

ABSTRACT

Moral Injury and Moral Resilience among Healthcare Workers in the aftermath of 2023 Earthquakes in Türkiye: Navigating Systemic Challenges and Strengthening Moral Competencies

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The earthquakes of February 6, 2023, in Türkiye and Syria caused widespread destruction, resulting in over 50,000 deaths and more than 100,000 individuals severely affected. Beyond the public health crisis, healthcare workers (HCWs) faced extreme conditions, including resource shortages, overwhelming suffering, and the inability to save lives, which may have contributed to their moral injury. This phenomenon can erode core values, leading to guilt, helplessness, and distrust. Many HCWs left their jobs during and after the earthquakes. Türkiye's lack of preparedness and ineffective crisis management left them unequipped, exacerbating the impact.

This study explores the moral injury experienced by HCWs who provided critical care during the earthquakes. We use a mixed-method study approach. First, the survey, composed of items questioning demographic information, Moral Injury Symptom Scale – Healthcare Professionals, and The Rushton Moral Resilience Scale, aims to determine the prevalence and correlation of moral injury and moral resilience within this population. Second, semi-structured interviews provide deeper insights into individual experiences.

Initially, over 400 HCWs responded to the survey, and the sample size continues to grow. Additionally, a pilot study involving in-depth interviews offers further qualitative insights into the phenomenon of moral injury.

In this study, we will present and discuss findings from both the survey and pilot qualitative study, focusing on collective resilience and systemic challenges in disaster response. We hypothesize a negative correlation between the frequency and individual scores of HCWs experiencing moral injury and those demonstrating moral resilience. A general sense of distrust is evident among HCWs, particularly towards administrators and other teams, leading them to rely primarily on their own team members for support. Furthermore, widespread doubt about the possibility of systemic improvements discourages them from proposing structural reforms. Should these assumptions be validated, this study will provide a realistic perspective on the steps required to enhance HCWs' moral competences and moral resilience.

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