

RESEARCH ARTICLE/ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

Earthquake, social disorder, violence

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Abstract

Natural disasters appear as unexpected, traumatic events that break the normal flow of life; these events cause changes in the social structure in the region. There are two alternatives for this change. The first alternative is social unity, the other is social disorder. The purpose of the study is to explain the violent events that occurred after the earthquake in Kahramanmaraş on the 6th of February 2023, through the theory of social disorder. The literature on relevant subjects will be searched and the violent events displayed in the media will be explained in the context of social disorder theory in this study. The increased rates of violence and crime in the long-term period after disasters have been detected by the researchers and this situation has been explained with the theory of social disorder. The social disorder theory emphasizes that the increased stress burden causes an increase in domestic violence. The longitudinal studies that have been carried out on crime rates after the disaster determine that with the help of cooperation and social cooperation, there is a decrease in the crimes against property and violence and an increase in the cases of domestic violence. The disappearance of unaccompanied minors, child abuse, rapine, violence against women, and hate crimes against refugees are some of the criminal behaviors that are reflected in the media in the acute period and evaluated within the scope of this study. The Decrease of control due to social disorder and the absence of officials to provide security in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake explain that criminal behavior may occur in the acute period. The systematic, rapid, and effective implementation of the actions planned to prevent social disorder after natural disasters may be beneficial in preventing crime and violence in regions damaged by natural disasters.

Keywords: Natural disaster, crime, crime theories

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1. INTRODUCTION

Traumatic events are life-threatening events that negatively affect the individuals' coping mechanisms and cause great distress, feelings of helplessness, and terror in their lives. It causes people to lose their sense of meaning, and control. Wars, traffic accidents, sexual assaults, injuries, and natural disasters are some of the examples of traumatic events (Dalenberg, et al., 2017).

As traumatic events, are different than everyday life stressors and disrupt the natural flow of people's lives, natural disasters are one of the traumatic events that suddenly change the everyday life of people affected. Natural disasters not only change individuals' lives but also change the social structure of the region that it has impacted. For that reason, natural disasters differ from other traumatic events due to their nature. The first difference is that natural disasters affect many people at the same time. Additionally, after natural disasters, social attention, resources, and support are transferred to the region and individuals immediately. In this way, resource access is facilitated, unlike individual traumas like assaults. On the other hand, since more than one person is affected by natural disasters at the same time, individual needs and problems may not be noticed. Besides, natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, destroy infrastructure elements such as hospitals, roads, communications, houses, and workplaces. Because of this destruction, the increased needs of the people due to disaster may not be met until the infrastructure components are rebuilt. In this respect, natural disasters causing collective traumas have certain risk and protective factors which can affect the development of certain psychological problems due to the trauma like post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression (Watson & Hamblen, 2002).

Earthquakes like most natural disasters not only negatively affect the psychological well-being of the people but also cause damage to physical spaces and structures. The destruction and damage to infrastructure components, such as hospitals, roads, communication networks, and houses also lead to changes in living areas which

can turn into a constant stressor. Due to harm to infrastructure caused by earthquake, survivors have a hard time reaching necessary needs, and their everyday lives are disrupted. This situation can be a risk factor for development of the psychological disorders (Watson & Hamblen, 2002). In addition to psychological problems, increased fear of crime can be seen because of the insufficient security measures in destructed areas after the earthquake (Hino, et al., 2018).

Studies show that criminal behavior increases after natural disasters. It is observed that crime incidents increase after the disasters due to changes in physical areas, insufficient resources, job loss, and lack of adequate security during the temporary settlement process (Kwanga, et al., 2017). Similarly, in the study conducted after the earthquake in New Zealand, it was found that rate of the crime incidents first increased immediately after the disaster and then decreased in time, except for domestic violence the rate of crime did not decrease in time (King and Fabris-Rotelli, 2016).

According to Fritz (1961), crime incidents decrease or slightly increase after the disaster, because after the disaster people try to restore their social life thus promoting safety. It is argued that after a disaster, loss, and suffering are collective rather than individualistic, and as all the members of the community are affected by the disaster, solidarity is promoted among the survivors. In addition, natural disasters like earthquakes threaten the survival of the people. This threat is visible to most people causes increased empathy toward the survivors and encourages social cooperation to solve urgent problems such as rescue and debris removal, and disasters represent opportunities for social change.

However, contrary to Fritz's view, many studies reported an increase in post-disaster criminal activity which explains the causes of the crimes by two ecological theories of crime: the routine activities theory proposed by Cohen and Felson and the social disorganization theory proposed by Shaw and McKay. Routine activities theory proposes that crime will occur when three basic elements come together in time and space: the

presence of suitable targets such as property to be stolen and individuals to be victimized, the absence of protectors such as police, neighbors, or surveillance technologies, and the presence of motivated criminals (Cohen and Felson 1979). A number of studies in the field of criminology support the social disorganization theory to explain crime, showing that the theory is potentially important for studying crimes after disasters because the living areas of the people become criminogenic (Frailing and Harper, 2020).

1.1. Social Disorder Theory

Social disorganization theory was put forward by researchers at the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s which is also known as Chicago school in the criminology field. Rapid urbanization, industrialization, and an increased number of immigrants in the city were one of the foundations on which the theory is based. Park and Burgess (1925), who were the first to write about how this change affected the city, stated that as people migrate and form new living areas similar to the ecological balance in nature, new social ecology forms. In relation to their observations on the city of Chicago, they put forward the Concentric Zone Theory, stating that people would compete for scarce resources and physical space. According to this theory, as business areas occupy the city and expand with the increasing population, this expansion disrupts the residential areas. As the growing city disturbs the people in the residential areas, the people residing in these areas move away and the abandoned settlements which causes social disorder (Porter, et al., 2015).

Park and Burgess' definitions of social disorder were later applied to criminal behavior by Shaw and McKay (1942). A fundamental question for researchers is how the concentric zone theory proposed by Park and Burgess explains juvenile delinquency. In this regard, they examined how the economic and social structures of areas with different crime rates differ. As a result of their studies, Shaw and McKay (1942) emphasized the importance of three structural elements: socioeconomic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility (Kubrin, 2009). With this

theory, it is stated that the social structuring of the living area is important in the formation of criminal behavior and that failure to maintain order in social togetherness causes crime. At the same time, the social norms and values created by the people living in the region begin to differ (Walklate, 2017). Later studies have shown that factors such as social effectiveness, participation in organizations, and social networks also play a mediating role between crime and social disorder (Edwards, 2010). In other words, social disorder theory accepts the view that crime is a result of social interactions. All individuals who are part of a crime, such as the perpetrator and police, and their social, political, and economic needs and beliefs as factors in the emergence of crime. Social disorder emerges after events that have an impact on the social structure, such as economic crises, wars, terrorist attacks, globalization, and feminism (Sumner, 2004).

Social scientists brought the theory back to the agenda and expanded it in the following years. In the new model, the impact of collective impact and social capital elements on social order is mentioned (Porter et al., 2015). Collective influence appears as a necessary element for social bonds; It is the mutual trust and cooperation of people living together in a certain region. Social capital is the relationship between individuals that supports unity and provides social control through social ties that prevent crime from occurring (Kubrin, 2009). This social control includes actions such as creating friendship relations, organizing common activities, informing parents about their children's behavior, and warning people about behavior that does not comply with the norm. However, official social control is the maintenance of order through official structures such as law enforcement and laws (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003).

The physical and social destruction that occurs after natural disasters causes social disorder. The region itself becomes criminogenic after the disaster due to factors such as inaccessibility to official institutions, unemployment, change of settlement, and staying in temporary living spaces. For this reason, official and unofficial social control in the residential area deteriorates

and the emergence of crime becomes easier (Frailing and Harper, 2017).

1.2. Natural Disasters, Social Disorder and Crime

There are different studies on crime rates after natural disasters. After Hurricane Hugo, infrastructures on the island of St. Croix were damaged and many buildings were destroyed. It was observed that the incidents of looting increased after this incident. Researchers studying disaster criminology have stated that the partial reason for the increase in looting crime was hurricanes (Qurantelli, 1994) similarly after Hurricane Katrina also the rate of looting increased (Quarantelli, 2007). Harper and Frailing (2012) concluded that unemployment and low socioeconomic status after Hurricane Katrina caused social disorder and therefore theft increased in the region. When the areas in which hurricanes took place and the crime rate increased are examined, it is found that the society consists of different socio-economic classes, the authorities are rapidly losing control in the region, and the previous crime rates are high (Drabek, 2010). While post-disaster studies found that helping behavior among individuals increased, it was revealed that race and education level were predictive. It has been observed that vulnerable groups and economic income classes have less access to aid after natural disasters (Kaniasty and Noris, 1995; Bolin and Bolton, 1986). As a result of the analysis conducted using 14 years of geographical and longitudinal data in the United States, a relationship was found between the impact size of natural disasters and the increase in the crime rate. There has been an increase, especially in property crimes and aggressive crimes after the disasters (Prelog, 2015). Although helping behavior increases immediately after disasters and a therapeutic community is formed, long-term investigations in disaster areas revealed that criminal behavior increased in the long term (Leitner et al., 2011). Crimes reported to the police in the region were examined for the 5 years after the Canterbury earthquake, and it was found that general criminal behavior decreased during this period, but domestic violence, theft, arson, and assault

crimes increased (Breetzke, et al., 2016). In light of the information obtained through individual interviews after the 2010 Haiti earthquake, it was seen that sexual and physical assault increased in the region and created a significant problem, especially for women and girls (Kolbe et al., 2010).

1.3. Kahramanmaraş Earthquake

Kahramanmaraş Earthquake happened on February 6, 2023, at 04:17 and 13:24, with epicenters in Pazarcık (Kahramanmaraş) with a magnitude of 7.8 and Elbistan (Kahramanmaraş) with a magnitude of 7.5. Later an earthquake of magnitude Mw6.4 occurred, with the epicenter in Hatay Yayladağı, which is also one of the city that affected by the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake, on February 20, 2023 at 20:04. These earthquakes caused great destruction in 11 provinces, which corresponds to 16.4 percent of the country's demographics and whose total population is 14,013,196 people for 2022. According to official data, more than 48 thousand people lost their lives and more than half a million buildings were damaged (Turkish Presidency Strategy and Budget Presidency, 2023).

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

After the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, harm to infrastructures and change in social organization caused social disorganization similar to another natural disaster. This social disorganization led to criminal events which were reflected in the press and the reports of non-governmental organizations. In this context, unaccompanied children whose relatives could not be reached immediately after the delays and deficiencies in search and rescue efforts after the earthquake, and missing children who could not be reached by their relatives, were the leading issues followed with concern. When we look at the violations of children's rights, the most prominent issues are the violation of children's data through the press and their vulnerability to neglect and abuse. Violence against women, one of the main problems of Turkey, has also come to the fore for women damaged by the earthquake, and the deficiencies in support mechanisms have become a matter of discussion.

In addition to all these, theft and looting incidents that occurred in the earthquake region, hate crimes against refugees, and torture and ill-treatment that occurred in this context were also among the events reflected in the press. This study aims to explain the human rights violations and violent incidents reflected in the media after the earthquake through social disorder theory.

3. METHOD

This study covers the content analysis of texts about violent incidents that developed in the earthquake region after the earthquake and were reflected in the media and the reports of non-governmental organizations, using a qualitative method. For this purpose, 'google.com' search engine was used, along with 'Kahramanmaraş/Maraş/Hatay earthquake', 'crime', 'child abuse', 'unaccompanied child', 'violence against women', 'theft', 'extortion', ' Searches were made with the keywords 'immigrant/Syrian immigrant' and 'torture'. In this context, news and NGO reports published on the internet between February 6, 2023, and July 10, 2023 were included in the research. Repetitive news from different sources was included in the study one time. A total of 23 news and 11 reports have been included in the study. The accessed news has been classified according to the classification of the relevant legal regulations.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Unaccompanied and Lost Children

In the statement made by the Ministry of Family and Social Services on February 13, 2023, a week after the earthquake centered in Kahramanmaraş, it was stated that 1362 unaccompanied children in the provinces affected by the earthquakes were registered in the Ministry system, 369 of these children were identified and matched and delivered to their families, and there was a high number of children followed in the hospital. It has been stated that the number of children admitted to the Ministry's institutions is 201, that the identities of 1071 of these children have been identified, and that 291 children have not yet been identified (Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2023a).

In the last statement made by the Ministry of Family and Social Services on May 26, 2025, it was stated that there were 1914 unaccompanied children who were removed from the rubble after the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, 1841 of these children were handed over to their families with an identity verification, the treatment of 7 children continued in hospitals, and 53 children were taken into institutional care (Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2023b)

According to the information prepared by the Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation to inform the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the situation of unaccompanied children in the earthquake zone in Turkey, families trying to find the whereabouts of their children due to the lack of coordination in the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes In Turkey, personal efforts were made to find solutions for unaccompanied children in hospitals, and in the meantime, violations of children's rights occurred. It has been reported that the personal information of children whose families or identities are being tried to be found is circulating on social media, that concerns about children being handed over to adults or abducted in an uncontrolled manner have arisen, and that the Disaster Child Civil Coordination Team established after the earthquake has quickly worked on the processes to be followed regarding missing and unaccompanied children (Mor Çatı, 2023a).

The Disaster Child Civil Coordination Team started its work immediately after the earthquake and published the Information Note on Unaccompanied Children on February 8, 2023. By scanning and confirming social media posts on February 6-7, 2023, 95 children were declared missing and there were 50 unidentified children in hospitals (Disaster Child Civil Coordination Team, 2023a). Following the work carried out by the Coordination Team by scanning and confirming social media posts between 6-10 February 2023, it was determined that as of 17:00 on Friday, February 10, a search warrant was issued for at least 168 children and there were many unidentified children in hospitals (Disaster

Children's Civil Coordination Team, 2023b). In the information note dated 14.02.2023 titled Second Information Note - Recommendations on Unaccompanied Children, the Coordination Team listed the steps that should be followed to ensure that the best interests of the children who are left unaccompanied and for whom a search warrant has been issued are considered. Accordingly, it has been recommended to strengthen the connection between units, ensure the safety of children, provide regular information, establish information desks, identify the relevant personnel, identify and identify children, investigate the relationship of proximity, and monitor child safety and well-being (Disaster Child Civil Coordination Team, 2023c).

Apart from this general information, there is also special news reflected in the press. On 01 June 2023, in the news titled "The forgotten face of the earthquake: Where are the missing children?" ("Depremin unutulmuş yüzü: Kayıp çocuklar nerede?"), it is stated that a 4-year-old child has not been found even though 114 days have passed since the earthquake. According to the statements of his relatives, search and rescue efforts started 5 days after the earthquake, and family members who did not leave the debris could not find a trace of the child. Yet, even though the family reported the situation to the prosecutor's office, DNA samples to search and match the child and the family were taken 60 days later (Cumhuriyet, 2023). Again, "Grandma and grandfather in Kahramanmaraş are looking for their granddaughter Ela, who disappeared in the earthquake" ("Kahramanmaraş'ta anneanne ve dede, depremde kaybolan torunları Ela'yı arıyor") (T24, 22 February 2023); similar news content regarding missing and unaccompanied children also found with the news title "New image from Mukaddes Erva, which disappeared after emerging from the rubble" ("Enkazdan çıktıktan sonra kaybolan Mukaddes Erva'dan yeni görüntü") (NTV, 28 February 2023), "Earthquake victims looking for their missing ones: 'We want our children to be found even if they are bones' ("Kayıplarını arayan depremezeder: 'Çocuklarımızın kemikleri bile olsa bulunmasını istiyoruz') (BBC Turkish, 21 March

2023) were found. These news contents include information specific to the children mentioned and information regarding unaccompanied children in general.

4.2. Violation of Children's Right to Be Forgotten

Another criminological issue found in the news was regarding to violation of the children's rights. In the article written by Media Ombudsman Faruk Bildirici on 20.03.2023, it was stated that the images of children rescued from the rubble after the earthquake were frequently included in the media, and that they even created pages with these photographs in two different newspapers with the titles "Babies of Hope" ("Umudun bebekleri") and "Believe in Children" ("İnanın çocuklar") even there was no aid to public interest in publishing these photographs. It has been stated that it is possible to make effective news with shots where children's faces are not visible, by sharing the photos of children to manipulate the feelings of the reader, children's privacy and security are put at risk, and their traumas can last a lifetime (Birgün, 2023a).

Studies carried out by the Disaster Child Civil Coordination Team (Afet Çocuk Sivil Koordinasyon Ekibi) after the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes showed that news about children circulated continuously in different media, that all children had access to this news, and that this negatively affected the children's sense of trust, trigger their anxiety and fear, and paved the way for abuse. It was emphasized that it violated children's physical speech rights. For child rights-based journalism four basic steps have been suggested: "not instrumentalizing, getting approval, supporting, and being an example" (Disaster Child Civil Coordination Team, 2023d).

4.3. Child Neglect and Abuse

In the Guide on the Protection of Children Affected by the Earthquake in Turkey published by UNICEF Turkey, it is stated that the risk of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect increases in emergencies such as earthquakes and that gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, economic exploitation, and illegal

adoption are among these risks. It has been emphasized that these risks are especially valid for children who lose their caregivers. It is important to establish safe areas that support the identification of risks to children, along with emergency support and protection services, after disasters (UNICEF, 2023).

Turkish Grand National Assembly on March 1, 2023, following the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes establish a commission for protection of child brides under the name of "Parliamentary Investigation Commission Established to Investigate the Case of a Six-Year-Old Girl Being Exposed to Sexual Abuse in the Name of Marriage and to Determine the Precautions to be Taken to Prevent Similar Incidents and to Prevent All Kinds of Child Abuse" ("Altı Yaşındaki Bir Kız Çocuğunun Evlilik Adı Altında Cinsel İstismara Maruz Bırakılması Olayının Araştırılarak Benzer Olayların Yaşanmaması ve Her Türü Çocuk İstismarının Önlenmesi İçin Alınması Gereken Tedbirlerin Belirlenmesi Amacıyla Kurulan Meclis Araştırması Komisyonu"). The commission listened to the experts from field for the possible solutions and suggestions regarding how to protect children from abuse who live in camps. According to the commission meeting minutes, child abduction and abuse are the main threats to the safety of children after natural disasters. It is mentioned that after the previous earthquakes, there were abuse cases in which male camp workers were responsible for providing basic needs in the camps. Because camp security is not enough, girls are abused in the camp. So, it is stated that there is a lack of control in tent camps and container camps in the region of earthquakes which can lead to cases of sexual abuse (TBMM, 2023).

Other than the sexual abuse incidents in which children were subjected to physical sexual abuse were also reported in the press. In the news titled "Sexual abuse in the hospital of a Syrian child pulled out of the rubble" ("Enkazdan çıkarılan Suriye'li çocuğa hastanede cinsel istismar") dated February 28, 2023, it was stated that a 13-year-old Syrian girl saved from the rubble in Hatay was subjected to sexual abuse by a man while she was receiving treatment in the hospital, and similar behavior of the same man towards other

women was detected (Bianet, 2023). According to another incident reported in the press on June 30, 2023, a person was detained on the allegation that a 17-year-old girl staying in a tent camp in Malatya was harassed by a 21-year-old person (Cumhuriyet, 2023b).

Another finding regarding children's rights was neglect. As most of the news stated there were delays and lack of coordination during search and rescue efforts immediately after the earthquake. This delay led to children's inability to access shelter, clothing suitable for seasonal conditions, medical treatment, clean water, food and hygiene materials, education, and psychosocial services (Duvar, 2023). Neglects have even caused children to lose their lives after the earthquake. For example, in the news dated May 9, 2023, it was stated that a 4-year-old child died after a fire broke out due to electrical contact in the shed that a Syrian immigrant family set up in the garden of their house, which was damaged by the earthquake in Malatya (Habertürk, 2023).

4.4. Gender-Based Violence

In addition to child abuse also earthquake areas become riskier for the women based on the NGO reports and news. "Mechanisms to Combat Violence Against Women in the Earthquake-Affected Region" published by the Mor Cati Women's Shelter Foundation after the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, stated that after the earthquake, it became difficult for women to access mechanisms to combat violence, officials had insufficient information on guiding women, and there were no safe toilet areas for women and children. Women had to postpone their hygiene needs due to security risks, which also caused the emergence of diseases caused by lack of hygiene. Women who were subjected to violence and were in the process of divorce or living separately from their spouses could not reach the tent and were forced to stay with their violent spouses and family members. It has been stated that single women have difficulty accessing safe shelter services, all these situations pose a risk of violence for women and prevent women from moving away from a violent environment (Mor Çatı, 2023b). In the report titled "Women's Experiences of Moving Away from Violence and Support Mechanisms in

Earthquake-Affected Regions “ published by the same organization on July 6, 2023, it is stated that even after 5 months, still the basic needs of women are not met, support mechanisms are not accessible, and the problematic applications in the area constitute an obstacle for women to move away from violence.

When we look at the news reflected in the press, cases of violence against women have been encountered. In the news titled “ *Male violence in the earthquake zone: He did not show his children, he used violence* “ (“*Deprem bölgesinde erkek şiddeti: Çocuklarını göstermedi, şiddet uyguladı*”) dated February 19, 2023, stated that a woman in Hatay Samandağ handed over her two children to her estranged husband, with whom she was in the process of divorcing, due to the damage to her house, however when the woman asked to see their children, she encountered with physical violence of her husband (Artibilgi , 2023). In another case which is reported by the news dated February 24, 2023, by the title “*He poured boiling water on his ex-wife!*” ‘*He said aftershock earthquake is happening*’ (“*Eski eşinin üstüne kaynar su döktü! ‘Artçı depremden oldu’ dedi*”). The woman, whose house was severely damaged due to the earthquake, went to her ex-husband’s earthquake-resistant house so that her children would not have any problems, and at the end of the third day, her ex-husband poured a pot of boiling water over her head while she was sleeping. Her husband said, ‘Pray that I did not kill you’ (*Dua et seni öldürmedim*). The woman who was subjected to violence said: “ *The reason for the violence was that I stood tall after the divorce and had friends. He took revenge on me.*” (“*Gereğesi boşandıktan sonra dimdik ayakta durmam ve arkadaşlarımın olmasımıyş. Benden intikam aldı.*») (NTV, 2023).

4.5. Crimes Committed Against Property

News about looting and theft in the regions affected by the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes have been on the agenda since the first days:

The news titled “*102 arrests in the investigation of looting and theft in the earthquake zone*” (“*Deprem bölgesinde yağma ve hırsızlık soruşturmasında 102 tutuklama*”) dated February 14, 2023, stated that

248 incidents related to crimes against property in the earthquake zone were encountered, 175 suspects were identified, 102 of the suspects were arrested by the judgeships, 23 people were ordered to undergo judicial control, 23 arrest warrant was issued for the suspect, it was stated that 7 suspects were detained (TRT Haber, 2023).

In the news content dated February 28, 2023, titled “*Sexual abuse of the Syrian child removed from the rubble in the hospital*” (“*Enkazdan çıkarılan Suriye’li çocuğa hastanede cinsel istismar*”), under the title of neglect and abuse towards children, it was stated that the 18-year-old sister of the girl who was subjected to sexual abuse and other women in the hospital were also victims of the crime of theft by having their gold stolen by the same man (Bianet, 2023).

As reported in the press on February 8, 2023, titled “*Scandal in the earthquake zone! Stealing with AFAD clothes*” (“*Deprem bölgesinde skandal! AFAD kıyafeti ile hırsızlık*”), it was stated that 2 people who were determined to have stolen from evacuated houses in Şanlıurfa by wearing clothes of AFAD an aid organization to not to be caught by the police during the crime (Milliyet, 2023).

4.6. Hate Crimes Against Immigrants

It has been announced that the number of immigrants residing under temporary protection in the earthquake zone is 1,738,035. (TC Presidency Strategy and Budget Directorate, 2023) However, it is also known that there are many immigrants in these regions due to their proximity to the border gates of the provinces affected by the earthquake (Duruel, 2023).

As stated above, many theft and looting incidents in the region after the earthquake was reported in the press, but these incidents were primarily attributed to Syrian immigrants (Gazete Karınca, 2023). The news titled “*They experienced double fear*” (“*Çifte korku yaşadılar*”) dated February 24, 2023, stated that Syrian earthquake victims, whose lives were turned upside down by the destruction caused by the earthquake, experienced double fear with lynching attempts. Besides, it is also mentioned that they have a hard time reaching their basic needs that they

could not find shelter, and that they could not request support due to the risk of being attacked. Indeed, those who participated in search and rescue efforts were treated like thieves and had to leave the region (Birgün, 2023b).

Relevant NGOs, on the other hand, reported that the allegations of looting and theft in the press about immigrants were not true, that immigrants were criminalized with the influence of hate speech, and that they were affected differently by the earthquake (CİSST, 2023).

4.7. Torture and Ill-Treatment

In the joint statement published by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on 5 April 2023, it was stated that law enforcement officers in the earthquake region tortured and mistreated people they suspected of being involved in theft and looting, that one person died in custody after being subjected to torture, and that in some cases, law enforcement officers committed crimes. It was determined that there was no intervention to prevent attacks by civilians against the alleged people, in some cases the victims were determined to be Syrian refugees, and xenophobia played a decisive role (Amnesty, 2023).

Incidents of torture and ill-treatment also emerged as a reflection of crimes against property and hate speech against immigrants after the earthquake. In the news dated February 18, 2023, it was stated that the suspect of the looter who was later found out to be innocent beaten by the police with the words "I will relieve my stress with you" (*Seninle stresimi atacağım*). The news titled "Three soldiers were arrested in Hatay on charges of "killing people" ("Hatay'da üç asker, "insan öldürme" suçlamasıyla tutuklandı") dated March 18, 2023, stated that two of the Syrians who were beaten and given diesel at the police station in Hatay died, two of them were in intensive care, and in the investigation launched in Reyhanlı, two lieutenants and one first lieutenant were arrested (T24, 2023; Evrensel 2023).

5. DISCUSSION

After the Kahramanmaraş earthquake, post-disaster crime incidents were observed, in line with the literature. Although statistical data regarding these criminal incidents is not published, based on the reports of NGOs serving in the region and individual incidents reflected in the press it is possible to say that criminal acts have taken place in the region.

According to the view that natural disasters increase crime by disrupting social organization patterns, in connection with the theory of social disorganization, it is argued that since disasters create significant stress on households, there may be an increase in cases of domestic violence (Zhou, 1997; Zahran et al, 2009). Results of a study conducted in Florida show that natural disasters significantly reduce levels of reported property and violent crimes, but significantly increase the number of reported domestic violence crimes (Zahran et al, 2009). In a review study addressing the relationship between natural disasters and gender-based human rights violations against women and girls, findings were found that natural disasters disproportionately affect women and girls compared to men (Düger and Yaman, 2022). A qualitative study done by Thurston et al. (2021), found that the triggers that cause violence against women have increased after the natural disaster because of increased stress factors, deficiencies in supervision and support services, and the increased social problems related to inequality that lead to violence.

Some studies show that natural disasters cause domestic violence crimes to increase significantly, while significantly reducing the levels of crimes against property (Zahran et al., 2009). Although disaster sociologists generally claim that looting is rare after natural disasters, based on their qualitative studies with people damaged by disasters, criminologists prefer secondary data such as official statistics on crime to better understand this phenomenon, and according to such data, many natural disasters occur. It is observed that theft incidents increase significantly after disasters, and it is suggested that this situation may be caused by the increase

in the number of disadvantaged people after disasters, the existence of a subculture that tolerates small-scale thefts, the existence of criminal gangs and an insufficient police force (Frailing and Harper, 2020).

In our study in line with the literature, different types of crimes have been conducted according to news and NGO reports. According to types of the crime seven themes are determined which are unaccompanied and lost children, violation of children's rights, child neglect and abuse, crimes committed against property, gender-based violence, hate crimes, and torture. Even though the exact number of the crimes is unknown, it can be argued that after the disasters criminal acts continue to happen.

From the social disorganization theory perspective, since the units that will officially provide social control were affected by the earthquake and were not sufficient, the arrival of support teams from different cities appeared as a risk factor in terms of social disorder theory in maintaining social order. The loss of control of the authorities immediately after the event (Bolin and Boltin, 1986) resulted in child losses and child abuse in the period immediately after the earthquake. In addition, like other studies, cases of looting and domestic violence were also reflected in the media.

It is seen from the themes that vulnerable groups are more prone to be victimized after disasters. After the disasters, vulnerable groups like women, children, older people, and minorities are at higher risk for victimization. Because lack of social cohesion and norms of informal social control which are constructs of social disorganization theory, lead to an increase in crime (Lyons, 2007), vulnerable groups are more likely to be affected by lawlessness and chaos after the disasters (Bizzarri, 2012). Similarly, news headings in this study also showed that victims are mostly children, immigrants, and women.

As previous studies (Drabek, 2010) have shown, immigrants who are among vulnerable communities benefited less from aid and even became victims of hate crimes. This study's

results also showed that immigrants are the victims of hate speech and ill-treatment. Freilich and Chermak (2014) concluded in their study that social disorganization is correlated with hate crimes due to demographic changes, and perceived inequality. It is found that as the community heterogeneity increased, the hate crime rate also increased especially in economically disadvantaged neighbors (Lyons, 2007). A qualitative study conducted in Hatay showed how limited resources affect the perceived discrimination and hate speech interviewees stated that locals verbally abuse them and they have a hard time reaching resources (Duruel, 2023). As the earthquake region, which is socially disorganized and economically disadvantaged, includes cities that have higher rates of immigrants, hate crime toward ethnic minorities is expected to increase from the social disorganization theory perspective.

6. CONCLUSION

To explain the criminal activities in the earthquake region from the perspective of social disorder theory, it is important to understand the magnitude of the earthquake's destruction. Kahramanmaraş Earthquake greatly damaged the infrastructures and buildings and some of the roads, hospitals, and other government institutions collapsed with the individual buildings. This destruction affected the dynamics in the social organization together with the psychological well-being of the individuals. Some of the individuals affected by the earthquake migrated out of the city and lived in temporary settlements, most of the people started to live in tents or container camps which led to changes in social ties, which is a crime-preventing factor.

No matter how powerful the destruction is, it is a necessity to provide safe living spaces for everyone after natural disasters. In addition to shelter, the food and hygiene needs of people damaged by the earthquake must be met quickly and effectively. All services provided to people affected by the earthquake should be handled with a trauma-sensitive approach, and practitioners should be trained and supervised in this regard. Every institution should have an

emergency action plan specifically for natural disasters and earthquakes, and these action plans should be inclusive of vulnerable populations like people with disabilities, the elderly, children, prisoners, etc. It is important that action plans are sensitive to the needs of vulnerable populations. A gender-sensitive disaster management plan and emergency action plans also need to combat violence against women after disasters as studies showed that gender-based violence increases after disasters.

To conclude, after the damage caused by the Kahramanmaraş earthquake social ties and social organizations have been also damaged. Individuals suffer from the individual effects of the trauma together with its social effects. According to social disorganization theory, crime is not against the individual but against the society. Societies that lack societal norms, and surveillance, are more prone to crimes. For that reason, it is important to take necessary precautions for the safety of the areas that are affected by the earthquake. Since the crime investigations carried out within the scope of this study were only events reflected in the media, our results have limitations. It is seen that criminal acts in the region cause stress on the individuals. Besides, there is a need for more study on the disaster criminology area for a better understanding of the issue.

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