

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Social Service Practices in Disasters: February 6th Earthquake in Hatay Case

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Abstract

Hatay, one of the provinces most affected by the major earthquakes that occurred on February 6, 2023, was the area most impacted by the event. Immediately following the disaster, to recover from the effects of the earthquake and alleviate its negative impacts, social workers flocked to the region and implemented many social service practices. Social work practices are of critical importance in terms of accelerating the healing processes for the people of the region. In the study, the activities of social workers were evaluated using a case study approach. The aim is to reveal the effectiveness of social work practices from the perspective of social workers working in the earthquake response. Such an approach both supports and guides policy makers and decision makers in establishing new living conditions in the region and reveals the issues that need to be taken into account for future activities. Within the scope of the research, interviews with 30 social workers were analyzed. The results demonstrated that social work practices are extremely important in eliminating social damage in the post-earthquake period; however, human resources should be developed and increased in terms of quality and quantity, and financial and physical resources should be provided for social work practices.

Keywords: Hatay, February 6 2023, Earthquake, Social Work in Disaster

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Öz

6 Şubat 2023'te Kahramanmaraş merkezli gerçekleşen depremler sonrasında Hatay, depremlerden en fazla etkilenen il olmuştur. Felaketin yaşanmasından hemen sonra depremin oluşturduğu yaraları sarmak ve olumsuz etkilerini hafifletmek amacıyla Türkiye'nin her bölgesinden sosyal hizmet çalışanı bölgeye akın etmiş, psiko-sosyal destek, yönlendirme, iyileştirme, korku ve stresle başa çıkma, eğitim, savunuculuk gibi birçok sosyal hizmet uygulamasını hayata geçirmiştir. Depremi yaşayan bölge halkının iyileştirme ve normale dönme süreçlerini hızlandırmak, psikolojik ve sosyal hasarları tamir etmek bakımından sosyal hizmet uygulamaları kritik bir öneme sahiptir. Çalışmada sosyal hizmet çalışanlarının deprem bölgesindeki faaliyetleri, uygulamaları nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden vaka çalışması ile değerlendirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Amaç sosyal hizmet uygulamalarının etkinliğinin deprem alanında faaliyet gösteren sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının bakışıyla ortaya konulması, eksik ve yetersiz yönlerinin tespit edilmesidir. Böyle bir yaklaşım hem bölgede oluşturulacak yeni yaşam şartlarının tesisinde politika üretici ve karar vericilere destek olmak, yol gösterici olmak hem de ilerleyen süreçlerde gerçekleştirecek faaliyetlerde dikkate alınması gerek hususları ortaya koymaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında 30 sosyal hizmet uzmanı / çalışanı ile gerçekleştirilen mülakatlar analiz edilmiş, tespit ve sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlar doğrultusunda sosyal hizmet uygulamalarının deprem sonrası süreçte toplumsal hasarın giderilmesi noktasında son derece önemli olduğu ancak nitelik ve nicelik olarak insan kaynağının geliştirilmesi ve artırılması gerektiği, sosyal hizmet uygulamaları için finansman ve fiziki alan sağlanması gerektiği ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hatay, 6 Şubat 2023 Depremi, Afetlerde Sosyal Hizmetler

Introduction

Turkey is a country with a high risk of disasters, especially earthquakes, due to its geographical and geological structure. First degree earthquake fault lines spread to almost all parts of the country. Such a situation constantly keeps the possibility of encountering an earthquake disaster on the agenda. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to say that despite the radically changed disaster policies and new management mechanisms created after the 1999 Marmara earthquake, social awareness was created in terms of earthquake preparedness. The losses of life and property experienced in the earthquake disasters on February 6 and then on February 20, 2023, horribly reveal how unprepared we are on these matters. More than fifty thousand deaths (WHO, 2023), destruction of hundreds of thousands of residences and workplaces, millions of people becoming homeless (UN-IOM, 2023), and economic losses that will require long years and high costs to compensate are considered as the prominent consequences of the earthquake called "the disaster of the century". In addition to the damage caused by the earthquake in the physical structure, The damage it caused in the social structure should not be forgotten. Anxiety, restlessness, worry, fear, isolation, tension, post-traumatic stress disorders, sleeping and socialization difficulties are just a few of the social and psychological problems caused by the earthquake (Bozkurt, 2023; Tang, Deng, Glik, Dong, and Zhang, 2017).

All these negative symptoms can affect different segments of society in different ways. Particularly vulnerable and fragile groups such as children, disabled people, families of disabled people, elderly people, women, and immigrants are much more affected by the process and face more difficult conditions in terms of sustaining their lives. Conditions that are already very challenging for the general population become even more difficult for these groups, and their vulnerability is literally multiplied. At this point, social work practices provide guidance and advocacy activities to increase the resilience of earthquake-affected citizens and vulnerable groups against disasters, to help them hold on to life, and to meet their basic needs. It is known that

social work practices will make significant contributions to social change and improvement. The needs of earthquake victims and vulnerable groups are identified through the practices carried out by social workers at the individual (micro) and groups (mezzo) levels (Tapan, 2023; Mullally, 1997, pp. 108-134; Pohjola, 2011, p. 12) and appropriate solution mechanisms. Improvement processes are accelerated. In this context, efforts are made to heal social damage through social work intervention such as psychosocial support, education, group work, needs assessment, guidance and advocacy. The basic function of social work in this sense is formulated as acting as a bridge between people damaged by the earthquake and the resources, facilitating the interaction of earthquake victims with each other and with the society, providing guidance and support to social policy makers, and helping to create financial resources for all activities (Tapan, 2023; Pincus and Minahan, 1973, pp. 15-33). Hatay is the province most affected by the earthquakes that occurred on February 6, 2023, and February 20, 2023. More than half of the deaths in these earthquakes occurred in Hatay. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of Syrian immigrants lived in crowded conditions in old buildings that were relatively earthquake-proof in Hatay. This situation led to both an increase in casualties in Hatay and the formation of vulnerable groups that were disproportionately affected by the earthquake disaster due to the immigrant population presence. (Bozkurt, 2023; Dal Zilio and Ampuero, 2023; Hussain, Kalaycıoğlu, Milliner, etc. 2023).

In this study, the effectiveness of social work policies implemented immediately after the February 2023 earthquake disaster in Hatay is evaluated. The evaluation was carried out using the interview method, one of the qualitative research techniques. Interviews were conducted with 30 experts and professionals who carried out social work activities in Hatay after the earthquake, and these interviews were supplemented by field observations. For the research, approval was obtained from the Hatay Mustafa Kemal University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board on June 12th, 2023, protocol number 18, as well as the necessary permissions from the Hatay

Governorship. The information security of the participants was ensured and their post-earthquake sensitivities were taken into special consideration. No participant was coerced into being interviewed, and all regulations regarding the protection of personal information were strictly followed.

The study consists of conceptual framework and literature, methodology, demographic characteristics, findings regarding earthquake experience within the scope of research findings, findings regarding the activity process in the earthquake zone, findings regarding expectations and predictions for the future, and discussion and conclusion sections. It is hoped that the results of this study will be a source of academic studies, especially in the fields of social work and disaster, and will help policy makers and decision makers on the subject.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Social Work and Application Areas in Disasters

Disasters are events that can affect the normal flow of life in many ways. Whether natural or human-caused, disasters are important phenomena that cause many negativities in social life or have the potential to deepen existing negativities and risks (Kadıoğlu, 2020). As Tomanbay states, disasters are events that can disrupt both social balance and the internal and social balance of individuals (Tomanbay, 2000, p. 125). Since disasters occur in unexpected and sudden situations, they are also described as crisis periods. For this reason, disaster management is often handled in coordination with crisis management. Can (2020) criticizes these definitions from the perspective of disaster sociology. He states that the definitions originate from physical sciences rather than social sciences, that nature is held responsible for the damages that occur in the definition of disaster, whereas when the human factor is excluded, it is not possible for nature to produce a disaster in its own course, and that a holistic approach focusing on the before, during and after the disaster is required. Based on these criticisms, Can defines disaster as follows:

“Disaster is a disaster that occurs suddenly or over time in places where human communities live, either by the ordinary movement of nature or by direct or indirect human intervention; “It is a social phenomenon that causes great damage and losses in physical, economic, psychological and many other aspects and has important social consequences in terms of its effects” (Can, 2020, p.20).

The extent to which a society or community is affected by a disaster depends on how resilient it is. This resilience is directly related to vulnerabilities. Resilience and vulnerability are two important key concepts of disasters that are related but conceptually different. There is an inverse proportion between resilience and fragility. More broadly, as resilience increases, vulnerability decreases; as fragility increases, resilience decreases. The concepts of resilience and fragility manifest themselves in many different aspects such as the individual, family, community and society. However, it is often not known who/what is how resilient and how fragile on this scale that varies from individual to society. This situation becomes more visible in the event of a sudden disaster. According to another approach, vulnerability occurs at two levels: social and individual. The situation caused by factors such as poverty, limited educational opportunities, lack of support from society and public institutions, and the health, psychological and social effects of the disaster in the long term expresses fragility at the individual level. It is pointed out that fragility increases at the social level in case of inadequacy or poor management of social service provider institutions for disasters, which ties to the demographic, historical and cultural fabric of society (Akbaş, 2020, p.336). Resilience is related to a society's current economic, social, physical, institutional, social and psychological preparedness level for disasters. In this context, it is evaluated that a disaster management perspective that extends over a long period of time during and after the disaster, including preventive measures starting before the disaster, will increase resilience. It is emphasized that creating a resilient society and culture of resistance is among the functions of social policy (Akbaş, 2020, p.337).

Social work also comes into play at this point and covers the practices carried out to bring an

individual, family, society or community to a more resilient position or situation, starting from the pre-disaster period. As Ceyhan (2023, p.780) states, social work has an extremely important role including the preparation processes before and after disasters, reducing disaster-related risks, and practices that will increase the resilience of the society against a possible disaster. In other words, social work refers to practices, services and approaches that pursue a strategy to reduce the effects of disasters, starting from before the disaster, continuing during the disaster, and afterward, in line with possible scenarios. These applications and services encompass psychosocial support, economic and material support, legal support, and more in all shapes and sizes. In short, social work takes an approach that ensures preparation before highly destructive disasters, especially earthquakes and fires, training fully equipped and well-trained teams, and working in coordination with each other (Özçelik, 2020).

Social work practices can be activated both by the state and in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and some voluntary foundations in the region experiencing the disaster. One of the most important institutions that provide services before and after disasters on a state basis is the Ministry of Family and Social Work. Although in some cases the recovery process in the local area develops spontaneously, it may not always be sufficient. Moreover, when some coordination problems arise, this may cause more harm than good. In this case, when the resources of the affected communities in the region where the disaster occurs are not sufficient, some social support mechanisms get involved. The most important of these is social service provider institutions in the context of non-governmental organizations. In Türkiye, the Red Crescent is the leader of social work in disasters as a non-governmental organization (NGO) (Özçelik, 2020, pp. 52-53). Apart from this, many independent, national and international non-governmental organizations that are not affiliated with local governments or the state implement social service practices.

After disasters, some interventions become necessary, as mentioned above. Perhaps, the most significant of these is providing psychosocial

support. During the post-disaster phase, psychosocial support is provided to individuals, families, or groups to help them cope with the disaster and crisis situation. For this reason, psychosocial support after a disaster is a necessity. The reason is that when this cannot be achieved, the risk situation may increase and reach advanced levels in a negative sense (Kök, 2023, p. 9). According to another evaluation, psychosocial support is a set of multidisciplinary services that includes eliminating the incompatibilities and disorders that may arise after a disaster, increasing the well-being of the individual and society, increasing the resistance to disasters that may occur in the future, and supporting recovery processes. After earthquakes and other disasters, psychosocial support services are provided through public institutions, non-governmental organizations, expert volunteer initiatives and experts within local government organizations. Psychosocial support is critical for disaster victims to hold on to life against problems such as depression, loneliness, alienation, isolation, anomie, and stress caused by disasters. As a matter of fact, the reciting of the adhan after the earthquake was perceived as a support to hold on to life for earthquake victims who thought that life had ended (Bayhan, 2020, p.300-302). On the other hand, an application that is at least as important as psychosocial support is financial aid, which is usually provided for once and helps overcome the crisis situation, giving individuals the opportunity to focus on other problems. Other supports include providing legal counselling by offering necessary guidance in order to prevent possible loss of rights. On the other hand, after highly destructive disasters such as earthquakes, health consultancy and necessary guidance and assistance in this regard also cover extremely important application areas.

Social Work Practices for Disadvantaged/At-Risk Groups in Disasters

The destruction experienced in disaster situations - especially earthquakes - creates special need groups or makes the situation of those who already have special needs more critical (Tomanbay, 2000, p. 125). It can be said that during disasters,

especially those with special needs, or in other words, disadvantaged/risky groups need some social work practices more. Because these groups consist of individuals who have experienced the disaster like everyone else and who, independently of this, have some special needs or needs that differ from those of other segments of the society (Kök, 2023, p. 9). For this reason, there may be a situation of double victimization or double disadvantage, which is of primary importance in social work practices in disasters. The most important issue in the relationship between fragility and disasters is that social conditions determine fragility. Definitions and usage of vulnerable groups may vary depending on geographical regions, organizations and academic research. The term vulnerability is frequently used in social policy, public health and humanitarian work to describe specific groups and produce solutions for their needs. Although disadvantaged groups are defined in different ways for different reasons, evaluations are made that they are more special, vulnerable and fragile than other segments of society due to their qualities. In this context, the disabled, the elderly, immigrants and refugees, children, women, and because of all these processes, the poor are defined as disadvantaged groups (Demir, 2020, p.268-270). Various social policies are being developed to protect vulnerable groups during earthquakes and meet their needs. These policies aim to support vulnerable groups before, during and after the disaster.

Disaster experiences can cause anxiety, lethargy, stress, material and moral losses, displacement or various health problems in individuals. While all of these are experienced by many disaster victims, their devastating effects can be more profound, especially for those who are considered as marginalized or disadvantaged. For this reason, the advocacy of social work practices in this field come to the fore (Ceyhan, 2023, p. 780). Considering that material losses can be compensated over time, it is of primary importance to focus on the moral losses of individuals and intervene in emerging behavioral or personality disorders. Because if no intervention is made at this point, this situation may lead to other negative effects in the future, such as sleep

disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and cardiovascular system disorders. For this reason, the most important support to be given after a disaster is considered psychosocial support. Psychosocial support given to disaster victims does not only cover the first moments of the disaster. However, it rather requires long-term case management and a holistic approach. In fact, at this point, other state institutions or non-governmental organizations can be activated by inter-institutional cooperation when necessary (Aykut and Soner Aykut, 2020, pp. 60- 62).

The Role of Social Work in Disaster and Crisis Management

Natural disasters are events that are likely to occur whenever and wherever humanity exists. Disaster management is defined as the set of activities that start before the disaster and continue during and after the disaster in order to eliminate the possible damages that may occur after natural disasters and reduce their effects. One of the most important components of disaster management is the social service interventions carried out by social workers. Social workers are experts who have the necessary equipment and knowledge to reduce and prevent disaster risk. In addition to taking on protective-preventive, rehabilitative and educational roles due to disasters, professionals also play a very active role in disasters with effective case management, planning and consultancy services. By making a plan specific to each individual's needs and situation, social workers can manage disaster-related cases very effectively and take actions to prevent possible crises (Ceyhan, 2023, p. 780-781; Kamrujjaman et al., 2018; Naturale, 2007). On the other hand, social workers can also take on an advocacy role after disasters for the purpose of facilitating disaster and crisis management and raising awareness. In this regard, for example, Tapan (2023, p. 20) aimed to make a socio-political contribution after the disaster by taking on an advocacy role as both a disaster survivor and a social worker after the February 6 earthquakes.

As it is known, Türkiye is a geography prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, and fires. In particular, the fact that the continent it is located on is relatively young shows

that it is more prone to seismographic movements, that is, earthquakes. The earthquakes experienced on February 6 are the two biggest examples of this in the last century. Social service practices are of particular importance in geographies where such large earthquakes occur. Because, as Kök (2023, p. 9) states, the larger the geography where the disaster occurs, the more difficult it is to coordinate social service practices after the disaster. Thus, it is very important to plan post-disaster social service practices very well in such large geographies. In this context, the first step that needs to be taken is to identify possible crises in advance and plan measures for them.

Social services act as a crucial reference point for minimizing the problems caused by disasters, both before and after they strike. However, in order to achieve this, it is necessary to create an organizational order and ensure crisis management (Kök, 2023). Crisis management in disasters covers all interventions and services provided before, during and after the disaster. This is simply called integrated disaster management (Altun, 2016, p. 184). Tapan (2023, p. 25) offered several suggestions regarding disaster and crisis management after the recent February 6 earthquakes. These can be summarized as follows: First of all, the withdrawal of disadvantaged groups to safe areas, the equal distribution of resources to the clients, the uninterrupted provision of services by ensuring the cooperation of non-governmental and public organizations, and the provision of consultancy regarding grief and therapy processes to disaster victims who have lost their relatives. In addition to all these, medical social work practices are also extremely important. Within the scope of medical social work, on-site interventions are provided in a health institution in the region where the disaster occurs, or, if there is no such opportunity, in field hospitals established. Social workers fulfill key roles in macro, meso and micro sense in hospitals and health institutions through case management, advocacy roles and various interventions (Karaağaç, 2023, p. 1163).

Problems Encountered by Social Workers in Disasters

Research on the impact of social workers during disasters is among the understudied topics (Kranke et al., 2020). However, there are very few studies on how professionals cope with the stress of being exposed to disasters (Cronin, Ryan, & Brier, 2007, p. 370; Naturale, 2007). Being a social service provider in disasters sometimes creates certain areas of struggle. These can be grouped under several headings: The first of these is the level of emotional and psychological impact of disasters on social workers. Secondly, the social worker becomes physically tired or worn out. Thirdly, the social worker is also a supportive victim. The last one is the lack of adequate planning and coordination in disaster situations. All of these are also critical important factors that can lead to wear and tear, called secondary trauma. Adding to the previous point, while social workers possess considerable training and dedication, some emotional and psychological aspects of being human can inevitably challenge even the most skilled professional. In recent years, studies have begun to explore this phenomenon, and the concept of 'compassion fatigue' has emerged to aptly describe this experience. In recent years, studies have begun to be carried out on this subject, and the concept of "compassion fatigue" has come to explain this expression. As stated by Türk and Kaya (20203), compassion fatigue occurs when social workers listen to clients and establish empathy and intense bonding with their losses, pain, and difficulties they face. As a result, the social worker's energy may be depleted, resulting in a condition called compassion fatigue. For example, in a study researchers conducted with social service workers after the February 6 earthquakes, they examined the effect of practitioners' compassion fatigue on their psychological resilience and found that the secondary traumas experienced significantly negatively affected the psychological state of the employees (Türk and Kaya, 2023, pp. 86-87). Compassion fatigue or secondary traumas refer to social workers experiencing the same types of symptoms experienced by traumatized clients. Distress effects such as insomnia, nightmares,

stomach aches, headaches, fatigue, memory loss, and sadness are examples of a few of the physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral domains of the secondary traumatic stress experience (Naturale, 2007).

The second problem faced by social service providers is also related to the first problem mentioned above. Particularly due to compassion fatigue or secondary traumas, the service provider may occasionally neglect their own needs. This brings about physical exhaustion as well as emotional exhaustion (Türk and Kaya, 2023, p.86). AFAD has prepared a guide for emergency and disaster workers on this subject and stated what employees should pay attention to. The guide recommends, employees should allocate time for themselves to rest, not forget to take care of their own needs while taking care of those who ask for help, pay attention to nutrition and sleep, etc. (AFAD, 2023). Thirdly, one of the problems faced by employees is that social workers and managers in disaster environments are also affected by the disaster and the increase in disaster-related needs (Cronin, et al., 2007, p. 378). This situation emerged more clearly with the February 6 earthquakes, and social service workers experienced mental, physical and emotional fatigue due to the fact that they had to serve as disaster victims themselves. However, it can be said that there are not enough studies on this subject.

The last one is that the planning and programs between institutions, individuals or institutions and individuals are not framed well enough. Lack of coordination here can negatively affect both the psychology and working conditions of social workers. For this reason, the coordinated and rotating work of social service workers is very important and functional. In a study conducted on this subject within the scope of the Covid-19 disaster, Şahin Taşgın and Bürüngüz (2021) interviewed social workers who worked in medical social work departments in institutions, municipalities and hospitals affiliated with the Ministry of Family and Social work in Istanbul, and as a result of the study, coordination between institutions was determined. They stated that employees made risky decisions using their own initiative due to reasons such as lack of resources and lack of a flow procedure on what to do in case

of a possible disaster. Considering all these together, during disasters, it is essential for social workers to both cooperate with their teams and practice personal care in order to work most effectively on behalf of their clients (Kranke, et al., 2020).

Hatay Case Study on Social Work Practices in Disasters

Research Method, Research Process and Research Field

Qualitative case study method was used in the study examining the effectiveness of social work practices in Hatay, an earthquake region. This method is used to understand and evaluate the facts through the experiences and opinions of the participants (Creswell, 2015). Within the scope of qualitative research, the interview technique has the feature of facilitating the acquisition of rich data (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). The interview technique has some advantages compared to other research techniques. The advantageous aspects include providing the opportunity to better understand the thoughts, experiences and approaches of the participants, to continue the interview more flexibly and fluently, and to provide guidance when necessary (Merriam, 2009). Researchers should take into account the positive and negative aspects of each technique when choosing a method and shape the research within this framework (Punch, 2005).

In this research, the interview technique, one of the qualitative research methods, was preferred. Semi-structured interview forms were prepared to evaluate the effectiveness of social work practices after the earthquake. In Hatay, the province most affected by the earthquake in Turkey, tent cities and container cities where earthquake victims stayed were visited, and the activities and practices of social service workers working in these areas were observed on-site. The interviews were generally held in a conversational environment in front of tents or containers. No social service worker was forced to interview and only those who were willing were interviewed. The questions in the interview form, where the participants were not interrupted, were directed as part of the

conversation. Personal identification information was handled in accordance with all relevant data privacy regulations, ensuring complete anonymity for participants. In this study, where the effects of social work practices during the earthquake were investigated, Hatay Province was chosen as the field. This choice was influenced by the fact that Hatay, which has enough cultural and architectural knowledge to host many different civilizations historically, is also the city that suffered the most destruction in the earthquake and is accessible to researchers for observation and interviews.

Demographic Features

Within the scope of the research, interviews were held with 30 people who were experts and experienced in their fields and who worked in Hatay during the earthquake. The participants were reached through personal contacts and snowball sampling method. 16 of the participants in the research were women and 14 were men. Each interview lasted an average of 40-50 minutes, and all interviews were deciphered by the researcher. Data continued to be collected until saturation was achieved. All participants are university graduates and have at least a bachelor's degree. The age range varies from 24 to 42. When the participants were asked about their professions, 19 people answered as Social Worker, 6 people as Psychologist, 2 as Psychological Counsellor, 2 as Sociologist and 1 as Rehabilitation Specialist. Professional experience periods vary between 1 year and 12 years. Duty periods in the earthquake zone vary between 2 weeks and 7 months. While 5 of the interviewed participants stated that they were from Hatay, the remaining 25 people expressed that they came from different provinces of Türkiye on assignment or as volunteers. 10 of the participants work in non-governmental organizations and 20 people work in various public institutions. The following questions were asked in general during the interviews: How did you decide to come to the Hatay? Can you tell us about the first sight and feelings you encountered when you came to Hatay, the earthquake zone? Could you separately evaluate the difficulties and conveniences

experienced while operating in the earthquake zone?

Although the general answer to the questions about what field they worked in the earthquake zone was psychosocial support, they declared that they tried to help in every aspect needed in the field. They put forward opinions that, in addition to psychosocial support, they tried to take part in needs assessment, advocacy, guidance, education, hygiene provision, access to resources support, coordination, communication, and all kinds of social service activities imaginable. Frankly, field observations during the interviews also support this claim. The table includes gender, age, profession, professional experience, length of duty in the earthquake region, provinces of origin, mission area in the earthquake region, and working organization (NGO/Governmental). In the parentheses after the participant statements, the participant code (P1, P2, ..), gender (F/M) and age categories are given.

Research Findings

Findings Regarding Earthquake Experience

In the interview form developed to investigate social service activities in Hatay during the February 6 earthquake, the activities related to the earthquake experience consist of questions about the participants' opinions before the activity. In this context, the participants' reasons for choosing Hatay among the eleven provinces considered to be earthquake regions, their first impressions about the effects of the earthquake and the parts it affected the most, and their opinions about the reasons for the extreme destruction caused by the earthquake were investigated. The common point of the topics researched in this section is that the participants provide information about the working environment they encounter before they even start the activity. Such an approach also explains the field climate that affects the opinions of social workers. During the earthquake, the intervention of people who are experts in their fields, knowledgeable, equipped and experienced in every field is extremely important. It is known that such interventions make significant contributions to the reduction of risks and losses in

Tablo 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant Code	Gender	Age	Working Organization (NGO/Governmental)	Work Experience	Job	Earthquake Mission Time	Province of Origin	Mission Area
P1	Female	24	NGO	1 Year	Social Worker	2 Week	Manisa	Social Support and Guidance
P2	Male	32	Governmental	11 Year	Social Worker	3 Month	Hatay	Outreach and Review
P3	Male	28	Governmental	5 Year	Social Worker.	2 Month	Kocaeli	Needs Identification/ Guidance
P4	Male	27	Governmental	3 Year	Social Worker.	2 Month	Kütahya	Coordination and Direction
P5	Female	36	Governmental	12 Year	Psychologist	5 Month	Hatay	Psychosocial Support
P6	Male	36	Governmental	8 Year	Social Worker	3 Month	Zonguldak	Household Scanning / Direction
P7	Male	32	NGO	1 Year	Social Worker.	3 Week	Zonguldak	Psychosocial Support
P8	Female	27	NGO	3 Year	Psychologist	2 Week	Sakarya	Psychosocial Support
P9	Female	43	NGO	21 Year	Social Worker.	2 Week	Tekirdağ	Needs Identification/ Guidance
P10	Male	34	NGO	10 Year	Social Worker.	2 Week	Ordu	Family Social Support
P11	Male	26	NGO	1 Year	Social Worker.	2 Week	Ordu	Psychosocial Support
P12	Female	38	NGO	7 Year	Sociologist	2 Week	Kayseri	Household Scanning / Direction
P13	Female	27	Governmental	4 Year	Psychological Cou.	1 Month	Konya	Psychosocial Support
P14	Male	25	NGO	1Year	Psychologist	3 Week	Kayseri	Psychosocial Support
P15	Female	27	NGO	3 Year	Social Worker	3 Week	Konya	Outreach and Review
P16	Female	25	NGO	1 Year	Psychologist	2 Week	Samsun	Psychosocial Support
P17	Female	36	Governmental	12 Year	Psychologist	1 Month	Çorum	Psychosocial Support
P18	Female	29	Governmental	5 Year	Psychological Cou.	7 Month	Hatay	Psychosocial Support
P19	Male	33	Governmental	7 Year	Social Worker	3 Month	Bayburt	Needs Identification/ Guidance
P20	Female	26	Governmental	1,5 Year	Social Worker.	3 Month	Mersin	Outreach and Review
P21	Female	26	Governmental	4 Year	Social Worker.	2 Month	Bilecik	Psychosocial Support
P22	Male	33	Governmental	8 Year	Sociologist	4 Month	Adana	Social Support and Guidance
P23	Male	28	Governmental	3 Year	Social Worker.	2 Month	Adana	Psychosocial Support
P24	Female	29	Governmental	6 Year	Social Worker	3 Month	Osmaniye	Coordination and Direction
P25	Female	28	Governmental	2 Year	Rehabilitation Spec.	7 Month	Hatay	Disabled Care/ Rehabilitation
P26	Male	31	Governmental	9 Year	Social Worker	2,5 Month	İstanbul	Household Scanning / Direction
P27	Male	42	Governmental	16 Year	Psychologist	7 Month	Hatay	Psychosocial Support
P28	Male	38	Governmental	10 Year	Social Worker	3 Month	İstanbul	Social Support and Guidance
P29	Female	35	Governmental	11 Year	Social Worker	7 Month	Hatay	Family Social Support
P30	Female	25	Governmental	4 Year	Social Worker	3 Month	İzmir	Education / Direction

earthquakes and to the recovery and normalization processes. On the other hand, it is evaluated that the profession, especially that of those working in the field of social work, has extremely high feelings of empathy and compassion and is very related to human love and spirituality. As a matter of fact, social workers who heard about the earthquake

disaster that took place on February 6, 2023, took immediate action, and tried to support the earthquake victims in every field where they were needed. A small portion of the social workers interviewed did not leave the earthquake zone while they were already living in Hatay and took

it upon themselves to immediately participate in the process and contribute. A large number of them came from different provinces of Türkiye and tried to take part in every possible activity of social service. When asked why they chose to work in the Hatay region during the earthquake, the interviewees stated that they turned to the region with the most destruction out of a sense of professional and humanitarian responsibility.

I was working in Hatay before the earthquake. I was in a position to easily go to another province. I chose to stay in Hatay. The magnitude of the disaster here was enormous. I could not leave the city where I was born and raised. I chose to stay in Hatay because it has moral advantages and to get social support from my family. My wife and family relatives live in Hatay. This is the land where I was born and raised, I grew up here, I received education from the schools of this place, I blended in with the people of this place, and in my opinion, this place needed the service the most in the period after the earthquake (P18, F, 29). Driven by a desire to help I wanted to help the relatives of our citizens who lost their lives in the earthquake and our injured citizens, and everyone who experienced that pain there, and I had friends in the Hatay region, I received information from them about what was happening and the situations in which I could help, and I decided to go (P16, F, 25). When I chose the department, I studied the PDR department in order to heal people, to support people who are in a difficult situation and in a difficult mood, to be with them and to accompany them on that journey. Again, the institution I work at serves this very well. We work with disadvantaged groups. When the earthquake happened, I tried to empathize with the people there directly. No matter what, I go and do my best; For example, carry a napkin? Feeling like doing even that would be good for me, my friend, and I volunteered (P13, F, 27).

Participants took action immediately after the earthquake, yet they stated that they had serious difficulties in transportation to the Hatay region, that transportation was extremely difficult, and that the difficulty of transportation in these conditions competing against time disrupted their support activities. When they reached the region, they stated that they were shocked by the scene they encountered, that despite all their experience (a significant percentage of the interviewees stated

that they had worked in pandemics, floods and regional earthquakes), they had never encountered such a disaster before and observed that there was no stone left unturned in the city.

While we were going by plane, Hatay Airport was closed, so we landed at Gaziantep Airport and from there we took the shuttle to Hatay. For these reasons, it was a long, tiring and stressful journey. There were cracks in the roads, and the roads were closed in some places. There was an extraordinary crowd. Vehicles bringing aid supplies, ambulances, funeral vehicles and every kind of vehicle you can think of were on the roads. The road trip, which was supposed to take two hours, took about ten hours, and this tested our patience very much (P26, M, 31).

We arrived late at night and the sight we saw on our way to our duty area in the morning horrified us because there was no building that was not destroyed, we realized that 100% of the city was destroyed and it was worse than what was seen on the screens, it made us feel helpless. I felt great sadness and fear, everyone needed help, it was dark everywhere and it was raining (P9, F, 43). All the buildings around me were destroyed, voices calling for help were coming from the houses and I felt a great sadness, I felt helpless and powerless because I couldn't do anything (P3, M, 28).

The late arrival of aid and the increasing number of deaths every day caused me deep anxiety (P30, F, 25). Participants gave similar answers to questions about the causes of the earthquake, making sense of the material and moral losses experienced, and the segments most affected by the earthquake. It has been seen that there is almost a consensus that earthquake is a geological natural event, unpredictable and unpreventable, but if the necessary precautions are taken, the loss of life and material losses can be reduced and social damage can be minimized.

It was a long-awaited earthquake anyway, Hatay is a 1st degree earthquake zone, after all, but I never thought it would be this destructive and cause loss of life. Of course, I believe in fate, but believing in fate does not prevent me from taking precautions (P5, F, 36). Hatay is a region known to have been destroyed seven times in history. I am surprised that we live in a geography full of fault lines and are so unprepared and confused for an earthquake. I prefer to approach natural disasters as a whole. How prepared were we? If the buildings had been built to withstand severe

earthquakes, would we have suffered so many losses (K29, F, 35)? I think an earthquake is a natural disaster, but such a loss of life and property is imprudence. P11, M, 26). Earthquake is a natural disaster. Earthquakes cannot be prevented, but precautions can be taken by foreseeing what will happen afterwards. I attribute the material and moral losses mostly to lack of precaution, and I feel sad (P22, M, 33).

On the other hand, it was stated that the entire population of the region, especially the most vulnerable groups, was affected by the earthquake. Children, disabled people and families with disabled individuals, women, immigrants, and poor citizens had to deeply experience all kinds of negativities of the earthquake. They stated that especially children would not be able to recover from the earthquake disaster and the shock of losing their homes and relatives due to the earthquake for a long time, so they made the greatest effort in this field as social workers.

I think the group most affected by the earthquake is children. Because they are defenseless and in need of protection. They follow the path their families have drawn for them (P16, F, 25). Families of disabled people and chronic patients are the ones most affected by the earthquake. They suffer a lot because they cannot escape easily during an earthquake and have difficulty finding medical supplies after the earthquake (P25, F, 28). Disabled and elderly individuals and their relatives are the groups most affected by the earthquake. While providing home care services is challenging even under normal conditions, this becomes almost impossible when the most basic needs are not met (P4, M, 27). Children are most affected by earthquakes. Such traumatic events experienced during psychosocial development stages can cause permanent problems in adulthood (P21, F, 26).

Findings Regarding Activities, Difficulties and Inadequacies in the Earthquake Region

In this section, where the activities carried out in the earthquake zone were investigated, the participants were asked questions about in which area they carried out their activities and for how long, the difficulties, facilities and inadequacies experienced in this process. In addition, they were asked to convey, with their field experiences, the

factors required to make social service activities in the earthquake zone more effective and efficient. Social work practices in natural disasters such as earthquakes primarily aim to meet the urgent needs of the society and provide support. In this context, the most common types of social service practices in the disaster literature are disaster shelters, psychosocial support, meeting basic needs, community education, family reunification, support for the disabled, and legal consultancy services. Disaster shelters are established during or after the earthquake, and social service workers in these places provide shelter, basic needs and psychosocial support to the victims. Psychosocial support includes support services provided to help people affected by the earthquake cope with post-traumatic stress. This practice may include counseling, group therapy or support groups. Meeting the basic needs of earthquake victims such as food, water, clothing and medical aid is also considered a type of social service activity. Social workers identify these needs and provide access to help. Community education includes informing individuals about earthquake preparedness and emergency plans. This application is an important social service application in terms of helping people learn how to be prepared for an earthquake. Family reunification is a social service practice that provides assistance in reuniting and communicating with family members who were separated during an earthquake, thus minimizing social damage. Within the scope of support for the disabled, disabled individuals are provided with assistance for their special needs and their integration with society is supported. Legal consultancy is a type of social service practice that includes assistance and consultancy services regarding the legal rights and insurance claims of earthquake victims. Social work professionals adapt, increase or decrease their practices according to local conditions and needs.

The Ministry of Family and Social Work stated that they reached more than 3 million citizens in the earthquake zone with many social service practices such as psychosocial support, psychological first aid and coordination of in-kind aid, and that they showed that the state stands by its citizens, and that they carried out social service activities in the

field with more than 12 thousand personnel. It was also emphasized that among these personnel there were social workers who worked devotedly in the field, even though they were earthquake victims themselves (Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2023a). The Ministry also prepares social service projects for earthquake-affected citizens who have gone abroad temporarily, and within the scope of the projects, psychologists, psychological counselors, social workers, and child development experts provide family seminars, psychosocial trainings, and historical-cultural trips, separately for adults and children. Within the scope of the projects stated that improvement activities will be organized. In addition, it is also stated that with the project, which aims to reduce the negative effects of the earthquake on citizens, Turkish families residing in Germany and whose relatives come from the earthquake area will be informed about how to approach their relatives affected by the earthquake and what they should pay attention to (Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2023b).

During the earthquake disaster in Hatay, social service experts and employees declared that they contributed to many social service activities. Education, rehabilitation, consultancy, guidance, needs assessment and access to services, especially the psychosocial support services mentioned above, are among the leading activities. The issue frequently mentioned in the interviews with the participants was that the social service personnel operating in the earthquake zone were involved in almost every issue and every social service practice and that they made an effort for this.

I worked in the psychosocial support team in the earthquake zone for 1 week in Antakya, 1 month in Kirikhan, and 3-4 months in the Hassa region. Home visits, individual interviews, psychoeducation and other trainings, activities, children's activities, sports, culture, etc. I worked in all activities (P10, M, 34). I worked in the Children's Services Unit, Women's Services Unit, and Socioeconomic Support Units (P22, M, 33). I worked for weeks in the field of household screening and social activities for children in the container city where we were assigned as the Ministry (P29, F, 35). We worked with both children and families. For example, tents were set up in Antakya. We were going to those tents and doing activities with the children, but we also tried to reach the children who

could not reach them and set up tents with them and support those children. We played games and did activities, and apart from that, we reached the families by visiting the villages and neighborhoods of Samandağ. We asked about their needs and tried to help in terms of psychosocial support (P8, F, 43). We were assigned to the villages and neighborhoods of the provinces or districts to which we had been assigned, and also to container cities. We worked in children's areas, we worked in elderly areas, we helped people with disabilities, home care, individuals in need of socioeconomic support, families and even people trying to reach tents and other shelter needs. We had to not only work in one field but also work outside our own field. Because our employees were affected by the situation at some point, we tried to provide psychosocial support to them (P15, F, 27).

A number of difficulties have been encountered in social work practices in the earthquake zone. Such challenges are inherent in disaster and the social work profession. Access difficulties, emergency coordination, resource shortage, mental problems, communication problems and housing problems stand out as the most frequently encountered difficulties. During earthquakes, infrastructure may be damaged and road and communication networks may be interrupted. This makes it difficult for social service teams to reach affected areas and provide assistance. Since earthquakes often require the participation and intervention of more than one organization, they can lead to lack of coordination and conflicting relief efforts. Earthquakes can require a large number of resources quickly. Social work teams face challenges in the field with inadequate funding or understaffing. On the other hand, earthquakes can cause traumatic events and psychological problems may be common among affected individuals. Social workers also have to deal with such situations. Damage to the communication infrastructure makes it difficult to find missing people and convey requests for help. Many people may become homeless during earthquakes. In such cases, social service teams may have to intervene with rapid planning and implementation to meet temporary shelter and settlement needs. To overcome all these challenges, good preparation, quick response and effective coordination are important. In this context, social service teams

during earthquakes are of critical importance for the well-being of society. Most of the difficulties expressed were also confirmed by social service workers operating in the Hatay region.

As difficulties there was a major organizational problem. Inter-institutional communication was not possible because their phones did not have reception. Since everyone came from outside, they did not know the environment or the staff (P12, F, 38). We visited households in the village in Antakya, but they could not go to the unvisited villages due to bad roads (P5, F, 36). It was very tiring for us to work with a small number of people in the units due to the concentration of applicants to work in the earthquake zone and our colleagues being on administrative leave or passing away. It became very difficult for those of us who were directly exposed to the earthquake to provide psychosocial support. We were sleep deprived, we were sleeping little, we were working all the time, so we were very tired, but frankly, we did not feel so tired because we saw people in those conditions (P29, F, 35). I was staying in a tent city with foreign nationals in the earthquake zone. I had difficulty communicating with adults. Because we don't speak the same language. There was no problem with the children either, they were just too crowded, maybe we can say this as a problem (P7, M, 32). During the activities, we had difficulties in directing them to other government institutions. There was a bit of a coordination problem. Lack of living spaces, people's general psychology, dirty air due to demolition, difficulties in accessing basic services, difficulties experienced in the field (P14, M, 25).

In order for social service activities to be effective and efficient in the earthquake zone, factors such as preparation and planning, cooperation and coordination, human resources, communication, resources, public participation, training and capacity development, psychosocial support, and rapid response come to the fore. Detailed preparation and planning must be made for effective service delivery before, during and after the earthquake. Emergency plans, training, drills and scenario development are important at this stage. Effective cooperation and coordination should be ensured between different institutions, non-governmental organizations, local governments and other stakeholders. This factor is vital as it allows services to be provided without

conflict. Competent and sufficient human resources such as social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and guidance specialists must be available. These professionals significantly accelerate the healing process through the provision of psychosocial support during crisis periods. Personnel who can communicate effectively with the public and have crisis communication training are required. It is critical to inform and guide the public. Physical resources such as equipment, materials, financial resources and accommodation facilities are extremely important in supporting the effectiveness of service delivery. Community involvement and feedback help tailor services to meet needs. Social work professionals and other crisis management personnel should be regularly trained and kept up to date. The psychosocial needs of earthquake victims should be focused on and emotional support should be provided. It is vital to act quickly and in a coordinated manner immediately after an earthquake to have the potential to minimize loss of life and damage. In the interviews, social service workers operating in the Hatay region also put forward opinions that these factors would significantly increase the effectiveness and efficiency level of social work practices.

More human resources are required. Individuals working in the field (like me) should be supported in training and many issues (P24, F, 29). I think we need more Social Workers and Psychologists and concrete activities that will revive hope in people (P18, F, 29). As an employee in the earthquake zone, I also need psychosocial support and I request that support be provided in this regard (P2, M, 32). Institutions such as family social work, Afad and Red Crescent need to work in cooperation and coordination (P10, M, 34).

Findings Regarding Expectations and Predictions for the Future

Although the expectations and predictions of social workers about the future after the earthquake are different, it is possible to reach certain conclusions based on common points. First of all, after the earthquake, there is an increase in the psychosocial and basic needs of the society, and social workers are expected to work harder to

meet these increasing needs. Secondly, social workers' crisis management skills become even more important. As earthquakes and other natural disasters increase in frequency, experts' skills in emergency response improve and become more efficient. Thirdly, social workers are expected to focus on education and awareness activities to increase society's preparedness for disasters. Fourthly, the importance of closer cooperation and coordination with other institutions, local governments and non-governmental organizations for post-earthquake service delivery is understood. Fifthly social workers can improve service delivery by using technologies such as communication and data analytics more effectively. Sixthly it should not be forgotten that social workers working in post-earthquake services may themselves be under stress. Therefore, it is important for them to be well and get support. Finally, post-earthquake societies have long-term recovery and reconstruction needs. Social workers also play an active role in this process. These insights reflect the challenges and opportunities social workers may face to more effectively respond to the needs of post-earthquake communities. On the other hand, the predictions and expectations for the general society that experienced the earthquake are hopeful that the situation will improve day by day, the wounds will be healed and the material and moral, economic, psychological and social damages will be compensated over time.

I hope that more effective and effective work will be carried out in the future. More effective psychosocial support should be provided by taking into account the psychology of the personnel working in the field (P18, F, 29). As far as I understand, the process will not work any faster than this. But my hope is that a city can be built that will not cause such destruction again (K1, K, 24). I hope that our state will heal the wounds quickly and we will get back on our feet (P22, M, 33). I think that those traumas, those damages, those psychological injuries are not things that will go away easily, we need to give great support as a society, we need to heal the wounds of those people before building a house, buying a car (P8, F, 27). I think people there always need social support. I think part-time assignments from here should be done a little more intensively. Appointed personnel must receive training

on how to treat individuals affected by disaster (K15, K, 27). I do not know how other ministries and other institutions of the state will work professionally.

However, our ministry stated that it will continue psychosocial support. My personal expectation is that in a very short time, people's important needs such as basic shelter, basic security, basic clothing, eating and drinking, and access to food, as well as strengthening and finally access to social services, will be met... I hope my expectations will come true in a very short time (K29, K, 35). In the next period, I hope earthquake-resistant buildings will be built and those in need will not be victimized, especially the demographic structure in Hatay was an example for our whole country, I hope it does not change (P27, M, 42).

Participants working in the field of social work in Hatay had a significant change in their lives before and after the earthquake, they began to value their loved ones much more, they tended to live life minimally, they realized that making others unhappy for financial reasons causes suffering that affects the whole society. This experience heightened their sensitivity and instilled a sense of caution towards natural disasters and their impact. They stated that it is necessary to be more sensitive and cautious about this issue.

I learned to live life minimally. Because I still feel the nothingness of having such a bond with matter when even the breath, we take does not belong to us (P12, F, 38). Material possessions lost their importance and enjoying the moment became important (P14, M, 25). After the earthquake, I learned how valuable my loved ones and the life I live are (P26, M, 31). I changed, my environment changed, it deeply shook my perspective on life (P4, M, 27). I did not have much experience with the suffering before the earthquake, and I experienced the psychological difficulties of working in disasters (P16, F, 25). Nothing is the same anymore, we lost our home and many of our relatives, and we still experience post-traumatic stress symptoms (P5, F, 36).

Discussion

Social service in disasters encompasses a range of activities, including providing emergency shelter, food assistance, and mental health counseling to individuals and groups affected by disasters. In the literature, it is seen that international studies on disaster and social service activities are more

intense than national studies. It is noted that these studies, which mainly focus on social service activities carried out during and after disasters such as earthquakes, fires, hurricanes and finally pandemics, are generally compatible with the findings of this research on social service activities carried out during the February 6 Hatay earthquake. In the Wenchuan earthquake that occurred in China, Huang, Zhou, and Wei (2011) particularly highlighted the healing dimension of social work activities. Frankly, the findings of this research conducted in Hatay point to the same direction. They stated that the medical support, social support and psychosocial activities provided by social service workers aim to improve the physical and mental health of earthquake victims and thus increase their motivation for life. During the Marmara Earthquake, qualified social workers were needed to provide aid and support services in the field. These experts give hope to disaster victims and help them look to the future more optimistically. Hope motivates disaster victims and supports them in achieving their goals, especially in such periods (Javadian, 2007; İbiş and Kesgin, 2014). In his study, Zakour (2008) emphasized the importance of social service workers in creating resources for social work activities in disasters and making these resources accessible to disaster victims. The study carried out in Hatay, the earthquake region, spent weeks and months of household screening, needs assessment and meeting the identified needs for the same purposes. Similar findings emerged in the study conducted by Wong (2018), which touched upon the importance of social service workers during disasters. In their article, Artan and Özkan (2020) focused on the importance of social work and the roles of social workers in disasters and reached similar findings. Another study addressing social work activities at the individual, group and community levels with disaster and post-disaster dimensions was conducted by Alstone, Hazeleger and Hargreaves (2019). The findings of the study are similar to the findings of this study conducted in Hatay, but the activities in Hatay were organized as a whole rather than separately at micro, mezzo and macro levels. The situations of vulnerable groups with unique and special needs were of course considered and support activities

were continued within special programs. Studies by Aydın (2012) and Altun (2016), focusing on the situation of vulnerable groups in disasters, also reached similar findings and highlighted the importance of social service interventions for risk groups. Tuncay (2004), who made significant contributions to the literature with his book titled "Social Service in Disasters, Social Work Practices Realized After the 1999 Marmara and Bolu-Düzce Earthquakes", revealed the nature and characteristics of the social services activated during the earthquake and the difficulties experienced by social service workers during disasters. The findings highlighted in the work are almost the same as the findings in this study conducted in Hatay. As social service intervention, primarily psychosocial support, need identification, access to resources, education, rehabilitation, taking into account the special needs of vulnerable groups, and household screening are the prominent social service intervention areas in both studies. On the other hand, the difficulties experienced by social workers in the earthquake zone such as inadequacy of human resources, inadequacy of space to carry out activities, working for excessive hours, and as a result of all these, the inability to maintain their own well-being stand out as common findings of field studies.

After the disaster, it is extremely important for social service workers who will serve in the regions affected by the disaster to be protected from the psychological effects of the disaster and to be able to continue their professional work effectively (Tuncay, 2004; İbiş and Kesgin 2016). In order to continue their work effectively, rescue personnel must be well prepared, otherwise emotional trauma renders them ineffective (Waeckerle, 1991; İbiş and Kesgin 2016). As a matter of fact, in this study conducted in Hatay, a significant portion of social service workers in the earthquake area stated that they experienced difficulties in protecting their mental health and that they especially needed psychosocial support. Similar findings emerged in Aktaş's (2003) study, in which he investigated how social work intervention would be in crisis situations, the steps of intervention, and the interventions to be carried out at the social level. In a study comparing the

Van and Marmara earthquakes in terms of social service activities, it is evaluated that the special needs of vulnerable groups (especially children, women and disabled people) were not adequately addressed and the desired level of psychosocial support was not reached (Altun, 2016; Tapan, 2023). This situation is partially compatible with this research. The reason the incident is still fresh in Hatay in this this sense, social support services are continuing uninterruptedly.

In his research on the actors involved in disaster management and their roles in terms of social service activities, Özçelik (2020) examined the social service activities carried out by central government organizations (ASHB, AFAD, Kızılay, UMKE etc.), local governments and non-governmental organizations in the field. The findings that all these institutions tried to support disaster victims as much as possible in a coordinated manner during the disaster are fully compatible with the findings of this research. On the other hand, İbiş and Kesgin (2014) touched upon the relationship between social work and medical rescue in their research and discussed the social service practices of the Ministry of Family and Social Services in crisis intervention in case of disaster. Findings have been reached that the implementation objectives of the Ministry and the activities carried out in Hatay are compatible. As a matter of fact, the conclusions that the Ministry entered the earthquake area with as much personnel and resources as possible and did not hesitate to make any sacrifices in supporting the earthquake victims were confirmed by social workers operating in Hatay. It was reported that there was a serious lack or inadequacy of coordination after the Marmara earthquake (Karataş, 2000; Tapan, 2023). This reveals that similar results were obtained with this study conducted in Hatay and that it is compatible with the literature.

Conclusion

Earthquakes are one of the leading disasters that have the effect of radically changing human life. The earthquake disaster that occurred in Hatay on February 6, 2023 affected the lives of all people living in the region, causing wounds that are

difficult to heal and damage that is difficult to compensate. In such incidents, social work practices are of critical importance in minimizing social damage and accelerating healing and normalization activities. In fact from the first moment the earthquake was learned, the Ministry of Family and Social Work, local administrations, non-governmental organizations and volunteer initiatives flocked to the region to provide support in the field of social work and assigned their experts and experienced officials on the subject. It is extremely valuable to make social service activities operational in the region immediately after the earthquake disaster and to carry out these activities with trained, knowledgeable and experienced staff. Because such an initiative reveals the value given to people in the region, the steps taken to reduce suffering, and the belief that the people of the region are not alone in the healing processes. On the other hand, evaluations carried out in line with the opinions and suggestions of social service experts and studies operating in the earthquake region will increase the accuracy of the steps to be taken and the policies to be produced in the field. As a result of the field interviews conducted with experts who are practitioners in the field of social work in the earthquake affected region of Hatay, many conclusions have been drawn that will guide decision makers on this issue.

During the earthquake, there were opinions that there were serious difficulties in transportation to the earthquake area, that transportation delayed arrival to the site, that access to the region could not be achieved during the very valuable hours called golden hours, and it was emphasized that alternative transportation routes should be provided to the region. It was found that there was a lack of coordination between institutions providing social services, which significantly reduced the effectiveness and efficiency of services. The environment of chaos and turmoil created by the lack of coordination has also made it difficult for earthquake-affected citizens to have access to basic needs. On the other hand, the principle of equal and fair access to humanitarian aid has been disrupted by the lack of coordination. At the point of making sense of the causes of the earthquake and earthquake losses, social workers

point out that the earthquake is a natural event and therefore cannot be prevented or predicted. However, they have a consensus that the loss of life and property can be minimized with effective measures to be taken and deterrent measures and controls to be implemented. It has been stated that if the ground surveys are scientific, the construction quality is high and durable, the damage caused by the earthquake will be much more limited. On the other hand, social work practitioners showed vulnerable groups as the segments most affected by the earthquake. It has been stated that especially children, the disabled, women, the poor and immigrants are already vulnerable, and their grievances has increased with the earthquake.

It is possible to talk about a consensus among social workers that for social service activities in the disaster area to be more effective and efficient, a serious preparation process, sufficient human resources in terms of quality and quantity, sufficient financing, and physical space to carry out the activities, and social support are required. The fact that the earthquake occurred in more than one province at the same time and in a very wide geography caused inadequacies, especially in terms of human resources, and therefore a decrease in the quality of social service practices. On the other hand, the problems experienced in shelter and accommodation areas in the early days of the earthquake were significantly resolved during the process. First tent cities and then container cities played an important role in this field.

It is possible to state that there is a generally optimistic approach regarding future expectations and predictions. A very significant part of the social service workers who contributed to the research put forward expectations that, as the state and society, healing processes will be carried out quickly, wounds will be healed, and a new life will be achieved with new hopes. At this point, on the one hand, physical structuring will be emphasized and solid housing and living spaces will be built and on the other hand, the psychological and social damages of the society will be repaired with other social service activities, especially the psychosocial supports.

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