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WORKFARE IN TIMES OF CRISIS: EXPERIENCES OF COMMUNITY BENEFIT PROGRAMS WORKERS IN POST-EARTHQUAKE TÜRKİYE

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Abstract

Workfare programs are critical policy instruments in times of crisis, offering short-term income support, fostering social cohesion, sustaining livelihoods, and enhancing psychosocial resilience. In Türkiye, post-disaster temporary employment is primarily implemented through Community Benefit Programs (CBPs), which operate as community-based public works within a workfare framework. This study examines the experiences of CBP workers employed in Temporary Settlement Areas (TSAs) in Hatay after the 2023 earthquakes. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were analyzed through thematic content analysis. The results reveal that CBP employees faced dual vulnerabilities as both disaster survivors and service providers, reporting housing insecurity, bereavement, and limited psychosocial support. To complement these findings, Cochran's Q test was applied to compare the prevalence of housing, access, and psychosocial problems. However, no statistically significant differences were found. Overall, the findings emphasize that CBPs not only provided vital temporary income support but also contributed to the resilience of economically disadvantaged groups.

Keywords: Workfare, Community Benefit Programs (CBP), 2023 Earthquakes, Temporary Settlement Areas (TSA), Hatay

JEL Codes: I30, I38, Q54, H84

1. INTRODUCTION

Disasters not only cause physical destruction but also transform all aspects of life by affecting social institutions, values, relationships, and processes. In this respect, disasters can be conceptualized as multidimensional crises that shake the fundamental pillars of individual and collective life. The normative order of societies, everyday practices, and institutional structures is reshaped following disasters, resulting in temporary or permanent transformations (Dynes, 2006; Tierney, 2007). Therefore, disasters are complex phenomena that trigger long-term processes of

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social reconstruction, extending far beyond immediate emergency response and relief efforts (Berke & Campanella, 2006; Vale & Campanella, 2005). In this context, disasters can be defined as *fait social total*—that is, multilayered societal events that simultaneously affect economic, political, cultural, and individual domains (Oliver-Smith, 2019). As emphasized in anthropological and sociological literature, disasters create profound ruptures that impact physical spaces and urban memory, identity, and social capital (Faas, 2016; Oliver-Smith, 1996; Vale, 2014). Earthquakes, with their sudden and devastating impacts across vast geographies, are paradigmatic examples of such disasters.

Vulnerability, in this context, is a multidimensional phenomenon that determines the sensitivity of societies to the impacts of disasters, encompassing physical, social, economic, and environmental dimensions (UN/ISDR, 2004). It is shaped not only by the severity of the disaster but also by pre-existing structural inequalities, levels of access to resources, social protection networks, and mechanisms of solidarity within the society (Fothergill & Peek, 2004; Wisner et al., 2004). Certain social groups—low-income households, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and migrants—systematically face heightened risks (Cutter et al., 2003; Hemingway & Priestley, 2006; Marshall et al., 2020; Wisner et al., 2004). Because these groups already experience structural disadvantages, their vulnerabilities are often exacerbated in the post-disaster period. Therefore, providing social and financial support to such vulnerable populations during recovery processes is a humanitarian necessity and a core component of effective disaster management. In this regard, adopting justice-based, inclusive, and equitable approaches in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery phases is of critical importance.

Post-disaster social policies aim to ensure the physical and psychosocial recovery of affected individuals. Policy instruments provided in areas such as housing, healthcare, psychosocial support, education, and employment are designed to facilitate the reintegration of disaster-affected populations into everyday life. Within this framework, temporary employment programs aim to reduce dependency on social assistance by providing short-term income support and enhancing social cohesion (Twigg, 2004). Particularly in periods following disasters—when economic activity is disrupted and unemployment rates surge—such employment schemes serve as critical mechanisms for livelihood and social belonging. In international literature, these programs are commonly referred to as public works or public employment programmes, and are typically implemented in response to economic crises, seasonal deprivation, or natural disasters (McCord, 2008; McCord, 2017; Nagamatsu & Ono, 2017). These programs provide short-term financial relief and contribute to the reconstruction of individuals' social roles, their reintegration into the labor force, and the strengthening of their psychosocial resilience. In line with neoliberal labor market transformations, workfare-oriented programs have been increasingly promoted as instruments to activate the unemployed and to reduce long-term dependency on welfare. Such programs particularly target the participation of disadvantaged groups—including women, migrants, and low-income populations—who are often excluded from formal labor markets (Soldatic et al., 2012). While frequently criticized for emphasizing conditionality and short-term relief, these schemes nevertheless play a significant role in post-disaster contexts by addressing urgent livelihood needs and fostering social inclusion.

In Türkiye, this approach is institutionalized through the Community Benefit Programs (Toplum Yararına Programları- TYP), which are implemented in collaboration between the Turkish Employment Agency (Türkiye İş Kurumu- İŞKUR) and public institutions. These programs provide temporary employment in public services for unemployed individuals during

extraordinary periods such as disasters, pandemics, or economic crises. Their dual purpose is to preserve household income levels and mitigate risks of social exclusion, while also serving as a broader mechanism of social protection (TR Official Journal, 2022). However, their effectiveness depends on factors such as the sustainability of skills acquired, the inclusiveness of program design, and the degree to which psychosocial dimensions are incorporated.

The challenges faced by disaster survivors and disaster workers in the literature are generally addressed as pertaining to separate groups (Alexander & Klein, 2009; Bonanno et al., 2010; Brooks et al., 2016; Ein et al., 2023). While disaster survivors commonly face issues such as trauma, housing insecurity, unemployment, social exclusion, and difficulties in accessing services, disaster workers contend with problems including burnout, high levels of stress, long working hours, and emotional strain (Kaniasty & Norris, 2004; Norris et al., 2002). However, some individuals experience a condition of “secondary victimization,” simultaneously being disaster victims and serving in public roles during post-disaster response and recovery efforts (Abramson et al., 2015; Albris et al., 2020; James & Gilliland, 2012). Despite the significance of this dual status, its implications for service quality and employee well-being remain underexplored. Understanding the experiences of those who are both disaster victims and service providers is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of social policy instruments and designing more responsive recovery strategies. In this context, this study addresses this gap by examining the dual vulnerabilities of CBP workers in post-earthquake Türkiye, thereby shedding light on an underexplored dimension of disaster recovery and highlighting the need for more inclusive and adaptive social policy interventions.

The earthquakes on February 6 and February 20, 2023, directly affected 11 provinces in Türkiye and claimed the lives of more than 50,000 people. The combined population of these 11 provinces, approximately 14 million, represents 16.4% of Türkiye’s population (SBB, 2023a). The region comprises 3 million households with an average size of 3.5 persons (SBB, 2023b). Labor market indicators reveal employment and labor force participation rates below national averages, coupled with higher unemployment. Around 3.8 million people are employed in the region, representing 13.3% of Türkiye’s total workforce, while registered unemployment stands at 622,000. Economically, the region accounts for 9.8% of national GDP (SBB, 2023b). In order to mitigate the labor market impacts of the earthquakes, CBPs were deployed intensively: İŞKUR allocated 19,150 positions within the affected provinces and an additional 2,950 in other provinces to support relocated populations, with a total budget of 1.6 billion TL (SBB, 2023b). Through these programs, continuity of public services is ensured while temporary income support is provided to individuals affected by the earthquake, thereby contributing to the post-disaster recovery process. At the same time, temporary employment opportunities aim to prevent increased population fluidity in the region.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines the socio-demographic profiles, housing conditions, challenges, and coping strategies of individuals employed under CBPs in Temporary Settlement Areas (TSAs) in Hatay/Antakya after the 2023 earthquakes. Preliminary findings show that all participants were themselves disaster survivors, meaning they simultaneously occupied the roles of public service providers and direct victims. This dual status underscores the multilayered implications of post-disaster temporary employment, encompassing economic, social, psychological, and administrative dimensions. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that a wide range of factors influence both the individual well-being of this “secondary victimization” group and the quality of the public services they provide. Therefore, this research offers valuable

insights for the reassessment of post-disaster social policies and the design of more inclusive programs that explicitly address conditions of vulnerability.

Building on this framework, the article proceeds as follows: Section 2 examines the evolution of Community Benefit Programs (CBPs) in Türkiye. Section 3 outlines the research materials, methods, and case study context; Section 4 presents the empirical results; Section 5 discusses these findings in relation to the broader literature on disaster recovery and social policy; and Section 6 concludes with key findings and policy recommendations.

2. CBPs IN TÜRKIYE: EVOLUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Community Benefit Programs (CBPs) have become one of Türkiye's most significant active labor market policies, particularly in periods of social crisis. Designed to provide temporary employment while supporting the continuity of public services, CBPs serve a dual role: they mitigate the socio-economic impacts of disasters and crises, and they function as a social protection mechanism for disadvantaged groups. CBPs first emerged under the World Bank-supported Employment and Training Project (1993–2000); 55 CBPs were conducted in 2002 and 30 more in 2007–2008 (Açık, 2023: 41–45), aiming to cushion privatization's labor-market effects and prevent detachment from the labor force during economic shocks and disasters (İŞKUR, 2011). Since then, CBPs have increasingly operated as crisis-response tools, particularly following major earthquakes: after the 1999 Marmara Earthquake, 4,605 individuals benefited (predominantly in Kocaeli and Sakarya) (İŞKUR, 2000: 47); following the 2011 Van (15,154 people) and 2020 Elazığ (2,174 people) earthquakes, thousands were temporarily employed in afforestation, infrastructure repair, and park construction (İŞKUR, 2012; 2020a); and in İzmir—the province most affected by the 2020 Aegean Sea earthquake—4,760 individuals were employed (İŞKUR, 2020b). Although participation typically declines in subsequent years, CBPs persist in various formats (İŞKUR, 2013a; 2021a; 2021b). After the February 2023 earthquakes, 15,593 people in Hatay, 13,079 in Kahramanmaraş, and 16,431 in Malatya were employed under CBPs (İŞKUR, 2023a; 2023b; 2023c); participation continued in 2024, and 10,000 additional positions are planned in four provinces in 2025 (İŞKUR, 2024a; 2024b; 2024c; AA, 2024), confirming CBPs as a core mechanism for temporary employment and public service continuity.

Implementation is governed by a regulatory framework that requires service providers—primarily public institutions—to align with CBP objectives and demonstrate capacity; NGOs and private-sector organizations may also participate through service procurement (TR Official Journal, 2013; İŞKUR, 2013). Legislation mandates a broad range of services in temporary settlement centers—health, education, sanitation, logistics, security, and psychosocial support (TR Official Journal, 2014)—yet field conditions often necessitate flexible, need-based approaches emphasizing urgent tasks such as cleaning, water distribution, and technical support. Eligibility criteria stipulate Turkish citizenship, registration as unemployed with İŞKUR, age ≥ 18 , no retirement/disability pension, not being a full-time student, and no social security coverage (TR Official Journal, 2013; 2022). Applications proceed via e-government, the ALO 170 hotline, or İŞKUR's digital platform; provincial directorates oversee selection, typically with 80% chosen by public notary draw and 20% by listing, prioritizing disadvantaged groups (women, individuals over 35, persons with disabilities, former convicts, and veterans) (İŞKUR, 2013). To expand coverage, participation is generally limited to one individual per household, with exceptions for collective living facilities such as women's shelters and dormitories (TR Official Journal, 2022).

Under standard conditions, CBPs run for six months (up to nine) at 45 hours per week (İŞKUR, 2013; TR Official Journal, 2022); re-enrollment requires a three-month interval, and total tenure with the same institution may not exceed 18 months (TR Official Journal, 2013). Following the 2023 earthquakes, legal amendments introduced substantial flexibilities in affected provinces: program duration extended to nine months, permissible absences doubled, household restrictions lifted, and income-based eligibility waived (TR Official Journal, 2023a; 2023b). These adjustments enabled faster, more inclusive implementation in regions such as Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, and Malatya, reinforcing CBPs' dual function—temporary income support and continuity of essential public services—within the broader architecture of post-disaster social protection.

3. MATERIALS, METHODS, AND CASE STUDY

3.1. Materials and methods

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews designed to capture individual and contextual dimensions. The guide covered socio-demographics (gender, age, occupation, education, household composition, income), disaster experiences, CBP roles, living conditions, types and frequency of services delivered in TSAs, challenges in service provision (accessibility, security, psychosocial well-being), coping strategies, preparedness measures (aftershocks, evacuation), physical/mental impacts, and participant recommendations for improving services. This flexible design ensured comparability across cases while allowing rich elaboration.

The fieldwork was conducted six months after the earthquake. All interviews were carried out by the author during August and September 2023 in the temporary settlement areas where CBP employees were assigned. Interviews were conducted with a total of nine CBP personnel working in four different temporary settlement areas. Interviews were conducted with employees who were on their break during working hours on weekdays. The interviews lasted an average of 35 minutes. Following the fieldwork, the interview notes were transcribed. The transcribed data were then analyzed using content analysis. Data were thematically analyzed via content analysis in NVivo 15. The analysis generated findings on socio-demographics, survivor status, and the ability to sustain everyday life.

To test whether prevalence differed among three binary-coded themes emerging from the analysis—housing, psychosocial support, and access—Cochran's Q test was applied. Cochran's Q is a non-parametric test for related samples assessing differences in proportions across three or more matched groups, suitable for dichotomous data from the same participants under different conditions (Cochran, 1950). Analyses were conducted in R (v4.x).

Unique aspects of the field research

During the fieldwork, due to the limited availability of staff, overlapping break times, and the conduct of interviews in public spaces, some interviews were carried out with multiple participants simultaneously. In such cases, the researchers noted the contributions of all participants and transcribed them within the same interview form, distinguishing between different speakers. Consequently, these transcripts, which included the statements of more than one participant, were incorporated into the analysis as single interview forms.

Since the participants' native language was Turkish, all semi-structured interviews were conducted in Turkish. All interviews were conducted in Turkish; quotations presented here were translated by the author, preserving the original meaning.

3.2. Case study: Temporary settlement areas in Antakya, Hatay

Hatay was the most severely affected province in 2023, with 686,043 people directly impacted across 15 districts. Urgent housing needs led to 198 container settlements accommodating ~210,000 residents. Between 2023 and 2025, nearly 26,000 individuals were employed via CBPs in Hatay (The Governorship of Hatay, 2025), reflecting the centrality of temporary employment in sustaining services and livelihoods.

The study's spatial sample consists of four TSAs in Antakya: Ovakent, Katar 1, Ciner 1–2, and Koç (Figure 1). Ovakent lies north of the city center; from north to south, Ovakent, Katar 1, Koç, and Ciner 1–2 are arrayed along the main transport axis northeast of the center. TSAs differ in topographic context, spatial patterns, and size (Table 1).

Figure 1. Study Area. A) Ovakent TSA b) Location of TSAs within Antakya, c) Katar 1 TSA, d) Ciner 1-2 TSA e) Koc TSA



Source: Prepared by the author

Table 1. Sizes of temporary settlement areas and the number of staff

TSAs	Number of CBP Participants	Total number of Workers*	Total number of Containers	Total Population Accommodated	Area of TSA (m ²)
Ciner 1-2	5	7	100	430	40,000*
Katar 1	28	40	616	1850	40,000*
Koç	70	100	1040	5000	135,000*
Ovakent	11	19	499	2400	40,000*

TSA areas estimated via Google Earth Pro; other data provided by site managers.

* The total number of workers includes CBP participants. Workers other than CBP personnel consist of civil servants assigned from relevant public institutions, employees and volunteers of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and subcontracted workers.

The quantitative data on TSAs presented in Table 2 provide essential indicators for understanding the size of post-disaster settlements, population density, and the demand for public services. The largest site in terms of area is the Koç TSA, which spans 135,000 m², accommodates 1,040 containers, and serves a population of approximately 5,000. With 70 CBP staff and a total of 100 personnel employed, this site represents one of the most intensive examples of post-disaster

service provision. This demonstrates that the number of personnel increases proportionally with the size of the site and its population.

On the other hand, in TSAs with similar areas (approximately 40.000 m²)—namely Ciner 1–2, Katar 1, and Ovakent—the number of residents served, and the number of personnel employed vary significantly. In Katar 1, for instance, services are provided to 1.850 residents living in 616 containers, yet only 28 CBP staff are employed. Similarly, in Ovakent, just 11 CBP staff provide services to 2.400 residents. These figures indicate that in certain TSAs, the density of CBP personnel is insufficient, and service provision is managed with relatively fewer staff members despite high demand.

Personnel assigned under CBPs constitute a significant portion of the workforce in these settlements. In addition to site managers and staff from public institutions, CBP workers are responsible for supporting essential services such as water distribution, sanitation, electricity, and psychosocial assistance. Their presence not only ensures the continuity of basic services but also highlights the dual role of CBP participants as both disaster survivors and frontline service providers in post-earthquake recovery.

4. RESULTS

The findings are organized around three categories: socio-demographic structure, earthquake-related losses, and sustaining everyday life. The conclusions were structured through thematic content analysis and interpreted in relation to the themes and sub-themes that emerged within each category.

The data on participants employed under the CBP indicate that post-disaster services in TSAs were carried out across different CBP assignments (Table 2).

Table 2. The information on participants employed under the Community Benefit Programmes

TSAs	Interview Code	CBP Assignment	Age	Gender
Ciner 1-2	Interview 1.1	Cleaning	42	Male
Ciner 1-2	Interview 2.1	Water Distribution	50	Male
Katar 1	Interview 6.1	Electricity	36	Male
Katar 1	Interview 7.1	Cleaning	40	Female
Katar 1	Interview 7.2	Cleaning	37	Female
Katar 1	Interview 7.3	Cleaning	35	Male
Koç	Interview 10.1	Fault Reporting	25	Female
Koç	Interview 10.2	Fault Reporting	28	Female
Ovakent	Interview 14.1	Water Distribution	40	Male

Nine interviewees (25–50 years; 5 men, 4 women) held assignments in cleaning, water distribution, electricity, and fault reporting. Women were concentrated in cleaning and fault reporting; men in physically demanding roles (cleaning, water, electricity). Most were recruited for environmental cleaning, with maintenance/repair/infrastructure also common. It was found that the majority of CBP employees were hired primarily for environmental cleaning purposes. Additionally, maintenance, repair, and infrastructure services were observed to be other areas of employment within the scope of the CBP. However, it was also determined that the field coordinator retained the authority to reassign tasks and responsibilities in order to meet other operational needs within the management of the TSAs. One participant expressed a concern regarding the distribution of assignments and the scope of responsibilities as follows:

‘May God never let anyone go through something like this. We are in a terrible place psychologically. I’m not doing well as it is. I’ve been a hairdresser for years. My entry into the CBP was arranged through the governor’s office. I was working at the hair salon here. This morning, I came in and was faced with this situation —they told me, ‘Close this place down and move next door, you’re a cleaner now.’ So I was transferred here as cleaning staff. ... Apparently, this place doesn’t even have a work permit. I’ve just found out that I was officially hired as a cleaner. But I actually work for an association called ...’ (Interview 7.3.)

Although the issue mentioned by the participant appears to arise from a disagreement between the NGO and CBP staff, it is observed that the underlying cause is related to the exclusion of job descriptions aimed at supporting recovery-oriented service provision in the field from the official scope of the CBP. Another striking aspect of the participants' statements is the sensitivity in their emotional state, linked to their status as earthquake survivors. This condition, along with findings related to the losses experienced by CBP personnel during the earthquake, has been examined under the category of “earthquake survivor status” within the thematic content analysis (Table 3).

The diversity of Temporary Settlement Areas (Ciner 1-2, Katar 1, Koç, Ovakent) indicates that participants were assigned to different locations and that service provision was organized within a broad spatial network. This diversity highlights that the post-disaster intervention process requires a structure involving multi-level coordination, and that CBP personnel play a critical role within this structure.

Table 3. Thematic Findings on the Adaptation of CBP Personnel to the Post-Disaster Process

Theme	Sub-theme	Interviews	Frequency	%
Earthquake survivor status	Yes	1.1, 2.1, 6.1, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 10.1, 10.2, 14.1	9	100
	No		0	0
Loss of a first-degree family member	Yes	2.1, 7.1	2	22
	No	1.1, 6.1	2	22
	No response	7.2, 7.3, 10.1, 10.2, 14.1	5	56
Post-earthquake accommodation situation	In their own home	1.1, 7.2, 10.1, 14.1	4	44
	In their own container	6.1, 7.1, 10.2	3	33
	In a relative's container	2.1, 7.3	2	22
Currently residing in the TSA where they work	Yes	6.1, 7.1, 10.2	3	33
	No	1.1, 2.1, 7.2, 7.3, 10.1, 14.1	6	67
Working hours	08.00-17.00	1.1, 2.1, 6.1, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 10.1, 10.2, 14.1	9	100

Findings indicate that all CBP personnel in the sample were affected by the earthquake as survivors. This highlights that, while fulfilling their service roles within the framework of public service provision, CBP personnel were simultaneously coping with multiple layers of trauma as disaster victims. Twenty-two percent of the participants reported the loss of a first-degree family member, which constitutes a significant dimension in terms of emotional burden and psychological impact.

An analysis of housing-related data reveals that 56% of participants reported their homes as either destroyed or severely damaged, while 44% were residing in moderately damaged dwellings. These figures point to a high-risk group in terms of housing security. Regarding current accommodation, 44% of participants were living in their own homes, 33% in their own containers, and 22% in containers provided by relatives. It was also found that 22% of the participants were not allocated a container due to their tenant status in their pre-earthquake residences. The analysis

indicates a diversity in accommodation arrangements among the workers. Furthermore, only 33% of the participants were employed in the TSA where they resided, whereas 67% lived outside these areas. This suggests that the physical separation between work and living spaces may impose additional transportation burdens and stress. One participant experiencing housing insecurity described their situation as follows:

‘They keep asking me whether I own a house—what does that have to do with being eligible for assistance? I find this very hard to understand. I have lost three family members in the earthquake, and I am 55% disabled. Do I really have to be a homeowner? I’m simply trying to claim what is naturally mine—my right to shelter. Just because I’m a tenant, does that mean I have no rights?... My biggest problem, my biggest concern, is shelter. I’ve already endured enormous pain. When evening comes, I start feeling anxious, thinking about where I will stay, calculating it over and over in my head. I’ve already lost my family.’ (Interview 2.1)

The participant’s statements highlight the critical role of addressing housing-related challenges and ensuring the continuity of life after a disaster as part of the recovery process. Individuals employed under the CBP following the disaster contribute to the labor force; however, as they are also disaster survivors, examining their ability to sustain everyday life in the post-disaster recovery process (Table 4) becomes essential for designing institutional support mechanisms and reinforcing structured recovery processes in the post-disaster context.

Table 4. Thematic Findings on the Ability of CBP Personnel to Sustain Everyday Life in the Post-Disaster Recovery Process

Theme	Sub-theme	Interviews	Frequency	%
Intention to migrate to another city	None	1.1, 2.1, 6.1, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 10.1, 10.2, 14.1	9	100
	Housing	2.1, 7.3,	2	22
Primary challenges	The neglect of the fact that they are also earthquake survivors	6.1, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 10.1, 10.2, 14.1	7	78
	Abusive supervision (mobbing)	6.1, 7.1, 7.2	3	33
	Transportation problems	7.1, 7.2, 14.1	3	33
	Working	6.1, 7.1, 7.2	3	33
Coping strategies	Serving fellow earthquake survivors	1.1, 2.1, 6.1, 7.3	4	44
	Remaining in the city where spatial memories persist despite the loss of places tied to personal memories	2.1	1	11
Receiving psychological support	Yes	7.2	1	11
	No	1.1, 2.1, 6.1, 7.1, 10.1, 10.2, 14.1	7	78
	Would have wanted to	2.1, 7.1	2	22
Suggestions for improving current work	Having my housing problem solved	2.1	1	11
	Having field managers from Antakya, and ensuring they are more equitable	6.1, 7.2	2	22
	Continuation of dinner distribution	6.1, 7.1	2	22

An examination of the post-disaster experiences of CBP personnel reveals that none of the participants considered migrating to another city. This finding illustrates the strong spatial and emotional ties participants maintain with their place of residence. Notably, one participant’s description of “remaining in the city where spatial memories persist despite the loss of places tied

to personal memories” as a coping strategy reflects the continuation of place attachment in the aftermath of trauma. The theme of “the neglect of the fact that they are also earthquake survivors”, which emerged as the most frequently cited issue at 78%, points to insufficient institutional psychosocial support and a lack of empathetic approaches. In addition, the articulation of issues such as “abusive supervision (mobbing)” and “transportation problems” highlights that employees are confronted not only with disaster-related challenges but also with organizational and structural difficulties.

Among the suggestions voiced by CBP employees for improving their working conditions were the resolution of housing problems, the continuation of dinner distribution, and the appointment of local field managers from Antakya to ensure more equitable practices. These recommendations suggest that within post-disaster reconstruction processes, employees should be regarded not merely as a labor force but also as disaster survivors with specific vulnerabilities and needs.

When Tables 3 and 4 are evaluated together, it becomes evident that CBP personnel experience both structural vulnerabilities (housing, transportation) and psychosocial vulnerabilities (loss of close relatives, sense of belonging, invisible labor). While Table 3 illustrates the levels of physical damage and temporary housing conditions of the participants, Table 4 reveals deeper dimensions, such as emotional resilience, place attachment, and expectations of support. This holistic assessment suggests that post-disaster public recovery programs need to be redesigned to address not only logistical but also emotional and social dimensions. Overall, the dual status of CBP employees as both service providers and disaster survivors reveals a multi-layered vulnerability profile, emphasizing the need to re-evaluate psychosocial support and housing policies for this group.

The thematic content analysis further indicates that access-related problems were particularly salient among participants who did not reside in the temporary settlement areas where they were employed and explicitly reported transportation difficulties. The subthemes of “being forgotten as earthquake survivors” and “the desire to receive psychosocial support” revealed the high level of psychosocial support needs. In terms of housing conditions, participants who did not have a container of their own or who continued to live in moderately damaged dwellings were found to experience post-earthquake housing difficulties more acutely. Cochran’s Q test was applied to examine whether the observed prevalence rates of the three themes—access, psychosocial support, and housing—differed significantly from one another.

The analysis revealed that psychosocial challenges were the most frequently reported theme among CBP workers (89%), followed by access-related difficulties (78%), while housing issues were comparatively less prominent (67%). Although Cochran’s Q test did not indicate a statistically significant difference among the three categories, $Q(2, N = 9) = 1.5, p = 0.47$, the distribution of responses nonetheless highlights important dimensions of post-disaster vulnerability. Specifically, the predominance of psychosocial concerns underscores that recovery is not solely a matter of restoring physical shelter but also involves addressing the compounded stress faced by individuals who were simultaneously disaster survivors and service providers. The emphasis on access problems further indicates that systemic barriers in public service delivery persist in Temporary Settlement Areas, amplifying inequalities already documented in the disaster literature. These findings suggest that while the provision of housing remains essential, the effectiveness of post-disaster recovery strategies ultimately depends on the integration of

psychosocial support and equitable access to services, thereby linking material recovery with broader processes of social resilience.

5. DISCUSSION

CBP personnel in TSAs are not merely public employees; they are survivors facing multilayered vulnerabilities. All participants were survivors; many had housing problems, and some lost first-degree relatives. Spatial separation between residence and workplace amplified transport burdens and emotional strain, pointing to the importance of considering mobility and place-based constraints in post-disaster employment arrangements.

Cochran's Q indicated no significant differences across housing (66.7%), access (77.8%), and psychosocial (88.9%) challenges, yet each domain is independently critical. This aligns with Wisner et al. (2004), who emphasize structural inequalities in shaping recovery capacity, and with Norris et al. (2002), who document long-term mental health and living-condition disruptions, exacerbated by limited resources and weak social support. Recovery, therefore, extends beyond physical shelter to include psychosocial well-being and social cohesion.

The dual role of responders as both providers and disaster-affected individuals can stretch resilience capacity and increase burnout risk (Benedek et al., 2007; Brooks et al., 2015). The challenges faced by CBP workers thus necessitate multidimensional support for local personnel. Economically and socially disadvantaged groups—overrepresented among CBP workers—may face “secondary victimization,” as caregiving responsibilities, limited access to assistance, and resource scarcity compound recovery challenges (Bolin, 1982; Norris et al., 2005). These conditions underscore the need for integrated support that addresses economic security alongside psychosocial and organizational dimensions.

Uneven staffing across TSAs appears to create inequitable workloads and elevate burnout risk. Personnel numbers should scale with site area, container capacity, and sheltered population (Sphere, 2018). Without such calibration, psychological and physical strain will intensify.

In-service training is also critical, particularly in communication, stress management, cultural sensitivity, and the rights and responsibilities of individuals under temporary protection (TR Official Journal, 2014). Reports of being ‘forgotten as survivors’ (78%) alongside very low use of psychological support (11%) point to gaps in availability, access, and/or acceptability (e.g., stigma), compounded by organizational problems such as mobbing and transport barriers. These findings echo literature on invisible burdens and constrained institutional capacity in disaster contexts (Brooks et al., 2015; Ein et al., 2023).

Finally, coping via work and service to others aligns with evidence that belonging, self-efficacy, and social engagement aid psychological recovery (Hobfoll et al., 2007). However, expressed unmet needs and low service uptake indicate that psychosocial support mechanisms should be expanded and normalized, alongside organizational measures that reduce workload inequities and improve daily accessibility.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study examines CBP personnel in post-disaster TSAs regarding socio-demographics, characteristics, experienced challenges, coping strategies, and policy effectiveness. The findings indicate that CBP personnel operate under layered constraints shaped by housing strain and

bereavement, mobility-related burdens arising from the spatial mismatch between residence and workplace, and limited access to psychosocial support. These challenges, together with organizational issues such as uneven staffing and workload concentration, pose risks for staff wellbeing and the continuity of post-disaster services

Service burdens, uneven staffing, and limited institutional support threaten the sustainability of post-disaster services. Yet meaning-oriented coping (working, serving the community) suggests CBP is not merely a temporary employment vehicle; it is also a social intervention that contributes to psychosocial recovery.

Human capital has been severely affected by mortality, injury, and migration, transforming the regional labor market. Safeguarding employment, creating new opportunities, and supporting priority groups (women, youth, students, persons with disabilities, older adults, migrants) are critical. Shifts in sectoral composition, evolving unemployment, and rising social assistance claims require more than retrospective employment data; CBPs must be reassessed in type and scope. The CBP model's dual function—temporary income support and maintenance of public services—makes it strategically important for recovery and service continuity. Social cohesion depends not only on physical reconstruction but also on effective employment policies that sustain productivity and social roles. However, to ensure the sustainability of this role, the scope, duration, flexibility, and mechanisms for reaching target groups should be designed in line with field-specific needs. In this regard, the following recommendations are presented to improve the program's structural features and to reorganize its implementation processes in line with identified needs:

- Flexible duration and continuity: In disasters, service needs are prolonged; frequent turnover degrades quality. Allow flexible, extended CBP tenure in affected regions so experienced personnel can continue.
- Field-responsive placement: While eligibility criteria are standardized, urgent TSA needs (cleaning, water, technical support) demand flexible application handling geared to local conditions and service priorities, with better pre-placement information and guidance.
- Labor market alignment: Conduct regional labor market analyses post-disaster and develop medium-term programs tailored to sectoral needs and unemployment profiles.
- Occupation-specific CBPs: Institutionalize legally sanctioned, expertise-based CBPs (e.g., construction, electricity, health support), following pandemic-era precedents (Açık, 2020).
- Student Social Work Programs (SWP): Reintroduce SWPs during crises to support the 4.1 million students affected in 2023 (SBB, 2023b), fostering youth development and social contribution.
- Programs for receiving provinces: Systematically track migration flows and design CBP/integration programs in host provinces to support social cohesion.
- Psychosocial support and training: Systematically expand access to psychological services and in-service training (communication, stress management, cultural sensitivity, post-disaster resilience) for managers and staff.

- Need-based personnel allocation: Plan staffing by sheltered population, container capacity, and site size; distribute workloads fairly (Sphere Project, 2018).

With these adjustments, CBP programs may function more effectively both as temporary income support and as a field-responsive intervention that can contribute to service continuity and psychosocial recovery. Strengthening program design and implementation flexibility is therefore important for enhancing post-disaster service capacity.

Ethical Statement and Author Contributions	
Yazat katkı Oranı: Çalışmanın tamamı tek bir yazar tarafından yapılmıştır.	Contribution Rate The entire study was conducted by a single author.
Çıkar Çatışması: Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir	Conflicts of Interest: No conflict of interest declared.
Etik Kurul İzni: Çalışma, Etik Kurul tarafından onaylanan prosedürlere uygun olarak yürütülmüş ve T.C. Gazi Üniversitesi Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü Etik Kurulu tarafından onaylanmıştır (27.04.2023 tarihli karar, protokol kodu E-77082166-604.01.02-641356). Çalışmaya katılan tüm bireylerden bilgilendirilmiş onam alınmıştır.	Ethics Committee Permission The study was conducted in accordance with the procedures approved by the Ethics Committee and approved by the T.C. Gazi University Ethics Committee of the Institute of Science (Decision dated 27.04.2023, protocol code E-77082166-604.01.02-641356). Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.
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