Social workers' lived experiences of the Kahramanmaraş earthquake in Türkiye: 'Not everyone is in the same boat'

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Abstract: Natural disasters pose numerous challenges for affected countries, and the 2023 Kahramanmaras earthquake caused significant damage and ongoing difficulties. This study explores the experiences of social workers engaged in disaster response through semi-structured interviews with fourteen participants. Two key themes emerged: (1) the scope of social work interventions, and (2) challenges and opportunities in practice. Findings highlight the need for comprehensive disaster management policies addressing vulnerable populations' specific needs. These insights have practical implications for social work education, equipping future practitioners with the skills required for effective disaster response.

Keywords: social policy; disaster; earthquake; social work; vulnerable groups; social protection policy

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Introduction

Türkiye is a country located at the intersection of several tectonic plates and is prone to various natural disasters (Bommer et al., 2002). A comprehensive analysis reveals that Türkiye encountered a total of 206 natural disasters and 170 technology-induced disasters over the period of 1900 to 2022 (Usta, 2022). According to the International Disaster Database (EM-DAT, 2023), 183 disaster events were recorded worldwide from January 2022 to July 2023, resulting in a loss of life for 78,467 individuals. A recent occurrence of earthquakes in the Southeast of Türkiye on February 6, 2023, resulted in an estimated death toll of over 50,000 individuals and an economic loss amounting to 35 billion dollars (EM-DAT, 2023).

No doubt that inherent characteristics of the social work profession render social workers well-suited for engagement in disaster management. The field of social work is grounded in principles that encompass social justice, human rights, transformative societal shifts, and empowerment. It involves active collaboration with individuals, families, and communities to explore viable solutions to challenges and enhance overall welfare (IFSW, 2014). Furthermore, social work practitioners receive comprehensive training to provide assistance to individuals, groups, and communities in times of crisis, address problems, conduct needs-assessments and advocate for vulnerable groups while strictly adhering to professional codes of ethics (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2012). In disaster situations, social workers generally work as brokers, counselors, advocators, case managers, and trainers (Dominelli, 2015; Harms et. al, 2020). Two functions of social work in disasters can be mentioned: the first is to provide the necessary services for the risk groups affected by disasters, and the second is the psychosocial service activities carried out to eliminate the psychological adaptation disorders of people affected by disasters (Altun, 2016).

However, Sim et al. (2013) underscored the detrimental impact of inadequate professional training on the active involvement of social workers in the realm of disaster management. The lack of expertise in disaster management is a prevalent issue among social workers, causing services to be disrupted in disaster-affected areas (Koç & Yalçın, 2023). The recent catastrophic earthquake in Türkiye showcased the immense dedication of helping professionals, particularly social workers, in providing aid to the affected individuals. Unfortunately, the delineation of the requisite functions for social work within the realm of disaster management remains obscure in Türkiye.

The Türkiye Disaster Response Plan (TAMP), implemented since 2022, aims to establish an effective response mechanism in disaster situations and to ensure that necessary preparations are made before disasters occur. This plan provides a comprehensive framework for all disasters and emergencies in Türkiye and involves government agencies, the private sector, civil society organizations, and citizens (TMMOB, 2023). According to TAMP, the primary responsibility

for social work intervention in disasters lies with the Ministry of Family and Social Services. Since 2009, disaster-related activities have been managed by the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD). AFAD is responsible for coordinating disaster and emergency services, formulating training policies, and making legislative arrangements in these areas. The Ministry of Family and Social Services operates in three main areas of responsibility during disaster response processes: "Social Assistance," "Psychosocial Support," and "Services for At-Risk Groups." Particularly in the post-disaster period, psychosocial support is provided through psychological first aid aimed at helping survivors feel safe, express their emotions, and make sense of the events they have experienced. These services are delivered through one-on-one counseling, disaster information brochures, seminars, and panels (AFAD, 2022). Social workers take on roles such as providing post-disaster psychosocial support, managing in-kind donations, assessing the needs of affected individuals, referring them to social services, and supporting personnel involved in disaster response in Türkiye. However, these roles are not assigned exclusively to professionals holding a bachelor's degree in social work; they are also performed by other professionals, such as psychologists, teachers, and sociologists, who are employed by the Ministry under the status of social workers.

The question of what experiences and challenges Turkish social workers face remains unanswered. In this context, this article aims to examine the experiences of social workers during the 2023 Kahramanmaras earthquake. Accordingly, inclusion criteria were specifically defined to focus on the social workers who were actively involved in post-earthquake interventions. While the experiences of social workers who were on duty during the earthquake but not directly engaged in such interventions are undoubtedly important, they fall outside the scope of this study."Obtaining detailed information about the challenges professionals face throughout the process will facilitate drawing conclusions about the pivotal role of social work in disaster management. In this regard, this study makes a valuable contribution to the field of social work by providing practical insights for social workers, informing policy and practice, raising awareness, and supporting collaboration and development in the area of disaster management. It emphasizes the significance of social workers in disaster response and their potential to have a substantial impact in such challenging situations.

Methods

Study design

A qualitative research methodology was chosen for this study to effectively analyze the participants' experiences. The reason behind choosing the qualitative research method as a crucial tool in this study is its ability to thoroughly investigate and comprehensively evaluate the traumatic effects of the disaster phenomenon. The study specifically focuses on exploring the opportunities, challenges, and interpersonal experiences of social workers. This method allowed the researchers to engage in direct interaction and observation, which greatly facilitated an in-depth exploration of the experiences encountered in the disaster management process. This study utilized a phenomenological design to extensively examine the experiences of social workers engaged in disaster management, aiming to develop a comprehensive understanding of their firsthand encounters and perspectives.

Procedure and study participants

The study was conducted with a sample group of 14 social workers with 6 women and 8 men who were working in various provinces affected by the Kahramanmaras earthquake in Türkiye. The mean professional experience of the participants was 8 ± 3.4 years. Prior to the study, only two participants had received training in disaster management. Among the participants, four were affiliated with the Ministry of Family and Social Services, another four were associated with the Ministry of Health, and two each worked for the Turkish Red Crescent, the Disaster AFAD, and the municipality.

The snowball sampling method was employed to reach the participants. After potential participants who had worked in the earthquake zone during or after the disaster were identified, they were informed about the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and the voluntary nature of their participation in the study. A semi-structured interview form was used in the research. Prior to creating the semistructured interview format, the researchers extensively reviewed existing literature and formulated open-ended questions. This approach was chosen to ensure flexibility during the data collection process. Verbal consent was obtained before the interview. The interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform. The interviews ranged in length from 55 to 75 minutes and were conducted over three months, spanning from April 2023 to July 2023. In order to maintain data security, the information shared by the participants during the study was carefully recorded and stored in a locked secure location.

Data analyses

Once the data was collected, the obtained audio recordings were transcribed word for word into written format. Next, we reviewed the statements of the participants and analyzed their behaviors during the interviews. We then transcribed the exact words of each participant. The process of coding involves decoupage of the information gathered through observations, interviews, or other channels, and then transcribing them (Williams & Moser, (2019). Following the coding process, the next step involved categorizing and grouping the themes that emerged during the interviews. Then we employed a case analysis approach, also known as the case-by-case analysis or case perspective analysis. In this stage, similar cases were grouped and studied together. The participants were given transcribed audio recordings once more to confirm their accuracy. The MAXQDA 2022 software was utilized for data analysis. Through the use of observational methods, the coding of the data, alongside the participants' narratives, and their emotional states were identified and included in the analyses. The participants' identities were kept anonymous, and each participant was assigned a serial number (e.g., P1). The data analysis focused on the participants' experiences during Kahramanmaras earthquakes and the emerging themes from these experiences. As a result of the analysis, themes, categories, codes, and subcodes were obtained. In order to enhance the study's validity, techniques such as peer debriefing, triangulation, and reflective journaling were used throughout the process of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). Thus, the final themes were extracted from the qualitative data using an inductive approach.

Ethical consideration

Ethical approval for the study was received from the Cyprus International University, Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (EKK22-23/015/015).

Results

The analysis of the data in the study resulted in two superordinate themes: (1) scope of social work intervention theme, which includes the different client groups of social workers encountered in the disaster area and the professional roles and functions they undertook with these clients. (2) The challenges and opportunities theme addresses the problems that social workers experienced and their perspectives on future social work interventions in disaster situations. The themes and subcategories are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
The themes and subcategories

Subcategories	Final Themes
Client Profile	Scope of Social Work Intervention
Professional Roles and Functions	
Past Disruptions	The Challenges and Opportunities
Future Considerations	

The findings are presented under these four headings, using direct quotes from the participants' descriptive narratives.

Theme 1: Scope of social work intervention

Understanding the scope of social work interventions in disasters is critical to improving the effectiveness of disaster management. Based on the research data, they were categorized into two subcodes: "client profile" and "functions and roles of social workers." These subcodes include the diversity of clients encountered by social workers in the disaster process, as well as the details of the specific roles undertaken by professionals.

Client profile

One of the most important factors determining the scope of social work interventions in disasters is the diversity of the client profile. The clients consisted of individuals from various demographic and socio-economic backgrounds, including children, youth, senior citizens, persons with special needs, women, families, and disadvantaged groups. Each group faced varying levels of vulnerability to disasters and had specific needs.

The participants' observations of the clients, services, and staff in the earthquake zone highlighted the central theme of social workers prioritizing their efforts towards vulnerable groups that face heightened risks during disasters.

In the disaster period, all earthquake victims and survivors are included in our client group. But not everyone is in the same boat, so to speak. We may be in the same sea, and everyone's capacity for staying above that sea is different. In other words, some are on a piece of wood, some are on a lifebuoy, some can't swim, some are on a ferry. As such, we need to prioritize particularly vulnerable groups in the earthquake zone (P1)

P1 points out some demographic groups that faced greater vulnerability compared to others during a disaster. Correspondingly, our findings show that social workers prioritized assisting the most vulnerable groups. For example, P9 said:

The groups we prioritized were disadvantaged groups. Otherwise, we tried to provide services to everyone immediately. People with no identity or no relatives, the elderly or orphans without a family or orphans who have lost their family, refugees, or people with a physical or mental disability. Apart from that, we focused on all disadvantaged groups. Because we gave them priority. (P9)

This study revealed that there were no services or arrangements available for certain groups in terms of acute social work interventions during the disaster. For instance, one participant portrayed adolescents as a neglected group in the following way:

Adolescents are often vulnerable and can be at risk of neglect or abuse. There have been numerous cases of young people who have turned to crime or are in need of support from social services. Because there is no school. There is no school they can go to. They don't want to stay in the tent all the time. There is no adequately organized assistance available to provide psychosocial support for them. While children go to the play tent, the adolescents stay outside. (P4)

Professional roles and functions

The functions and roles of social workers in disaster processes expand the scope of intervention. The experiences of participants highlighted the importance of social workers' roles in crisis intervention and coordination. However, in the earthquake zone, where disadvantaged clients were concentrated, participants indicated fulfilling various social work functions and roles, including advocacy, networking, needs analysis, and risk assessment, as follows:

We have skills and roles that come from the nature of the profession, especially in crisis management, establishing connections, and coordinating direction. We have a lot of organizational skills. Our contact with other institutions is much faster. We can liaise with institutions providing services in this field much more easily (P3)

Since the social workers can actually see the flaws in the system, since they are active in the field, they were able to advocate for the applicant, establish contact with the relevant places, and make attempts to solve the problem. The operational role is also very important. Because we work very actively in the operation part, we know very well how to match resources with organizations and individuals. It is important to know the source there. Who carries out this work in that operational part? You will know him; you will meet with him. For example, we carried out those parts very well. (P5)

We can summarize it as follows. Due to our professional equipment, we are able to provide a holistic perspective in analyzing the needs of people. We can identify vulnerable groups and we have a lot of functions in terms of providing social protection or necessary psychosocial support to the family. We have a different perspective, a special perspective in the field of disaster. (P7)

Theme 2: The challenges and opportunities

The firsthand experiences of social workers in disaster scenarios shed light on the challenges encountered during the intervention process and the potential opportunities that lie ahead. In this study, two main subcategories were determined: "Past Disruptions" and "Future Considerations". These subcategories include the factors affecting the effectiveness of social work intervention and ideas on enhancing these processes in the future.

Many participants reported that lack of communication was one of the biggest problems in the earthquake zone. Firstly, communication was affected by multiple factors, including damaged infrastructure, overwhelmed staff, and a lack of awareness among organizations. According to participant P7, the large scale of the earthquake hindered coordination efforts, and they described the situation as follows:

I don't know. Perhaps, it was assumed that the initial response would always come from neighboring provinces, so disaster preparedness plans were made accordingly. However, since the neighboring provinces are also earthquake-prone areas, coordination could not be established. There was a serious coordination problem on the field. (P7)

Systematic issues were also presented as one of the most dominant challenges. Social workers act as brokers to fulfill clients' needs, but mostly they have not received any feedback on case outcomes. Participant P7 highlighted the absence of a mechanism to track clients' professional work outcomes, leading to uncertainties and challenges in the follow-up process.

For example, a needs-assessment in the field might show that a family needs a tent. We

were conveying this to AFAD* by a message. But I didn't know if the case was closed or if it was still needed. Because the team that came after us did not have a system to track it. We informed them of a case. That's all. That's all they said. We were told that no feedback would be given to us. Of course, this is a serious shortcoming. (P7)

Participant P5 emphasized that social workers should be given the necessary authority and resources beforehand to ensure effective social work interventions. Nonetheless, this often poses a significant challenge.

If this had happened: if the person who managed the social work case had a tent, food, and authority, the process would have been incredibly effective. Because we are stuck there. We are stuck with bureaucracy. (P5)

Some participants stated that formal procedures could lead to disruptions in professional practice. Furthermore, the expectations placed on social workers by managers to report to senior management daily posed a potential risk of prioritizing quantity over quality when it came to interventions in cases.

[...] The first thing the administrators wanted was for us to follow the law, but this was a significant emergency situation. Achieving 100% complete execution of the legal framework is, in my opinion, a utopia. People's needs had to be met promptly, taking into account my own experience in the field. (P4)

Similarly, P6 implied this issue as follows:

Basically, the practitioners who worked there had to report on their work on a daily basis because they were usually attached to a ministry. Let me describe their general anxiety; they are worried that they have to deliver the data quickly by the evening, and since they have had very few interviews, they might be criticized for the low number of interviews. Why did we talk to so few people? Basically, one of the biggest problems was that there was a system that focused on quantity rather than quality. (P6)

While operating in disaster areas, social workers were confronted with not only systemic and structural challenges, but also personal difficulties. The lack of training in disaster education was highlighted as a challenge by P1 and P10 with the following statement:

I think everyone is afraid of the first response moment after that traumatic event. That includes other professions. Social workers should make the team feel its professional capability. It should be prominent there. That is, at the point of applying and demonstrating what they know. (P1)

When the first earthquake happened, the trainings were assigned to us from the online

system, but their efficiency is obviously questionable. I listened from the computer just to tick. I just read a few articles on trauma education, but how effective can trauma education be without experiencing the field in the region, but at least we could have a theoretical basis. (P10)

Future considerations

This category consists of three subcategories: "training on social work during disasters", "scientific research within this field" and "preparation of disaster management plans." All will be presented in detail with the related quotations from the participants in this section.

Training in disaster-focused social work has been identified as a requirement by all participants having working experience in the earthquake area. The participants recommended that institutions offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses, along with in-service training programs, should prioritize the dissemination and updating of knowledge in areas such as social work in disaster management, trauma care, and psychological first aid. P8 and P2 described these themes as below:

Especially in social work education, it should be included in the curriculum. I can say this about the future of social work in disasters in Turkey. If there are training, we will be more dominant in this field. We are a disaster country. We always say that. (P8)

Crisis management, working with trauma, communication skills with institutions ... most importantly, communication skills with earthquake victims. Understanding the psychology of earthquake victims, understanding the mood they are in at that moment. These have to be provided. In order to develop these, social workers who are going to work in the field should be trained, and this training should be continuous and face-to-face applied training. (P2)

Participants P1 and P6 highlighted the necessity for social work academics in Türkiye to conduct further research on social work in disasters.

In particular, social work academics need to do more research and gain more experience in the field of disasters in order to see how effective social work can be in disaster management. (P1)

Unfortunately, there are several deficiencies in both the practice and the academic base of social work. If we look at the publications that we all try to read, very little work has been done on disaster in the field of social work. (P6)

According to some participants, apart from improving professional competence and skills, "volunteerism" was the most critical criterion for individuals working in this field. P10 expressed volunteerism in the following way:

If you go voluntarily, you show a will. So there's one thing that everyone agrees on: "The right distribution of humanitarian aid, the right delivery of social work interventions" and these people do not tire anyone there. Because they go there with a dream. But you don't see this in mandatory assignments. I approach this with the concept of willpower, where there is a convergence in a common will. (P10)

Another common issue reported by participants is the great necessity of disaster plans and the enhancement of proper policies in Türkiye. The participants expressed their support for social workers' active engagement in the establishment of disaster policies. Furthermore, the participants emphasized the importance of the social work profession actively participating in the multidimensional framework of policymaking for disaster management. In this regard, P5, P11 and P13 explained this necessity in the following way:

Disaster management in Türkiye needs to be governed with a multidisciplinary perspective. Currently, the involvement of human sciences, social sciences is somewhat weak. (P11)

We cannot allocate a separate piece for social services in disaster management. We can evaluate social services within the whole. In other words, there should be a holistic plan. (P13)

Well, actually, the beginning and end of the disaster intervention plan in Türkiye are quite clear. It's a detailed plan, but the role of social workers is only in providing psychosocial support services. Throughout the entire disaster management process, our professional perspective needs to be emphasized. There is a significant need for social work academics who have experience in trauma and disaster work to be present in the field portals. (P5)

Another finding is related to disadvantaged groups in disaster management plans. The participants indicated that social workers should be involved in raising social awareness for vulnerable groups during disasters. They suggested that specific disaster plans should be developed for disadvantaged people. P12 exemplified this issue in the following way:

We can initiate social work intervention right from the rescue moment; especially for disadvantaged groups, this is a necessity. Let's start from there. Cultural situations may arise at the rescue site, and there might be a disabled individual. There is nothing

about rescuing disabled individuals, so there's a significant gap. For instance, a hearing impaired person may be trapped under debris and won't be able to hear any sounds. Therefore, there is a need for another model to rescue them. (P12)

Similarly, P14 expressed the requirement of ensuring the continuity of boarding social service institutions in disasters and developing plans and policies for this as follows:

The biggest earthquake in Türkiye caused the collapse of institutions and organizations responsible for implementing social service models, as well as the evacuation of their personnel who were affected by the disaster. At this point, there is a need for an action plan on what should be done to ensure the functioning of social service models as they do during normal periods. (P14)

Discussion

In this qualitative study, the experiences of Turkish social workers who took part in the earthquake sites in Türkiye were examined in light of the difficulties encountered in the professional working process. The literature was utilized to offer a wider perspective on the results of the experiences of social workers in disaster management. These insights can be included in social work education and training programs to better equip future social workers in effectively responding to disasters.

The results of this study indicate that some demographic groups who are more vulnerable than others are more severely affected by disasters. As anticipated, this aligns with research showing disadvantaged communities face additional burdens during disasters (Bayraktar & Yılmaz, 2018; Gartrell et al., 2020, Ünlü, 2024). In addition, it was revealed that vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied children, people with special needs, youth, and patients requiring chronic care, were prioritized by social workers during and in the aftermath of the earthquake. Similarly, Kousky (2016) reported that children are the ones most affected by disasters.

Additionally, vulnerable groups face greater obstacles to accessing resources and meeting basic needs during disasters (Bayraktar & Yılmaz, 2018; Zakour & Harrell, 2003). The present study indicates that young people were one of the neglected groups in terms of accessing leisure services. Strengthening the resilience of at-risk populations, particularly youth, is essential for ensuring equity during disasters (Wu & Greig, 2022). An additional noteworthy finding regarding the theme of integrating acute social work interventions in disaster scenarios was related to the roles and functions of social workers. In general, the participants believed that they had diverse roles and functions in the disaster area. However, it has been disclosed that their roles predominantly centered around advocacy, connection, coordination, needs

analysis, and risk assessment. This finding is aligned with prior research highlighting social workers' roles in disasters as educators, counselors, and brokers (Matlakala et al., 2022). Similarly, Javadian (2007) noted that social workers played pivotal roles at micro, mezzo, and macro levels in addressing the 2003 earthquake in Iran, offering comfort and guidance to affected individuals. In disaster management, social workers' interventions include providing resources, connecting individuals with support systems, conducting assessments, and offering psychosocial support (Maher & Maidment, 2013; Shevellar & Westoby, 2014;). In line with this, Rusconi and Boetto (2024) state more broadly that disaster work in social services encompasses interventions aimed at increasing resilience to disasters and mitigating the effects of disasters on people, communities, and ecosystems. Correspondingly, the participants in this study highlighted the various roles of social workers during and after the earthquake, such as advocating for affected individuals, establishing connections, coordinating efforts, analyzing needs, and assessing risks. However, this study's findings emphasized the importance of making the social work profession more visible in the field of disaster management. Earlier studies also emphasized the need for a prominent role for social workers in disaster scenarios (Hay & Pascoe, 2018; Harrikari et al., 2021; Rambaree & Rambaree, 2021).

The second theme of the study is based on the challenges and opportunities faced by social workers at the disaster site. It is clear that social workers faced numerous challenges, including individual, systematic, and structural. At an individual level, certain participants highlighted their perception of inadequate skills and competencies in the realm of disaster social work. This underscores the significance of education focusing on trauma and its psychological effects in disaster response (Hay et al., 2021). However, the inadequacy of practitioners' disaster skills is perceived as a prevalent concern (Cooper & Briggs, 2014; Javadian, 2007; Rock & Corbin, 2007). The potential impact of teaching and practice recommendations on the resilience of vulnerable and marginalized populations is an area that requires more research. A similar gap in disaster training was highlighted by Canadian social workers (Wu, 2021).

Similarly, a study in China identified various challenges that had to be addressed in the earthquake-affected zone, including the lack of governmental support, low professional status of social work, rapid changes in the social environment, lack of supervision, coordination, and cooperation among social service agencies, and inadequate experience and knowledge in working with survivors of the disaster (Huang et al., 2014). Participants in the current study also reported systemic issues such as insufficient organization, coordination, and communication in disaster zones. The participants stated that the earthquake-affected area had sufficient numbers of workers. Yet, the participants also reported obstacles in terms of organization, coordination, and communication within the disaster zone. These deficiencies created challenges for survivors in accessing resources and impacted social workers' ability to manage cases effectively. For instance, the lack of coordination and

communication causes confusion and uncertainty among both practitioners and survivors (Hay & Pascoe, 2022). Furthermore, the participants recommended the development and distribution of disaster-oriented social work curricula, conducting extensive academic research in this field, and enhancing awareness through the development of social policies. Correspondingly, other researchers emphasized the significance of conducting social work research in disaster management (Huang et al., 2014; Maglajlic, 2019; Sim et al., 2022). Despite the critical role of social workers, academic studies in disaster social work remain scarce.

It is crucial for social work curricula, especially in disaster-prone countries, to incorporate disaster social work as a fundamental component. Additionally, social work students must receive training in effectively handling disaster situations (Fahrudin, 2012; Ng, 2012; Nikku, 2015). In the current research, the participants emphasized the importance of pre-disaster training, active involvement of the social work profession in disaster management policies, creating societal awareness during disasters, and developing specific plans for disadvantaged individuals.

Finally, it is revealed that the proactive involvement of social work professionals in the field, actively engaging in the development of social policies by giving priority to vulnerable groups, expediting disaster preparedness, and fostering multidisciplinary collaboration are all essential elements in the macro level of the social work profession. Currently, social workers are not as prominently involved in disaster-related policy development as needed (Alston et al., 2018). To accomplish this, social workers should strive to enhance the prominence of their profession throughout all stages of disaster management, including pre-disaster, during-disaster, and post-disaster processes. It is necessary for them to establish stronger alliances with public organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. Active involvement of social work professionals in the field, participating in macro-level policies, may create a political climate and legal regulations that prioritize disadvantaged groups, expedite disaster preparation, and promote multidisciplinary collaboration. Moreover, the participation of social work professionals in macro-level policymaking may also aid in providing medium and long-term psychosocial support through post-disaster damage reduction measures following the Kahramanmara earthquakes.

Limitations and future research

This qualitative study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of social workers involved in the 2023 Kahramanmaras earthquake. Social workers who were not directly engaged in disaster interventions were not included. The limited number of participants may restrict the generalizability of the findings. This may have resulted in the diverse experiences of social workers employed in

different regions of Türkiye and within various institutional structures not being fully reflected. The study primarily focused on professional experiences during the early phase following the disaster. It does not include longitudinal data on how social workers' roles, coping strategies, and professional development have evolved in the long term. The interviews were conducted via online video recordings, which prevented observation of participants' work environments. Additionally, the awareness of being recorded may have caused participants to behave more cautiously; these aspects are considered limitations of the study.

It is important for future research to expand the knowledge base in the field by taking these limitations into account. First, studies conducted with larger and more diversified samples would allow for comparisons of the experiences of social workers across different regions, institutions, and socio-demographic characteristics. In this regard, including social workers employed in non-governmental organizations or community-based initiatives may contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of multidisciplinary collaboration in disaster response. Second, the use of longitudinal research designs could reveal how social workers' roles, competencies, and psychosocial well-being change from the immediate aftermath of the disaster through the recovery and reconstruction processes. Such research would be valuable in identifying the long-term professional and personal impacts of disaster work on social workers.

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