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# Exploring gender-inclusive approaches in Turkish disaster risk management: insights from decision-makers, service providers, and NGOs

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the experiences and views regarding gender sensitivity of service providers, decision-makers, and non-governmental organization (NGO) workers who operate during disasters. The study uses a phenomenological model – a qualitative approach. Data are collected by two trained interviewers using a semi-structured interview form. In-depth interviews are conducted with 52 individuals from four provinces in different regions of Türkiye. Then, the data are analysed using MAXQDA20, a qualitative analysis programme. The results show that a substantial proportion of the participants does not use gender-sensitive language or terminology. Women are defined by their domestic roles and motherhood, with reference to religious sources. Furthermore, in the context of the disaster risk management process, participants intensely report their views and experiences regarding the practical needs of women, such as hygiene, privacy, and access to information. However, the strategic needs of women, such as women's empowerment, gender-based data collection, and combating violence against women, are only mentioned by a few participants, especially NGO workers. Finally, most participants do not receive gender training. Those who receive it mention their experiences with vulnerable groups, violence against women, and other reproductive health issues.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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disaster risk management;  
gender sensitivity; response;  
mainstreaming

## 1. Introduction

Türkiye has commonly experienced nature-induced and human-caused disasters due to its geographical and geopolitical location and physical, economic, and social vulnerabilities (Inal & Kaya, 2021). Recently, on 6 February 2023, two major earthquakes (7.7 and 7.6 magnitude) struck the southeast of the country, with the epicentre in Kahramanmaraş city. The earthquake had a devastating effect on 11 provinces. According to official records, more than 50,000 people lost their lives, 100,000 people were injured, and millions were affected Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD, 2023). In addition, low-intensity conflicts have occurred between ethnic separatist terrorist organizations and state forces in the eastern region of Türkiye for years. It is estimated that over 30,000 people have died in these conflicts (White, 2000). Furthermore, Türkiye is currently grappling with significant challenges related to the integration and management of approximately four million

refugees and irregular migrants, largely due to the impact of the Syrian civil war and the turmoil in Afghanistan (Oxford Analytica, 2021; Şafak-Ayvazoğlu et al., 2021).

The situation that the country has been experiencing in terms of disasters has also been challenging in terms of gender issues, presenting a complex picture. Along with the characteristics of Middle Eastern geography in terms of historical and cultural roots, the country's social structure is based on the republican system of government established at the beginning of the last century, which predicts a democracy committed to the equality of all citizens. This democracy also supports the values of Enlightenment and Western civilization (Sancar, 2014).

The tension observed between the two opposite poles (seculars and conservatives) for over a century is reflected in every element of society and the state, leading to a 'one step forward, two steps back' in terms of gender equality. For example, in the amendment to Article 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye in 2004, the following paragraph was added: 'Men and women have equal rights'. The State must ensure that this equality exists in practice. With this clause, state interventions to ensure gender equality are guaranteed by the constitution (Yildirim & Göçgün, 2016). However, Türkiye published a presidential decree on 20 March 2021, announcing its sudden withdrawal from The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, a critical state intervention aimed at promoting gender equality, which Türkiye signed as the first signatory on 11 May 2011 United Nations (UN, 2021). The withdrawal decision took effect on 1 July 2021 (Council of Europe, 2021). On the one hand, women's participation in education and employment is increasing day by day in Türkiye; on the other hand, gender-based violence and femicide rates remain relatively high (Afsar, 2016, Cavlin, 2020; Tekkas Kerman & Betrus, 2020; Toprak et al., 2017). Türkiye has a somewhat problematic status in terms of gender equality indicators. According to the latest Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum (WEF), Türkiye ranks last among European countries and only features among middle-ranking Middle Eastern countries. In terms of the sub-components that determine Türkiye's place in this ranking, educational attainment places the country in the best category; however, concerning other components that are critical for women's empowerment in society, the country's ranking reflects a pessimistic picture (Global Gender Gap Report, 2021).

The relationship between disasters and gender is worth examining. Early studies on the intersectionality of disasters and gender were carried out in the nineties; today, these two topics are still discussed in various contexts on local and global scales (Enarson & Chakrabarti, 2009; Enarson & Morrow, 1998; Enarson et al., 2018; Erman et al., 2021; Fothergill, 1998; Myers, 1994; Yadav et al., 2021). Gender theory indicates that individuals and societies are heavily influenced by gender dynamics (Council TWs, 2007). Thus, it is essential to consider societies' pre-disaster preparedness, mitigation efforts, vulnerability to disasters, and post-disaster efforts from a gender perspective (UNISDR, 2009). Therefore, a gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction approach has emerged. Gender-based differences and issues are considered in disaster phases, and gender equality is promoted by implementing policies, strategies, plans, or programmes (Nelson et al., 2016).

*Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015* United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR, 2005) and *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*, which are among the most comprehensive international actions for disasters, also highlight the reality of gender in disasters, calling for both international and local authorities to consider this issue United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR, 2015).

In this framework, we carried out a comprehensive project (Integrating The Gender Perspective into Turkey's Disaster Policies) financed by the Ministry of the Interior Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). In the first part of the project, we examined disaster legislation (laws, regulations, and national plans) in Türkiye from a gender perspective to understand whether it was gender-sensitive (Erbaydar et al., 2021). This article constitutes the second phase of the project and aims to (i) discover the gender-specific thoughts of individuals who determine disaster policies, disaster field workers, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who work in

disasters, (ii) understand their views and experiences regarding gender needs in disaster risk management processes, and (iii) explore their gender-based training.

## 2. Conceptual framework

Researchers have emphasized that the needs of people during disasters are gender-based. Such needs are not uniform and are classified into practical and strategic (Ciampi et al., 2011; Pincha, 2008) (Figure 1). The approach to women's practical and strategic needs was first developed in the 1980s by Maxine Molyneux and later by Caroline Moser (Molyneux, 1984; Moser, 1989). This approach focuses on providing necessary living conditions such as water, childcare, and health services and creating livelihood opportunities, which are urgent practical needs for women. At the same time, it also addresses strategic needs such as decision-making power, leadership positions, and activities aimed at women's empowerment. Although practical needs improve women's lives, they do not have a substantial impact on gender inequality. In contrast, strategic needs involve changes in power and control relations (Ciampi et al., 2011). It is crucial to reveal the distinctions between these approaches and evaluations for ensuring gender equality during the activities carried out in the disaster risk reduction process. Within the scope of this process, the involvement of women in rescue teams for disaster risk reduction programmes, the inclusion of men in childcare teams, and the implementation of programmes, including activities such as donating bicycles to women and improving their swimming skills, are crucial for promoting gender equality. Such programmes contribute to creating appropriate settings for equal opportunities (Pincha, 2008). Disasters involve various gender-laden issues, particularly shelter, security, and privacy (Ciampi et al., 2011; Pincha, 2008).

One of the key principles specified by the United Nations for gender mainstreaming is to provide decision-makers, senior executives, and other key personnel with training in gender awareness, gender analysis, and gender planning, as well as tools such as guides available for their use in such processes (Peña-López, 2017). The areas for gender mainstreaming that were also presented at the Platform on Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction held in Kobe, Japan, in January 2005 involve the integration of a gender perspective into all processes of disaster risk management and education, communication, programme implementation, and monitoring activities United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR, 2009). Furthermore, the International Disaster Reduction Conference held in Davos in 2006 under the theme of 'Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction', emphasized the need to build capacity and raise awareness among planners, decision-makers, and implementers United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR, 2009).

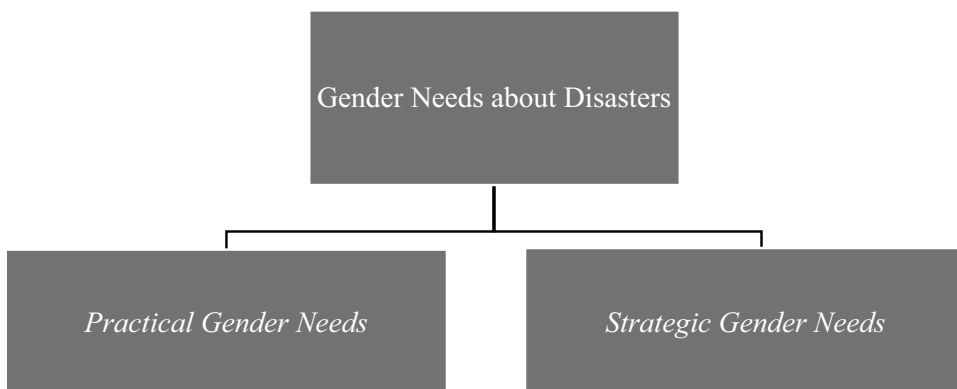
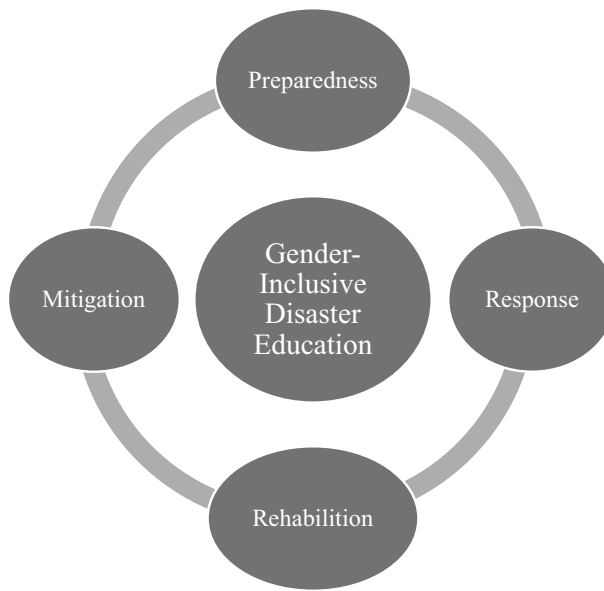


Figure 1. The gender needs of people in disasters (Pincha, 2008).



**Figure 2.** The importance of gender inclusive disaster education in disaster phases (created by authors).

Among the most essential activities and practices to be carried out to ensure gender sensitivity is gender-inclusive disaster training, which is part of all disaster risk reduction processes and is provided for those who work in the field (Figure 2). Such training should address gender-inclusive assessments, which ensure that the needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of women and men are identified and that appropriate and effective programmes are implemented.

We searched PubMed, Scopus, ISI Web of Science, Google Scholar, Science Direct, and EBSCO index and databases, but we could not find any study on this topic in Türkiye. This research was conducted with the AFAD (a national agency that single-handedly coordinates and exercises legal authority in cases of disasters and emergencies in Türkiye), other relevant government institutions, and major NGOs in the field. To ensure the gender sensitivity of such institutions and organizations, this study was carried out to identify the kind of activities they carried out, particularly gender-inclusive education, and to determine how well such activities matched the characteristics mentioned above. The information obtained through this research allows us to create a roadmap for this subject.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research design

This study addressed disaster phenomena and the topic of disadvantaged situations from a gender-based perspective. The study was conducted with various segments of society working on disasters (service providers, NGOs, and decision-makers). A phenomenological qualitative research design was used in this study. Husserl (1967) first applied a phenomenological approach to social science to study how people describe and experience facts through their senses (Husserl, 1967; Patton, 2015). It is a qualitative methodological structure that examines individuals' experiences in detail and reveals how they make sense of them (Husserl & Moran, 2012). The study used in-depth interviews with 52 individuals from four provinces in different regions of Türkiye.



Figure 3. The map of research area.

### 3.2. Research area

This study was conducted in the provinces of Van, Adana, Istanbul, and Ankara, located in various regions of Türkiye (Figure 3). These provinces were selected for their diverse characteristics, reflecting the country's various aspects and past experiences with disasters. Van, who witnessed a major earthquake in 2011 ( $M_w = 7.0$ ) that resulted in significant casualties, was chosen to represent the sociocultural conditions in the eastern part of the country. With its high earthquake risk and previous seismic activity in 1998, Adana holds importance not only as a cosmopolitan city but also for representing the Mediterranean region. Istanbul, a densely populated cosmopolitan city and major economic hub, experienced a devastating earthquake in 1999 ( $M_w = 7.5$ ). This disaster has led to substantial losses of life and property, highlighting Istanbul's vulnerability to disaster. Finally, Ankara, the capital city, was included due to its role as a policymaking centre for disaster-related policies in Türkiye.

### 3.3. Research participants and recruitment

A purposive sampling technique, frequently preferred in qualitative studies, was used in the participant selection process. In this context, snowball sampling, maximum diversity, and criterion sampling were combined (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2017). Cooperation with the AFAD and snowball sampling techniques were used together to reach the participants. Criterion sampling was used when the participants had characteristics of interest for the study. To include participants in the study, it was determined that a person had been working on disasters for at least one year, had participated in at least one disaster, and did not face any obstacles that would restrict the interview. Finally, we aimed to reach as much diversity as possible based on the criteria defined within the scope of the research (gender, province, institution, and position).

The most critical point in determining the sample size in qualitative research is reaching a size that provides detailed and comprehensive information about the target audience, called data saturation (Creswell, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although this study initially aimed to reach 60 people (15 participants from each province), researchers and interviewers evaluated data saturation after each interview and decided whether to include new participants. As the last interview was a repeat of the previous interviewees' content, the study was completed by the 52<sup>nd</sup> participant (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic characteristics of participants.

Participant	Age	Sex	Residence	Participant	Age	Sex	Residence
Actor1	45	Woman	İstanbul	Actor 27	30	Man	Ankara
Actor 2	38	Woman	İstanbul	Actor 28	37	Man	Ankara
Actor 3	25	Woman	İstanbul	Actor 29	26	Woman	Ankara
Actor 4	29	Woman	İstanbul	Actor 30	35	Man	Ankara
Actor 5	43	Woman	İstanbul	Actor 31	45	Man	Ankara
Actor 6	34	Woman	İstanbul	Actor 32	35	Man	Ankara
Actor 7	52	Woman	İstanbul	Actor 33	31	Woman	Ankara
Actor 8	43	Man	İstanbul	Actor 34	38	Woman	Ankara
Actor 9	50	Woman	İstanbul	Actor 35	42	Man	Ankara
Actor 10	33	Man	İstanbul	Actor 36	31	Woman	Ankara
Actor 11	51	Woman	İstanbul	Actor 37	32	Man	Ankara
Actor 12	34	Woman	Adana	Actor 38	28	Woman	Ankara
Actor 13	46	Woman	Adana	Actor 39	38	Woman	Van
Actor 14	32	Woman	Adana	Actor 40	35	Man	Van
Actor 15	32	Woman	Adana	Actor 41	48	Man	Van
Actor 16	34	Woman	Adana	Actor 42	45	Woman	Van
Actor 17	30	Man	Adana	Actor 43	42	Man	Van
Actor 18	42	Woman	Adana	Actor 44	55	Man	Van
Actor 19	46	Woman	Adana	Actor 45	53	Man	Van
Actor 20	39	Man	Adana	Actor 46	50	Woman	Van
Actor 21	35	Man	Adana	Actor 47	40	Man	Van
Actor 22	55	Man	Adana	Actor 48	36	Man	Van
Actor 23	56	Man	İstanbul	Actor 49	28	Man	Van
Actor 24	29	Woman	Adana	Actor 50	38	Man	Van
Actor 25	43	Woman	Ankara	Actor 51	37	Man	Van
Actor 26	37	Woman	Ankara	Actor 52	38	Man	İstanbul

### 3.4. Data collection

#### 3.4.1. Data collection form

National and international literature and research on indexes and databases such as PubMed, Scopus, ISI Web of Science, Google Scholar, Science Direct, and EBSCO were reviewed while creating the questionnaire for this study. Based on the literature review, the following disaster-specific parameters were obtained, and a semi-structured questionnaire was created:

- (1) *Demographic information and institutional details of the interviewee,*
- (2) *Personal views on gender (to understand gender socialization),*
- (3) *Views and experiences on gender needs in disaster risk reduction,*
- (4) *Views and information about gender-based institutional activities on disaster,*
- (5) *Solution offers.*

#### 3.4.2. Data collection process

Research data were collected through face-to-face in-depth interviews between 2 November 2018, and 1 January 2019. Two social scientists conducted interviews. Before the data collection stage, the interviewers received one day of training from the research team on the in-depth interview method, the purposes of the study, and the semi-structured questionnaire form. In addition, a list of persons and entities to be interviewed was introduced to the interviewers, the data collection process was discussed with them, and their feedback was received.

The researchers arranged appointments with the individuals to be interviewed in the provinces they visited. At least one researcher accompanied the interviewers during their visit to the province of study. In-depth interviews were conducted in the participants' own offices, and a suitable room was arranged within the institution for those who did not have a particular office room to be interviewed in an isolated environment. The interviews lasted an average of 120 minutes. Interviewers and researchers collaborated on transcription of audio recordings, analyses, and reporting.



### 3.5. Data analysis

Initially, audio recordings of the participants were transcribed using a transcriber. The transcribed data was encoded using the 'line-by-line' method in the MAXQDA 20 software. Many researchers recommend this approach (line-by-line coding) as a first step in data analysis. This approach implies reviewing the transcription and naming or coding each line of the text, even if the lines are not complete sentences (Gibbs, 2007). The relevant codes were then gathered to form categories, and finally, the categories were gathered to form themes. During the analysis process, the transcriptions were first read in plain form by all authors to become familiar with the data, then repeated under the codes and categories. Finally, the themes were restructured. The readings allowed us to check the conformity of the data with the themes and categories and to perform a more comprehensive analysis. After all codes, categories, and themes were clarified, the MaxMaps code model was used in MAXQDA to visualize the findings. The finalized findings are reported in the Results section, organized into three main themes. The conclusion and recommendations section are then formulated in alignment with the findings and theoretical framework.

### 3.6. Trustworthiness of research

Validity and reliability are essential criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness and quality of a study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed different criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research: internal validity (credibility), reliability (dependability), and external validity (transferability). These criteria were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that techniques such as long-term interaction, triangulation, and participant confirmation could be used to ensure the internal validity of the research. In this study, to ensure internal validity, a strategy of diversifying data sources was used by interviewing different people on the same subject. In this regard, in addition to selecting participants from four different provinces, interviewing different segments, such as disaster workers, NGO workers, and decision-makers, enabled us to obtain different experiences on the topic. In addition, since most interviews exceeded two hours, and the average interview duration was two hours, long-term interaction was achieved with the participants. Finally, during the interview process, interviewers periodically asked participants, 'Do you mean this?' The validity of the study was ensured by asking questions and obtaining approval.

External validity (transferability) is another criterion used to maintain the reliability of this study. Transferability refers to the degree to which qualitative research results can be transferred to other contexts or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Bitsch (2005) stated that the researcher can form a potential user's transferability judgement through 'intensive description' and purposeful sampling. In this study, the researchers created 'thick' descriptive data. We have also included comprehensive details on the methodology and context. This approach allows readers to make personal judgements about how well the research context fits their situation, that is, to generalize the findings to other contexts. Another method to ensure transferability is to use purposive sampling to select participants. This study used purposeful sampling because it provided more in-depth findings than other probability sampling methods. In addition, the researchers preferred to select suitable participants for the study and provided maximum information.

Finally, investigator triangulation was used to ensure reliability, and the remaining research team confirmed the research codes. In addition, an external researcher (T. E.), an expert in gender research, was involved in checking the data analysis. Additionally, during the coding phase, researchers regularly convened groups to collectively determine the codes and categories of each narrative. Unnecessary codes were removed, the main ideas were determined, and the themes, categories, and codes were finalized in these discussions. In case of disagreement, the group engaged in discussions until a consensus was reached. The overall agreement among the coders was notably high, reaching 85.7%. Finally, the participants' quotes were presented in detail to minimize researcher bias and ensure the reliability of the study.



### 3.7. Research ethics

This study was approved by the Non-clinical Research Ethics Committee of Hacettepe University (No: GO 18/48–20). Before starting the interviews, the interviewees were informed about the project, and informed consent was obtained. Interviewees voluntarily participated in the study. Audio recordings of the interviews were obtained with the permission of the respondents. The names of the interviewed individuals were kept confidential during the analysis and presentation of the data, and the results were presented as anonymous responses.

## 4. Results

The study was conducted on 52 individuals (27 women and 25 men) with different ages and locations (Table 1). The participants comprised 36 disaster workers and 16 decision-makers from government and NGOs.

The study's findings present three main themes: (i) disaster workers, gender, and their way of dealing with the issue; (ii) strategic and practical needs within the context of gender in disasters; (iii) gender training of disaster relief workers (Table 2). Each theme was introduced, described, and supported by the findings from the content analysis of the transcribed interviews.

### 4.1. Disaster workers, gender, and their way of dealing with the issue

The participants' views on gender and femininity/masculinity are shaped by roles, particularly domestic roles (Figure 4). Culture, learned gender codes, and expectations about gender effectively shape these roles. Some of the participants prefer to use the word '*lady*' instead of '*woman*' and they do not make any reference to LGBTQIA+ in their statement, which suggests they construct gender

**Table 2.** Distribution of codes and categories among participants.

	Narratives
<b>Theme 1: Disaster workers, gender and their way of dealing with the issue</b>	
1.1. Roles Defined for Women	43
1.1.1 Motherhood	16
1.1.2 Other domestic roles	15
1.1.3 Childcare	9
1.1.4 Wife	3
1.2 Roles Defined for Men	26
1.2.1 Working/earning money	15
1.2.2 Protecting the family	7
1.2.3 Father/husband	4
1.3. Sources used to define gender and gender roles	71
1.3.1 Cultural and religious references	22
1.3.2 Learned codes (lady, spouse, compassionate etc.)	22
1.3.3 Gender equality/Inequalities	18
1.3.4 Physical/biological differences	9
<b>Theme 2: Strategic and practical need within the context of gender in disasters</b>	
2.1 Practical Needs	94
2.1.1 Privacy	24
2.1.2 Health/hygiene	21
2.1.4 Safety	18
2.1.5 Pad/hygiene products	15
2.1.6 Reproductive health/conception	8
2.1.7 Personal care	8
2.2 Strategic Needs	15
2.2.1 Women's empowerment	9
2.2.2 Participation of women in social and working life	6
<b>Theme 3: Gender training for disaster relief workers</b>	
3.1 Violence against women	7
3.2 Gender training	6
3.3 Vulnerable groups	4
3.4 Reproductive health	2

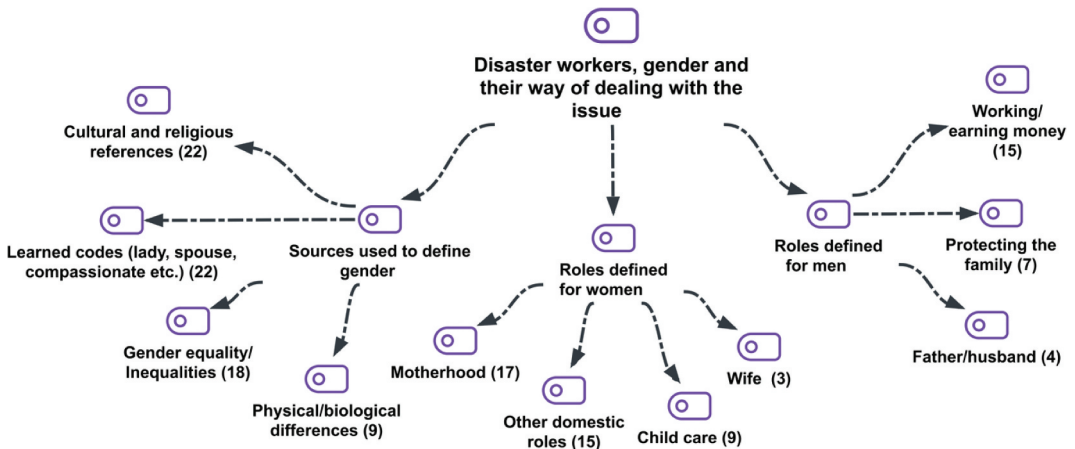


Figure 4. Disaster workers, gender and their way of dealing with the issue.

solely based on *male-female dichotomy*. In conclusion, most participants reproduce the traditional/conservative perspective when expressing their views on the formation of gender and gender roles, addressing men and women with their position in a stereotypical family, using a discourse that praises marriage, and interpreting the subject from a creationist's perspective.

(A woman is) the complementary to a man, she is a wife, a life partner, a good mother to her children. She is a teacher to educate the future society. Being a man, on the other hand, is also being the head of the family, keeping the family together, working hard to make a living [—] I say that because I think women are relatively weaker than men in terms of physical strength [—] So they can choose different occupations. I'm not saying men are superior, I'm talking about a power that comes from creation. I think that men and women should be separated into different occupations. I mean, I think it would be more appropriate if ladies were given jobs that they are more easily able to perform. (Actor 41).

Being a woman means being a mother, being compassionate, and then carrying the whole burden of the family. Being a man means being the protector of the family, taking care of his family, providing for his family, providing their education, providing a good environment for them [—] I think the society's view on ladies is a little bit different... I mean, I think men are in a more advantageous condition, but only until they get married. I think ladies become the head of the family after getting married. (Actor 47)

Some statements highlight traditional roles, especially that of the mother, and justify this view by referring to religious sources.

Mothers come to my mind (when we speak of women). A woman means a mother, and you know mothers are praised in the hadiths of our Prophet and in the verses of Quran. There is this saying of the Prophet Muhammad about mothers; 'Heaven lies beneath the feet of mothers'. That's why the holiness of mothers starts from childhood. In the time of Hazrat Umar, that is, in the age of jahiliyya, men used to bury their daughters alive. While a father dug up his daughter's place to bury her alive, she cleaned off the dust that had covered her father's pants, so we all know how sacred they are, we know it not only because it is taught by our religion but also because these are the things we are supposed to know as normal people. (Actor 49)

Contrary to the general views on gender, which define women/men by domestic roles, it is also observed that few participants, consisting of NGO representatives who view gender roles from the right perspective, address the needs and demands of women and men and define themselves specifically as women.

You are born male or female by birth, but your gender is shaped by the society. When gender assigns certain tasks to us, we are separated as men and women. As we socialize, gender comes into play. Once an individual is born, we will call that individual either male or female, but soon awareness will arise with the tasks to be assigned. There is a distinction made between a man and a woman. These two are actually equal; there are

things that we can do (to achieve equality). I think the concept of equality is divided, expanding (the gap) between men and women. The only difference is that women can reproduce while man cannot give birth to children [—]. Apart from that, all duties are supposed to be shared equally between them. Yet, it is not possible in our society, they should be equal, but the boundaries are drawn very sharply. Unfortunately, women are not included in but isolated from social life [—]. The roles of boys and girls are separated beginning from childhood. In fact, (boys and girls) are similar in many aspects, they can do anything together. (But the gender roles) start to separate children (in terms of gender identity), for example, in a children's game or when kids observe their parents' behaviours in the family. Gender roles are assigned even in early childhood, starting to construct who they are to become. (Actor 23)

#### 4.2. Strategic and practical need within the context of gender in disasters

The first step in understanding the needs that differ during a disaster is to clarify how experiences tend to differ. The second step is to analyse how such differentiation is reflected in needs and requirements. The study's participants mostly report their views and experiences of women's practical needs rather than their strategic needs during disasters. Moreover, when stating these needs, they mostly address this issue in the context of basic human rights principles by referencing the United Nations and other international organizations rather than from a gender perspective.

...There are certain standard needs, which we can call as basic necessities. These have been determined within the framework of the approach of OCHA (The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), which is a UN organization. We can list them as a range of products... such as healthcare, hygiene, clean water, shelter, heating, infrastructure, superstructure... I mean, these can be further detailed, like diapers and formula for babies, sanitary pads for women, a playground for boys, etc... (Actor 28)

Contrary to the general point of view, some participants, particularly NGO workers, also point out strategic needs and emphasize the importance of giving a voice to the subject of need and being able to identify different needs.

We act on different characteristics and sensitivities of different social segments. ... we always come together with the beneficiary group at the stage of determining the needs in our work; we prefer to work on defining their needs. When we learn the needs directly from the beneficiary group, we can more clearly identify their gender-based or age-based characteristics and their needs arising from it. However, before that, we need to make sure that all segments are empowered to create equal opportunities against any disaster. So, if part of our empowerment is learning to drive, or if part of it requires learning to swim due to the geography we live in, then we should recommend it to everyone. (Actor 7)

When evaluated in the context of needs analysis, problems emerge in terms of gender mainstreaming because gender- and age-based data are *not collected*, and gender-based needs are ignored, as reported by Actor 2:

According to what is called 'Gender Mainstreaming', all data are collected by age and gender. That is, if you do not find out with whom they are, for what they want and what they need the works will not go well, so that is the work starts from that point. After all, the work begins with the collection of data... (It is essential to learn) daily life activities for a woman, a man, a child, an old woman, or an old man... These will be formed into focus groups, and basically, what you will be doing in this frame is to design your project in the form of a daily schedule or a seasonal schedule... (Actor 2)

When experiences specific to women are examined, the picture of the challenges and needs experienced by women in the case of a disaster is as follows:

The state of privacy and availability of clothing/the state of *being dressed/undressed* in a disaster raises the gender perceptions of individuals; it has been reported that this factor constitutes a disadvantage for women.

[Yet] of course, women are much more affected. The 1999 Marmara Earthquake occurred in the dead of night. You know, lots of women sleep in their underwear as the weather is hot. A woman would not simply rush out in underwear, so probably there may have been people who lost their lives while trying to get dressed [during the

earthquake]. Actually, there are lots of examples like this. Some of the examples are even included in the booklet which we prepared for UNDP. Women say, 'I'd never go out without my clothes on' ... (Actor 2)

Actor 37, a male member of the post-disaster rescue team, reports his opinion as follows:

Of course, we have problems with the idea of a man touching a half-naked woman (in a disaster area). That feeling of hesitation is so bad. ... I mean, if we failed to rescue a woman alive just because we avoided touching her - while knowing she had a one percent chance of survival there -, I wouldn't be able to sleep. We as men are expected to obtain a consent from the victim's partner just because he might react (badly to our rescue attempt) ... As a part of a decent team working for search and rescue, I find the possibility of being misunderstood (for physically touching a victim) very disturbing ... (Actor 37)

Particularly regarding the loss of personal space during disaster periods, the relationship between menstruation period and disaster constitutes another challenge and area of need for women:

It is much more difficult for a woman who is menstruating at the time of a disaster to express her need for sanitary pads. Under normal circumstances she would probably ask her husband to get a pack, or she would herself buy it from the convenience store in the neighborhood. But what if the convenience store was destroyed or the woman's husband lost his job (due to the disaster)? Then the woman will have to ask the relief teams. Probably, the woman was always reminded that it (menstrual care) was a private issue - in terms of gender. Due to pressure manifesting itself as shame, taboos etc. on the woman, now it's harder for her to demand it from someone else. Maybe it's the first time she is asking for it (sanitary pads). She may not even know how to demand it. She is facing a real challenge in terms of social roles. (Actor 27)

The question of safety, on the other hand, raises another issue for women within the context of vulnerability to disaster and sexual violence:

... Safety is very important for girls and women. A (post-disaster) environment where women are exchanged, bought, and sold, and abused... []... Girls are likely to face such terrible dangers. Children (need) safety and protection. Children are kidnapped... Girls are forced into marriage... Boys are forced to work. There is a critical need for protection... (Actor 9)

Concerning access to information, Actor 28 points out another challenge experienced by women regarding access to name lists posted in public coffee houses.

Preliminary Damage Assessment Reports... Perhaps this may sound illogical as an example but in fact, it's so common. The reports are announced and listed by name, and the name-lists are posted on the window of the public coffee house. For the public, it is strange for a woman to go in front of a public coffee shop and stand there. Women are not welcomed in that place. And the women will not see their own names on the lists, they are not counted as an individual or as an identity. Even such a simple situation can actually affect women to a great extent. Men, on the other hand, don't have such a problem. They can easily have access to that information, and those who find their names in the list of habitable residences can soon settle in their home. If a woman does not seek refuge in the state when she loses her family, then she will be victimized for the second time within the cultural and social structure she lives in. Somehow, she has to find a shelter. (Actor 28)

#### **4.3. Gender training for disaster relief workers**

In gender training for disaster relief workers, 28 interviewed participants report that they have not received gender training at their institutions. At the same time, 16 participants state that they have not directly received gender training but attended meetings, seminars, workshops, and shared experiences on topics such as violence against women, vulnerable groups, and women's reproductive health. Only three NGO participants have received training directly related to their gender. Training has been provided to state institutions by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, and rights-based organizations have provided training to NGOs and private organizations.

I attended a large number of training on disaster; the topics included women, gender, and vulnerable groups. No specifically gender-related training has been given within the institution, but most of the training that I received covered those topics. (Actor 27)

I attended a training organized by UNICEF in Izmir once. It was a five-day training... The topics mostly included society, gender and disaster, and related management and coordination. (Actor 32)

...We always give gender equality orientation to our new colleagues. Depending on the work schedule, we address women's perspectives, and perform studies and orientations. And we do that as a part of other training programs, but we mainly focus on language. In terms of the use of language, we are trying to eliminate sexist language from our discourse by constantly developing new methods. For this purpose, our promotion and human resources teams are now developing a new method. Such as sharing a word and explaining that word on weekly basis... (Actor 7)

## 5. Discussion

This study evaluated the experiences and views of disaster workers, disaster decision-makers, and NGO workers working in the field of disasters in Türkiye regarding gender sensitivity. The findings revealed that the participants intensely had a traditional/conservative perspective when reporting their views and experiences on the formation of gender and gender roles. Women are defined mostly by domestic and motherhood roles, and it is worth noting that the participants justified their statements with reference to religious sources. This perspective is the most prevalent in Türkiye (Bora, 2001; Sahinoglu & Buken, 2010; Seçgin & Tural, 2011). In a study conducted by Seçgin and Tural with pre-service teachers, a significant majority of participants stated that women's main duty was motherhood (Seçgin & Tural, 2011). Many studies have supported the finding that femininity is equivalent to motherhood in Türkiye (Baştürk Akca, 2015; Güdücü, 2018; Ozbay, 2015). Gender stereotypes and traditional and religious discourses dominate women's discourse and perceptions of motherhood, even among women working in paid/unpaid jobs. The commonality in these discourses is the emphasis on the sanctity of motherhood (Tugrul, 2019). In addition, numerous studies in the national and international literature address justified critical evaluations of motherhood identity and perspectives (Hañçer, 2018; Hooks et al., 2016; Neyer & Bernardi, 2011).

The problems of gender equality and equity in Türkiye are reflected in disaster risk management (Güdücü, 2018). The lack of a gender perspective can be seen in identifying the needs and requirements of women and men in disaster cases. Disaster situations involve numerous sex-specific needs (Enarson et al., 2018; Erbaydar et al., 2021; Fothergill, 1998; Pincha, 2008). The study addressed participants' statements on safety, privacy, and personal care in women's disaster experiences. The data revealed that women's experiences as disaster victims were similar to those of other studies (Delaney & Shrader, 2000; Enarson & Morrow, 1998; Pincha, 2008; Sohrabizadeh, 2016). Despite their destructive and chaotic effects, disasters offer an opportunity to eliminate the established disadvantages. It is anticipated that programmes developed for women in the field of disaster will have a transformative impact on society, provided that they are based on strategic needs and aimed at empowering women. Within the scope of this study, NGOs emphasize strategic needs in terms of gender-related requirements and the need for gender-based data collection, which is an essential requirement. Moreover, sharing first-hand experiences, observations, and records by men, women, transgender groups, and NGOs is instructive for understanding the problems of disaster risk management and developing solutions.

Women in Türkiye are still categorized as vulnerable groups (Asian Development Bank ADB, 2014). This study revealed that the problems faced by women during disasters were handled within such groups and by analogy with them and that these problems were not considered directly as gender issues. The limitations and regression in Türkiye's perspective on gender (withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention) may have also affected the handling of disaster situations.

The gender perspective is crucial for disaster training (Council TWs, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016; UNISDR, 2009). Many documents point to the sheer necessity of delivering training to decision-makers, relevant organizations, and NGOs (Peña-López, 2017; United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction UNISDR, 2009). The fact that most participants in the study did not receive gender training highlights the need to arrange and deliver this training and its content within the

shortest time possible. Gender-based disaster training can be provided directly to employees in the form of in-service training, and it can enable the integration of the gender perspective into undergraduate disaster training for those working in the disaster field.

## 6. Limitations and strengths

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The first limitation is senior decision-makers' refusal of interview requests due to their intensity. For example, we wanted to review heads of Disaster and Emergency Management (AFAD). However, he did not give us appointments due to his workload. Second, although attention was paid to providing a comfortable environment for the participants, and efforts were made to establish trust during the data collection process, some participants, especially those working in public institutions, may have refrained from expressing their opinions. This research was conducted in a political climate in which Türkiye moved away from the concept of gender equality. Nevertheless, this is one of the first studies to provide a qualitative review of the relationship between disasters and gender in Türkiye. In addition, the proposed qualitative research design with 52 individuals from different disaster areas in four provinces provided an in-depth understanding of the intersectionality of these two important subjects.

## 7. Conclusion and recommendations

The study results showed that many participants had incomplete or problematic perspectives on the concept of 'gender'. Women are defined by their domestic roles and motherhood, with reference to cultural and religious sources. In addition, although the participants stated that women's needs were considered in cases of disaster, these were limited to practical needs that some international organizations were expected to meet in disaster situations, such as privacy, menstrual period, and hygiene needs of women. However, it is crucial that some participants, especially NGO workers, point to the strategic needs of women, such as empowerment, the collection of gender-based data, and combating violence against women. Regarding participants' gender-related training experiences, they mostly reported not receiving any training on this topic. Participants who reported getting training, their experiences intensely on issues such as violence against women, vulnerable groups, and reproductive health rather than directly on gender issues.

In conclusion, this study revealed a need for gender-based training for individuals in the disaster field. To reduce public vulnerability to disasters, it is essential to train workers (field workers, decision-makers, and NGOs etc.) on gender issues in disasters and enable them to increase their awareness. Collaboration should be made with academics working in the field, women's organizations, and gender-sensitive NGOs in determining the content, methods, and delivery of training. Additionally, researchers strongly recommend further research to better understand gender mainstreaming in disaster risk management and close the gender gap in the disaster risk reduction process.

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