



The Child's Right to Privacy Within the Framework of Disaster Journalism and Ethics: The Case of the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake

*Afet Haberciliği ve Etik Çerçevesinde Çocuğun Mahremiyet Hakkı:
Kahramanmaraş Depremi Örneği*

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ABSTRACT: The media plays a crucial role in disaster situations by generating a substantial amount of news and informing the public. While the need for information surges during such times, it is paramount that disaster reporting is conducted within the framework of ethical considerations. However, there are instances where media outlets prioritize commercial interests over ethical practices in their coverage of disasters. Examples such as disregard for the right to privacy of victims, portraying death and suffering as mere numbers, and providing unnecessary details about the deaths of victims are frequently encountered during disaster periods. This study aims to examine the news coverage about children related to the 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquake within the framework of disaster journalism and ethics, focusing on the right to privacy. A total of 556 news articles about children, published in Sabah, Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Şafak, and Sözcü newspapers during the 7-day national mourning period (February 7-13, 2023) declared after the earthquake, were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods. The findings reveal that children's privacy rights were violated through the overt publication of their identities and photographs, neglecting their best interests. The news stories often objectified children, utilizing them as instruments to amplify dramatic impact. It can be argued that these reports primarily served public interest rather than upholding public good.

Key Words: Disaster Journalism, Ethics, 6 February Kahramanmaraş Earthquake, Child, Right to Privacy.

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Öz: Medya, afet dönemlerinde yoğun bir şekilde haber üreterek kamuoyunu bilgilendirme işlevini yerine getirmektedir. Enformasyona olan ihtiyacın arttığı bu dönemlerde afet haberciliğinin etik bir anlayışla sürdürülmesi önem taşımaktadır. Ancak medyanın afet haberlerini ticari kaygılarla sunduğu ve etik ihlaller gerçekleştirdiği görülmektedir. Mağdurların mahremiyet hakkının gözetilmemesi, ölüm ve acının yalnızca bir rakamdan ibaretmiş gibi gösterilmesi, kurbanların ölümleriyle ilgili gereksiz ayrıntılara yer verilmesi gibi örneklerle afet dönemlerinde çok sık karşılaşılmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, 6 Şubat Kahramanmaraş depremi ile ilgili yapılan çocuk haberlerini afet haberciliği ve etik bağlamında ele alarak mahremiyet hakkı çerçevesinde incelemektir. 6 Şubat depreminden sonra ilan edilen 7 günlük milli yas döneminde (7-13 Şubat 2023); Sabah, Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Şafak ve Sözcü gazetelerinde yayınlanan 556 çocuk haberi nicel ve nitel içerik analizi yöntemleriyle incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda, çocukların kimlik bilgilerinin ve fotoğraflarının açık bir şekilde yayınlanarak mahremiyet haklarının ihlal edildiği ve çocuğun üstün yararının gözetilmediği tespit edilmiştir. Haberlerde çocuklar dramatik etkiyi artıracak bir haber malzemesi olarak nesneleştirilmiştir. Yapılan haberlerin kamu yararından çok kamu ilgisine yönelik olduğunu söylemek mümkündür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afet Haberciliği, Etik, 6 Şubat Kahramanmaraş Depremi, Çocuk, Mahremiyet Hakkı.

GİRİŞ

The concept of disaster has been defined as a natural, technological, or human-induced event that results in physical, economic, and social losses for all or part of society, disrupting or halting normal life and human activities, and exceeding the affected community's ability to cope with its own resources (IFRC, n.d.). In the literature, disasters are often used interchangeably or alongside terms such as "crisis," "emergency," and "catastrophe." However, "disaster" typically refers to natural events, while "catastrophe" denotes emergencies involving human factors. In a broader sense, these terms, often explained in conjunction with the concept of "crisis," are employed to describe adverse situations that cause significant destruction, damage, and sorrow (Akgül, 2017, p. 12). Disasters are devastating events that occur suddenly, disrupt daily life, and have widespread impacts too massive for individuals to overcome independently (Ergünay, 2000; Akgül, 2017, p. 12). Generally, disasters can be categorized into three main groups: natural, technological, and man-made. Natural disasters encompass events like earthquakes, floods, landslides, avalanches, droughts, storms, hail, tornadoes, and meteorite impacts, which are results of unpreventable natural phenomena. Technological disasters include industrial, mining, nuclear, and transportation accidents, threats to critical infrastructure, cyber threats, major fires, terrorism (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear threats), and environmental hazards. Lastly, man-made disasters encompass wars, internal conflicts, terrorist acts, mass migrations, and industrial accidents (IFRC, n.d.; AFAD, 2018, p. 61).

Among natural disasters, earthquakes stand out as one of the most devastating calamities in Turkey, leading to significant loss of life and property. Between 1900 and 2023, Turkey witnessed 269 major earthquakes. The 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, along with the 1939 Erzincan earthquake and the 1999 Gölcük-centered Marmara earthquake, inflicted the most substantial loss of life and property (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2023, p. 6). The earthquakes that

struck Kahramanmaraş on February 6, 2023, at 4:17 a.m. and 1:24 p.m., measuring 7.7 and 7.6 in magnitude respectively, impacted a vast area spanning 11 provinces and 108,812 square kilometers, primarily affecting Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, Adana, Malatya, and Adıyaman (Anadolu Agency, 2023). This disaster, recorded as the most destructive earthquake in Turkey's history due to its intensity and geographical reach, prompted a 7-day national mourning period. The aftermath saw over 48,000 fatalities, more than 120,000 injuries, and damage to over half a million buildings (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2023, p. 6). This earthquake tragedy dominated media coverage for days, generating numerous news reports. However, this period also witnessed the publication of several news articles that failed to adhere to ethical guidelines concerning disaster and disaster victim reporting. Disasters amplify the public's need for information. To meet this demand, media outlets ramp up news production during such times. Notably, children often become subjects of news coverage during disasters. However, just as in routine reporting, news stories featuring children during disasters can be ethically problematic.

This study aims to examine news reports featuring children in the context of the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquake, from the perspectives of disaster journalism and ethics, with a specific focus on the right to privacy. The research encompasses 556 news articles about children published in *Sabah*, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Yeni Şafak*, and *Sözcü* newspapers during the 7-day national mourning period (February 7-13, 2023) declared after the earthquake. These articles were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods. Guided by this overarching aim, the study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1. What is the distribution of news reports featuring children across different newspapers?
- RQ2. What are the placements of these news reports within the newspapers?
- RQ3. What are the thematic categories of these news reports?
- RQ4. Are children's identifying information disclosed in these news reports?
- RQ5. How are photographs of children utilized in these news reports?
- RQ6. What are the observed problems and ethical violations in these news reports?
- RQ7. Is children's privacy respected in these news reports?

A limited number of studies in the existing literature examine earthquake coverage through the lens of children's news. Erdem and Kaynar (2022) analyzed representations of children in television news reports covering the 2020 İzmir earthquake. Studies using Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis method have revealed that children are often reduced to object status and stereotypical representations in news coverage. Similarly, Karataş (2022), focusing on the İzmir earthquake, employed

critical discourse analysis to examine children's representation in online news outlets, finding a more dramatic tone in these outlets compared to mainstream media. Basmacı (2024) examined the coverage of the Kahramanmaraş earthquake, specifically focusing on child images published in online news outlets. This qualitative study found instances of unethical reporting practices and a tendency to portray children through stereotypical imagery focused on themes of 'miracle,' 'hope,' and 'innocence.' Ginsberg and Roberts (2020) outlined five key principles for disaster reporting, emphasizing the crucial importance of respecting the privacy of all affected individuals, particularly children. UNICEF (n.d.; 2007) also provides guidelines for reporting on children during disaster situations. These studies are significant in their focus on children's media representation in times of disaster.

1. Disaster Journalism and Ethics

While some individuals experience disasters firsthand, many witness these events through the lens of media. Disaster journalism encompasses the process of gathering and disseminating information related to natural, human-induced, or technological disasters (Houston et al., 2019, p. 592). Media has been employed throughout history to convey the impact and consequences of disasters. Daniel Defoe's "The Storm" (1704), a fictionalized account of the devastating storm that struck Britain in 1703, claiming over 8,000 lives, exemplifies the existence of journalistic narratives about disasters long before contemporary news reporting. Predating Defoe's "modern" account, storytellers like envoys, merchants, and sailors embellished the effects of disasters to captivate audiences and draw crowds (Cottle, 2014, pp. 2-3).

During disasters, stakeholders, including disaster victims, government entities, and media consumers, require access to timely and accurate information. Media outlets bear the responsibility of ensuring a reliable and truthful information flow during such critical times (Çaplı & Taş, 2010, pp. 237-251). News reports disseminated during disasters serve multiple purposes: issuing warnings about ongoing threats, highlighting government aid and relief efforts, boosting the morale of volunteers, encouraging assistance initiatives, and soliciting donations (Farhi, 2017). Scientists, aid organizations, volunteers, and government officials depend on trustworthy information from the media to respond effectively to disasters and manage the recovery process. Serving as a bridge between the government and the public, the media shapes public opinion and perception. Furthermore, its role extends beyond the immediate aftermath of disasters, playing a crucial role in raising awareness and mobilizing efforts for disaster preparedness (Akgül, 2017, p. 27). In essence, during disasters, the media performs a vital public service (Thorson, 2012, p. 74). Ethically sound disaster reporting is crucial for disseminating accurate information to the public. However, a significant portion of disaster news is driven by commercial interests and often involves ethical breaches. Clark-Ginsberg and Roberts (2020) outline five fundamental principles for ethical disaster reporting:

- **Explain the Causes:** Every disaster has an underlying story that demands reporting. To understand why a disaster occurred and how future occurrences can be prevented, it is crucial to present events within their broader context. However, in practice, disaster reporting often focuses on answering "who," "what," "where," and "when," neglecting the crucial questions of "why" and "how."

- **Identify the Affected Populations:** Disasters do not impact all segments of society equally. Factors like geographical location and access to resources create disparities in how people within a disaster zone are affected. In order to better reveal the effects of the disaster, journalists need to meet with sources from different segments. Conducting these interviews requires respect for the privacy of those affected by the disaster, particularly children, who are among the most vulnerable groups.

- **Stop Perpetuating Myths and Tropes:** During a disaster, an intense bombardment of news about situations such as looting, theft, murder, which disrupt public order and lead to outrage, takes place. However, these news stories remain at the level of rumors from time to time and do not reflect the facts. Making rumors constant and sensationally transmitting such news, the accuracy of which has not been fully proven, negatively affects both the disaster victims and the relief teams in the region. Such news that generates fear should not be published without confirmation.

- **Stick Around:** When a disaster occurs, the effects of the disaster continue for a while. The receding of floodwaters or the cessation of aftershocks does not signify the end of a disaster's impact. Challenges such as displacement, shelter, and disruptions in essential services may persist. Journalists must remain engaged with affected communities, recognizing the long-term repercussions of disasters.

- **Stop Calling Them Natural Disaster:** Not all disasters unfold solely through "natural" processes. Human activities often contribute significantly to the severity of disasters. Structural and environmental factors like poverty, unplanned urbanization, drought, and climate change exacerbate the impact of disasters and increase the likelihood of future events. Therefore, indiscriminately labeling every disaster as "natural" perpetuates the misconception that all disasters are solely natural occurrences (Clark-Ginsberg & Roberts, 2020).

During disasters, the media's tendency to prioritize short-term outcomes often leads to the rapid spread of misinformation. This phenomenon, detrimental to journalistic credibility, stems from the pressure on media outlets to generate news swiftly due to economic concerns (Akgül, 2017, p. 41). Çaplı and Taş (2010, p. 237) argue that natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes, lend themselves readily to the creation of dramatic narratives. Media plays a critical role in satisfying the public's need for information during such crises, aiming to contextualize the situation and alleviate feelings of uncertainty about the future. However, conversely, crises present media outlets with a "golden opportunity" for commercially

driven news production. This duality renders crises ethically challenging for media organizations, highlighting the tension between their social responsibility and the societal functions of news. Due to the influence of commercial interests on media practices, "news has the potential to perpetuate and exacerbate crises" (Çaplı & Taş, 2010, pp. 237-251).

In times of disaster, "conveying news accurately" is as crucial as "conveying accurate news." Discussions surrounding disaster journalism and ethics often revolve around how media outlets, driven by commercial interests, portray such events. A central ethical dilemma concerns the extent to which audiences should be exposed to the trauma inflicted by these disasters (Wahl-Jorgensen & Patti, 2013). Disaster coverage frequently exhibits instances of "bad" journalism, including: disregard for victims' privacy, reducing death and suffering to mere statistics, and providing unnecessary details about victims' deaths. Live broadcasts, in particular, can sometimes veer off course, exposing viewers to graphic and inappropriate imagery. In pursuit of higher ratings, increased clicks, or greater sales—essentially, maximizing economic gains—media outlets often prioritize sensational visuals and dramatic narratives over factual reporting. They may exploit the suffering of individuals who have lost loved ones, children bearing the scars of the disaster, and grief-stricken victims by presenting them as spectacles, accompanied by dramatic music, thus disregarding their privacy (Temiztürk, 2012). Journalists chasing sensational stories often prioritize their pursuit over genuine concern for the victims (Wahl-Jorgensen & Patti, 2013). Consequently, media coverage becomes more focused on the potential for profit than on the human cost of the disaster, driven by the relentless pursuit of higher ratings. While such reporting captivates audiences, it also desensitizes them to suffering. Over time, people may become indifferent to the images they see, normalizing tragedy and pain (Akgül, 2017, p. 42). Furthermore, exposure to graphic content can contribute to mental health issues, such as compassion fatigue (Üsküdar İletişim, 2023).

Another ethically problematic aspect of disaster journalism involves the uncontrolled proliferation of unverified content sourced from citizen journalists. In the current media landscape, traditional media outlets find themselves competing with citizen journalists. A significant portion of disaster news comprises amateur footage, often shared on social media by individuals directly impacted by the event, which may not adhere to ethical guidelines. The unfiltered use of such content by news organizations raises serious ethical concerns (Wahl-Jorgensen & Pantti, 2013; Milka & Warfield, 2017). An examination of how these events are portrayed in the media reveals a concerning trend: journalistic ethics are often disregarded in favor of commercial interests. Accordingly, it is possible to summarize the ethical principles that should be taken into account when making earthquake news as follows:

- Outdated images and photos should not be used in the news, image repetitions should be avoided.
- Instead of frightening, panic-inducing, sensational language, more constructive language should be used.
- In times of disaster, journalists should report in a manner befitting human dignity.
- Caution should be taken considering that there may be disturbing details when taking images of those under the wreckage and those who have been removed from the wreckage.
- It is necessary to protect the personal rights and private life of disaster victims and their relatives, and to respect the privacy of children and individuals with special needs.
- The use of children's photos and children's videos as symbols causes children to carry the traces of the trauma they have experienced throughout their lives.
- Extended close-up shots of people waiting for assistance should be avoided, considering that people may be humiliated by it.
- Journalists working in the disaster zone should not disrupt search and rescue operations, should not endanger life safety. After the earthquake, microphones should not be extended to people under the rubble, and people coming out of the wreckage should not be entered into a race to view.
- It is necessary to avoid discriminatory and otherizing discourses when making disaster news. It is more correct to share the name and age information of the disaster victim instead of expressions such as "Syrian migrant was pulled out of the wreckage" and "Afghan refugee was rescued"
- Media coverage should not be limited to images of destruction and grieving individuals. It is crucial to present a holistic view of the situation.
- When reporting on incidents of looting, theft, or violence, journalists should refrain from using language that incites further violence or conflict.
- Sensitivity is paramount when interviewing those directly affected by the disaster. Avoid insensitive questions like "How do you feel?" or "Are you in pain?" to individuals waiting for news of loved ones at disaster sites.
- Earthquake reporting should not solely revolve around numbers. Constantly updating death tolls and injury figures can desensitize audiences to the human cost of the tragedy.
- The use of dramatic music and language that amplifies feelings of helplessness and suffering should be avoided (Afet Haberciliği Rehberi, 2023; Üsküdar İletişim, 2023; Özhan et al., 2023).

2. Children's Right to Privacy in News Reporting: An Ethical Framework

Studies concerning the representation of children in the media generally fall under two main categories: child-centric journalism and journalism ethics. Child-centric

journalism, often grounded in the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), highlights the underrepresentation of children in media and argues that when they are represented, it's often as subjects of negative news. On the other hand, studies focusing on journalism ethics scrutinize how news stories involving children are presented, assessing them against ethical guidelines related to identity protection, privacy, and hate speech.

In Turkey, Article 21 of Press Law No. 5187, titled "Non-disclosure of Identity," criminalizes the publication of identifying information about individuals under 18 years of age who are either perpetrators or victims of crimes (Legislation, n.d.). However, neither the professional principles established by the Press Council nor those outlined by the Contemporary Journalists Association (ÇGD) include specific regulations regarding children (Press Council, n.d.; Contemporary Journalists Association, n.d.).

The Turkish Journalists' Rights and Responsibilities Declaration, developed by the Turkish Journalists Association (TGC), addresses children under the "Journalist's Code of Conduct" section. This section emphasizes that in cases involving crimes against children, particularly those involving sexual assault, the identities of both victims and perpetrators under 18 years of age must be protected. It explicitly prohibits the use of images, pictures, or drawings that could lead to their identification. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of obtaining permission from legal guardians before interviewing or filming children. When reporting on children, the potential impact and benefit to the public should be carefully considered. These principles approach children as both subjects and sources of news. As subjects, their privacy and identity must be shielded, particularly in cases that have entered the legal system. As sources, measures should be taken to prevent any harm that may come to them (Uzun, 2014, p. 156). The TGC's Media and Diversity Guide highlights that portraying children as victims, pitiable cases, or delinquents can contribute to their exploitation. The guide stresses that children should not be solely associated with negative narratives; their successes and achievements deserve equal attention (TGC, n.d.).

Of the newspapers included in this study's sample, the Demirören Group, which owns Milliyet and Hürriyet, outlines specific principles regarding children in its Written Press Publication Principles: "In police and judicial news, depictions of violence with graphic details and obscene language are avoided. Newspaper and magazine employees are advocates for women's and children's rights. News that may lead to discrimination, mental or physical harm, or humiliation against women and children is not permitted." (Hürriyet Kurumsal, 2018). No comparable ethical guidelines or statements were found in the other newspapers included in the sample.

Numerous international studies have examined the ways in which children are portrayed in news media. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ, 2002) asserts that children's identities should be protected unless there is a clear and compelling public interest. Likewise, the BBC's Child Protection Policy emphasizes the importance of obtaining consent from both the child and their guardian when featuring children in news reports. The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) stresses that even when identities are obscured, news organizations should refrain from using imagery that could potentially put a child at risk (Bianet, 2004). UNICEF (2007), emphasizing that every child has inherent rights that must be respected, has established ethical guidelines for reporting on children. These guidelines state that children should not be portrayed in ways that expose them to lifelong discrimination, stigmatization, or exclusion. When reporting on cases involving sexual abuse or exploitation, the child's identity and image must be protected, and details about the crime should not be disclosed. In covering traumatic events, journalists must avoid questions, approaches, and interpretations that could retraumatize the child. While there might be situations where disclosing a child's identity, name, or image serves their best interests, even in such cases, the child must be protected from potential harm and provided adequate support. When risks are high, it's advisable to present the general situation of children rather than focusing on a single individual. As evidenced, numerous principles and guidelines highlight the need for a child rights-focused approach to children's representation in news media. However, numerous examples demonstrate the violation of these ethical principles in practice. The Vietnam War, for instance, is often associated with the iconic photograph of a nine-year-old girl running naked. The ethics of publishing this photograph, particularly whether it served the child's best interests, remains a subject of debate today (UNICEF, 2007, pp. 39-115).

News reports featuring children are prevalent during disasters, raising numerous ethical concerns. Children are often presented alongside sensationalized narratives, objectified as spectacles for one-time consumption, and their stories are rarely revisited or followed up on. The media's practice of disclosing children's names and images in coverage of traumatic events like disasters and wars can perpetuate their trauma (UNICEF, n.d.). Recognizing these ethical complexities, UNICEF provides guidelines for reporting on children during disasters:

- **Prioritize the best interests of the child:** The best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in all reporting. This requires respecting the child's dignity and privacy.
- **Obtain informed consent whenever possible:** Interviewing children who have experienced trauma can have adverse effects. It's essential to obtain informed consent from the child's caregivers before engaging with them.

- **Question the necessity of disclosing a child's identity:** Carefully consider whether revealing the child's name and image is absolutely necessary for the story.
- **Always provide explanations:** When reporting on children, provide them with clear and age-appropriate explanations about the reporting process.
- **Allow children time:** Give children ample time to understand the situation, build trust, and feel comfortable with the journalist.
- **Exercise caution and verify information:** While interviewing children can provide valuable insights, it's crucial to approach their accounts with a healthy degree of skepticism and verify information through multiple sources.
- **Manage expectations:** Children who have experienced trauma may misinterpret media attention, leading to unrealistic expectations. They may experience disappointment when media interest wanes. Journalists must manage interactions with children carefully, avoiding the creation of false hope or dependence on media attention.
- **Highlight positive developments:** To mitigate the potential negative impact of trauma, report on positive developments and stories of resilience related to children affected by the disaster (UNICEF, 2007, pp. 39-115).

In conclusion, the most significant ethical violations encountered when reporting on children during disasters include: disclosing children's identities and images without respecting their privacy, reporting without obtaining informed consent from children or their guardians, and objectifying children as mere tools to enhance the dramatic impact of news stories. Therefore, it's reasonable to assert that news coverage during disasters often fails to prioritize the best interests of the child, instead catering to public interest rather than public good.

3. Purpose and Method

This study aims to examine news reports featuring children in the context of the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquake, analyzing them through the lens of disaster journalism, ethics, and the right to privacy. To achieve this aim, a total of 556 news articles published in Cumhuriyet, Hürriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Sözcü, and Yeni Şafak newspapers during the 7-day national mourning period (February 7-13, 2023) following the earthquake, were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative content analysis techniques.

For the quantitative content analysis, categories were defined based on the research questions, and a coding guide was developed to analyze the 556 news articles. The study's universe consists of all news articles published in print media during the national mourning period. The sample, however, is limited to news articles published in the selected newspapers that feature photographs of children. The selection criteria for the sample emphasized newspapers with high circulation rates representing diverse ideological perspectives.

Following the quantitative analysis, a qualitative content analysis was conducted. A new sample of 16 news articles, deemed suitable for qualitative analysis, was selected. These articles were examined in the context of journalism ethics, the right to privacy, and children, addressing the research questions: "What problems and ethical violations were observed in the news articles?" and "Was the child's right to privacy upheld?"

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Quantitative Findings

The research identified 556 news articles featuring children published across six newspapers. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of these articles by newspaper.

Table 1: Distribution of news articles featuring children by newspaper

Newspaper	Percentage and Number of News
Sabah	27.15% (151)
Hürriyet	17.98% (100)
Milliyet	17.98% (100)
Cumhuriyet	15.28% (85)
Yeni Şafak	11.15% (62)
Sözcü	10.43% (58)
Total	100% (556)

An analysis of Table 1 reveals that Sabah newspaper published the highest number of news articles featuring children, while Sözcü newspaper published the fewest. Hürriyet and Milliyet newspapers published an equal number of articles. Table 2 presents the placement of these articles within the respective newspapers. The analysis first considered the page number where the article appeared. Then, recognizing the significance of the front page, the placement of articles featured on the front page was also incorporated into the analysis.

Table 2: Placement of news articles featuring children by newspaper

Newspaper	FP* Banner headline	FP Headline	FP Below the fold	Pages 2 and 3	Inside pages (Page 4 onwards)	Back page	Total
Sabah	5.29% (8)	2.64% (4)	14.56% (22)	17.88% (27)	58.94% (89)	0.66% (1)	151
Hürriyet	3% (3)	3% (3)	6% (6)	5% (5)	83% (83)	-	100
Milliyet	-	7% (7)	2% (2)	21% (21)	68% (68)	2% (2)	100
Cumhuriyet	-	3.52% (3)	5.88% (5)	9.41% (8)	75.29% (64)	5.88% (5)	85
Yeni Şafak	-	1.61% (1)	17.74% (11)	20.96% (13)	58.06% (36)	1.61% (1)	62
Sözcü	-	1.72% (1)	6.89% (4)	53.44% (31)	36.20% (21)	1.72% (1)	58
Total	%1.97 (11)	3.41% (19)	8.99% (50)	18.89% (105)	64.92% (361)	1.79% (10)	556

* FP: Front Page

According to Table 2, a majority of the news articles featuring children were published on inside pages. A total of 80 articles (14.38%) appeared on the front pages of the newspapers, highlighting their prominence. Out of these, 11 (13.75%) were featured as headlines, while 19 (23.75%) were presented as main stories. The remaining 62.5% were placed in the middle or lower sections of the front page. All headline articles featuring children appeared in Sabah newspaper, while Milliyet newspaper had the highest number of main stories focusing on children. Table 3 presents the findings regarding the inclusion of identifying information about children in these news articles.

Table 3: Distribution of children's identifying information in news articles by newspaper

Newspaper	Full name included	Only first name	Full name not included	Total
Sabah	41.72% (63)	21.85% (33)	36.42% (55)	151
Hürriyet	33% (33)	21% (21)	46% (46)	100
Milliyet	35% (35)	16% (16)	49% (49)	100
Cumhuriyet	48.23% (41)	18.82% (16)	32.94% (28)	85
Yeni Şafak	12.9% (8)	12.9% (8)	74.19% (46)	62
Sözcü	25.86% (15)	34.48% (20)	39.65% (23)	58
Total	35.07% (195)	20.5% (114)	44.42% (247)	556

According to table 3, while children's identifying information was not included in 247 (44.42%) of the news articles, 195 (35.07%) of the articles explicitly published the children's full names. In 114 (20.5%) of the articles, only the children's first names were mentioned. These articles often used adjectives like "little," "tiny,"

or "angel" alongside the children's names. Table 4 provides details regarding the use of children's photographs in the newspapers analyzed.

Table 4: Distribution of how children are featured in photographs by newspaper

Newspapers	Face clearly visible	Out of focus	Child shown from behind	Face blurred	Total
Sabah	67.54% (102)	32.45% (49)	-	-	151
Hürriyet	78% (78)	21% (21)	1% (1)		100
Milliyet	74% (74)	26% (26)	-	-	100
Cumhuriyet	52.94% (45)	47.05% (40)	-	-	85
Yeni Şafak	80.64% (50)	19.35% (12)	-	-	62
Sözcü	58.62% (34)	41.37% (24)	-	-	58
Total	68.88% (383)	30.93% (172)	0.17% (1)	-	556

According to Table 4, 68.88% of the photographs displayed the children's faces clearly and without any obscuring. In 30.93% of the photographs, while the children's faces were not obscured, they appeared blurred or less identifiable, either due to the distance from the camera or the presence of multiple individuals in the frame. Only one photograph showed a child with their back turned, concealing their face. Notably, no photographs utilized blurring techniques to protect the children's identities. Table 5 provides information regarding the categories of news articles featuring children.

Table 5: Distribution of news article categories by newspaper

Newspapers	Rescued Child	Child Earthquake Survivor	Deceased Child	Child Volunteer/ Philanthropist	Injured Child	Unaccompanied Child	Missing Child	Symbol Child	Group Photo	Total
Sabah	47.01% (71)	25.82% (39)	8.6% (13)	6.62% (10)	9.93% (15)	-	0.66% (1)	0.66% (1)	0.66% (1)	151
Hürriyet	45% (45)	25% (25)	11% (11)	7% (7)	2% (2)	5% (5)	3% (3)	2% (2)	-	100
Milliyet	50% (50)	21% (21)	10% (10)	13% (13)	1% (1)	1% (1)	3% (3)	-	1% (1)	100
Cumhuriyet	64.7% (55)	9.41% (8)	15.29% (13)	1.17% (1)	2.35% (2)	1.17% (1)	3.52% (3)	-	2.35% (2)	85
Yeni Şafak	40.32% (25)	33.87% (21)	8.06% (5)	3.22% (2)	1.61% (1)	6.45% (4)	-	6.45% (4)	-	62
Sözcü	63.79% (37)	15.51% (9)	6.89% (4)	-	10.34% (6)	-	-	-	3.44% (2)	58
Total	50.89% (283)	22.12% (123)	10.07% (56)	5.93% (33)	4.85% (27)	1.97% (11)	1.79% (10)	1.25% (7)	1.07% (6)	556

As illustrated in Table 5, half (50.89%) of the news articles featuring children across the six newspapers analyzed belong to the "child rescued from the rubble" category. The remaining categories are as follows: child earthquake survivor (children who survived the earthquake- 22.12%), deceased child (photographs taken before the

earthquake of children who lost their lives- 10.07%), child volunteer/philanthropist (children participating in aid efforts, sending allowance money, etc. - 5.93%), injured child (children who were injured in the earthquake and hospitalized- 4.85%), unaccompanied child (children separated from their families during the earthquake- 1.97%), missing child (children reported missing by their families- 1.79%), symbolic child (children whose stories were highlighted as symbols of hope in past earthquakes- 1.25%), and group photo (photographs featuring groups of children– 1.07%).

4.2. Qualitative Findings

For the qualitative analysis, seven categories were selected, excluding the "group photo" and "unaccompanied child" categories. These two categories were deemed unsuitable for qualitative analysis and were therefore excluded from further examination. Consequently, a new sample consisting of 16 news articles from seven categories was created. These articles were examined in the context of journalism ethics, children, and the right to privacy, addressing the following research questions: "What problems and ethical violations were observed in the news articles?" and "Was the child's right to privacy upheld?"

4.2.1. Rescued Child

Almost all news articles within the "child rescued from rubble" category featured photographs where the children's faces were clearly visible, often showing them being pulled from the debris, injured. As depicted in Visual 1, some of these photographs were prominently displayed as main stories (Visual 1), while others were given even greater emphasis as headlines (Visual 2). In the example shown in Visual 1, the child's identifying information is withheld. However, Visual 2 demonstrates a case where the child's full name is clearly revealed.

Visual 1: Milliyet, 11.02.2023



Visual 2: Hürriyet, 11.02.2023



Visual 3 illustrates an example where stories of children rescued from the rubble are presented collectively. In such collage-style news presentations, children are often portrayed as symbols of hope and resilience. Some news articles further amplify the dramatic impact by using quotes from the children uttered during their rescue as headlines, as seen in Visual 4.

Visual 3: Sabah, 11.02.2023



Visual 4: Milliyet, 11.02.2023



Conversely, in some news articles (Visuals 5 and 6), children are merely 'pointed out' as objects within the news story. The example presented in Visual 5 shows a photograph of a baby who has been rescued from the rubble with injuries. The baby's name is not mentioned in the article. Similarly, in Visual 6, the child's name is not disclosed, and their face is not clearly visible. However, the phrase "this child" is underlined and highlighted with an arrow, emphasizing the child as a focal point. In both examples, children are objectified and presented as elements within the larger narrative.

Visual 5: Hürriyet, 12.02.2023



Visual 6: Sözcü, 07.02.2023



An analysis of news articles categorized as "child rescued from rubble" reveals a concerning disregard for children's right to privacy, with distressing photographs of

their rescue openly published. In almost every photograph, the visible trauma on the children's faces is palpable. While some articles explicitly mention the children's identities, those that omit this information often feature children who have just been rescued and whose identities might not yet be known. Therefore, it's plausible that the omission of identifying information in such cases is not motivated by ethical considerations but rather a lack of readily available information. The news stories often sensationalize and dramatize the children's experiences, potentially exacerbating the trauma they have endured. Consequently, it's difficult to argue that the coverage of rescued children consistently reflects a strong ethical framework.

4.2.2. Child Earthquake Survivor

The "child earthquake survivor" category emerged as the second most prevalent theme, representing 22.12% of the articles analyzed. Within this category, children were portrayed both as objects and subjects of the news. For instance, Visual 7 exemplifies a news story where a politician takes center stage, relegating the child to a mere object within the narrative. In contrast, Visual 8 presents a child earthquake survivor as the subject of the article, with their identifying information explicitly stated.

UNICEF's guidelines (2007) emphasize the importance of obtaining consent from caregivers and considering the best interests of the child before disclosing their identity when reporting on children. However, the example presented in Visual 8 clearly disregards both of these crucial principles. There is no indication that consent was obtained, and the article's content does not appear to serve a compelling public interest or benefit the child in any way. Therefore, these two examples illustrate the absence of a robust ethical framework in reporting on children, particularly regarding the protection of their right to privacy.

Visual 7: Yeni Şafak, 11.02.2023



Visual 8: Hürriyet, 08.02.2023



4.2.3. Deceased Child

It was found that old photos of deceased children were used in 10.07% of the news stories examined. Dramatic expressions are included in the headlines of such news, examples of which are included in Visual 9 and Visual 10. Üsküdar University's earthquake reporting guidelines (2023) advise against sensationalizing photographs used in earthquake coverage. According to the same guide, it is necessary to avoid giving the faces of those who lost their lives in the earthquake. Because this can inflict further trauma upon their loved ones. Likewise, the Disaster Reporting Guide (2023) cautions against the inclusion of dramatic and agitating elements in news coverage, deeming it ethically problematic. Therefore, it can be concluded that news articles categorized as "deceased child," which often rely on such practices, raise significant ethical concerns.

Visual 9:
Cumhuriyet, 11.02.2023



Visual 10:
Milliyet, 11.02.2023



4.2.4. Child Volunteer/Philanthropist

The headline "Big Hearts in Little Bodies," as shown in Visual 11, highlights the emotional manipulation often employed in this category of news articles. In this example, the child involved in aid efforts is identifiable. Visual 12, on the other hand, while not directly about the child depicted, utilizes the child's image as a supporting element, mentioning only their first name.

Objectifying children in news coverage and utilizing them as tools to heighten dramatic impact is ethically problematic. Such practices can contribute to compassion fatigue among audiences, desensitizing them to genuine suffering (Üsküdar İletişim, 2023). News reports should prioritize factual information over emotional appeals. It is essential to avoid language that could incite agitation or emotional outbursts (Disaster Reporting Guide, 2023). Therefore, ethical violations are evident in this category as well.

Visual 11: Sabah, 08.02.2023



Visual 12: Sabah, 08.02.2023



4.2.5. Injured Child

Visual 13 presents a case where both the photograph and identifying information of an injured child are openly shared. The injuries sustained by the child as a result of the earthquake are clearly visible.

Publishing photographs of injured or rescued children in such a manner raises serious ethical concerns. Instead of displaying these graphic images, it would be more appropriate to either refrain from using the child's photograph altogether or to obscure the child's injured face using blurring techniques. Referring to UNICEF's guidelines (2007), this instance demonstrates a clear lack of consideration for the best interests of the child. Therefore, refraining from publishing the child's photograph would be the most ethically sound approach. Alternatively, blurring the child's injuries in the photograph could mitigate some of the ethical concerns.

Visual 13: Sabah, 10.02.2023



4.2.6. Missing Child

News reports about missing children often include identifying information and clear photographs of the children, presumably to aid in their swift recovery. However, sharing personal information about children can inadvertently expose them to security risks. Before publishing such details, it is imperative to inform and obtain

consent from the child's parents, legal guardians, or caregivers, making them aware of the potential dangers. The example presented in Visual 14 includes a statement from the missing child's father, indicating that consent was obtained for the news story. Nevertheless, this category of news coverage remains ethically ambiguous and warrants careful consideration.

Visual 14: Sabah, 08.02.2023



Visual 15: Hürriyet, 10.02.2023



4.2.7. Symbol Child

Visual 16 features a news story about İsmail Çimen, who, as a child, was rescued 146 hours after being trapped in the 1999 Gölcük earthquake in Turkey. At the time, he became a symbol of hope and resilience, widely recognized as the "miracle child." However, during the recent Kahramanmaraş earthquake, Çimen's story resurfaced in the media, juxtaposing images of his rescue as a child with his current adult self. This republication effectively re-symbolized him and risked retraumatizing both him and the audience. It is crucial to recognize that, within the framework of ethical disaster reporting, re-traumatizing individuals and perpetuating their symbolic representation should be avoided (Disaster Reporting Guide, 2023; Üsküdar İletişim, 2023; Özhan et al., 2023).

Visual 16: Hürriyet, 12.02.2023



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze news coverage of children in the aftermath of the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquake in Turkey, examining it through the lens of disaster journalism, ethics, and the right to privacy. The study specifically focuses on news articles published in Sabah, Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Şafak, and Sözcü newspapers during the national mourning period declared after the earthquake (February 7-13, 2023). A total of 556 news articles were identified and analyzed for this study.

Disasters frequently dominate media coverage. During such times, the media is responsible for ensuring the accurate and timely flow of information by acting as a bridge between the state, the audience and the disaster victims. Many responsibilities, such as making the voices of those in need of assistance heard, sharing the work of the state and mobilizing charity workers, are directly related to the media. Thus, disaster reporting constitutes a significant public service. However, disasters also offer important commercial opportunities for the media. The concern to cover the disaster quickly and the desire to keep the audience ready to receive all kinds of information causes the media to ignore some professional responsibilities. Disaster reporting and ethics reveal the pitfalls of viewing disaster periods as opportunities for commercial news production, emphasizing that the quality, not the quantity, of news reporting is paramount. It is seen that social responsibilities and economic interests conflict in the reporting of earthquakes. This situation leads to the negative reflection of the people affected by the earthquake in the news. Children, particularly, are vulnerable to ethical violations in their portrayal during and after large-scale disasters like earthquakes.

Of the newspapers examined, Sabah allocated the most space to news stories about children, while Sözcü dedicated the least. A general analysis of all five newspapers included in this research yielded the following findings: The majority of

these articles (64.92%) were published on inside pages, although some were prominently displayed on the front page with large accompanying photographs, often as headlines or main stories. Children's faces were clearly visible in 68.8% of the photographs analyzed, with no instances of blurring techniques employed to protect their identities. An analysis of the inclusion of children's identifying information revealed that 35.07% of the articles explicitly mentioned their full names, while 20.5% included only their first names, often accompanied by adjectives like "little" or "tiny." A more ethical approach, if disclosure is deemed necessary, would be to use initials instead of full names. Notably, 44.42% of the articles did not disclose the children's identities. However, considering the overall media coverage trends during the aftermath of the earthquake, it is likely that this omission stems not from ethical considerations but rather from the lack of available information, particularly for children who were rescued from the rubble. This assumption is supported by the fact that approximately half of the articles analyzed focused on rescued children.

In the category featuring photographs of children rescued from the rubble, their faces are predominantly visible and prominently displayed, even in headlines and lead stories. Some articles within this category include graphic and distressing images of children, visibly shaken and terrified amidst the devastation. Similar instances are also observed in the "injured child" category. Certain articles present full-page collages showcasing moments of children being pulled from the debris, further amplifying the spectacle. Some attempt to heighten the dramatic impact by using quotes from the children, uttered during their rescue, as headlines. There are also examples where children are reduced to mere objects within the narrative, simply 'pointed out' within the larger story. Similar instances are observed in the "child earthquake survivor" category, where unidentified children are objectified and relegated to the background in articles primarily focused on politicians. The "child volunteer/philanthropist" category also exhibits cases where children's photographs are used for news stories unrelated to them, often to emphasize the collective relief effort. One such example features a full-page image of an unidentified child, published alongside a headline highlighting the mobilization of aid. Within this category, there are also instances where children are positioned as subjects of the story. However, even in these cases, where the child's full name and photograph are published, it is difficult to argue that these practices serve the child's best interests. The "deceased child" category often utilizes old photographs of children taken before their passing. These articles, intended to evoke a strong emotional response, can retraumatize grieving families. In the missing children category, the photographs and names of the children were published openly despite the potential risks to their safety and well-being. In "the symbol child" category, a news article was published that could serve as an example of how a child who experienced the 1999 Gölcük earthquake carries the trauma he/she experienced throughout his/her life. Even though the child has grown up and

years have passed since the earthquake, the child has continued to be symbolized both as a child at the time and as an adult today.

In the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquake, children were featured as rescued, earthquake survivor, deceased, missing, injured, symbolized, unaccompanied for a single time, and their identities and images were exposed and presented as spectacle material accompanied by a dramatic and sensational news language. It was observed that a traumatic language was used in news items featuring children, and photographs of children that should not have been published openly were included. Thus, it can be said that the traumas experienced are deepened through children and become a lifelong burden. The fact that the news is based on emotion instead of information causes the viewers to become desensitized and experience compassion fatigue (Üsküdar İletişim, 2023; Disaster Reporting Guide, 2023; Özhan et al., 2023, p. 686). Therefore, the findings of this study, in conjunction with previous research (Basmacı, 2024; Maden, 2023; Özhan et al., 2023; Karataş, 2022; Erdem & Kaynar, 2022), suggest that the media's portrayal of children during the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquake, much like in previous major earthquakes in Turkey, raises significant ethical concerns. In conclusion, the most prominent ethical violations observed in disaster reporting involving children include: disregarding children's right to privacy by disclosing their identities and images, reporting without obtaining consent from their families, and objectifying children by reducing them to tools for amplifying the dramatic impact of news stories.

Ethical guidelines published by the Turkish Journalists Association (TGC), UNICEF, and the International Federation of Journalists (IJF) state that the use of a child's image may be permissible in certain circumstances serving the public interest. However, the crucial consideration is the accurate assessment of necessity. Examples within this study demonstrate the use of children's photographs to heighten the dramatic impact of the earthquake, with the children's identities clearly published. Therefore, it appears that the best interests of the child were not prioritized, and the news prioritized audience engagement over public good. It is essential to remember that children's identifying information and images can remain in the digital realm for years, unlike print or broadcast media where they might disappear. Media should exercise extreme caution in reporting on children during disasters. Children's images and names should not be published explicitly. If the use of a child's image is deemed absolutely necessary, blurring the face or obscuring it entirely could be a solution. Identifying information can be provided using only the first initials of the first and last names, avoiding descriptive terms such as "tiny," "little," or "angel." However, before releasing identifying information and images, a thorough evaluation of necessity is required, always prioritizing the best interests of the child.

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