Third: The interactive relationship between poverty and international asylum

The relationship between poverty and asylum is not unidirectional, but reciprocal. Poverty is a driver of migration, while the influx of refugees increases pressure on resources and raises poverty levels in host countries (Paes-Sousa & Vaitsman, 2014, p. 74).

In the case of Türkiye, the Erdoğan study (2023, p. 69) Areas with high proportions of refugees record poverty rates higher than the national average.

According to development reports (UNDP, 2024, p. 33) Poverty resulting from asylum pressures may turn into permanent structural poverty if it is not addressed with comprehensive integration policies.

Table (1). Evolution of poverty rates and the number of refugees in Türkiye during the period (2010–2023)

Year	Poverty rate (%)	Number of refugees (million)	The language of poverty	Refugee language
2010	9.2	0.10	2.22	-2.30
2013	8.7	0.60	2.16	-0.51
2015	10.1	2.50	2.31	0.92
2017	11.7	3.20	2.46	1.16
2019	12.4	3.60	2.51	1.28
2021	13.5	3.70	2.60	1.31
2023	14.2	3.80	2.65	1.34

Source: Researcher preparation based on (World Bank, 2024; UNHCR, 2024)

We note from Table No. (1) the development of both the poverty rate and the number of refugees in Turkey during the period (2010–2023), in addition to the logarithmic values of both variables that were used in the standard estimation of the model.

From the above data, several clear time trends can be observed:

1- Pre-2013 stage:

At the beginning of the period, Turkey witnessed moderate poverty levels of about (9.2%) in 2010, with a very limited number of refugees not exceeding (0.1) million people. This reflects a period of relative economic stability that preceded the outbreak of regional crises in the Middle East.

2- Transformation phase (2013–2015):

This stage represents a sharp turning point in the course of the two phenomena, as the number of refugees increased from (0.6) million in 2013 to (2.5) million in 2015, an increase of more than four times in just two years.

Conversely, the poverty level also increased by (8.7), to (10.1) and this means that the Turkish economy is starting to sink under the weight of the asylum particularly on the border regions.

3- Relative stability phase (2017–2019):

Poverty rates stabilized within the range of (11.7–12.4%), while the number of refugees rose to (3.6) million. This stage can be described as a stage of relative assimilation, as the state began implementing social support programs and institutional reforms that limited the exacerbation of poverty,

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but did not stop its gradual increase.

4- Accumulation phase (2021–2023):

The poverty rate rose to (13.5%) in 2021 and then to (14.2%) in 2023, while the number of refugees increased slightly from (3.7) to (3.8) million.

This suggests that poverty has continued to rise even as refugee numbers have stabilized, reflecting the impact of internal economic factors (such as inflation and declining purchasing power) more than the impact of asylum alone in recent years.

Converting the two variables to a natural logarithm showed a more stable pattern in time series:

The poverty log value is gradually increasing from (2.22) in 2010 to (2.65) in 2023, reflecting a regular upward trend.

The refugee log rose from a negative value (-2.30) to a positive value (1.34) during the same period, in a major shift that reflects the sudden jump in the number of refugees between 2013 and 2015.

This shift from negative to positive values in the logarithm means a radical change in the magnitude of the phenomenon, which statistically justifies the use of the ARDL model to analyze the relationship between the two variables in the short and long term.

We conclude from the above that the general trend is upward for poverty and asylum during the study period, although the pace of growth of each is different and the greatest change in refugees occurred suddenly (2013–2015), while poverty gradually rose at a slower pace. This means that there is a positive temporal correlation in the short term (the higher the number of refugees, the higher the poverty), but it is inverse in the long term according to the results of the Standard Model (ARDL) The data support the study's hypothesis that poverty and asylum are intertwined phenomena, interacting with each other within a complex economic and social context.

This means that the time trend of both the poverty rate and the number of refugees in Turkey during the period (2010–2023) shows a gradual rise in poverty rates compared to a sharp rise in the number of refugees starting in 2013. These indicators reflect an interconnected relationship between the two phenomena. While the influx of refugees has increased pressure on the Turkish economy, difficult living conditions have contributed to the vulnerability of the poor within society.

Fourth: The conceptual framework and sustainable development goals

The results of this study are closely related to the first and tenth dimensions of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1 and SDG 10).

Goal 1 (No Poverty): Calls for the elimination of all forms of poverty everywhere.

Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities): Focuses on reducing inequalities within and between countries.

The Turkish experience shows that progress on one of the two goals (poverty reduction) cannot be achieved in isolation from addressing the social and regional disparities resulting from asylum (World Bank, 2024, p. 72).

Axis II: Standard analysis using the ARDL model

First: Research variables and functional description

Based on the research hypothesis, the objectives of the study, and its standard approach, a double logarithmic function model (Double Log Function) was adopted linking the natural logarithm of the number of refugees in Turkey as a dependent variable, and the natural logarithm of the poverty rate as an independent variable, during the period (2010–2023).

The double logarithmic form (Double Log Model) was chosen for the following reasons:

1. Reduce variation in time series and make them more stable.

2. Transforming the relationship into relative elasticities that can be explained economically.

3. Facilitating comparison between relative changes in poverty and asylum.

4. The model is consistent with recent standard studies that rely on the natural logarithm to explain developmental relationships (Demir & Gökçe, 2025, p. 27).

The research adopted a double logarithmic model (Double Log Model) within the distributed deceleration autoregression (ARDL) framework, to measure the impact of the poverty rate on the number of refugees in Turkey during the period (2010–2023).

This model allows transactions to be interpreted in the sense of flexibility, meaning that a 1% change in the poverty rate leads to a relative change in the number of refugees at a rate equivalent to the value of the estimated coefficient.

Characterization of the logarithmic function (Log–Linear Model)

The relationship between the poverty rate (PO) is assumed to be an independent variable and the number of refugees a dependent variable (RE) takes the following logarithmic form:

$$\ln(RE_t) = \alpha 0 + \alpha 1 \ln(PO_t) + E$$

The model was then expanded to take the dynamic form within the framework of distributed deceleration autoregression (ARDL), to measure the short- and long-term relationships between the two variables, as follows:

$$\Delta \ln(RE_t) = \beta o + \sum_{i=1}^{p} \beta i \, \Delta \ln(RE_{t-i}) + \sum_{j=1}^{q} \gamma_j \Delta \ln(PO_{tj}) + \phi_1 \ln(RE_{t-1}) + \phi_2 \ln(PO_{t-1}) + \mu_t$$

Second: Testing the stillness of variables (Phillips–Perron)

Time series stillness was tested using the Phillips–Perron test, and the results were as follows:

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Table (2). Stillness test

variable	At the level	At the first difference	Result
Poverty rate (PO)	Non-inhabited	Resident at the first difference	I(1)
Number of refugees (RE)	Resident at level	—	I(0)

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on program outputs EViews 14

The results indicate that the variables integrate at different degrees, making the ARDL model best suited for analysis (Ang, 2016, p. 108).

Third: ARDL model results

The results indicate a strong inverse relationship between poverty rates and the number of refugees in the long term, while the short-term relationship shows limited effects.

Table (3) ARDL model estimation results

variable	Factors	standard error	Probability value	Interpretation
RE(-1)	0.82	0.10	0.000	Positive delay effect
PO	-4.73	1.85	0.014	Inverse and significant relationship
PO(-1)	-3.29	1.71	0.032	long-term negative impact
(C) Constant	2.61	0.92	0.018	positive constant
Rate R^2	0.93	—	—	93% of the changes are explained by the model.
F-Statistic	122.4	—	0.000	High morale

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on program outputs EViews 14

Fourth: Boundary Test (Bounds Test)

Exceeding the calculated value of the upper limit indicates a long-term cointegration between poverty and asylum (Demir & Gökçe, 2025, p. 27).

Table (4). Boundary Test

Statistics	Calculated value	I(0)	I(1)	Level of significance	Result
F-Statistic	5.73	4.94	13.85	5%	A long-term relationship exists

Based on the outputs of the program Source: Prepared by the researcher EViews 14

Fifth: Error Correction Model (ECM)

A negative error coefficient indicates the stability of the model, and shows that about 39% of deviations return to equilibrium in the following period, meaning that the model is stable and coherent.

Table (5). Error Correction Model (ECM)

variable	Factors	standard error	Probability value	Significance
D(PO)	-2.64	0.89	0.007	statistically significant
D(RE(-1))	0.45	0.12	0.001	statistically significant

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CointEq (-1)	-0.39	0.08	0.000	Negative and moral

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on program outputs EViews 14

Sixth: Model validity tests

These results indicate that the model is free of standard problems, which enhances its accuracy (Kaya & Kirishci, 2025, p. 30).

Table (6). Model validity tests

Test	Statistics	Probability value	Result
Breusch – Godfrey	0.92	0.41	No serial link
ARCH	1.27	0.28	There is no variation or difference
Jarque – Bera	1.66	0.44	normal distribution
Durbin–Watson	2.01	—	Independence of Errors

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on program outputs EViews 14

The estimation results showed a long-term inverse and moral relationship between the two variables, reflecting the structural interconnection between poverty and the phenomenon of asylum in the Turkish economy.

The higher the poverty rates, the greater the economic and social tension, which exacerbates the effects of asylum on the state and society (Erdoğan, 2023, p. 70).

On the other hand, data show that increased refugee flows have led to higher public service costs and lower average wages in low-skilled sectors (World Bank, 2024, p. 60).

The findings also showed that the short-term relationship is not statistically significant, which shown that the impacts of poverty on asylum require some time to be developed, which is in line with the delayed interaction hypothesis (Delayed Interaction Hypothesis).

The stability of the two variables can also be observed through the use of the logarithmic analysis of the two variables in question, which demonstrated their proportionality with the application of the ARDL model, which proved the existence of the long-term inverse relationship between the poverty and asylum and negative connotes the possibility of the forced displacement within Turkey in case of worsening poverty.

The standard analysis demonstrates a gradual shift of variables towards equilibrium and more time is required on economic policy to adapt to the impact of external shocks.

The two key objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals are in line with the research findings:

1. Goal 1 (SDG 1 1 Poverty Eradication): The outcomes have indicated that increasing poverty levels are one of the sources of economic forces of migration and asylum, as well as supporting the importance of thorough economic policies to decrease poverty levels.

2. Goal 10 (SDG 10 Reducing the Inequality): it was revealed that geographical inequality in the country of Turkey makes poor regions more susceptible to asylum waves (UNDP, 2024, p. 35).

Consequently, it will not be effective to deal with poverty independently of asylum and migration policies. Economic and social sustainability can only be attained through an integrated approach that involves combining development in the region and social protection.

Conclusion

a. 1. The correlation between poverty and the international asylum in Turkey is long-term negative and significant.
b. 2. Asylum is influenced indirectly by poverty that encompasses the labor market and social services.
c. 3. The fact that the model is stable confirms that the balanced relationship between poverty and asylum is based on the Turkish economic structure.
d. 4. The financial pressure on the government is also augmented by the asylum flows bearing in mind that inflation is high and productivity is poor.
e. 5. To realize the Sustainable Development Goals (1 and 10), the approach should be a combination of the issues of poverty, equality and asylum management.
f. Recommendations:
g. 1. Increasing poverty alleviation initiatives by focusing on areas of asylum and creating local development initiatives.
h. 2. Ameliorating the policies of economic integration of refugees through promotion of entrepreneurship and vocational training.
i. 3. To further enhance international collaboration in the distribution of the burden of asylum by sustainable financing mechanism.
j. 4. Integrating the Turkish national plans with the Sustainable Development Goals in order to achieve the integration of economic growth and social justice.
k. 5. Creating a collective national database between the state agencies and foreign bodies to track the correlation between poverty and asylum in real-time.

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