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## Fear-Anxiety in the Age of Disasters: Comparative Analysis of COVID-19 and Earthquake

### Afetler Çağında Korku-Kaygı: COVID-19 ve Deprem Karşılaştırmalı Analizi

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#### Abstract

**Aim:** The recent upsurge in the occurrence of disasters in Turkey makes it necessary to analyse how disasters change daily and social life and to understand the skills and needs of coping with fear, anxiety, and worry that they bring about in society, along with their physical and economic losses. This study aims to understand the fear and anxiety levels of individuals after the earthquakes which occurred in Kahramanmaraş on February 6 and affected eleven provinces, their impacts on daily life practices, and their ideas within the Anxiety Levels Specific to COVID-19" conducted in 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Method:** This study's data, collected online from 694 individuals over 18 across 7 regions, aims to explain the fear, anxiety levels, changes in daily practices, and perceptions of institutions among those indirectly exposed after the February 6 earthquakes, within the framework of crime fear theories.

**Results:** The findings are compared with data from a post-Covid-19 study for analysis. The findings suggest that the February 6 earthquake intensified societal fear and anxiety; while COVID-19 related fear and anxiety can be managed with individual and institutional measures, fear and anxiety related to earthquakes have become a societal issue that cannot be addressed individually.

**Conclusion:** The February 6 earthquake heightened societal anxiety, underscoring the need for safe housing as a social justice issue. Demographic factors and media use shaped anxiety levels, while trust in disaster management significantly declined.

#### Keywords

Disasters, COVID-19, February 6 Earthquakes, Psychosocial Impact, Social Inequalities

#### JEL Codes

Z00, Q54

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## Öz

**Amaç:** Depremler, salgın hastalıklar gibi doğa olaylarına, savaş ve terör saldırıları gibi sosyal faktörlere dayalı afetler, yaşamın olağan akışını bozarak çok sayıda insanı etkilemektedir. Türkiye’de de son dönemlerde yaşanan afetlerdeki artış, afetlerin gündelik ve toplumsal yaşamda yarattığı değişimlerin analiz edilebilmesi, fiziksel ve ekonomik kayıplarla birlikte toplumda yarattığı korku, kaygı, endişeyle başa çıkma becerileri ve ihtiyaçlarının anlaşılmasını gerekli kılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, 6 Şubat depremleri sonrasında bireylerin korku ve kaygı düzeylerini, gündelik yaşam pratiklerine etkilerini ve düşüncelerini suç korkusu teorileri ışığında sosyal güven çerçevesinde anlamayı ve 2020 yılında COVID-19 pandemisi sonrasında yapılan ‘COVID-19 Özelinde Korku-Kaygı Düzeyleri’ başlıklı çalışmanın verileri ile karşılaştırmalı olarak açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Yöntem:** Nicel araştırma yönteminin benimsendiği çalışmanın verileri, 6 Şubat depremleri sonrasında 7 bölgede 18 yaş üstü 694 kişiden online olarak toplanmış ve analiz edilmiştir.

**Bulgular:** Çalışmanın bulguları çerçevesinde, 6 Şubat depreminin toplumsal korku ve kaygıyı yoğunlaştırdığı; COVID-19 kaynaklı korku ve kaygının bireysel ve kurumsal önlemlerle yönetilebilirken, depreme bağlı korku ve kaygının toplumsal bir soruna dönüştüğü söylenebilir.

**Sonuç:** 6 Şubat depremi, bireysel önlemlerle yönetilemeyen toplumsal korku ve kaygıyı artırmış; güvenli barınma hakkının sosyal adalet kapsamında sağlanmasının önemini ortaya koymuştur. Demografik değişkenler ve medya tüketimi korku-kaygı düzeylerini etkilerken, afet yönetimi kurumlarına duyulan güvenin ciddi biçimde sarsıldığı görülmüştür.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Afetler, COVID-19, 6 Şubat Depremleri, Psikososyal Etki, Sosyal Eşitsizlikler

## JEL Kodları

Z00, Q54

## Introduction

Today’s societies, in which crime, global migration, and conflicts, which have existed throughout history of humanity, have increased, suffer from disasters more frequently due to many technological, economic, social, and political factors, and their impact has intensified. The escalation of uncertainty and anxiety surrounding disasters aligns with theoretical conceptualizations such as “risk society” (Beck, 2019) and “risk climate” (Giddens, 2014). As the risks for disasters diversify, the sense of insecurity and anxiety that societies go through today has become as a global common emotion. During the process that Gustav Le Bon (1999, p. 24) defines as “social contagion,” fear and anxiety have spread throughout society, and an atmosphere in which fear-inducing factors prevail has been experienced. Similarly, Strong (1990, pp. 249–251) characterises the transformation of psychology of pandemics into a new collective pandemic that spreads rapidly from one person to another beyond the individual effect as a “fear epidemic”. Despite the available information, the sudden and unpredictable nature of disasters leaves societies with uncertainty and erodes the sense of trust. Here, it appears that theories of terror and fear of crime such as victimisation, vulnerability, and disorder, which are oriented towards understanding mass psychology, contribute significantly to explaining the psychosocial reactions to disasters.

Ferraro (1995, p. 15) notes that individuals’ risk perceptions are shaped by their environment and grow with fear of crime, while disasters like earthquakes can worsen disorder and threat perceptions. Those who feel physically, mentally, and socially vulnerable tend to fear crime more (Rader, Cossman and Porter, 2012, p. 134; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981, p. 69–78). Social sciences began studying disasters in the 1950s, and by the 1970s, analyses emphasized vulnerability alongside economic and social factors. O’Keefe et al. (1976) is seen as the first to link socio-economic disadvantages to vulnerability. Pelling (2003, p. 5) adds that physical, social, political, and economic disadvantages increase disaster vulnerability, referring to this as human vulnerability. Albala-Bertrand (1993, p. 204) emphasises that long-term disaster impacts result from social inequalities rather than losses.

Furedi (2001) highlights media's role in shaping risk perception, fostering a culture of fear through rapid, live disaster news that disseminates anxiety. While direct victimization affects those experiencing losses firsthand, indirect victimization -fear experienced by individuals not directly exposed but witnessing losses via social circles or media (Greenberg and Ruback, 1992) -is crucial. This concept, linear to social bonds (Covington and Taylor, 1991) and linked to vulnerability (McGarrel, Giacomazzi and Thurman, 2006), is also associated with socio-economic status, identity, and region (Taylor and Hale, 1986). Skogan and Maxfield (1981) emphasize media and social networks' influence on indirect victimization, where exaggerated information can heighten fear. Moreover, McCarthy (1989) notes that the proliferation of information intensifies emotional responses, integrating them into daily life.

In forecasts of earthquakes with a high risk of occurrence in different provinces of Turkey, the unknown timing and intensity of the earthquake disseminate the perception of a threat to large masses and intensify the fear of the unknown. Individuals' insecurity about their homes and workplaces is among the most important factors that trigger this process. Here, it should be noted that the right to housing as a fundamental social right becomes meaningful together with the principle of safe and decent accommodation (Taylor et al., 2020, p. 376). In this context, the study aims to analyse the social fears, worries and anxieties of individuals living in Turkey after the 6 February earthquakes, with a particular focus on their perceptions of disaster.

In criminology, fear of crime theories are crucial for understanding the social and psychological dimensions of victimization, direct or indirect. This study hypothesizes that both natural and human-made disasters, due to their inherent uncertainty, generate similar social and socio-psychological impacts, fostering distrust. Vulnerabilities related to age, gender, and socioeconomic status appear comparable across exposure to crime and disasters. Given the increasing global impact of disasters, this research analyzes earthquake-related fear and anxiety within this theoretical framework, aiming to understand both directly and indirectly affected populations and contribute to existing literature.

## Current Study

When we review the World Bank data, the number of disasters was no more than sixty in 1975, while this figure climbed to 450 in 2005 (Ersoy, 2009). Analysing the impacts of natural disasters such as COVID-19, forest fires, floods, droughts, and earthquakes on social life in Turkey in recent years has gained importance when it comes to understanding the social structure, choices, and problems, and predicting the future. In this regard, this study aims to explain the level of social fear and anxiety after the earthquake on February 6, which occurred in Kahramanmaraş, struck many provinces, and claimed 50.783 life loss according to official figures (AFAD, 2023), and to understand the impact of all these successive disasters on society in a short time. In short, this study aims to explain the levels of social fear and anxiety experienced in Turkey after the February 6 earthquakes and the existence of this level on daily life practices. Furthermore, the data of the study were planned to be analysed comparatively with the data of the study entitled "Fear-Anxiety Levels Specific to COVID-19" conducted in Turkey in 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic in order to understand both the impacts of its process and the reaction to the pandemic and earthquake. The dataset used in the study is divided into two subcategories: pandemic fear/anxiety and attitudes toward vaccination. Within this framework, the first part of the dataset was adapted specifically for earthquakes. Additionally, a questionnaire was developed to measure trust in institutions and the impact on daily life. The entire questionnaire was tested for reliability and validity through a pilot study.

COVID-19, as a novel, unknown, long-lasting, and global disaster, is primarily manageable through individual precautions. In contrast, earthquakes are regional, immediate, well-understood hazards requiring coordinated measures at both individual and institutional levels, with pre-disaster preparedness being crucial. The main motivation of this study is to examine whether levels and types of societal risk, fear, and anxiety differ across these distinct disaster types. A comparative analysis highlighting these similarities and differences aims to contribute valuable insights to the disaster literature. While measures like mask-wearing and social distancing can reduce COVID-19-related fear, institutional and community interventions tend to have a greater impact for earthquakes, significantly

affecting fear and anxiety levels. Therefore, the comparative analysis of COVID-19 and earthquakes is both a strength and a limitation of the study.

In the aftermath of disasters, those who have been exposed to the direct impacts of the disaster and those who have lost the lives of their relatives and their homes are included in the primary group; whereas, other individuals in Turkey who felt or did not feel the earthquake are included in the secondary group. In this study, designed as an online survey, every individual who can access the internet, was over the age of 18, were living in Turkey, and was included in the secondary group in the framework of the Maraş earthquake on February 6 was included in the study.

**Specifically, the main questions of the study can be listed as follows:**

- 1. Do the levels of fear and anxiety about earthquakes differ based on demographic variables?
- 2. Is there a correlation between fear and anxiety levels, exposure to earthquakes, and taking precautions?
- 3. Does the level of fear and anxiety affect daily life practices?
- 4. Do people trust institutions and experts' statements after the earthquake?

## Method

### Participants

The data were collected online between 04.04.2023 and 19.05.2023 with the participation of 694 individuals over the age of 18 from 7 different regions who were in the secondary victim groups, through the convenience sampling method. 63.8% of the participants were female and 36.2% were male. 43.2% of the participants were aged 31–45, 42.8% were aged 18–30, and the lowest number of participants with 1.0% access to the online survey was in the category of 65 years and over. Majority (48.7%) of the participants hold a bachelor's degree, followed by the high school graduates (23.1%). 52.3% of the participants were married and 46.5% were single. Therefore, it can be asserted that young participants and those having a higher education level were interested in the study as it is an online study.

**Table 1:** Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Age	f	%	Educational Attainment	F	%
18-30	297	42.8	Literate	13	1.9
31-45	300	43.2	Primary school	16	2.3
46-55	56	8.1	High school	160	23.1
56-65	34	4.9	Associate's degree	77	11.1
65+	7	1.0	Bachelor's degree	338	48.7
Total	694	100.0	Postgraduate degree	90	13.0
			Total	694	100.0
Gender	f	%	Marital Status	F	%
Female	443	63.8	Single	363	52.3
Male	251	36.2	Married	323	46.5
Total	694	100.0	Other	8	1.2
			Total	694	100.0

It was observed that 33.3% of the participants were civil servants, 14.4% were workers, 13.8% were self-employed, 13.5% were students, 13.3% were job seekers, 7.6% were housewives and 3% were retired in the parallel with the rate of participants over the age of 65. In the analysis of the monthly income level, 39.6% of the participants were concentrated in the category of 10001-20000 and 30.1% were concentrated in the category of 0-10000. Regionally, 32.4% of the participants were residing in Eastern Anatolia, 26.4% in Marmara, 13.8% in South Eastern Anatolia, 9.7% in Central Anatolia, 7.3% in the Mediterranean, 5.8% in Black Sea and 4.6% in Aegean region.

## Ethical Considerations

The questionnaire used in this study, for which ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Bitlis Eren University with the no. E-84771431-050.01.01.04-88119 dated 03.04.2023, was prepared by making use of the study entitled "Fear-Anxiety Levels Specific to COVID-19" for comparison, and then a pilot study was conducted with 10 people. The survey form was distributed via e-mail and texting/social media posts with a standardised general description. In the preliminary information, the participants were informed about the voluntary nature of participation and were asked to read the instructions and provide their informed consent.

## Measures

In order to measure the levels of fear and anxiety about disasters, the questionnaire of the study was adapted from the survey form prepared by Memiş Doğan and Düzel (2020) and whose Cronbach's Alpha value was calculated as .813. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire for measuring fear and anxiety levels was calculated as .86, the reliability coefficient of the questions on trust in institutions was calculated as .76, and the reliability coefficient of the questions on daily life practices was calculated as .84. The survey instrument was adapted from Memiş Doğan and Düzel (2020), whose study titled "Fear and Anxiety Levels in the Context of COVID-19" developed this questionnaire to assess fear and anxiety related to the pandemic. In this study, focusing on individuals in Turkey who have not experienced an earthquake and are considered the secondary group, the questionnaire was specifically adapted for the context of earthquake disasters. The questionnaire employed was adapted from Memiş Doğan and Düzel's 2020 study, "Fear and Anxiety Levels in the Context of Covid-19." It measures fear and anxiety related to the pandemic, focusing on individuals' concerns for themselves and loved ones, as well as attitudes toward vaccination, based on demographic factors. In this study, targeting residents of Turkey not directly affected by earthquakes, the questionnaire was modified to assess earthquake-related fear and anxiety. Additionally, a trust in institutions scale was used to evaluate confidence in organizational measures. A third questionnaire assessed the impact of earthquake fear and anxiety on daily life. All instruments were pilot tested for reliability and validity. The data were classified under 5 themes: individual fear and anxiety towards earthquake, fear and anxiety towards the social environment and relatives, trust in institutions, precautions taken, and the effect of fear and anxiety on daily life practices.

## Data Analyses

The IBM SPSS 25 software was used to analyse the data. After the preliminary analyses, frequency analysis was used to determine demographic data in the study. The openness between binary demographic variables and recorded themes was determined using t-test, and ANOVA was applied to multivariate demographic data.

## Results

### Fear - Anxiety Levels

Firstly, when we examine individual fears, concerns, and worries about earthquake, it was determined that even though 59.8% of the participants stated that they accepted living with natural disasters, 95.2% of them stated that they were worried about the high risk of earthquakes in Turkey, and 92.5% of them stated that the earthquake threat was serious. 40.6% of the participants stated that they were worried about the durability of their houses and 68.6% stated that they were feeling unsafe inside the buildings.

**Table 2:** Individual Fear and Anxiety Levels

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Have No Idea		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I believe that my house is not resistant to earthquakes	116	16.7	166	23.9	187	26.9	197	28.4	28	4.0	694	100.0
I fear an earthquake in my province	355	51.2	252	36.3	30	4.3	50	7.2	7	1.0	694	100.0
I often think about what I would do if an earthquake struck.	284	40.9	278	40.1	34	4.9	89	12.8	9	1.3	694	100.0
Frequent coverage of earthquake news by the media increases my fear	163	23.5	258	37.2	68	9.8	164	23.6	41	5.9	694	100.0
I do not feel safe inside buildings	315	31.0	261	37.6	73	10.5	127	18.3	18	2.6	694	100.0
Fear of earthquake disturbs my psychology	210	30.3	246	35.4	66	9.5	141	20.3	31	4.5	694	100.0
I believe that the earthquake threat is serious.	382	55.0	260	37.5	37	5.3	14	2.0	1	.1	694	100.0
I believe that major cities are riskier	422	60.8	206	29.7	33	4.8	28	4.0	.5	.7	694	100.0
I feel like shaking and often check the lamp	203	29.3	232	33.4	46	6.6	154	22.2	59	8.5	694	100.0
I sleep restlessly at night	180	25.9	242	34.9	55	7.9	165	23.8	52	7.5	694	100.0
The high risk of earthquake in Turkey terrifies me	463	66.7	198	28.5	12	1.7	9	1.3	12	1.7	694	100.0
I have accepted a life with natural disasters	113	16.3	302	43.5	81	11.7	141	20.3	57	8.2	694	100.0
I no longer enjoyed anything after the disasters occurred.	238	34.3	240	34.6	75	10.8	105	15.1	36	5.2	694	100.0
The earthquake makes me more anxious when compared to COVID-19	352	50.7	210	30.3	64	9.2	53	7.6	15	2.2	694	100.0

While 87.5% of the respondents stated that they were worried about the province where they lived, 90.5% stated that major cities were more worrisome. Moreover, 62.7% of the participants stated that they felt shaking and frequently checked the lamp, 60.8% stated that they slept restless at night, and 81% stated that they planned what they would do if an earthquake struck during the day. Finally, 65.7% of the participants stated that they were psychologically disturbed by the fear of earthquakes, 68.9% stated that their joy of life was negatively affected after disasters and they no longer enjoyed anything as much as before.

Compared to COVID-19, the fear and anxiety towards earthquakes (81%) were higher and the type of disaster was effective on the levels of fear and anxiety. This can be attributed to the replacement of confidence in practices to ensure safety with measures and precautions such as masks, distancing, hygiene, and vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic, with concerns about the measures to be taken within the framework of building, city, and structural safety beyond individual measures when it comes to earthquakes.

**Table 3:** Levels of fear-anxiety towards the social environment

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Have No Idea		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I fear possible harm to my family/ acquaintances due to an earthquake	436	62.8	223	32.1	9	1.3	23	3.3	3	.4	696	100.0
I inculcate a sense of caution in my family/ acquaintances	236	34.0	349	50.3	34	4.9	64	9.2	11	1.6	696	100.0
I am worried about the whereabouts of family members during the day	177	25.5	252	36.3	65	9.4	179	25.8	21	3.0	696	100.0
I called my family/ acquaintances more often after the earthquake	175	25.2	280	40.3	77	11.1	138	19.9	24	3.5	696	100.0
The earthquake positively affected my family relations	94	13.5	204	29.4	91	13.1	236	34.0	69	9.9	696	100.0

When analysing the rate of fear-anxiety about the social environment, it was determined that 94.9% of the participants stated that they were worried about the harm to their loved ones due to the earthquake, 61.8% were worried about the whereabouts of their family members, 84.3% warned their families about the earthquake, and 75.5% called up their families more frequently due to earthquake anxiety.

**Table 4:** Feeling the Earthquake and Fear-Anxiety Relationship

Feeling the Earthquake in Kahramanmaraş	F	%	N	X	P
Yes	353	50.9	353	2.0861	.000
No	341	49.1	341	2.2548	
Total	694	100.0	694		

As Table 4 shows, there was a significant correlation between feeling the earthquake and fear-anxiety levels ( $P<05$ ), but the participants who did not feel the earthquake ( $X = 2.2548$ ) had higher



levels of fear-anxiety than those who felt the earthquake ( $X=2.0861$ ). The elevated fear and anxiety can be attributed to unknown risks, a phenomenon consistent with Geert Hofstede’s (1983) uncertainty avoidance theory. This theory highlights how societies’ varying responses to unknown realities—such as Turkey’s high score of 85, reflecting a strong need for clarity—directly influence fear levels. Consequently, uncertainties regarding city, residence, and earthquake preparedness contribute to participants’ anxiety. Travis Hirschi (2002)’s argument that control fosters social trust further supports this, as earthquakes inherently introduce significant uncertainties in timing, location, and preparedness. Additionally, indirect victimization (Taylor and Hale, 1986, p. 157), defined as media- and social network-driven dissemination of unexperienced danger, also contributes to the observed fear and anxiety levels.

According to the results of the ANOVA test, there was a significant difference between the participants aged 18–30 ( $X = 2.0825$ ) and the participants aged 46 ( $X = 2.3899$ ) and above and between the participants aged 31–45 ( $X = 2.1606$ ) and those aged 56–65 ( $X = 2.5196$ ). There was a positive correlation between age and fear-anxiety levels, and as the age increased, so did the level of fear-anxiety. Within vulnerability theory, particularly as applied to fear of crime, unprotected vulnerable groups like the elderly experience exacerbated fear and anxiety due to their limited recovery potential and heightened susceptibility to physical harm (Cossman and Rader, 2011, p. 143). In disasters, the elderly’s increased economic capital at risk, coupled with their disadvantaged ability to avoid sudden threats, explains why fear and anxiety levels can directly correlate with age.

**Table 5:** The Correlation between Socio-Demographic Data and Fear and Anxiety

Age	N	X	P	Gender	N	X	P	Monthly Income	N	X	P
18-30	297	2.0825	.001	Female	443	2.0446	.000	No Oncome	114	2.0575	.004
31-45	300	2.1606		Male	251	2.3884		0-10000	209	2.1143	
46-55	56	2.3899						10001-20000	275	2.1865	
56-65	34	2.5196						20001-32000	70	2.3635	
66+	7	2.7302						32001+	26	2.3889	

It was observed that there was a significant difference between genders in the levels of fear-anxiety towards earthquake ( $P<05$ ), and male ( $X=2.3884$ ) participants had higher levels of individual fear-anxiety towards earthquakes compared to female ( $X=2.0446$ ) participants, similar to the levels of fear-anxiety towards COVID-19. Similar findings were explained by gender roles in the literature (Clemente and Kleiman, 1977, p. 522) in the case of fear of crime. Contrary to studies showing that earthquake fear and anxiety are higher in women (Kung and Chen, 2012; Canlı and Yılmaz, 2024; Çetintaş, 2025), it can be said that the anxiety observed here originates from the family and social environment rather than individual concerns and can be explained by gender roles influenced by masculinity and femininity stereotypes. The societal assignment of family protection during disaster to the male, often defined as strong, protective, and fearless, could influence his level of worry, fear, and anxiety. This aligns with crime fear research suggesting that men’s perceived responsibility to protect their spouses and children contributes to their anxiety (Snedker, 2006; Heber, 2009; Haynes and Rader, 2015).

There was a significant correlation between monthly income and the levels of fear-anxiety within the framework of the categories established based on the hunger and poverty thresholds announced in Turkey ( $P<05$ ). According to the ANOVA analysis, the levels of fear-anxiety of the participants who stated that they had no income ( $X=2.0575$ ) and an income between 20001–32000 ( $X=2.3635$ ), 0–10001 ( $X = 2.1143$ ), and 20001–32000 ( $X= 2.3635$ ) differed. Here, it can be argued that in parallel with the ideology of fragility, fear and anxiety about properties such as homes, cars, or the order of life increase. According to Rader (2017, p. 7), the lower classes lack the economic power to take precautions within the framework of their social fears and have to reside in more precarious and unprotected neighbourhoods.



**Table 6:** The Correlation between the Region of Residence and Fear and Anxiety

Regions	N	X	P
Marmara	183	2.1433	.000
Aegean	32	2.2569	
Mediterranean	51	1.9717	
Central Anatolia	67	2.2811	
South Eastern Anatolia	96	2.0122	
Eastern Anatolia	225	2.1664	
Black sea	40	2.6708	

There was also a significant difference between the region of residence and the levels of fear and anxiety. Surprisingly, the Black Sea region ( $X=2.6708$ ), with the highest level of fear-anxiety compared to the other regions, differed from the Marmara ( $X=2.1433$ ), Central Anatolia ( $X = 2.2811$ ), Southeast Anatolia ( $X = 2.0122$ ), and Mediterranean ( $X = 1.9717$ ) regions. The high level of fear and anxiety in the Black Sea region, which has not been hit by a major earthquake in recent history and where the earthquake risk is considered to be low, can be attributed to the indirect victimisation approach and the unknown risk effect. Skogan and Maxfield's (1981) indirect victimization approach posits that fear of crime, and by extension disaster, can be heightened by media reports and vicarious experiences, potentially exceeding the impact of direct exposure. This framework elucidates the high fear and anxiety in the historically low-earthquake-experienced Black Sea region, attributing it to the social environment, media influence, and the perception of unknown risks. Furthermore, TÜİK Internal Migration Statistics reveal that many Black Sea residents have relatives in earthquake-prone areas, making their elevated fear comprehensible. This phenomenon is also explainable via Dao and Lim's (2022) perceived threat concept, which asserts that perceived threat levels are determined by cognitive sensitivity to threat probability and severity, irrespective of rational data. Thus, the heightened earthquake-related fear in the Black Sea region arises from a convergence of cognitive threat perception, uncertainty, indirect loss, concern for relatives in affected zones, and media exposure.

**Trust and Precautions**

When analysing the level of trust in the institutions that affect fear and anxiety about earthquakes, a great majority (96.9%) of the participants stated that economic measures should be taken for earthquakes, and 98.5% stated that measures and preparedness for earthquakes should be improved in public spaces such as airports and railway stations. As for local governments, 98.7% of the participants stated that the earthquake should be taken into account when planning the city, while 54.8% stated that they found the building analyses of the municipalities unreliable. Here, it can be asserted that approximately half of the participants had no trust in local governments when it comes to building analyses. Similar to these data, in the studies conducted by Güven and Kızılkaya (2023) and Şehitoğlu (2023), it is seen that trust in local governments increases resilience in the fight against disasters.

While the rate of the participants who trusted the public statements following the earthquake was 19.3%, the rate of those who do not trust them was 64.5%. While the rate of the participants who stated that the earthquake precautions in Turkey were sufficient was 11%, the rate of those who thought otherwise was 84%. The observed data can be attributed to the earthquake's magnitude, impact, and destruction ratios. Given the considerable effectiveness of social and institutional disaster measures alongside individual precautions, it can be asserted that distrust towards institutions may negatively impact individual and social fear and anxiety levels. Similar findings emerge from Turkish disaster studies. Selçuk's (2024) post-February 6th earthquake research revealed co-occurring solidarity and conflict networks with institutions, indicating an intertwining of trust and insecurity. Özer (2017) also noted high societal insecurity regarding disaster management. Furthermore, Fahri Çakı (2020) observed that distrust in institutions after the 1999 Marmara Earthquake strengthened civil society organizations. Such institutional trust issues can be elucidated by Jürgen Habermas's (1973) concept of legitimacy crisis, wherein distrust in institutional structures and practices engenders a legitimacy crisis. Consequently, post-earthquake intervention deficiencies and pre-earthquake preparedness failures likely erode individual trust in institutions, culminating in a legitimacy crisis.

**Table 7:** Trust in Institutions

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Have No Idea		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Earthquake precautions for the Turkish economy should be increased	573	82.6	99	14.3	12	1.7	5	.7	5	.7	694	100.0
Urban planning in Turkey should be based on earthquakes	598	86.2	87	12.5	6	.9	1	.1	2	.3	694	100.0
Earthquake precautions should be further increased in fields such as airports, railway stations, and hospitals	591	85.2	92	13.3	8	1.2	1	.1	2	.3	694	100.0
I believe that the necessary precautions against earthquakes have been taken in Turkey	33	4.8	43	6.2	35	5.0	191	27.5	392	56.5	694	100.0
I find the public statements made during the earthquake sincere and sufficient	51	4.3	104	15.0	91	13.1	148	21.3	300	43.2	694	100.0
I find the building inspections by municipalities reliable	25	3.6	119	17.1	170	24.5	208	30.0	172	24.8	694	100.0

Furthermore, 70.8% of the participants reported that the statements of experts negatively affected their fear and anxieties about earthquakes, but 80.3% reported that the statements about the earthquake were not exaggerated. Similarly, 63.8% of the participants stated that frequent news coverage intensified their fear of disease in the COVID-19 period. The role of the media in shaping risk perception increases people’s fears and anxieties (Furedi, 2001, p.83).

**Table 8:** Trust in Experts

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Have No Idea		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Experts' statements intensify my fear of earthquake	235	33.9	256	36.9	61	8.8	115	16.6	27	3.9	694	100.0
I think that earthquake statements and warnings are exaggerated	30	4.3	53	7.6	54	7.8	285	41.1	272	39.2	694	100.0

The participants stated that they found the measures taken individually (60.2%) and socially (79.2%) inadequate within the framework of earthquake-related measures. A study conducted by Düzel and Memiş Doğan in 2022 reported that the rate of confidence in vaccination was 53.6%. Likewise, this study showed that the rate of those who thought that the precautions against COVID-19 were not protective was 49%. A comparison of the precautions taken for disasters suggested that distrust in earthquake precautions was higher, and despite the obscurity of COVID-19, the predictability of the earthquake rose the expectation to take precautions and affected the level of trust in institutions.

**Table 9:** Perception of Precautions

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Have No Idea		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I find the measures I have taken for earthquakes adequate	30	4.3	123	17.7	123	17.7	299	43.1	119	17.1	694	100.0
I believe COVID-19 precautions are protective	50	7.2	184	26.5	120	17.3	206	29.7	134	19.3	694	100.0
I believe that the earthquake precautions taken by society are protective and adequate	20	2.9	56	8.1	68	9.8	232	33.4	318	45.8	694	100.0

**Practices of Daily Life**

Levels of fear and anxiety towards disasters also affect daily life practices. The impact of the earthquake led 77.8% of the participants to talk about earthquakes when they came together with friends and family and 53.1% stated that the fear of earthquake negatively affected their daily lives. When examining the practices and precautions, it was determined that 54.6% of the participants stated that they went to bed prepared for the possibility of an earthquake at night, 55.9% avoided high-rise buildings, 67.2% designated the safest place in the house, and 42.8% prepared an earthquake kit, 58.8% planned for the possibility of an earthquake within the family, 63.2% of them kept water by their bedside, and 92.5% of the participants kept their cell phones close to them due to the functional use of cell phones in the Kahramanmaraş earthquake.

**Table 10:** Practices of Daily Life

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Have No Idea		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
When I come together with my family and friends, we always talk about the earthquake	188	27.1	352	50.7	39	5.6	97	14.0	18	2.6	694	100.0
Fear of earthquake negatively affects my daily life	133	19.2	235	33.9	65	9.4	216	31.1	45	6.5	694	100.0
I try to avoid going near high-rise buildings due to fear of earthquake	143	20.6	245	35.3	55	7.9	210	30.3	41	5.9	694	100.0
I go to bed at night, prepared for the possibility of an earthquake	119	17.1	260	37.5	60	8.6	217	31.3	38	5.5	694	100.0
I prepared an earthquake kit	124	17.9	173	24.9	59	8.5	254	36.6	84	12.1	694	100.0
We made planning for earthquakes in the family	134	19.3	274	39.5	67	9.7	176	25.4	43	6.2	694	100.0
I keep my phone close to me when I go to bed at night	381	54.9	261	37.6	15	2.2	31	4.5	5	.7	694	100.0
I plan to move to a more earthquake-resistant place	102	14.7	189	27.2	182	26.2	188	27.1	33	4.8	694	100.0
I plan to reinforce the house I live in	73	10.5	147	21.2	238	34.3	189	27.2	47	6.8	694	100.0
I researched/learned about meeting points in my neighbourhood	105	15.1	212	30.5	169	24.4	132	19.0	76	11.0	694	100.0
I took out earthquake insurance DASK for my house	186	26.8	154	22.2	147	21.2	140	20.2	67	9.7	694	100.0
I secured my furniture in my house	73	10.5	196	28.2	116	16.7	250	36.0	59	8.5	694	100.0
I moved furniture around in my house	75	10.8	136	19.6	95	13.7	317	45.7	71	10.2	694	100.0
I have designated the safest place in the house	169	24.4	297	42.8	96	13.8	100	14.4	32	4.6	694	100.0
I keep water by my bedside	196	28.2	243	35.0	49	7.1	169	24.4	37	5.3	694	100.0
I studied the earthquake risk map	263	37.9	270	38.9	69	9.9	75	10.8	17	2.4	694	100.0

The rate of those who stated that they had reviewed the earthquake risk map was 76.8%, the rate of those who stated that they had researched and learned about the meeting points was 45.6%, and the rate of those who planned to reinforce their houses was 31.7%. The rate of those who stated that they had secured the furniture in their houses was 38.7%, and the rate of those who stated that they had moved their furniture was 30.4%. Even though the rate of fear and anxiety was high, the rates were low when it comes to taking precautions and anxiety did not turn into the practice of taking precautions.

**Table 11:** The Correlation between Daily Life Practices and the Region of Residence

Regions	N	X	P
Marmara	183	2.5594	.000
Aegean	32	2.5469	
Mediterranean	51	2.3725	
Central Anatolia	67	2.7724	
South Eastern Anatolia	96	2.5042	
Eastern Anatolia	225	2.6339	
Black sea	40	2.9563	

When it comes to the change in daily life practices, it was determined that the Black Sea region, having the highest rate of fear and anxiety, differentiated from the Marmara ( $X = 2.5594$ ), Mediterranean ( $X = 2.3725$ ), and South-eastern Anatolia ( $X = 2.5042$ ) regions by showing the greatest change in daily life practices. Beck (2019) and Giddens (2014)’s risk society concept offers a critical lens for understanding contemporary societal uncertainty, positing that global, often uncontrollable risks necessitate a deep need for existential security and daily precautions. Disasters intrinsically disrupt physiological needs and individual/social integrity (Çetintaş, 2025), compelling routine adjustments. For instance, keeping mobile phones nearby post-earthquake exemplifies a behavioral adaptation for safety and preparedness, enabling emergency access and fostering security (Yıldırım, 2023).

### Conclusion and Discussion

The findings of the study showed that the earthquake of February 6 intensified fear and anxiety at the social level. While fear-anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic was balanced with individual measures such as masks and distancing, changing daily life practices, and expectations for healthcare services, fear-anxiety related to the earthquake turned into a social problem that cannot be struggled individually due to inadequacies in urban planning, buildings, and infrastructure. It is considered that the fear and anxiety of society, which was highly motivated to take individual measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, was not reflected in the practice of taking precautions with the despair that individual measures would be inadequate during the earthquake process. The individuals’ perception of the threat posed by new earthquakes that may hit especially major cities increased, and their concern about the possible destruction and loss of life due to new earthquakes intensified their anxiety.

It is possible to explain why people who live in the Black Sea region, which has neither been hit by a major earthquake nor people who felt the earthquake are more worried than those who felt the earthquake, as they have not yet gone through such a phase and have not yet felt the earthquake. This can be explained by fear increased and thus indirect victimization caused by local information and news about victimizations that have not been experienced based on fear of crime (Covington and Taylor, 1991, p. 234; Greenberg and Ruback, 1992, p. 3). This can also be attributed to the increased perceived threat in large cities where relatives reside, as the scale of earthquake destruction amplifies the perceived risk and severity of an anticipated seismic event (Dao and Lim, 2022).

Elderly people with high levels of anxiety about the earthquake may feel more vulnerable in avoiding the earthquake, which can be explained by the feeling more vulnerable in coping with the victimization that might come about within the framework of the vulnerability theory and recovering

their losses (Skogan, 1978, p. 10). In the context of gender, the higher fear-anxiety levels of men in both the earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic can be attributed to their gender roles, which expose men and women to different dangers during and after disasters (Twigg, 2015, p. 91). Men's altruistic fears, encompassing their protective attitudes towards family and relatives, can also be considered a significant factor contributing to increased anxiety (Snedker, 2006; Heber, 2009; Haynes and Rader, 2015). During COVID-19, blue-collar workers, who felt more vulnerable due to their working conditions, suffered from higher levels of anxiety than white-collar workers. This study, on the other hand, showed that anxiety was concentrated at the moderate-income level, which is more affluent than the lower-income group but not as advantageous to high-income individuals for feeling safe.

Consequently, the study showed that there was a hierarchy between fears and anxieties in the risky society we live in. Cell phones, that we should keep away due to the signals they emit, can turn into the greatest hope and a security measure that should be kept under our pillow when it comes to earthquakes. This makes the uncertainty, perception of danger, and need for trust in a risky society visible based on practices.

The earthquakes of February 6 in Turkey have revealed the necessity of providing the right to housing (Özbudun, 2009, p. 138), a part of social rights designed to promote social justice and the removal of social inequalities, for every individual and family in a structure where the individual can feel safe. The study reveals that age, gender, regional disparities, and TV/social media consumption influence fear-anxiety levels. Consistent with other research (Özkan, 2024; Selçuk, 2024), trust in disaster management institutions was observed to be damaged following the February 6th earthquake.

Governments must prioritize pre-disaster preparedness (urban planning, building safety, early warnings) to alleviate societal fears. Effective response also hinges on community-based training (including women) and organized volunteer teams. Increased social services are critical for psychological and social recovery, with local polyclinics and support units providing long-term care. Failure to provide essential post-disaster support risks exacerbating existing social problems like violence against women and new abuses against vulnerable groups, necessitating more social service institutions and qualified professionals in affected areas.

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## Özet

Afetler, toplumları sosyoekonomik koşullar, afetlerin şiddeti ve etki alanı bakımından değişen düzeylerde etkilemektedir. Hem dünya genelinde hem de Türkiye’de son dönemlerde yaşanan afetlerdeki artış, afetlerin gündelik ve toplumsal yaşamda yarattığı değişimlerin analiz edilebilmesini gerekli kılmaktadır. Çalışma, 6 Şubat depremleri sonrasında bireylerin korku ve kaygı düzeylerini, gündelik yaşam pratiklerine etkileri ve toplumsal güven çerçevesinde Covid-19 salgını sonrası 2020 yılında gerçekleştirilen “Covid-19 Özelinde Korku-Kaygı Düzeyleri” isimli çalışmanın verileri ile suç korkusu teorileri çerçevesinde karşılaştırmalı biçimde analiz edebilmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Türkiye’nin 7 farklı bölgesinden 18 yaş üstü 694 bireyin katılımı ile gerçekleştirilen çalışmanın verilerine göre; 6 Şubat depreminin toplumsal düzlemde korku ve kaygı düzeyini arttırdığı söylenebilir. Covid-19 salgınına dair korku-kaygı; maske, mesafe gibi bireysel önlemlerle değişen gündelik yaşam pratikleri ve sağlık hizmetlerine yönelik güven ile dengelenirken, toplumsal ve kurumsal önlemlerin ön plana çıktığı deprem özelinde korku-kaygının daha yüksek olduğu görülmektedir. Depreme ilişkin kaygının şehir planlaması, bina ve altyapıya ilişkin yetersizlikler nedeniyle bireysel olarak mücadele edilemeyen toplumsal bir soruna dönüştüğü söylenebilir. Araştırmada yaş, cinsiyet, bölgesel farklılıklar

*ve TV/sosyal medya kullanımının korku-kaygı düzeylerini etkilediği görülmektedir. Bireylerin özellikle büyük kentlerde yaşanabilecek yeni depremlere ilişkin tehdit algısının yüksek olduğu, yeni depremlerin yaratacağı olası yıkım ve can kayıplarından duyulan endişeyi arttırdığı görülmektedir. Afetlerin yarattığı psikolojik, sosyal ve ekonomik kayıpların uzun dönemli sosyal etkilerine yönelik sosyal politikalar geliştirilmesinin yanı sıra toplumun afetlerle müdahaleye etkin katılımı sağlanmalıdır. Kadınları da kapsayan mahalle/köy bazlı afet eğitimlerinin gerçekleştirilmesi ve gönüllü yerel afet müdahale ekiplerinin oluşturulmasının müdahale faaliyetlerine önemli katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.*