



# Disaster and Disability of the Century: The Case of Türkiye



Reyhan Gürel\*

Department of Health Sciences, Başkent University, Ankara, Türkiye

Submission: June 22, 2022; Published: July 28, 2023

\*Corresponding author: Reyhan Gürel, Department of Health Sciences, Baskent University, Türkiye, Email: reyhan\_guney@hotmail.com

## Abstract

In the aftermath of the earthquake in Turkey, which has been described as the disaster of the century, disabled people in particular have been experiencing various problems. In addition, the large destruction and the high number of injured in earthquake regions contribute to the increase in the disabled population. The situation of people with disabilities is affected by the cultural structure and socio-economic status of society. The fact that the earthquake occurred in provinces with low socio-economic status leads to serious problems for people with disabilities and fundamental deficiencies in their support. In conclusion, this mini-review aims to present the effects and results of the February 6 earthquake in Turkey on the disabled in line with the existing literature.

**Keywords:** Disabilities; Disaster; Earthquake; Türkiye; Nursing

## Introduction

The earthquake that occurred in Türkiye on February 6, 2023 has gone down in the literature as the most devastating disaster of the century, causing the highest number of casualties [1]. Nine hours after the first earthquake of 7.7 magnitude centered in Pazarcık district of Kahramanmaraş, an earthquake of 7.6 magnitude occurred in Elbistan district of the same province, causing more devastating consequences [2]. Eleven provinces were affected by these two earthquakes and approximately 44 thousand people lost their lives [3]. The earthquake not only caused many people to leave us but also caused thousands of people to be disabled for the rest of their lives [4]. When we think of people with disabilities, we think not only of physical disabilities but also of the mentally disabled, the visually and hearing impaired who have mental health problems due to the earthquake. Disability, which is defined as a part of being human, is encountered temporarily or permanently at some point in life, due to environmental or personal factors. These factors have led to a new perspective on disability with the definition of "an evolving concept" [5]. New approaches to disability have led to a focus on limitations in functioning rather than medical approaches. Before the earthquake, the proportion of the population with at least one disability (age 3 and above) in Türkiye was 6.9% and this rate was 5.9% for men and 7.9% for women [6]. According to the results of the disability survey conducted in Türkiye in

2002, it was reported that 11.8 percent of the total disabled population lived in the eastern Anatolia region and 9.9 percent in the southeastern Anatolia region [7]. The provinces most affected by the earthquake are located in the eastern Anatolia and southeastern Anatolia regions. These provinces have low income in socio-economic development rankings [8]. According to the field surveys conducted in the region after the earthquake, it was informed that 1293 disabled earthquake survivors were treated and transferred out of their provinces [9]. However, although the president announced that 850,000 people were disabled as a result of the earthquake, although official records have not yet been shared [10]. This number only includes people with physical disabilities.

Environmental factors in earthquake-affected provinces reveal that more people are disabled than the announced numbers. Because earthquakes, which destroy economic and social life in a short time, cause great material losses and disability of people [11]. This situation brings with it problems such as inadequate access to hygienic water, malnutrition, poverty, unfavorable working conditions and lack of access to health services [6]. In Hatay, where the February 6 earthquake caused the most destruction and loss of life, the damage to health facilities caused the people of the region to be unable to benefit from health services in the early period until field hospitals were established and became

operational [12]. These problems are among the environmental factors that pave the way for disability.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The ability of persons with disabilities to determine their own destiny is influenced by the cultural structure of the society in which they live [13]. In interviews conducted by Amnesty International with disabled earthquake survivors, it was noted that there were fundamental deficiencies in supporting people with disabilities in the aftermath of the earthquake in Türkiye [14]. Disabled earthquake victims;

- I. There are no private toilets,
- II. Their rights were not fully respected,
- III. They are forced to live in inadequate conditions,
- IV. Inadequate access to the devices they use,
- V. They reported that they experienced problems such as interruption of health and rehabilitation services after the earthquake [14].

During an earthquake, it is important that earthquake survivors are cared for appropriately and early [15]. Nurses who are responsible for the care to be given to the disabled earthquake survivors should also be knowledgeable about the subject. In the literature, it is stated that nurses manage the crisis effectively in times of disaster, but it is necessary to determine the information they need in order to provide effective care to earthquake survivors [16]. However, this earthquake was of such magnitude that even the health professionals who were supposed to care for the earthquake survivors were affected in the worst way.

Considering the current situation, the state should have emergency action plans for disasters and the process should be carried out without interruption. It is important to establish a support network for people with disabilities before the earthquake and to ensure that this network includes people who will be helped after the earthquake [17]. Considering the trauma experienced by disabled earthquake survivors, the necessary psychosocial support should be provided at an early stage [18]. By evaluating the effects of the earthquake, the solutions in the emergency process to be created should be permanent, not temporary.

## References

1. World Health Organization (2023) Help earthquake survivors in Türkiye&Syria.
2. AFAD. 06 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş (Pazarcık& Elbistan) earthquakes field studies preliminary evaluation report.
3. Presidency of the Republic of Turkey (2023) We will largely recover from the earthquake within a year.
4. Disabled Persons Association of Turkey (2023) Don't ignore the disabled again on the way to a new era!
5. Ministry of Family and Social Services (2011) World Disability Report 2011. Ankara:Anil Group Printing.
6. Ministry of Family and Social Services (2021) Statistical bulletin on disabled and elderly.
7. Turkish Statistical Institute (2002) Turkey disability survey 2002.
8. Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology (2017) Socio-Economic Development Ranking Survey of Provinces and Regions SEGE-2017 (Report no:3) Ankara.
9. Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (2023) Activities for the earthquake region.
10. Disabled Persons Association of Turkey (2023) We continue our work in earthquake zones
11. Tonak HA, Kitiş A (2020) Disabled in Earthquake and Fire Disasters: A Narrative Review. *Journal of Occupational Therapy and Rehabilitation* 8(1):77-84.
12. Ministry of Health (2023) February 22, 2023 press release.
13. Eltantawy MM (2023) Self-Determination Skills of Persons with Intellectual disabilities in Arabic Countries: A Mini-Review. *Global Journal of Intellectual & Development Disabilities* 11(4):1-3.
14. Amnesty International (2023) Türkiye:People with disabilities neglected in humanitarian response to devastating earthquake.
15. Güler Aksu G, İmrek Y (2023) The earthquake disaster in Türkiye: A review from child and adolescent psychiatry perspective. *Duzce Medical Journal* 25(1):6-14.
16. Rezaei SA, Abdi A, Akbari F, Moradi K (2020) Nurses' professional competences in providing care to the injured in earthquake: A qualitative study. *J Educ Health Promot* 9:188.
17. Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency Provincial Directorate of Disaster and Emergency (2009) The first 72 hours of an earthquake for people with disabilities.
18. Yıldız MI, Başterzi AD, Yıldırım EA, Yüksel Ş, Aker AT, et al. (2023) Preventive and Therapeutic Mental Health Care after the Earthquake- Expert Opinion from the Psychiatric Association of Turkey. *Turkish Journal of Psychiatry* 34(1):39-49.



This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License  
DOI: [10.19080/GJIDD.2023.12.555831](https://doi.org/10.19080/GJIDD.2023.12.555831)

## Your next submission with Juniper Publishers will reach you the below assets

- Quality Editorial service
- Swift Peer Review
- Reprints availability
- E-prints Service
- Manuscript Podcast for convenient understanding
- Global attainment for your research
- Manuscript accessibility in different formats

**( Pdf, E-pub, Full Text, Audio)**

- Unceasing customer service

**Track the below URL for one-step submission**

<https://juniperpublishers.com/online-submission.php>