Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi / The Journal of Social Sciences

Akademik Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi, Yıl: 9, Sayı: 56, Şubat 2022, s. 27-37

ISSN: 2149-0821 Doi Number: <http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/SOBIDER.57284>

Doç. Dr. Gökçe CEREV

Kocaeli Üniversitesi, cerevgokce4@gmail.com

Doç. Dr. Doğa Başar SARIİPEK

Kocaeli Üniversitesi, sariipek@kocaeli.edu.tr

Doç. Dr. Bora YENİHAN

Kocaeli Üniversitesi, bora.yenihan@kocaeli.edu.tr

Uğur CELAYIR

Fırat Üniversitesi Y.Lisans Öğrencisi, ucelayir@firat.edu.tr

A MUNICIPAL RESPONSE TO DOUBLE DISASTERS OF TURKEY; ELAZIG EARTHQUAKE AND COVID-19

Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has affected lives of millions of people both economically and psychologically. Governments have taken various measures to prevent spread of the virus on the one hand, and to compensate economic loss of citizens on the other. However, when natural hazards, such as earthquakes, combine with the pandemic, measures that are more effective may be required. Local governments, which are the closest to citizens in all sense, come forward at this point as the essential provider of social assistance. Elazığ, an important commercial and economic center across its region in Turkey, suffered a major earthquake and Covid-19 almost at the same time. A rapid emergence in the demand of social assistance occurred in Elazığ, and therefore, the Municipality had to deal with double disasters in the most effective way possible. This study analyzes the impact of social assistance provided by Elazığ Municipality by using both quantitative and qualitative research. Considering the findings of qualitative research, which was applied to Municipality officials, and the quantitative research, which was applied to beneficiaries, there is a high level of satisfaction with social assistance even though there are some points that are required to be developed.

Keywords: Covid-19, Earthquake, Natural Disasters, Social Assistance, Elazığ, Turkey.

TÜRKİYE’NİN ÇİFTE FELAKETİNE YEREL CEVAP: ELAZIĞ DEPREMİ VE COVID-19

Özet

COVID-19 salgını milyonlarca insanın hayatını hem ekonomik hem de psikolojik olarak etkilemiştir. Hükümetler bir yandan virüsün yayılmasını önlemek, diğer yandan vatandaşların ekonomik kayıplarını telafi etmek için çeşitli önlemler almıştır. Ancak deprem gibi doğal afetler pandemi ile birleştiğinde daha etkili önlemler almak gerekebilir. Vatandaşa her anlamda en yakın olan yerel yönetimler, bu noktada asli sosyal yardım sağlayıcısı olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Kendi bölgesinde önemli bir ticari ve ekonomik merkez olan Elazığ, büyük ve yıkıcı bir depremi ve Covid-19'u neredeyse aynı anda yaşamıştır. Bu süreçte, Elazığ'da sosyal yardım talebinde hızlı bir artış meydana gelmiş ve bu nedenle Belediye çifte afetle en etkin şekilde mücadele etmek zorunda kalmıştır. Bu çalışma Elazığ Belediyesi tarafından sağlanan sosyal yardımların etkisini hem nicel hem de nitel araştırma kullanarak analiz etmektedir. Belediye yetkililerine uygulanan nitel araştırma bulguları ile yararlanıcılara uygulanan nicel araştırma bulgularına bakıldığında, geliştirilmesi gereken bazı noktalar olmasına rağmen sosyal yardımlardan memnuniyet düzeyi oldukça yüksek tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Covid-19, Deprem, Doğal Afet, Sosyal Yardım, Elazığ, Türkiye.

INTRODUCTION

Knowing about the major threats for a society and having an action plan about what to do before, during and afterward can decrease the possible damages as well as helping habitants stay healthy and paving the way to bounce back rapidly. This may be the case, for instance, for earthquakes if the country is located in an earthquake zone. However, as far as the global pandemic is concerned, the situation will be different.

Whole world is going through a challenging period as it deals with the damaging impacts of the epidemic outbreak caused by COVID-19 virus. Epidemic outbreak seems to continue to be a part of our lives, which is why we must be well aware of the possibility that other disasters may occur at the same time and their impacts on societies may be even more damaging. Therefore, it is important to be prepared for what we may come up against.

In this sense, a major earthquake (6.8 on the Richter scale) hit Elazığ, an important commercial and economic center of its region, on 24 January 2020 just a few weeks before the first official covid-19 case was registered in Turkey. Unfortunately, it caused 41 people to lose their lives, more than 1600 people injured. More than 15 thousand buildings and 34 thousand apartments were severely damaged. Since structural engineers estimated that buildings would be unsuitable for further use, families living in those buildings and apartments were settled in container cities. Considering the moderately damaged buildings as well, almost two-thirds of the city was severely affected by the earthquake.

Without people even being able to heal their wounds, the first Covid-19 case appeared in Turkey on 11 March 2020, just 46 days after the earthquake. The combination of a sudden shock and COVID-19 definitely causes an increase in the infection rates, presents a threat to rapid and stable emergency responses. The number of people applying to healthcare facilities for treatment may increase excessively in the aftermath of an earthquake. It may be even more difficult to keep social distance these times and new clusters of virus spread may arise. Therefore, not only the central, but also local governments must account for the possible occurrence of sudden natural shocks during the pandemic and plan emergency responses that taking into account both the restrictions due to the pandemic and the social assistance programs required by double disasters.

In this study, data regarding social assistance provided by Elazığ Municipality aftermath the earthquake and during Covid-19 to its habitants were collected to evaluate overall response to double disasters. In this sense, the study starts with the brief explanation of social assistance and social service programs planned and implemented by Elazığ Municipality. To evaluate the impacts of these programs, both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used. The qualitative part of the study includes semi-structured interviews with municipal officers who are responsible officially to plan and implement social assistances towards citizens, while the qualitative part is the survey conducted to the citizens who benefit from these assistances.

MEASURES IMPLEMENTED BY ELAZIĞ MUNICIPALITY

Local governments, as the government units closest to the citizen, must foresee the unpredictable. In an effort to reduce the destruction caused by double disasters, Elazığ municipality implemented measures by seeking both to increase social distancing and to provide social assistance programs and services for the inhabitants who are in need of. A big share of the assistance targeted the workplace owners in the first place. The municipality, for instance, did not collect rent for the first 3 months of 2021 from the tradesmen who are tenants in shops owned by the municipality and had to close them due to lockdown measures in addition to the provision of 1000 TL cash assistance for them. As another direct support for workplace owners, the municipality did not collect water usage fee for 3 months. Moreover, the municipality gave up collecting some routine annual fees, such as commercial permit fee, route permit fee and urban transportation line permit fee.

Besides these direct supports for workplaces, the municipality provided in-cash and in-kind assistance for its citizens as well. Food and clothing aid, in this scope, was provided to employees whose workplaces were closed. Due to the transition to distance education throughout the country, the municipality distributed tablet computers and internet packages to students. Another group, who were privileged by the municipality was health workers. As in almost all cities in Turkey, health workers benefited from free use of public transportation.

While providing these supports, the municipality cooperated well with charities and philanthropists. In this sense, the municipality established a “charity bazaar” in cooperation with charity organizations to distribute goods, food, clothing, etc. provided by the philanthropists.

Besides these social benefits, Elazığ Municipality provided a number of social services to the persons in need of within the scope of Covid-19. To determine the most urgent services, the mayor himself and an authorized delegation visited 38 neighborhoods throughout the whole city. As a consequence of this in-place determination process, the municipality started extensive cleaning and hygiene procedures of the public places (parks, stops, cemeteries etc.) and places of worship. Besides, public transport vehicles started to be cleaned on a daily basis in addition to distribution of Covid-19 preventive materials such as masks and disinfectants in public transport vehicles. Within the scope of extensive cleaning service, the municipality established home care services unit to clean houses of disadvantaged citizens (older adults, disabled, chronically ill etc.) as well as provision of caregiving services and food aid for them. Youth council of Elazığ municipality is in charge of the provision of this food aid as well as running an awareness and training program for residents of shelters and container cities about prevention from the pandemic.

The municipality also tried to keep people's morale high during the pandemic period. While the municipal band, in this sense, organized concert events in nursing homes, city squares etc., the municipal conservatory brought cultural and art events online to art lovers in Ramadan due to the coronavirus epidemic measures.

Table 1: Elazığ Municipality Social Aid Statistics (between 24.03.2020-01.04.2021)

	Social Aid Type	Assisted	Assigned Team Number	Number of Personnel on Duty
1	Food aid	9550	6	10
2	Shopping (Courier Service)	657	4	8
3	Mask Distribution (To Market Places)	36450	4	12
4	Home Care - Cleaning	115	1	3
5	Demands for Elazığ Municipality Charity Bazaar	154	2	4
6	Elazığ Municipality White Meat Distribution (Package)	3220	4	8
	Total	50146	21	45

Source: Elazığ Municipality, 2020 Activity Report, <https://www.elazig.bel.tr/yayin/2020-yili-faaliyet-raporu/453/>

THE AIM AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Damaging outcomes that arose due to the Covid-19 outbreak affected social life in all aspects. In this period, countries started to plan and implement social aid and services for their citizens, especially in accordance with the social state responsibilities. Local governments, which are crucial agents in offering social assistance and services for citizens, have taken over significant initiatives in the struggle against pandemic. The importance of the social municipal management approach of municipalities, which is an important local government element that emerged as entities different from the central government by laws, has gained increasing importance in the Covid-19 period in terms of regional development. The purpose of this study is to guide the prospective policies by measuring the impact of social assistance and services provided by Elazığ municipality from both the implementer and the beneficiary perspective in the Covid-19 process. The study is especially important in terms of being conducted in Elazığ province, which has recently undergone a severe earthquake, and measuring the perceptions of those who apply and benefit from social assistance.

The questions of this study are as follows;

- Are the municipalities prepared for similar disasters before the Covid-19 outbreak?
- According to what criteria did the municipalities plan their assistance in the Covid-19 process?
- What experiences have municipalities gained in the Covid-19 social assistance process?
- Have the expectations of those receiving aid from municipalities been met in the Covid-19 process?
- What feelings and thoughts occurred in those receiving help from municipalities during the Covid-19 process?

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

In the search of answers to these questions, this study uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods at the same time. In the qualitative part of the study, a semi-structured interview form consisting of seven questions applied to the Vice President and Branch Managers responsible for offering social assistance in the Municipality was used. While creating the interview forms, the basic questions of the research formed the basis. Open-ended questions directed to the participants were recorded. The personal data of the participants, who were interviewed face to face, were kept confidential. As a result of the interviews, the evaluation was conducted through content analysis of the data.

For the quantitative part of the study, "Social Aid Return Perception" scale consisting of twenty-five questions was used. While the first eight questions of the scale consist of questions about determining the demographic characteristics of the participants, the Likert scale part consisting of seventeen questions consists of questions about benefiting from social assistance, expectations and the emotions it creates. While creating the questions, different studies on social aid perceptions in the literature and the experiences of the practitioners contributed

significantly. After conducting required validity and reliability checks, the study uses 5-point Likert scale, in which the questions were scored as Scale 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), 5 (Strongly Agree).

Limitations, Reliability and Validity of the Research

The limitations of the study are as follows;

- The evaluation of research data is limited to participants' views on social assistance during the Covid-19 process.
- It is accepted that the answers given by the participants to the survey questions are sincere and correct.
- It should not be forgotten that it is a subjective situation as the perceptions of social assistance may differ according to the perceptions of participants.
- This study conducts qualitative and quantitative research face-to-face, but the number of participants had to be limited due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was applied in the SPSS 25.0 program for the general reliability of the "perception towards social assistance offered by local governments in the process of Covid-19", which constitutes the quantitative part of the research. The test indicates Cronbach's Alpha value at a good level with 0.865. Cronbach's Alpha Values occurred above 0.5 significance level shows the sufficient reliability level (Kılıç, 2016: 48).

For the validity of the questionnaire, exploratory factor analysis was applied over 17 variables through the Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) value of the questionnaire and Bartlett Sphericity Test. At the end of analysis, KMO value of scale is measured as 0,874 and Bartlett test value is $p < 0,001$. Therefore, the adequacy of survey questions for factor analysis is verified by Kaiser Meyer Olkin test and Bartlett's test since the KMO value should be 0.50 and above as well as Bartlett's Test should be at the $p < 0.001$ level (Field, 2000). As a result of the factor analysis of the questionnaire, a three-factor variable emerged, and these factors took variable values between 1,144 and 12,124. Eight-factor survey explains 70,428% of the total variance. The fact that the total variance of the factors is 0.50 and above constitutes validity and the variables become significant (Büyüköztürk, 2002: 472-473).

There are 7 questions in the sixth section, which constitutes the qualitative part of the research. In the qualitative part, a group suitable for the criteria and characteristics of the research was selected over the proposition variables suitable for the purpose of the study within the framework of purposeful sampling method. In the purposeful sampling method, the sampling units are classified for specific reasons for research purposes (Uyangör and Dikkartın, 2009: 184). In this context, we conducted interviews with a deputy mayor and three branch managers, who are directly responsible for the social assistance programs of the municipality.

Research Sample and the Universe

The universe of the quantitative part of the study consists of 12,954 people directly benefiting from the social assistance programs of Elazığ municipality. The people to conduct questionnaire forms were selected by random selection method.

The sample size of the research consists of 148 people receiving social assistance. In calculating the sample size according to the universe, the formula $n = \frac{N \cdot t^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{d^2 (N-1) + t^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$ is applied. In the formula, n is the number of individuals in the sample; p is the frequency of occurrence of the event to be examined; q is the frequency of not occurrence of the event to be examined (1-p); t is the theoretical value in the t table at a certain degree of freedom and the detected error level and indicates the desired (+/-) deviation in the frequency of occurrence of the event. (Baş, 2008: 87). The study reached a reliability level of 0.90 and an acceptable deviation of 6.72% (+/-), which are sufficient and appropriate for further evaluation.

In the qualitative part of the study, authorized personnel, who plan and implement social assistance, took place in interviews. The important thing in the interview method is the face-to-face meeting of the participants with the research problem and limiting the sample to the basic features of the problem (Neuman, 2012: 322).

Analysis of Research Data and Findings

As the research consists of qualitative and quantitative sections, the findings will be presented under two separate sections as well.

Findings of the Qualitative Section of the Research

Participants of the qualitative part of the study are administrators responsible for social assistance in local government. The interview forms applied to the participants were analyzed over the main problems of the study. The data obtained as a result of face-to-face interviews were analyzed by content analysis.

Question 1: Is there a separate budget and planning for social assistance to be provided in case of disasters in your municipality?

According to the responses of the participants, it occurs that the municipality calculates a detailed annual budget for disasters, and makes plans accordingly for possible disaster scenarios jointly with other relevant institutions throughout the province. This reveals that the municipality seems prepared for possible disasters.

Question 2: How did you determine the type/level of assistance during the Covid-19 process?

Participants stated that the determination of social assistance and services in the Covid-19 process was made through online or face-to-face applications made to the relevant units of the municipality, meetings held in coordination with other aid institutions, and routine field

research. This statement reveals that the authorized department of the municipality acts delicately in reaching the needy and the citizens who are in need of help are identified in a coordinated manner.

Question 3: Are you in contact or do you have a coordination with the central government regarding social assistance provision during the Covid-19 process?

Participants stated that they are closely in contact with the central government during the Covid-19 process. They explained that the municipality conducts planning and provision of social assistance programs in normal periods with the implicit approval of the central government. They stated that in the Covid-19 process, priority was given to the general social assistance policy of the central government, and that local governments mostly intervened to complete this in areas with regional gaps.

Question 4: According to your personal opinion, did the social assistance programs provide sufficient protection for beneficiaries?

The participants stated that budget possibilities determine the exact amount of social assistance. Therefore, the municipality tries to give priority to disadvantaged groups in the distribution of social assistance. Participants also added that in case of an increase in budgetary possibilities, the coverage of social assistance can be expanded as well.

As a related question, participants were asked to explain the feedbacks of beneficiaries. While the participants stated that beneficiaries made positive feedbacks in general, the municipality cares feedbacks from beneficiaries a lot to recognize the shortcomings in the distribution of social assistance. Participants especially highlighted that the provision of social assistance in place, on time and in a fair way caused beneficiaries to have positive feelings and trust towards Elazığ Municipality.

Question 5: Has the Covid-19 process affected your plans in the future for possible disasters?

Participants stated that the Covid-19 process significantly affected their plans for future regarding possible disasters. According to the participants, the most important feature of the epidemic that makes it different from other disasters is that the epidemic creates different situations and needs every day. For this reason, they explained that it is important to make more flexible planning especially for certain disaster situations and that success in social assistance provision will be achieved with an effective coordination. They stated that more attention will be paid to these situations in future disaster plans.

Question 6: What are the benefits of the Covid-19 process for your organization in terms of good management?

Participants stated that the Covid-19 process brought especially great experience and flexibility in rapid decision-making process to Elazığ Municipality. In particular, they pointed out that the Covid-19 epidemic has permanent administrative effects, as it is a disaster that takes place over a long period, unlike the unexpected and instantaneous

disasters such as earthquakes and avalanches that are frequently experienced in the region. In this context, they found the opportunity to develop their own capacities in the face of disasters.

Question 7: How prepared are you for disasters like Covid-19 that may occur in the future?

Participants stated that they are more prepared for similar disasters that may occur in the future and that necessary alternative plans are easier to make now as they see their potential.

Findings of the Quantitative Section of the Research

The questionnaires applied to the sample were evaluated through the SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) 25.0 data analysis program. All 148 respondents who participated in the survey declared that they participated in the survey voluntarily.

Table 2: Demographic Structure of Participants

Demographic Structure		Frequency	Rate (%)
Gender	Male	94	63,5
	Female	54	36,5
Age	18-25	10	6,8
	26-35	41	27,7
	36-45	60	40,5
	46-55	27	18,2
	56 and above	10	6,8
Marital Status	Married	84	56,8
	Single	64	43,2
Family Structure (Number of members living in the family)	1-2	24	16,2
	3-5	72	48,6
	5-8	35	23,6
	8 and above	17	11,5
Family Income Level (TL)	2500 and below	20	13,5
	2501-3500	33	22,3
	3501-4000	59	39,9
	4001-4500	28	18,9
	4500 and above	8	5,4
Profession	Small retailer	67	45,3
	Student	21	14,2
	Health worker	28	18,9
	Other	32	21,6
Education Status	Primary school and below	8	5,4
	High school	58	39,2
	Associate degree	49	33,1
	Undergraduate	33	22,3
Did You Get Help From Another Institution?	Yes	62	41,9
	No	86	58,1

Source: Authors' own calculations.

Social Assistance Perception Levels of Participants

In the quantitative part of the study, a 17-question Likert scale questionnaire was used to measure the perceptions of people receiving help from local governments towards these aids. While evaluating the questionnaire, the data were analyzed over the average values in the analysis. In the evaluation of the questionnaire, it was scored as 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2

(Disagree), 3 (Undecided), 4 (Agree), 5 (Strongly Agree). The perception levels of beneficiaries were evaluated as follows: very bad (between 0-1), poor (between 1.01 and 2), medium (between 2.01 and 3), good (between 3.01 and 4), very good (between 4.01 and 5).

Table 3: Social Assistance Perception Levels of Participants

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Local governments have to provide social aid	148	4,79	0,748
Social assistance makes me feel that local governments are with me	148	3,64	0,884
Social assistance are suitable for my needs	148	3,50	0,547
Social assistance programs are sufficient	148	2,85	0,789
I feel debt to the society as a result of social assistance	148	3,14	1,245
Social assistance I receive increase my trust in local governments	148	2,87	1,141
Local governments treat fairly when providing social assistance	148	2,97	0,854
I really need social assistance	148	3,66	0,844
Social benefits reduce my level of poverty	148	3,77	0,741
Social assistance creates social equality	148	3,93	0,956
Social assistance pleases me	148	4,16	0,922
Social benefits made me feel safe	148	3,70	0,891
Social assistance must continue after Covid-19 ends	148	3,44	0,674
Social benefits helped me maintain my living standards	148	3,29	1,005
Social assistance is an important tool for ensuring social peace	148	3,13	0,682
Social assistance reduces poverty	148	3,16	0,691
Social assistance provided by local governments affects my decision of where I live	148	3,56	0,735
Valid N (listwise) and Total Mean	148	3,50	0,844

Source: Authors' own calculations.

When data in Table 3 is considered, the general perception level of the participants towards social assistance seems at a good level with an average score of 3.50. The majority of the participants considered that social assistance is a compulsory activity that must be provided by the municipalities. Participants expressed their satisfaction with the assistance provided by Elazığ Municipality during the Covid-19 process. Participants generally stated that the municipality distributes social assistance fairly and in accordance with the pre-determined needs, but that it would be better if the municipality improves the coverage of assistance. While the participants stated that the social assistance provision contributes significantly to create equality and reduce poverty in the society, they said that the assistance should continue after the Covid-19 process. While most of the participants stated that they felt safe thanks to the social assistance, they also explained that their sense of trust towards local governments developed. Most of the participants also added that the assistance is an important factor in determining their residence addresses.

CONCLUSION

Local governments are considered the best agents to provide support to their community aftermath a disaster since they have the first-hand knowledge of their citizens' social, cultural, economic, infrastructure, and environmental needs. When more than one disaster occurs at the same time, the need for assistance gets even higher. In this sense, Elazığ, an important commercial and economic place of its region, was hit by a

major earthquake (6.8 on the Richter scale) on 24 January 2020, just a few weeks before the first official covid-19 case was registered in Turkey. In other words, while Elazığ did not yet fully recover from the devastating effects of the earthquake, it also begun to experience the negative consequences of the pandemic.

Based upon this background, this study is an attempt to investigate the impacts of social assistance provided by Elazığ Municipality during double disasters. The study includes two separate field studies, quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative part was applied to the beneficiaries and the qualitative part was applied to the officials in the Municipality. At the end of our research, beneficiaries stated a general satisfaction regarding the level of assistance. There is also a perception about the fairness of the distribution of social assistance. However, beneficiaries also stated that it would be better if the municipality improves the coverage of the assistance.

As another result of the research, social assistance contributed well to the general level of poverty and equality in society according to beneficiaries. Therefore, the participants also stated that the aid should continue even after the pandemic. At the end of our research, we also found that the sense of trust towards local governments raised thanks to the regular and stable social assistance.

As the last words, although social assistance is considered generally sufficient, it would be developed further in terms of both quantity and beneficiaries. Besides, the beneficiaries think that social assistance programs provided by Elazığ Municipality are not only important tools in the fight against social inequality and poverty, but also they are among essential duties of the municipalities to provide social assistance and services to the needy.

REFERENCE

- Baş, T. (2008). ‘‘Anket’’. 5.Baskı, Ankara, Seçkin Yayınevi.
- Büyüköztürk Ş.(2002). ‘‘Faktör Analizi: Temel Kavramlar ve Ölçek Geliştirmede Kullanımı’’. Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Yönetimi Dergisi. Sayı 32. Sayfa 470-483.
- Elazığ Municipality, 2020 Activity Report, <https://www.elazig.bel.tr/yayin/2020-yili-faaliyet-raporu/453> (14.03.2021)
- Field, A.(2000) ‘‘Discovering Statistics using SPSS for Windows’’. London, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, New Delhi.
- Kılıç, S.(2016) ‘‘Cronbach'ın Alfa Güvenirlik Katsayısı’’. Journal of Mood Disorders. Vol. 6. Pp 47-48.
- Neuman, L.(2012) ‘‘Toplumsal Araştırma Yöntemleri: Nicel ve Nitel Yaklaşımlar’’. Cilt 2. 5. Baskı. Yayın Odası. İstanbul.
- Uyangör, M. S. ve Dikkartın T. (2009) ‘‘4mat Öğretim Modelinin Öğrencilerin Erişileri ve Öğrenme Stillerine Etkisi’’. Necatibey Eğitim Fakültesi Elektronik Fen ve Matematik Eğitim Dergisi. Cilt 3 Sayı 2 ss.178-194.