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An Overview of the Psychological Effects of the Earthquakes in Türkiye through Five Stories

**Türkiye’de Yaşanan Depremlerin Psikolojik Etkilerine
Beş Öykü Üzerinden Bir Bakış**

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Abstract

The number of earthquake-themed literary texts in Turkish literature is inversely proportional to the frequency and impact of earthquakes in Türkiye. This study examines earthquake-themed stories in Turkish literature regarding the effects of earthquakes on human psychology. Economic losses caused by earthquakes are, of course, an essential issue. It is also natural to deal with this issue in literary texts. The psychological impact of earthquakes is as crucial as economic losses. On the other hand, few literary texts deal with the psychological effects of earthquakes. Accordingly, few stories have been written about the psychological impacts of the earthquake, most of which are about the 1999 Gölcük earthquake. The Gölcük earthquake caused extensive damage with economic and psychological consequences. This study is based on qualitative research, whereby five stories written after the 1999 Gölcük Earthquake were selected using the purposive sampling method. The stories (How I Fell Out of Bed, The Wrong Person, Dear

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Hate, Without Breaking Faults, and Benefactors) were analysed by focusing on the inquiry of which aspects of the stories address the psychological problems caused by the earthquake on individuals. The selected stories have different characteristics in terms of genre and format. The stories belong to Orhan Duru, Mebuse Tekay, Hakan Şenocak, Ahmet Ümit and Barış Bıçakçı, who are renowned authors of recent Turkish literature. In the selection of the story, I paid attention to the stories dealing with different aspects of individuals' inner world. As a result of the analysis, the destructive effects of earthquakes on people's mental and spiritual health were determined showing that short-stories, as an important literary genre helps us understand and empathize with people who survived an earthquake.

Keywords: *earthquake, short-story, Turkish literature, Türkiye, Gölçük*

Öz

Türk edebiyatında deprem temalı edebî metinlerin sayısı, Türkiye’de yaşanan depremlerin sıklığı ve etkileri ile ters orantılıdır. Deprem konulu edebî metinlerin büyük bölümü, depremin ekonomik sonuçlarını tartışmaya açmaktadır. Depremin neden olduğu ekonomik kayıplar elbette önemli bir sorundur ve bu konunun edebî metinlerde ele alınması da doğaldır. Ancak depremlerin bireyin psikolojisi üzerinde yarattığı etki de ekonomik kayıplar kadar önemli bir konudur. Buna karşın depremlerin bireyin psikolojik durumuna etkisini ele alan edebî metin sayısı azdır. Buna bağlı olarak depremin psikolojik etkileri hakkında yazılmış az sayıda öykü vardır. Bu öykülerin de büyük bölümü 1999 Gölçük depremi hakkındadır. Gölçük depremi, çok büyük can ve mal kaybına yol açmış ve ekonomik ve psikolojik açıdan önemli sonuçlar doğurmuştur. Bu çalışma, depremin insan psikolojisi üzerindeki etkilerine ilişkin Türk edebiyatında yer alan deprem temalı öyküleri inceleyen nitel bir araştırmadır. Bu çalışmada örnek olarak seçilen beş öykü analiz edilmiştir. Amaçlı örnekleme tekniği kullanılarak 1999 Gölçük Depremi sonrasında yazılmış ve odağına Gölçük depreminin psikolojik etkilerini alan beş öykü seçilmiştir. Seçilen öyküler, tür ve biçim yönünden farklı özellikler taşımaktadır. Öyküler, son dönem Türk edebiyatının önemli yazarları olan Orhan Duru, Mebuse Tekay, Hakan Şenocak, Ahmet Ümit ve Barış Bıçakçı’ya aittir. Öykü seçiminde öykünün bireyin iç dünyasının farklı yönlerini ele almasına dikkat edilmiştir. Öyküler (Yataktan Nasıl Düştüm, Yanlış İnsan, Sevgili Nefret, Faylar Kırılmadan ve İyilikseverler), depremin bireylerde yarattığı psikolojik sorunların metinlerde hangi yönleriyle ele alındığı sorgulamasına odaklanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda depremlerin insanların ruh ve akıl sağlığı üzerindeki yıkıcı etkileri tespit edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Öykü türünün, depremi yaşayan insanların duygu durumlarını anlamada ve empati kurmada önemli bir rol oynadığı tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *deprem, öykü, Türk edebiyatı, Türkiye, Gölçük*

Introduction

Earthquakes, especially those that are very severe and cause loss of life and property, have various psychological effects on people. These effects are much more visible on those who experience the earthquake themselves. The people of a country where the earthquake occurs

are affected by the earthquake to a greater or lesser extent in various ways. Türkiye is located on the Northern Anatolian Fault Line (Ketin, 1969: 1), Eastern Anatolian Fault Line (Arpat & Şaroğlu, 1972: 44), and Western Anatolian Fault Line (Şaroğlu and Güler, 2020: 163). Due to these fault lines, earthquakes with a magnitude exceeding 7 on the Richter scale are observed in Anatolia. The Gölcük Earthquake of 17 August 1999 was Mw 7.4 (Südaş, 2004: 74), and the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes of 6 February 2023 were Mw 7.7 and Mw 7.6 (Nemutlu et al., 2023: 1224). According to official figures, 17,479 people died in the Gölcük earthquake (Özmen, 2000: 88) and more than 48,000 people died in the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2024).

Earthquakes can cause some psychological problems as well as fear and anxiety on people. Literary texts deal with natural disasters from many different perspectives. Authors sometimes take refuge in literary texts with the intention of therapy. Some literary texts also aim to raise awareness about earthquakes. In those texts, earthquakes are scrutinized by social, psychological, and economic perspectives before and after the earthquake. The object of this study is the stories about earthquakes. A small number of earthquake-themed stories were identified in the literature review process and they were classified in terms of their thematic ways they deal with earthquakes. In some stories, an earthquake is only a symbol of destruction and is only a background for narrating the main event or situation. Some of the stories describe the moment of the earthquake and the great horror experienced. Others deal with the inadequacy of pre-earthquake preparations and the social, economic, and psychological problems experienced after the earthquake. The psychological dimension of the issue is mostly ignored.

The study focused on the universe of earthquake-themed stories that emphasise the psychological effects of earthquakes. This study is based on qualitative research because according to Erickson, qualitative research aims to discover and define what certain people do in their ordinary lives and what their actions mean to them (2011: 43), which reflects the nature of the present study. The present study has elaborated on the selected 5 stories in terms of their divergent methods to deal with different aspects of the psychological effects of the earthquake. The researcher has analyzed the chosen stories within the scope of theme-based, descriptive, and content analysis using qualitative data analysis methods. Bryman suggests that the sample is a subset of the population selected for research and can be based on probability or a non-probability approach (2008: 168). This study is based on the purposive sampling criterion technique. I analyzed five stories written after the 1999 Gölcük Earthquake in line with the criterion sampling technique of purposive sampling. Creswell argues that the purposive selection of participants represents an essential decision point in qualitative research (1998: 120). A case study is the analysis of a “limited system” or an example through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of context-rich information (Creswell, 1998: 61). The stories selected for analysis are as follows: *Yataktan Nasıl Düştüm / How I Fell Out of Bed, Yanlış İnsan / The Wrong Person, Sevgili Nefret / Dear Hate, Faylar Kırılmadan / Without Breaking Faults* and *İyilikseverler / Benefactors*. The results of the analysis of five stories have

illustrated the effects of earthquakes on human psychology. The study has shed light on the destructive effects of earthquakes on people within the narrative universe of the selected five stories.

Some researchers have indicated that the number of the stories written about earthquakes is not quantitatively compatible with the reality of earthquakes in our country (Yüksel, 2013: 11). The psychological dimensions of earthquakes deeply affect individual and social life. Earthquakes shake people's sense of security by threatening life from various aspects. That causes great fear in people. As stated by Hofmann and Dibartolo, fear is an unpleasant but natural emotional reaction to danger and threat (2007: 92). The smell of death is so effective that it forms the basis of many fears (Kalyoncu, 2011: 31). Fear is the emergence of natural and universal anxiety in humans due to a veritas situation, event or person. The natural and social conditions and culture in which people live affect the emergence of fear. Therefore, fear is a learned emotion (Burkovik, 2004: 140), and it captures people and affects their vital decisions. It even causes physical complaints that can make people sick (Hennenhoefer & Heil, 2011: 7). Threats, severe insults, torture and similar events, natural disasters, and wars may cause panic attacks. The person may suddenly return to his past pains and traumatic moments with a sound, image, or any stimulus that reminds him of the events he experienced. Those exposed to earthquake trauma can experience that moment exactly (Kaya, 2007: 21). People may act or feel as if the trauma is happening again (Işık, 2006: 318). Ninan and Dunlop underline that people's memories are essential. Because past experiences enable us to predict what will happen in the future. That leads to anxiety.

Anxiety is conditioned fear and is a response to an expected and feared outcome. In the modern world, the threat is less physical and more often psychological (2007: 7). Köknel indicates that the only way to reduce and get rid of the anxiety caused by fears arising from past, daily life, or future concerns is to make them gain form and colour, be symbolized, and appear concretely. That naturally happens in dreams. Interpreting dreams reduces people's fears and anxiety, even if only for a short time. Mythological stories and fairy tales containing horror elements were replaced by horror stories and novels containing horror elements, which started in the seventeenth century, and this trend has continued increasingly until today (1992: 46, 47). Denis also offers a similar perspective on the relationship between fear and literary text. Denis remarks that people create situations that awaken foregone horrors and give us the pleasure of realizing that we have overcome them. Horror cinema, circus shows, and scary stories such as Grand Guignol allow reviving phobias, even for a short time, and experience the pleasure of overcoming them (2007: 13). As a means of expression, literary texts affect the writer and the reader. While it provides a kind of therapy for the writer, it also improves empathy in the reader. In this context, the present study examines a story written by five authors immediately after the earthquake of 1999. The focus of the investigation was to find out the psychological effects of the earthquake on the individual. It was seen that the five stories approached the psychological consequences of the earthquakes quite differently and drew attention to different aspects of the issue. The stories are examined in chronological order according to their publication dates.

Analysing story sample

1. Anxiety caused by earthquakes

Yataktan Nasıl Düştüm / How I Fell Out of Bed is a story by Orhan Duru (İstanbul-1933; İstanbul-2009). It is included in the book titled *New and Hard Stories* (Yeni ve Sert Öyküler). The book was first published in 2001. In this situation story, the narrator describes the moment of the earthquake and his emotional state afterwards. The text is woven from a different point of view from many earthquake-themed stories. The story begins as follows: “At 03:00 in the morning on August 17, 1999, there was a big tremor. It did not bother me at all. Five days later, I fell out of bed while sleeping.” (Duru, 2022: 85). These sentences indicate the time of the situation described. The essential location of the fiction is not clearly indicated. The story, which presents a slice of the narrator-protagonist’s life, focuses on the impact of the earthquakes on the individual’s inner world. The narrator-protagonist, who initially responds to the earthquake with cold-bloodedness, is later psychologically upset.

The fear and uneasiness that other people felt during the earthquakes emerge in the narrator five days later. The cause of the fear is not the earthquake or death. It is the chaos created by the late reaction of the individual’s inner world. The narrator, who behaved calmly at the time of the earthquake, fell out of bed during sleep five days later, although a second earthquake did not occur. The narrator investigates the reasons for this. He looks for ways to get rid of the uneasiness he feels. However, he has not received any results. The story ends with information given by the narrator as a new development. Accordingly, the narrator dreams of an earthquake every night and says he feels all the aftershocks (Duru, 2022: 87). Orhan Duru, who feeds on contemporary reality in his recent stories, expresses the ordinary details of daily life (Memiş Baytimur, 2012: 9).

Duru emphasises that the lives of people who survived the earthquake without loss of life and property are somehow turned upside down. He describes the situation of a person experiencing a severe earthquake with the irony of falling out of bed. As illustrated in the studies published in the field of psychology, different reactions are observed in people experiencing trauma (Friedman, 2015: 118). Psychological and physical consequences of traumatic exposure worldwide constitute an essential public health problem (Friedman, 2015: 4). Various emotional, cognitive, physical, and social reactions such as fear, shame, self-blame, social isolation, and feeling insecure may be seen as acute stress reactions (Friedman, 2015: 118). Post-earthquake people may intensely suffer from negative memories of the earthquake, numbness, decreased interest in other people, isolation, avoidance of factors and situations that will remember the earthquake, and sleep disturbance, which are accepted as symptoms of stress disorder (Johannesson et al., 2011: 917). Due to the losses caused by natural disasters, the social network is disrupted, and psychopathologies such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression can last for many years with different severity (Nakaya et al., 2024). *How I Fell Out of Bed* describes the effect of the trauma caused by the earthquake on the mental state of the person within the narrative order of the story.

2. Psychological problems seen in earthquakes victims

Yanlış İnsan/The Wrong Person was published in Mebuse Tekay's (Samsun-1954) storybook entitled *I was Never Like My Mother* (Annem Gibi Olmadım). The first publication year of the storybook was 2002. The date of writing is unknown. The text is a situation story consisting of two intertwined narratives. The first narrative constitutes the big frame. The second narrative is a diary placed within the larger frame. Both narratives have a unique fictionalisation. Both narratives are narrated in the first person. The story is about the Gölcük earthquake of 1999 and begins with the sentence: "I wanted it not to be forgotten..." (Tekay, 2002: 95).

The protagonist of the first narrative is a woman named Mine. The narration indicates that Mine received psychological support and wrote notes about her dreams in a notebook as part of her treatment. Immediately afterward, she received a diary in the mail. The following part of the story is in the form of quotations from the diary. The second narrative ends when the diary ends. The story and the first narrative end with the announcement of to whom the diary belongs, and the story is completed. The first narrative is ordinary and consists of Mine's reading a diary sent to her from Istanbul. The place in both narratives is Gölcük, as explained in the diary. From the note written at the end of the diary, Mine learns that Doğan died in a traffic accident. Doğan is a doctor from whom Mine received psychological support after the earthquake. The time of the first narrative is different from the time of the narrative in the diary. It is not possible to give a precise date for the first narrative. The note added at the end of the diary sent to Mine, the protagonist's story, is dated November 28, 1999. That is the date when the note was written. It is not clear how many days have passed since Mine received the diary. The person who wrote the note and sent the diary is the sister of Mine's doctor. The first narrative does not give any information about the Gölcük Earthquake.

The diary begins on 26 August 1999, approximately ten days after the Gölcük Earthquake of 1999. The first phrase is as follows: "It has only been six days since I came to Değirmendere;...". The entire diary describes the events that occurred between August 26 and October 6, 1999. The diary belongs to Doğan, who went to the region to help after the Gölcük earthquake.

In his diary, Doğan describes the conditions of Değirmendere and the earthquake victims. The diary describes the economic, social and psychological problems caused by the earthquake in a short, concise and striking manner. Mine and Doğan met because of the psychological support provided after the earthquake. The story discusses psychological problems in two channels. The first one focuses on Mine. The story's title (The Wrong Person) refers to the dramas in Mine's life. Mine's parents died when she was young. Mine believes that she should have died instead of her parents. According to Mine, children should die, not parents. That is because the parents may have other children. But when the parents die, the child is left alone. Mine's favourite friend Leyla passed away in the Gölcük Earthquake. Upon Leyla's death, Mine says: "If Leyla had lived instead of me, she would have new friends. The wrong person again" (Tekay, 2002: 112).

Although there is no clear statement in the story, Doğan's death in a traffic accident supports Mine's thesis that the wrong person died. Doğan's death is an essential loss for his patients and friends. The story also describes the emotional states of people trying to hold onto life among the ruins of the earthquake zone. The children's refusal to enter the tents out of fear and not leaving their parents' side (Tekay, 2002: 113) and the psychological trauma caused by the horrible event they experienced (Tekay, 2002: 108), people's getting used to fear (Tekay, 2002: 113) are narrated as embedded in the pages of the diary. At the core of the story is Mine's belief that her own life is less valuable than that of her loved ones and that if someone has to die, it should be her. Mine, an orphaned child, also lost her friends in the earthquake. The earthquake increases the fear of loneliness and the feeling of orphanhood. On the other hand, the story also mentions the problem of shelter among the problems of the earthquake region. Nakaya et al. revealed in a study that the need for shelter that emerged after the earthquake had adverse psychological effects on earthquake victims (Nakaya et al, 2024). Being in a temporary housing environment and the difficulty of rebuilding one's own life causes psychological distress (Tanji et al, 2024). Doğan states in his diary that he provides psychological support to the earthquake victims. Doğan is the one who writes the diary. The diary also shows a self-implemented therapy by the person providing psychological support. Earthquakes have severe psychological effects on both the victims and those who go for help.

Goelitz and Stewart-Khan say that those who aid survivors of a disaster witness traumas, and this can create psychological problems in them (2013: 43). That is another aspect of the psychological problem caused by the earthquake, which is supported by research findings, showing that women experience traumatic growth to a greater extent than men (Akbar and Witruk, 2016: 1040). This story deals with the psychological effects of the earthquake on individuals, especially with the focus on loneliness and loss of loved ones and the emotional state of those who went to help the earthquake victims.

3. Feelings of Guilt Caused by The Choices Made During The Earthquake

Sevgili Nefret / Dear Hate is included in Hakan Şenocak's (Ankara-1961) storybook with the same title. The first publication date of the book is 2002. The place and time of the story are not specified. The story focuses on the psychological effects of the earthquake on a family. The fiction does not focus on the narrating of an event but on the individual's inner turmoil and confusion. The story analyses the internal tension the man experiences until the second he comes home in the evening and wakes up the following morning. The moment and aftermath of the earthquake, which created internal conflict, are told through flashbacks.

The story's protagonists are Handan and her husband Âli. The story begins with a statement indicating that Handan has neither forgiven Âli during the ten years of suffering nor blamed him (Şenocak, 2021: 11). The story's first sentence contains "not to forgive" and "not to blame". The meaning of these words becomes clear at the end of the story. The story consists of two main parts opposite to each other. The transition between the two parts is quite successful. The first part, which is longer, is devoted to the family's narration and the disaster. The second and shorter part focuses on the tension between the husband and wife, and the story ends up with an unexpected situation. The first part of the story begins by

saying that Âli is not the father of a child anymore after the earthquake ten years ago. The story describes Âli's profound love for Handan, his childlike protectiveness toward her, and Handan's psychological state as a grieving mother who lost her child in the earthquake. With her essential loss, Handan is depicted as resentful of life and Âli. With her essential loss, Handan becomes resentful of life and her husband.

The story presents a section of the tension between Âli and Handan on the tenth anniversary of the earthquake. The cause of the conflict is that when the disaster occurred, Âli had to choose between his son and his wife. Âli saved his wife first. However, before he could save his son, the house collapsed. According to Handan, her husband was selfish. He chose to save his wife instead of saving his son. Thus, the word "he did not forgive" in the opening sentence of the story gains meaning. After this tense conversation, Âli falls asleep, calculating the night of the earthquake and the last ten years. The next day, events in the story develop in a different direction. Handan was the one who lost her life in the earthquake. During the quake, Âli does a favour to his son. That explains the words "did not accuse" in the introduction.

In the story, one can also find some contradictions in Âli's consciousness. At the core of the contradiction is his decision to save his son, not his wife, during the earthquake and the unhappiness caused by this choice. Küçükay suggests that decision-making is a high-level cognitive process. It occurs when different mental and psychological functions work together (2018: 607). In the story, Âli questions his decision. As a result of the questioning, he first endeavours to verify his choice to save his son, suggesting the problem of confirmation bias besides the choice theory in the story. Confirmation bias is the tendency of people to seek information consistent with their hypotheses and avoid inconsistent information (Cowley & Byrne, 2005: 513). People take many actions throughout their lives. They do these actions as a result of various decisions they make. According to Glasser's choice theory, everything people do is their own choice. Being happy or unhappy is also a choice of people. Being happy or not is in one's own hands. People get information from other people. People decide what to do with that information (1999: 9). People have more control over their lives than they think. People often keep their pain under control (Glasser, 1999: 10). The situations people complain about are the result of their own choices. People should be aware of the fact that they can eliminate the circumstances they complain about (Glasser, 1999: 82). The story brings up the consequences of Âli's choice. A study has revealed that individuals want to verify and validate themselves before the thought turns into a decision and an action (Çitilci, 2012: 47). In the story, Âli tries to convince himself of the correctness of the decision. However, the story's subject is not the consequences of an individual's choice in an ordinary situation. The individual made his choice in the face of the deadly effects of the earthquake. Âli's choice is about the lives of his two favourite people. That story's plot is not unusual in Türkiye, where large and destructive earthquakes are commonplace.

4. Fear of earthquake and mass media

Faylar Kırılmadan/Without Breaking Faults was first published in 2003 in Ahmet Ümit's (Gaziantep-1960) book *The Devil is in the Detail* (Şeytan Ayrıntıda Gizlidir). It is a crime story that deals with the earthquake phenomenon within the detective genre. The story tells about a murder after the earthquake on 17 August 1999. The murder victim is a professor specialising in

seismology. The fiction focuses on the search for an answer to the question of who committed the murder and why. The most essential point that makes this story different from other earthquake-related stories is that it opens up a discussion. The reason behind the murder is the fear and uneasiness created in society by the scientist's prediction of a great earthquake in Istanbul. The story stands in a different place among earthquake-themed stories as it expresses the negative impact of the earthquake scientists' statements on society. The perpetrators of the murder say that they do not intend to kill but frighten the seismologist so that he will understand the negative feelings he creates in people who listen to his explanations (Ümit, 2003: 100).

In this story, Ahmet Ümit criticises the scientists, especially seismologists, who explain their views on earthquakes. Köknel argues that the fear of death caused by natural disasters and catastrophes is a harmful factor that increases the state of anxiety in the individual (1993: 180). Excessive increases in anxiety levels may lead to sleep disorders, headaches, high blood pressure, mental breakdown, suicide, and homicides (1993: 181). Sleep disorders, fear of the dark, nervousness, aggressive behaviour, outbursts of anger, separation anxiety, avoidance of school, and general changes in behaviour, mood, and personality may occur (Gluckman, 2024). In the story, the murder occurred without the intention to kill. However, those who committed the murder wanted the seismologist to experience the fear of earthquakes. Cüceloğlu argues that the reality of a person is the world he perceives (2020: 288). The story discusses the media's coverage of earthquakes. Timisi and Dursun researched the reflection of Gölcük Earthquake of 1999 on the media. This study suggests that earthquake news in the media needs to be analysed. On the one hand, the media spread information about the dimensions of the disaster beyond geographical borders. On the other hand, it created a world of meaning about the earthquake through the information it disseminated (2003: 95).

After the earthquake, the opinions of scientists reached the public through the media. The media shared lots of information about Türkiye's earthquake characteristics. Nevertheless, this information process created an environment of uncertainty and insecurity by creating its counterpart. The value of the scientist's scientific explanation has decreased (Timisi and Dursun, 2003: 93). Distrust can cause fear in a person. Sources argue that fear can develop in people in various ways, and conditioning is one of them (Morgan, 1988: 227). People's emotions affect their actions (Helmstetter, 2001: 49). Earthquake has the effect of creating fear in people who experience it directly or indirectly. Earthquakes cause loss of life and property and create fear in people. Naturally, people try to get rid of the pressure of this fear in various ways. The information about the earthquake in the visual and written media, especially the information that there is a high probability of a great earthquake, feeds fear in people. Fear can make people exhibit extraordinary behaviours. Ahmet Ümit has treated the fear caused by the earthquake in detective fiction. Thus, he has brought a different aspect of the earthquake and its effects to the agenda.

5. Earthquakes and altruism

İyilikseverler / *Benefactors*, by Barış Bıçakçı (Adana -1966), is included in the book entitled *We Will Come Again in The Spring* (Baharda Yine Geliriz). The book's first edition was published in 2006. This text, written as a situation story, does not specify the place and

time. Therefore, it cannot be said which earthquake the story describes and the situation afterward. That makes it possible to universalise the story and to make generalisations about all earthquakes. The story consists of a one-way telephone conversation. It consists of a person of unknown gender, age, and nationality describing the situation in the earthquake zone where s/he travelled to help. The conversation is about the aid provided in the earthquake zone. The benefactor is far from the narrative of the essential social and economic problems caused by the earthquake and human suffering. It involves observing the person making a phone call and reporting the conversation heard. At the end of the conversation, the benefactor says “Do you know that one never gets tired while doing good!” in the last part of the story. The narrative ends with the view that the earthquake region is not as it appears on television and that it is necessary to help (Bıçakçı, 2020: 89).

The story criticises the attitudes of people in the face of disasters. It is open to debate whether the people who did good deeds did it for the earthquake victims or themselves. Researchers argue that the strategies people develop to cope with the adversities they encounter may vary according to their skills, their belief that the situation is under their control, and their expectations about the outcome of their efforts (Türküm, 1999: 75). In the story, the fact that the person who went to the earthquake zone for help tells what s/he saw and the help and favours s/he gave to people brings to mind the data of positive psychology. The positive psychology movement started in 1998 and aims to improve the lives of individuals by focusing on the strengths and virtues of one’s character (Power et al, 2008: 346). Thus, it aims to establish the spiritual balance of the person. The aim of positive psychology is not only to repair the bad things in life but also to start creating positive qualities (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000: 5). Positive psychology is a promising approach to improving well-being; it is treatment methods or activities that aim to develop positive emotions, behaviours or cognitions (Sin and Lyubomirsky, 2009: 468).

In the story of the *Benefactors*, the author emphasises the importance of doing good as a value in the foreground. However, in the background, the author criticises the person who does good and shares it with others on the phone. The criticism is that the person who does the favour expresses it openly and announces it to his/her surroundings. In other words, it is the altruistic attitude of such people. Theories about the evolutionary origins of altruistic behaviour have a long history, and the mechanisms that allow altruism to emerge and persist are still not fully understood (Hermsen, 2024). Altruism is a form of prosocial behaviour that aims to reduce the actor’s fitness while increasing the fitness of another individual as a recipient (Ando and Kawamoto, 2024). Durkheim argues that altruism is a voluntary act of self-destruction without self-interest (Dubeski, 2024). There are two perspectives on altruism, one positive and one negative. From the perspective of the positive approach, a favour is a work done gratuitously and is therefore valuable. The negative approach suggests that the person does this good deed to be appreciated by society and does not do the good deed gratuitously as it seems. Studies starting with Freud argue that egocentrism changes as the child grows up, the superego suppresses selfish desires over time, and altruism is accurate in childhood as a result of either the suppression of guilt or the internalisation of values (Monroe, 1996: 179, 180).

Social psychologists consider altruism together with the social and physical environment of the individual (Monroe, 1996: 180). The logical positivist theory put forward that individuals consider the cost and benefit of their behaviour and act accordingly (Güngör, 2019: 45). Logical positivists underline that the choices in their actions are a conclusion of the individual's egoism (Schlick, 1939: 66). The story "Benefactors" conveys a single person's one-sided telephone conversation. In this case, the story's title is singular, not plural. Thus, the title does not refer to one person but to everyone who exhibits similar feelings and behaviour. In fact, in this respect, there is a reference to the type of people who think more of themselves while doing favours to others. The intriguing aspect of the story is that it emphasizes the joy felt by the person who helped the earthquake victim. (Bıçakçı, 2020: 89). The statement that everyone should help is a response to the expectation of social appreciation. The story describes the behaviour of people who have not experienced the earthquake, lack empathy for earthquake victims, and are more interested in relieving their conscience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study analysed five stories with different authors and genres. The five stories selected for this study exemplify the diversity of psychological events caused by the earthquake and the fact that natural disasters cause different problems in every person.

The main point of departure of these stories is the Gölcük Earthquake of 1999. All five stories are about the adverse psychological effects of the earthquake on people. However, in each of them, the experiences and mental states of people exposed to the earthquake are handled from very different perspectives. The story *How I Fell Out of Bed* deals with the lasting effect of the fear and anxiety caused by the earthquake on the individual. Even if there is no loss of life or property, people are aware of the possibility of a major disaster at any moment. That leads to a loss of trust and a sense of well-being and restlessness. *The Wrong Person* tells the story of a woman who lost her family in a traffic accident as a child and is devastated again by the death of her friends in the earthquake. It draws attention to the psychological effect of the loss of life on the earthquake victim. *Dear Hate* also focuses on the effects of the loss of life caused by the earthquake. It reminds us that a man may have to choose between the people he loves during earthquakes. It expresses the weight of the burden of conscience that human choices can create and the need to believe in the correctness of the choice. *Without Breaking Faults* tells what the feeling of fear and terror caused by an earthquake can make people do. The story *Benefactors* focuses on one of the attitudes and behaviours of people who go to help earthquake victims. It raises the question of whether the person who does good and helps is doing it for the earthquake victim or to feel good.

These stories draw attention to the psychological issues of earthquake victims besides their concrete problems, such as sheltering and nutrition. Material aid to earthquake victims is essential. These stories and similar narratives also emphasise the necessity of providing psychological support to earthquake victims. They show that the problems of earthquake victims are not one-sided. They contribute to understanding the duties of individuals and societies in the face of earthquake and earthquake victims. It creates awareness of this issue. They draw attention to the multifaceted destruction caused by the earthquake in Türkiye.

Buildings and roads can be rebuilt, and people can regain their material power. However, the dead people cannot be brought back. It takes a lot of time and effort for people and societies to recover their inner balance and mental well-being.

Five stories present the negative impact of earthquakes on an individual's mental health in the virtual reality of the fictional world. Nevertheless, in Türkiye, whose territory is surrounded by three large and active fault lines, literary texts are expected to focus more on the earthquake issue and raise awareness of different dimensions of the problem. It is thought-provoking that the literature of a country where thousands of people die in big earthquakes ignores earthquakes in literary productions. Earthquakes, as natural disasters, continue to create fear in people and cause many different problems accordingly. It threatens life to a great extent. While it is such an important issue, the reasons for ignoring earthquakes in literature should be open to discussion. Earthquakes are one of the most important problems in Türkiye with their social, economic, and psychological consequences. On the other hand, literary texts on earthquakes are quite few. Most of these texts describe the economic damages caused by the earthquake. Literary texts are reflections of the societies in which they are born. For this reason, psychology and sociology disciplines must investigate the reasons for the low number of earthquake-themed literary texts.

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