

Moral Injury Experiences and Perceptions of Self as A Moral Subject of Healthcare Workers Working in and behind the Field in the Earthquakes of February 6, 2023 in Türkiye: Developing Quality Criteria and Solution Suggestions for Moral Resilience

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Moral injury is a type of negative affective disturbance experienced by those who have witnessed sudden and severe emotional damage, intense human suffering and cruelty. It can undermine the values, perspectives, attitudes and justifications that underpin the person's moral integrity.

On February 6, 2023, the earthquakes of magnitudes 7.7 and 7.6 caused significant damage to housing and public infrastructure, affecting both Türkiye and Syria. The disaster resulted in a significant loss of life, with over 50,000 deaths officially reported across 10 provinces in Türkiye. The event raised public health concerns and sparked debates on earthquake preparedness. One important ethical issue is the possibility that healthcare workers, who play a key role in the functioning of health services in the earthquakes, may experience moral injury which can lead to burnout and alienation. For instance, a considerable number of healthcare workers working in the region during and after the earthquakes were reported to quit their jobs.

Our research project aims to gain insight into the moral injury that healthcare workers may have experienced while conducting and/or managing critical treatment and care services during the aforementioned earthquakes. It will be questioned how they cope with the moral difficulties they experience and how these experiences determine their perception and position as moral agents. The secondary aim of the study is to develop basic principles (quality criteria) for the planning and organization of healthcare services in disasters and to develop short-term feasible solutions to the existing problems. These stages aim to contribute to increasing healthcare workers' moral resilience.

The study will include healthcare workers who served in various roles, duties, and positions during the February 6, 2023 earthquakes. It is designed as a descriptive, participatory, cross-sectional and mixed method research and will be carried out in four stages: 1) Determination of the prevalence of moral injury for the specified population; 2) conducting and analyzing

semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants with high and low moral injury scores, 3) evaluating the validity of the qualitative data through focus groups, and 4) developing quality criteria and practical solution suggestions in the light of the findings in a Socratic dialogue workshop with the participants.

The project has been submitted to TÜBİTAK, Türkiye's national science and technology institution. The two-year research project is the first study that addresses this subject in Türkiye.

In this presentation we will discuss the main framework and the preliminary findings of our project.