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Master of Science in Social Studies of Gender

"Do You Hear My Voice?":

LGBTIQA+ Solidarity and Resistance in Kahramanmaraş Earthquake in Türkiye through
Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network

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Abstract

People-centered, whole-of-society, and gender-sensitive approaches are increasingly recognized in disaster risk reduction. In contrast, consideration of LGBTIQA+ communities and their experiences in disaster settings still has not been globally mainstreamed and integrated into the existing disaster risk management policies. February 6, 2023, Kahramanmaraş Earthquake that hit Türkiye provides unique insights regarding the experiences of LGBTIQA+ communities in the aftermath of disasters. Thus, this thesis offers an analysis of the experiences of LGBTIQA+s and how LGBTIQA+s did resist the existing cis-heteronormative disaster risk policies by forming the Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network. This research uses qualitative research methods and obtains its data through semi-structured interviews with civil society organization staff, members of the solidarity networks, and LGBTIQA+ activists. This thesis will draw upon Butler's Queer theory and Spade's Mutual Aid theory to analyze the collected data. The research contributes significantly to the broader literature on LGBTIQA+ solidarity and resistance in disaster settings, which is considered a new emergent field.

Keywords: LGBTIQA+, solidarity networks, resistance, mutual aid, disaster risk governance

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1. Introduction

"…. within minutes after any major impact, disasters start becoming political."

- Olson (2000, p. 266)

Some scholars have interpreted disasters as unique settings which are considered separately from everyday life (Barton 1970; Merton 1970; Fritz 1961 in Fothergill, 1996). However, disaster settings reflect a country's current social and political structure as disasters reveal many details regarding our identity, such as who we are, how we live, and how we structure and maintain our society (Quarantelli, 1994b; Fothergill, 1996). A devastating earthquake that hit Türkiye and Northern Syria with a magnitude of 7.7, referred to as the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake due to its epicenter, resulted in the loss of many lives and displacement and has also relieved many hidden details related with regards to social, economic as well as a current political structure in Türkiye. While these issues are extensive and still being unfolded by academic research as well as ongoing change in the political atmosphere, the impact it plays on the LGBTIQA+[1] community is worth being focused on in terms of increased vulnerabilities.

Disaster starts becoming political within minutes after any major impact (Olson, 2000) because government institutions play a critical role in resource distribution before, during, and after the disasters. Therefore, politics determines whether the disaster becomes a catastrophe or not (Gerber, 2007). Disasters often have disproportionate and gendered impacts and can result in heightened risks and vulnerabilities in LGBTIQA+ communities, who are already marginalized at the societal and institutional levels. Understanding, addressing, and explicitly mentioning the vulnerabilities of LGBTIQA+ is critical to achieving a human rights-based and whole-of-society approach in the field of disaster risk reduction (DRR) (Cowan, 2022; UNDRR, 2023). Even though with the trend

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[1] LGBTIQIA+ is used as an umbrella term to include all persons whose sexual orientation gender identity/expression and sex characteristics is not adequately addressed by the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex, in particular persons whose gender identity is fluid or non-binary. It is used with the intention of the broadest possible inclusion to encompass all in an attempt to encompass all in an attempt to include non-western categories and local expressions of non-heteronormative sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

of inclusive disaster governance and growing awareness of analyzing disasters as gendered and intersectional social experiences, consideration of LGBTIQA+ is still largely absent in DRR due to disaster policies' heteronormative and cisnormativity nature (Haworth et al., 2021; UNDRR, 2023).

The LGBTIQA+ community in Türkiye has long experienced discrimination and marginalization at many levels, including social, and political. The Earthquake further exacerbated these existing inequalities and vulnerabilities of LGBTIQA+ individuals. Thus, this study seeks to understand the experiences of LGBTIQA+ communities in the aftermath of the Earthquake, with a particular focus on LGBTIQA+s' solidarity and resistance against the cis-heteronormative DRR policies. This research aims to shed light on the ways in which disasters can impact marginalized communities and how these communities can resist and overcome the challenges they face in post-disaster settings by building a Lubunya[2] Earthquake Solidarity Network. It also contributes to the broader literature on disasters with regard to LGBTIQA+ solidarity and resistance.

2. Contextualization

This section provides the necessary background information for understanding the research topic. In addition, contextual information helps further comprehend the relevance and significance of this research.

2.1 Kahramanmaraş Earthquake

On February 6, 2023, two devastating earthquakes, with a magnitude of 7.7 and 7.6, hit Kahramanmaraş, Türkiye, at 4:17 AM. The initial Earthquake was followed by over 3,100 aftershocks (AFAD). The impacts of the Earthquake have been felt across the ten provinces as

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[2] A key term in the LGBTIQA+ community's identity in Türkiye is "Lubunya". This term, originating from the Romani language and initially used pejoratively, has been reclaimed by the queer community in Türkiye as a term of empowerment and solidarity (Erdem, 2019). It serves to create a shared sense of identity and community among LGBTIQA+ individuals, fostering a sense of belonging and collective strength in a sociopolitical climate that often marginalizes and discriminates against them (ibid.).

Adıyaman, Gaziantep, Kilis, Hatay, Malatya, Diyarbakır, Adana, Osmaniye, Kahramanmaraş, and Şanlıurfa. These earthquakes were the largest to hit Türkiye in the last century and the most significant to strike the country's south-east region in many years (OCHA, 2023). As a result, a state of emergency on February 7, 2023, was declared to ensure the swift execution of search and rescue efforts and subsequent actions, considering the magnitude and seriousness of the disaster (Republic of Türkiye, 2023).

Level 4 alarm initiated for calling for international assistance. However, despite all local and international support mechanisms, around 51,000 people have lost their lives (MoI, 2023; UNHCR, 2023). Based on the UNICEF report (2023), the Earthquake affected 15.2 million people, and around 9.1 million people required immediate support. Notably, the temporary protection holders were heavily populated in Gaziantep, Hatay, Adana, and Mersin (PMM, 2023). A significant number of individuals, around 3 million, were internally displaced, either through self-migration to different provinces or through evacuation procedures initiated by AFAD. A considerable majority of these displaced persons, about 2.4 million, currently reside in temporary accommodations/tent areas (MEDAK, 2023).

 In disaster settings where survival needs are in place with an increased vulnerability, the gendered implications of the disasters resulted in more at-risk situations for marginalized groups such as LGTIQA+s. For days and weeks, there was only one sentence that everybody shouted during the search and rescue operations, "do you hear my voice?". However, there were many voices left unheard by the policies in place and by the mainstream media because they "operate to produce and maintain certain exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human: what counts as a livable life and grievable death?" (Butler, 2004, p.xv)

2.2 LGBTIQA+ Community in Türkiye

While this section may be concise, it provides crucial information concerning the LGBTIQA+ community and LGBTIQA+ grassroots organizations in Türkiye by explaining some significant moments both at political and societal levels.

LGBTIQA+ community in Türkiye has a long-standing presence and has made significant progress in their struggle for rights and recognition, even in the face of political and social hostility.

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) showed acceptance towards LGBTIQA+ citizens, primarily due to AKP's ambition to join the European Union (EU) during its first two terms in office. However, this acceptance turned to hostility once the prospects of EU membership diminished during AKP's following terms (Yenilmez, 2020; Neo, 2020).

Similar to LGBTIQA+ communities in many other countries grappling with the rise of right-wing populism, LGBTIQA+ individuals in Türkiye cope with various forms of exclusion at institutional, political, and societal levels (ibid.). The pressure from the state and society has been particularly intense since the Gezi Protests of 2013. Gezi Protests was a unique movement on many levels, as women and LGBTIQA+ emerged as autonomous political subjects who challenged the hegemonic masculine conceptualization of politics (Onbaşi, 2016).

2.2.1 Aftermath of Gezi Movement (2013-2023)

Following the 2014 pride parade, which attracted national and international audiences, pride marches were banned (Yılmaz, 2022). The situation for LGBTIQA+ individuals has further deteriorated following the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, and the subsequent declaration of a state of emergency (Duvar, 2022). The Governorship of Ankara has also issued an order for banning all possible future LGBTIQA+ events indefinitely, based on the reasons of public security, protection, public health, morality, and protection of other's rights and liberty (Öz, 2019; Ünan, 2015).

The state's withdrawal decision from the İstanbul Convention on July 1, 2021, a treaty designed to tackle systemic and widespread gender-based violence, has added to the existing challenges. The rationale for withdrawal was grounded on the convention normalizing homosexuality and was incompatible with Türkiye's social and family values (Official Gazette, 2021; Şener et al., 2022). The conservative political discourse propagated by the AKP often aligns with traditional societal norms, which marginalize LGBTIQA+ individuals based on religious and family values (Korolczuk et al., 2018). This hostile climate has increased homophobic and transphobic rhetoric, which has led to the suppression of LGBTIQA+s (Duraner, 2019). The absence of explicit protections for LGBTIQA+ individuals, alongside the pervasive discrimination and violence they face, resonates with Spade's critique of administrative violence (Spade, 2015).

It is also inevitable not to bring May 14, 2023, elections of Türkiye into this research as elections campaigns of AKP and its extreme Islamist alliance (People's Alliance) turned into anti-LGBTIQA+ propaganda. President often emphasized that the LGBTIQA+ community represents "deviant structures" and a "virus of heresy" during their election rallies (Poyrazlar et al., 2023). This trend of recognizing the 'gender' as both an internal and external enemy, a threat to democracy, security, life, and societal values, is seen in totalitarian and authoritarian countries as they combine their diverse fear and anxieties under one category, which is called gender (Butler, 2023)[3]. Thus, these actions and statements continuously made by the state, alongside the main reasons of withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention, serves further marginalization and suppression of the visibility of the LGBTIQA+ community and reinforce societal prejudices against them.

2.2.2 LGBTIQA+ Grassroot Civil Society Organizations

Despite these challenges, LGBTIQA+ activists and grassroots organizations in Türkiye continue to resist administrative violence, advocate for change, and mobilize public opinion. These organizations, including KAOS GL, the first LGBTIQA+ organization in Türkiye, were well-known locally and internationally (KAOS GL, 2023). Many other organizations, such as Red Umbrella, are also working towards a mandate that is dedicated to addressing and solving the issues of sexual health and human rights that affect both sex workers, who are part of the country's vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups, and LGBTIQA+s. However, even though their visibility in the local and international arena, LGBTIQA+ grassroots civil society organizations, alongside many women's organizations in Türkiye, are trying to advocate for human rights and gender equality under constant threat of closure on the grounds of violation of Turkish Civil Law forbidding the founding of "an association contrary to law and morality" (Bianet, 2005; Çağatay et al., 2022).

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[3] From the Butler's lecture on "Who is Afraid of Gender?" delivered in Malmö Stadsbibliotek in Malmö, Sweden on May 3, 2023.

3. Research Question and Objectives

This research paper aims to shed light on the ways in which disasters can impact marginalized communities and how these communities can resist and overcome the challenges they face. In light of this aim, this research analyzes the formation of LGBTIQA+ solidarity and resistance in the aftermath of the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake. The Earthquake was unique due to various factors, including the scale and the impact of the Earthquake, the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of disaster response and management of the government, the current societal and political context in which the Earthquake occurred, and the increased vulnerabilities of already marginalized communities such as LGBTIQA+s. The Earthquake offers unique insights into disaster risk management policies and disaster risk governance, the role of grassroots civil society organizations, and the importance of responsibility-sharing regarding response mechanisms. Earthquake response and (un)preparedness of the state were heavily criticized when it failed to distribute resources in a timely fashion into the Earthquake affected areas. In such a catastrophic atmosphere, where all citizens, regardless of their class, gender, ethnicity, or religion, have suffered, risks were significantly heightened for already marginalized communities such as LGBTIQA+ as they were faced with multi-layered discrimination and protection risks in the earthquake zones.

This research is explicitly based on the LGBTIQA+ communities to explore their experiences and how alternative response mechanisms emerged with the aim of solidarity and resistance. Therefore, the main research question of this study has been formed; "how did LGBTIQA+s resist the cis-heteronormative policies through building a solidarity network?".

4. Literature Review

4.1 Contextualizing Earthquakes as Social Disasters

Previous research has emphasized the relationship between disasters and social structures of everyday life; however, earthquakes were often defined as 'natural' disasters. There is still an ongoing debate in disaster studies about whether disasters should be classified as natural or human-made (Masselot, 2022).

The outcomes of natural disasters are not fundamentally different from economic, social, or political crises. "Earthquakes may be natural, but they only become disasters when they affect people" (Alexander, 2023, p.1; Masselot, 2022). Kelman (2020) states that although being aware of the earthquake-prone areas, people in power and resources decide for others to construct buildings in those areas regardless of their awareness and consent. More than 83% of all deaths from collapsed buildings due to earthquakes in recent years occurred in countries characterized by corruption which caused poor construction modalities, rapid urbanization, incompetent leadership, or diversion of funding (Nicholas et al., 2011). Ultimately, these broad-ranging actions, resource distribution, and values affect the treatment of various groups and contribute to what is commonly referred to as 'vulnerability' in disaster studies.

4.2 Vulnerabilities and Resilience; Resilience vs. Resistance in Disaster Settings

The terms vulnerability and resilience are especially important for this research as they are key terms to be understood while studying disaster and crisis settings, including humanitarian ones. According to Ariyabandu and Wickramasinghe (2003) and McEntire (2001), vulnerability refers to physical, social, cultural, economic, and political conditions that affect an individual's ability to prevent, prepare for, respond to, mitigate, and recover from hazardous events and associated disasters. Therefore, the severity of any disaster should be evaluated by the number of people affected and the impact on various groups based on intersectional factors. Highlighting the importance of vulnerabilities (such as age, gender, sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, first language, or ability) and how it follows a unique pattern for each, feminist disaster scholars have used intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1990) to explain complex and multi-layered unequal experiences of individuals in the disaster field. Even though the vulnerability framework is grounded and reflects reality in an oversimplified way, it provides a convincing illustration of how vulnerability based on root causes of everyday vulnerability, including unequal distribution of power and resources, neoliberalism, colonial and post-colonial heritages, to the unsafe conditions contextualizing disasters (Bauman, 2020).

The term resilience is defined as the ability of individuals, communities, and countries to maintain relatively stable psychological and social functioning during highly disruptive events like disasters as well as recover in a timely and efficient manner by accessing and organizing resources

(Bonanno et al. 2007; Meyer, 2015; Robinson et al., 2021). Vulnerability and resilience are not separate but are interconnected and may co-occur during a disaster (Miller et al., 2010). Resilience has been praised for reframing the conversation to highlight positive attributes. However, it has also faced criticism for failing to consider the methods for modifying, confronting, and dismantling oppressive systems (Robinson et al., 2021; Seelman et al., 2022).

To explore how LGBTQIA+ communities resist oppression and dominant narratives, some scholars are adopting a resistance framework as an alternative to resilience (Seelman, 2022; Ward, 2007). The resistance framework, rooted in a critical consciousness framework, highlights individual and collective efforts to resist oppressive systems, stigma, and violence (Ward, 2007). A resistance framework takes center stage by prioritizing the work required to address and dismantle the systems that create difficulties. Although resistance and resilience are often used interchangeably in the literature, there is a possibility that "resistance may be a form of resilience" (Paceley et al., 2021, p. 30).

4.3 Gender Mainstreaming and Disaster Risk Reduction

Rushton (2020) notes that the field of gender and disasters has emerged with the understanding that disasters are events that are constructed both physically and socially. Enarson and Morrow (1998) initiated significant research on disasters and gender implications. They proposed the concept of a "gendered terrain of disasters", which suggests that women's ability to cope with disaster is often predetermined.

Fordham (2008) has deepened the understanding of disaster risk by incorporating social class issues into gender analyses. Meanwhile, Ariyabandu (2009) has enhanced the comprehension of how gender, sex, caste, class, age, and ability interrelate, promoting equality, an idea central to feminist thinking. Achieving gender equality in DRR means ensuring that women and men have the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in policy creation and programs. It also involves considering and equally addressing both genders' interests, concerns, and needs (Kimber et al., 2021).

Gatens (1996) examines how institutionalized exclusions within social and political theory contribute to the formation of the body politic as a supposedly neutral body in social and political

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theory is implicitly masculine, heterosexual, and able-bodied, thereby excluding not only women but also men (Connell, 1995) from political representation (Rushton et al., 2020). Although the field of disaster research is highly dominated by Western knowledge, both women and minority groups, including sexual and gender minorities, are "other" to the "neutral" body politic that governs policy and practice (Gatens, 1996). The lack of attention was given to power dynamics, including contributions to the systematic exclusion of women and also LGBTIQA+ s in disaster risk reduction policies (Fothergill, 1998; Enarson et al., 2007; Thurnheer, 2009; Cutter, 1995; Rushton et al., 2020).

Gender-focused research has been crucial in ensuring that women's specific needs are acknowledged and that they receive assistance appropriately during disasters. However, the phrase 'gender and disaster' has become synonymous with issues relating only to women due to persistent structural inequalities that extend into disaster management (Rushton, 2020). The woman-man binary presented a view that women are generally more at risk in disaster contexts than men, which resulted in a skewed understanding of people's experiences of disasters (ibid.).

Based on these discussions, the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005–2015 was the initial step towards recognizing the importance of considering various dimensions of vulnerabilities in disaster settings. This framework was later followed by its successor Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, by building upon the lessons learned from HFA. The Sendai Framework succeeded and expanded on the HFA by setting seven clear targets and priorities for action (Wahlström, 2015). One of its guiding principles emphasized the need for an improved understanding of all dimensions of vulnerabilities and the protection of all human rights (Sendai Framework, 2015). In addition, the framework highlighted specific vulnerabilities and the importance of a gender-sensitive response in crises. It explicitly mentioned groups like women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, and older persons, identifying them as at significant risk during such crises (ibid.). However, similarly to the sustainable development goals (SDGs), such supra-national agreements continue to be based on heteronormative roots, which resulted in further marginalization of LGBTIQA+.

4.4 LGBTIQA+s Experiences During and After Disasters

Experiences on LGBTIQA+s in disaster settings provide the first and foremost steps to understanding the 'heteronormative assumptions of sexual and gender identity in disaster management policies' and thus emphasize why disaster management policies are needed a 'queering' nature. Hurricane Katrina, the Haitian Earthquake, and South and South-East Asian natural disasters between 2004-2010 are the ones that are highly cited in the field of disaster risk reduction while highlighting the experiences of LGBTIQA+s in disaster settings (Howes et al. 2014). These disasters have a common characteristic: the countries have heteronormative disaster risk management policies. Having such policies, as lessons learned, results in LGBTIQA+s being invisible in both policy and aid response levels, losing already existing support mechanisms available to LGBTIQA+s and safe spaces, and results in exclusion and harassment in the shelters (IGLHRC/SEROVie, 2011).

Heteronormative policies that were in place in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 resulted in heteronormative assumptions on either individual identities and gender composition of the families and couples, which leaves LGBTIQA+s vulnerable and out of the equation of participating in specific recovery initiatives (Howes et al., 2014). Families, in this case, were defined by authorities, including government and NGOs, as opposite-sex couples and their biological children, which resulted in same-sex couples being separated and resettled in different cities (Haskell, 2014). In addition to those systematic challenges, ongoing anti- LGBTIQA+ discrimination and stigmatization have added another layer to the vulnerabilities of LGBTIQA+s in disasters. For example, far-right political and religious groups may often blame LGBTIQA+s as disasters happen because of them and to 'punish' for their sinful actions and their supporters (Richards 2010). Existing literature on this also highlights the importance of intersectionalities, such as ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, and gender, as LGBTIQA+s should not compromise as one homogenous group. Still, these factors create different levels of vulnerability (Howes et al., 2014). For example, it has been found that lesbians, bisexual women, and queers of color turned out to be more vulnerable than most white middle-class gay men due to reasons such as lower income and living in more at-risk neighborhoods to disasters, such as floods. Similarly, transgender and intersex individuals faced different challenges in shelters as their gender identity

was questioned, and therefore, they experienced harassment due to using the 'wrong' bathroom (ibid.).

Studies conducted to assess the impact of the Haitian Earthquake in 2010 illustrated that the most significant effect was the loss of physical spaces, social networks, and support services available to LGBTIQA+s, which were already limited prior to the earthquake. (Howes et al., 2014; IGLHRC/SEROVie, 2011). Due to the social structure in Haiti, private spaces were significant for LGBTIQA+s since they concealed their identities in public and expressed them privately in safe spaces. Like Hurricane Katrina, LGBTIQA+s was further marginalized as they were blamed for 'causing' the earthquake, which resulted in physical assaults and harassment towards gay and bisexual men (Howes et al., 2014). LGBTIQA+ individuals and families face challenges in common places such as shelters. Lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender and intersex individuals are subjected to gender-based violence and 'corrective rape' in the shelter areas. Gay and bisexual men reported that they were forced to engage in sexual intercourse to be able to receive money or food (Howes et al., 2014; IGLHRC/SEROVie, 2011). To avoid abuse and reduce the chances of being denied in mainstream aid initiatives such as emergency housing, healthcare, and food, some men took a 'more masculine demeanor' based on appearing 'effeminate' (Howes et al.,2014; IGLHRC/SEROVie, 2011).

Three separate studies were conducted on South and South-East Asian disasters between 2004 and 2010 to reveal the impact on the local communities who express their gender identity differently than the mainstream and usually attributed as Western LGBTIQA+s (Pincha, 2008; Balgos et al., 2012). Studies have revealed that these communities were not registered as marginalized groups with specific needs, which resulted in the denial of shelter and aid because they could not be registered alongside the male/female binary by the organizations.

Even though the existing literature on LGBTIQA+s in post-disaster settings largely focuses on the vulnerabilities resulting from the heteronormative assumptions of sexual and gender identity, evidence of resilience among the LGBTIQA+s was also provided throughout the studies (Howes et al., 2014). As Quarantelli (1994b) states that the disasters reflect the current social and political structure of a country, organizations, both I/NGOs and grassroot CSOs, already used to dealing with the heteronormative policies that challenge LGBTIQA+ everyday life (ibid., 2014). With the

help of these organizations and/or through friendship networks, LGBTIQA+s creatively forms such networks as ways to sustain their senses of self, community, and belonging to cope with the impact of the disasters and also 'invisible disaster' that is resulted from exclusion from the official recovery and assistance processes (ibid.,2014, p. 912).

5. Theoretical Frameworks

By combining Queer theory and Mutual Aid theory, this thesis explores the agency, resilience, and resistance of the LGBTIQA+ community in challenging dominant norms and overcoming challenges in the aftermath of the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake. These frameworks provide critical insights into the social, cultural, and political dimensions of disaster response and shed light on the potential for alternative modes of support and community building.

5.1 Queer Theory

In queer research, the nature of the research subject is reviewed as a contingent and unstable entity shaped by specific social relations in history, geography, and society. It challenges the traditional understanding of gender as a fixed, binary category determined by biological sex (Butler, 1990) as the idea of queer emphasizes the fluidity and multiplicity of sexual subjects and attempts to oppose the normalization and homogenization of specific sexual practices, relationships, and subjectivities (Browne and Nash, 2010). Butler emphasizes that gender is performative and enacts behaviors, norms, and expectations continuously reinforced through social interactions and cultural practices. Therefore, Butler's theory suggests that individuals 'perform' their gender according to society's norms and expectations, not permanently but fluidly based on social norms and expectations.

The field of disaster risk reduction may benefit from the new approaches and frameworks created by feminist and queer theory (Cowan, 2022). By adopting this theoretical lens, this research explores how the LGBTIQA+ community resists and challenges the normative assumptions about gender and sexuality in the response phase. It can also provide a nuanced understanding of the various power dynamics that shape the experiences of the LGBTIQA+ community and how they intersect with other forms of oppression, such as class, ethnicity, and religion.

5.2 Mutual Aid Theory

Mutual aid is a form of community-based support that addresses the shortcomings of traditional systems and fosters resilience and self-sufficiency. It plays a vital role in times of crisis by providing immediate survival needs, addressing societal inequalities, promoting solidarity, and raising awareness about systemic issues. Mutual aid initiatives not only fill gaps left by government and NGO responses but also strengthen community bonds and combat feelings of isolation and fear. They advocate for long-term changes to prevent future crises and are rooted in principles of shared responsibility and reciprocal aid. (Spade, 2020).

When it comes to times of crises, mutual aid is critical due to (i) having the ability to respond more quickly than government agencies or NGOs, providing immediate and survival needs such as food, shelter, and medical assistance; (ii) being instrumental in addressing the gaps left by official channels, especially considering that crises often highlight and intensify existing societal inequalities; (iii) being rooted in the principle of solidarity rather than charity, fosters a sense of shared responsibility and reciprocal aid, promoting resilience and self-sufficiency - both of which are vital in crisis situations.

6. Methodological Considerations

6.1 Research Design

This thesis is grounded in a social constructivist methodology, deriving from post-structuralist feminist epistemology, which scrutinizes how social constructs influence standpoints, perspectives, and discourses (Burr et al., 2017). It critically assesses the formation and perpetuation of binaries through existing power dynamics, particularly concerning gender norms (Davies et al., 2011). According to social constructivism, the world and the interpreting mind are inseparable. Building on this ontological foundation, the thesis adopts an interpretive epistemological stance, as per Mason (2017), focusing on how individuals interpret their personal lives and experiences.

The thesis follows an inductive case study (Creswell, 2013) of how LGBTIQA+ solidarity and resistance networks formed aftermath of the disasters. Therefore, it follows a contextual practice (Ritchie et al., 2003). This method is specifically chosen due to the complex and contextual nature

of the research problem (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Based on the inductive nature of the research, preliminary theoretical concepts were selected prior to conducting the research.

6.2 Qualitative Approach

This research achieves in-depth information on the formation of LGBTIQA+ resistance and solidarity against the cis-heteronormative disaster risk management policies within the framework of the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake. The qualitative approach is used to be able to unpack the complex and multifaceted experiences of LGBTIQA+s in the aftermath of disasters. While exploring the narrative of LGBTIQA+ resistance and solidarity in the post-earthquake phase, the qualitative approach does "provide detailed, contextual and multi-layered interpretation" (Mason, 2017, p.221). A qualitative approach allows for a more in-depth exploration of these experiences, including the ways in which gender and sexuality intersect with other forms of oppression to shape individuals' experiences in the post-disaster setting (ibid.). Therefore, it allows for exploring the subjective experiences of LGBTIQA+ individuals and communities and their own interpretations of their experiences. A qualitative approach also enables a thorough exploration of the social, cultural, and political context in which the disaster occurred and the ways in which these factors may have shaped individuals' experiences.

6.3 Methods of Data Collection

6.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Feminist researchers have long favored interview techniques due to their capacity to reveal marginalized groups' real-life experiences and perspectives that are typically left out of the knowledge-creation process (DeVault et al., 2012; Brooks et al., 2014). Semi-structured interviews have been chosen as an interview form due to having a more dynamic and flexible approach than unstructured and structured interviews (DeJonckheere et al., 2019). It also allows the interview to proceed with a conversation form in which the discussion is guided by a core set of questions (Knott et al., 2022). It is analytically characterized by comparing participants' responses by item because all the interviewees are asked the same questions by following the same order (McIntosh et al., 2015).

To follow a certain standard, a topic guide was prepared in the language used during the interviews, which is Turkish, and sent to possible participants with the invitation letter. A topic guide[4] is a pre-written set of questions used in semi-structured interviews to outline the key issues and areas of questions and is often accepted as an interview protocol (Knott et al., 2022).

6.3.2 Sampling Strategy of Interviewees

Data collection is made by conducting semi-structured interviews with the key focal points who are working at the CSOs and (I)NGOs that are specifically focusing on LGBTIQA+ and sex workers, with LGBTIQA+ network/community members and also with individual LGBTIQA+ activists. Participants are recruited based on their knowledge and area of expertise and being active members of the selected LGBTIQA+ network/community and supporting LGBTIQA+ rights as an individual; therefore, purposive sampling is employed. Purposive sampling enables reaching rich information or insights since the most relevant participants are being recruited. This method is considered by many researchers as the most useful when it comes to conducting interviews with a small number of participants to avoid having disadvantageous of a small sample (Knott et al., 2022)

Semi-structured interviews with six participants from grassroot CSOs, United Nations agencies, LGBTIQA+ networks/communities, and individual activists are conducted. Interview participants are selected from the Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Organization and an organization who primarily focus on sexual health and reproduction. Both organizations specialize in the services provided to LGBTIQA+s and sex workers. In addition to these organizations, participants are selected from Antep Queer LGBTI+ Solidarity and Community Network. These organizations and community, including many other individual LGBTIQA+ activists and LGBTIQA+ organizations, are either formed and actively supporting the Ankara Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity and Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity initiative to support and assist LGBTIQA+s and sex workers who are affected by the Earthquake and excluded from the post-recovery disaster response that is provided by the majority of NGOs and national authorities.

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[4] See Appendix 1.2

Therefore, alongside their expertise in the field, they have been selected as they were the pioneers forming the solidarity network for LGBTIQA+s who were affected by the Earthquake.

6.4 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Researching disaster settings means working with individuals who are vulnerable at different levels and perhaps traumatized (Hilhorst et al. 2021). Even though the interview questions did not contain direct questions that may create discomfort, the research topic, in general, was about a traumatic event, raising possible concerns about the possibility of triggering post-traumatic stress disorder in participants. To be able to overcome possible discomfort, participation in research was voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw their consent without explaining any reasons at any stage of the study.

Before the online interview, the detailed interview topic guide and informed consent form were sent to the participants so they would be informed what would be asked during the interview. The procedure and the details were reminded to participants also verbally at the beginning of the interview. In addition, participants were reminded that they could provide any feedback at any stage at the beginning and end of the interview. Participants were also reminded to sign the informed consent form either with their given name or with the name they preferred to use. Being aware of the research ethics and having a personal commitment to obverse any form of problem in line with the 'do no harm' principle (Hilhorst et al., 2021) was reflected in my interviews as participants provided positive feedback about the whole process.

The study also acknowledged the potential disadvantages of having a small sample of interviewees, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the current crisis atmosphere in Türkiye, being out of the country, limited my communication channel usage to email, resulting in a small sample.

6.5 Positionality and Reflexivity

Positionality refers to how the researcher views the world and how they situate themselves within their study (Holmes, 2020). As a researcher from a country prone to disasters, Türkiye, I personally experienced the impact of the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake, albeit from a distance like many other

Turkish citizens. While I may not have been physically present during the earthquake, I have a deep understanding of the context and the potential challenges faced by affected individuals in Türkiye. Being aware of the potential complexities in discussing traumatic events, I made every effort to create a safe and supportive environment for participants to openly express themselves. However, it is essential to acknowledge that as a cisgender researcher in a heterosexual marriage, there was a risk that my positionality might have influenced participants' perceptions of my understanding of their experiences as LGBTIQA+ individuals. This potential bias could have affected the participants' willingness to share sensitive information or view me as an outsider. To mitigate these assumptions and establish trust, I prioritized fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and openness throughout the data collection process.

7. Data Analysis and Discussion

7.1. Disaster Risk Governance and Disaster Response of Türkiye (TAMP)

Disaster risk government is categorized in the literate based on three different dimensions. The first is formal governance which is how the governance arrangements are designed or meant to work when a disaster hits the country; real governance refers to how formal governance arrangements manifest and evolve in practice during the time of a disaster; and lastly, invisible governance refers neighborhood and network level activities that are outside of the formalized governance arrangements (Hilhorst et al., 2020)

As part of the formal governance, TAMP was created in 2014 by AFAD and is designed to manage all types of disasters and emergencies that may occur in Türkiye. It outlines the roles, authorities, and responsibilities of public institutions, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and individuals in pre-disaster, immediate post-disaster, and subsequent days (AFAD, 2022). It provides tactical approaches for various scenarios, including but not limited to floods, forest fires, epidemics, droughts, earthquakes, and more. Based on the document analysis, TAMP only focuses on the administrative and procedural level without paying attention to any group. Thus, it is evident that the plan was not prepared with an approach 'people-centered' as opposed to the global shift towards a people-centered approach as the way Sendai Framework was designed.

7.2 Real Disaster Risk Governance and Kahramanmaraş Earthquake

Regarding reflecting these policies into reality, which stands for real governance, failed as none of the above procedural steps worked efficiently and in a timely manner for rescuing and providing aid to affected people after the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake. Authorities have contextualized earthquakes as natural disasters, God-given, and "impossible to be prepared for" (Bir Gün Gazette, 2023). This way, authorities avoid losing the agenda control of dominant leaders and groups (Birkland, 1997; Olson et al., 2000). The general discourse of the authorities and President of Türkiye was in line with this contextualization, which also has an audience in reality due to the people's religious values.

The first hours and days of the Earthquake were managed by people, both in the affected areas and in other cities, through social media. People were tweeting under the rubble, asking for help to stay alive; searching for their families and loved ones; and calling coordination for aid (Reuters, 2023). They reached out for assistance via messages and used hashtags like #ENKAZALTINDAYIM (I am under the rubble). Simultaneously, individuals on the outside tracked these hashtags and started organizing spontaneously yet strategically (Drury, 2023). On the second day of the Earthquake, access to Twitter was restricted by the government (Reuters, 2023). The lack of country mechanisms' effectiveness caused affected people and everyone in Türkiye to search for alternative means of communication. Life in Türkiye has indeed stopped in Türkiye, and everybody just focused on the Earthquake. Türkiye's past on disasters did not define its future:

> "The only difference from the 1999 Marmara Earthquake, which was scaled as the same, is that we have watched and witnessed everything online" (Interviewee 5).

7.3   Experiences of LGBTIQA+ and Sex Workers in the Post-Disaster Setting

Even though the earthquakes are gender neutral, and they affect everyone regardless of their identity, the impacts of it exacerbate gender inequality (CARE, 2023). Considering this disaster setting and having gender-neutral and lack of people approach to TAMP, it was inevitable not have gendered impacts of the Earthquake, which have never been paid attention to by the public

authorities. Based on the reports by INGOs, individuals with vulnerabilities are exposed to increased levels of risk and vulnerability amid the crisis (CARE, 2023). As Interviewee 5 emphasized, after the Earthquake, due to AFAD's lack of coordination, access to basic human rights such as drinking water, food, shelter, and heating could not be provided. Moreover, in communal areas for drinking water, food, and heating needs, LGBTIQA+ individuals faced significant difficulties accessing the already limited services due to the risk of discrimination and violence based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expressions.

"In general, the situation is not good for the affected people - basic needs have been met to a certain extent but disproportionately. The needs of people living in small villages have been met even later. Currently, cities in the most affected provinces, like Hatay, Malatya, Adıyaman, and Kahramanmaraş, are empty. People went to their villages or relatives or moved to areas unaffected by the Earthquake. People who have continued to live in the affected areas had problems accessing shelter; regarding refugees, there are serious issues concerning their needs for legal protection" (Interviewee 3).

7.3.1 Evacuation and Access to Transportation

Following some days of the Earthquake, people either tried to leave the cities by themselves or through evacuation procedures initiated by AFAD. However, a mechanism was never established for vulnerable groups, such as LGBTIQA+s, refugees, or LGBTIQA+ refugees. There were at least 10 cases reached to case workers which involved more than one person, as LGBTIQA+s were forced to leave the evacuation busses and/or not accepted in the first place- which put LGBTIQA+ in such at-risk place as some tried to navigate their self-evacuation processes by following negative coping mechanisms, which involved multi-layered exploitation schemas (including selling/exchanging sex for food, transportation, and shelter/tent). Therefore, when vulnerable groups are not able to benefit from the existing response mechanisms, their heightened risks make them follow harmful practices, as many cases are combined with different intersectionalities and vulnerabilities (Interviewee 3). The evacuation situation was even worse and riskier regarding trans individuals due to their visibility (Interviewee 1).

7.3.2 Cis-heteronormative and Family-Based "Household" Assistance

LGBTIQA+ individuals and sex workers were already marginalized in pre-disaster settings in Türkiye as they face challenges accessing available public services such as health and education. Thus, LGBTIQA+s who either decided to stay in the affected cities and/or have no other option but to stay there, have faced structural barriers such as discrimination, stigma, and exclusion from mainstream disaster relief efforts (Interviewee 1). Cis-heteronormative policies were reflected in the field:

The aid provided by AFAD (including cash assistance) in the affected areas was based on a heteronormative family structure formed by married opposite-sex families and their children as recognized in the Turkish laws- which automatically leaves behind the LGBTIQA+ individuals and families. Aid coordination based on the "household level" results with trans women or individuals who live with his/her/their partner are automatically considered out of this aid provision. This also puts LGBTIQA+ individuals who do not actively communicate and/or completely cut their communication off due to the denial of their sexual orientation by their families (Interviewee 1). Even though they were not a member of their assigned family anymore in practice, since they were still a member legally, they were excluded from benefiting, especially from the cash assistance (Interviewee 1).

Aid provision based on ID cards also worsened the situation of trans individuals trying to access the aid, i.e., the right clothes that fit them. In addition, they were also often discriminated called by their names written on their ID cards instead of the name they preferred (Interviewees 4 and 5).

Following "family-based criteria" aid provision in tent areas resulted in denying LGBTIQA+ individuals in temporary accommodation and tent areas. Individuals who managed to enter somehow in these areas were often put in the same tents- which created ghettoization as a couple of tents were populated only with LGBTIQA+ individuals (Interviewee 3)- making them become an open target in some cases. As a result, the LGBTIQA+s who lived with their families or had to return to their families' homes were stuck in the same tent, and their exposure to a violence cycle was inevitable (Interviewees 3 and 6).

7.3.3 Shelter/Temporary Accommodation Centers

The scarcity of tents led to many people living together, preventing LGBTIQA+ individuals from being able to find shelter in tents. Even if they could find a tent, they could call their own, living with many people left them vulnerable to violence (Interviewee 3). Therefore, LGBTIQA+ individuals had to seek shelter in more secluded corners or damaged homes, which was quite dangerous (Interviewee 4). The ones that could find a tent and/or shelter were considered lucky. Because many individuals, especially trans women, were denied having a tent (Interviewee 5).

7.3.4 Discrimination and Hatred towards LGBTIQA+s

Considering earthquake-affected areas are relatively conservative, Interviewee 3 emphasized that some LGBTIQA+s decided to leave the tent areas as they felt insecure. They faced much social discrimination and direct harassment as they were blamed for the Earthquake that happened to them because of their deviant actions (Interviewees 4,5 and 6). Some individuals faced multi-layered discrimination based on ethnicity and religion while trying to access aid. These different intersectionalities, when combined with gender, being LGBTIQA+, that are seen as against family and religious values, deteriorated the general situation:

" … because of hatred against the Kurdish people or towards people from different religious sects (i.e., Alevis), we could not access the bread that was meant to be given in free of charge. We wanted even to buy it, but they did not give it because of our gender, ethnic and religious identity" (Interviewee 4).

Given the chaotic post-disaster settings, security-related problems arose in the affected cities, including theft and sexual and physical harassment, and violence—perpetrators encouraged by a lack of police forces and control mechanisms. When women and LGBTIQA+s faced harassment and violence and tried to report it, they were not taken seriously, and the police officers did not record their complaints due to post-disaster settings (Interviewee 5). This created an environment full of anxiety for people trying to manage their lives in the temporary accommodation areas.

The most vulnerable group in the affected areas were trans individuals and gay men who easily identified from the outside if they were "feminine". Many queer individuals managed to hide their gender orientation and expressions as it was impossible to understand from the outside. However, the case was not like that for the former group (Interviewee 4). Especially trans individuals did have anxieties, and majority of them did not even try to access the post-recovery mechanisms provided by the authorities:

"….they considered themselves lucky to get out of the rubble by themselves and still be alive. They were afraid even only going to the temporary accommodation areas thinking that 'I was able to escape from the Earthquake and still alive. What if something happens to me in the shelter area? That is why I did not even try to go there" (Interviewee 1).

"…I know that my friend, a trans woman, was terrified to go crowded places. One time she tried to take a bottle of water from the shelter area, and she immediately felt the looks full of hatred. She was trying to cover her face constantly and hide her body. It is unbelievable that people think how you look even under those circumstances" (Interviewee 5).

7.3.5 Settling into a Different City

Many affected LGBTIQA+s relocated and/or self-migrated to different cities to start a new life. However, things were not easy as they faced many uncertainties. The situation was worse when it came to sex workers. Other sex workers already dominated their work, and continuing to work was difficult for them. If they want to include in already dominated work areas, they may face the risk of exploitation cycles (such as being forced to give a share of their income to another sex worker). In many cases, they feel very hopeless, and many decide to return to their home, the earthquake zone areas. However, destroyed cities will no longer provide a field of work for them, as stated by Interviewee 3.

"After relocating to a different city, they face uncertainties about their future- which may push them into negative coping mechanisms" (Interviewee 3).

Due to not having enough economic resources and perhaps not being able to benefit from the cash assistance of AFAD and organizations, many earthquakes affected individuals have also started to work as sex workers (Interviewee 3).

Stigma and social discrimination challenge LGBTIQA+s while trying to start a new life. Interviewee 4 tells a story of their friend, who moved to another city but had to return after some time. Their friend was faced with sexist and discriminatory statements from her classmates. Her classmates also blamed their friend as she was the cause of the Earthquake because she was a lesbian.

Overall, the analysis highlights the intersectional vulnerabilities faced by LGBTIQA+ individuals and sex workers in disaster settings and the failure of existing governance and response mechanisms to address their specific needs. The findings emphasize the importance of a people-centered approach that considers the diverse needs and experiences of marginalized communities in disaster risk management and response efforts.

7.4 Developing Multi-Issue and Solidarity-Based Approach: "Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network."

7.4.1 Meeting the survival needs

Mutual aid initiatives demonstrate how people come together and share resources to meet the survival needs of affected people from disasters "when government is not there to help, offer relief that does not reach the most vulnerable" (Spade, 2020, p. 12). The development of the Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network represents a multi-issue and solidarity-based approach to address the needs of LGBTIQA+ individuals and sex workers affected by the earthquake. The network was formed by a collaboration of LGBTIQA+ individuals, organizations, and independent activists

from different cities with a slogan of "Lubunya, you are not alone". The network utilized social media platforms and alternative communication channels to disseminate information about its establishment and how individuals in need could contact the network. Messages were posted in multiple languages, including Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, and Farsi, to ensure accessibility for a diverse range of affected individuals. The network also called for donations to support LGBTIQA+s and sex workers in the earthquake-affected areas who were facing discrimination, exclusion, and safety concerns (Interviewee 5).

Two separate networks, one based in İstanbul and the other in Ankara, were established. While this research focused on the Ankara Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network, information about the former network was also shared by interviewees. The networks worked in collaboration and communicated with each other, coordinating efforts to provide assistance and support to affected individuals. While Ankara based network provides the information of who created the network, which is KAOS GL, Red Umbrella, Positive Living Association, May 17 Association, and Pembe Hayat; the former platform has not openly and publicly shared which organizations and individuals are the pioneers of the Network. In addition to these newly established networks, there were already existing local networks in earthquake zones, such as Antep Queer Network in Gaziantep. These networks continued directing their available resources to earthquake response and actively communicated with the former two networks when needed (Interviewee 4). Both of Lubunya networks' primary focus was to meet the survival needs of affected individuals. Survival needs include not only shelter, food, clothes, and transportation but also medical, legal, and psycho-social support, too. Especially with the existing gender-neutral disaster policies in place, the role of specialized organizations who provide assistance and services, i.e., HIV medication, menstrual hygiene kits, hormone therapy, and specialized psycho-social support services (Interviewees 1 and 3). The network recognized the intersecting vulnerabilities of the affected population and aimed to address these needs comprehensively. Therefore, creating a multi-issue and solidarity-based approach was necessary since the affected people's lives were cross-cut by many different experiences of vulnerability (Spade, 2020).

Coordination mechanisms and resource mobilization were essential aspects of the networks' functioning. Existing mechanisms, such as hotlines and ongoing projects of collaborating organizations, were integrated into the earthquake response efforts to avoid duplication and ensure

efficiency. Division of responsibilities within the network, including case confirmation, risk analysis, and referrals, helped streamline the process and prevent burnout among frontline workers (Interviewee 1). The network's coordination with professional organizations provided minimum standards of support, confidentiality, and access to wider networks and resources (Interviewee 1, 2). It also facilitated information dissemination in accessible languages, ensuring affected individuals were aware of available services and support. Interviewee 1 emphasized that they had some cases about evacuation and finding safe places for affected LGBTIQA+s in İstanbul; they communicated with focal points from the Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network, and those people's needs were realized on very short notice. The Network could even follow up and provide feedback upon completing the referred case. These networks were crucial, especially during the evacuation phase and getting access to safe transportation. They tried to create safe circumstances during the evacuation phase. However, as stated by Interviewee 1, it was not possible to create LGBTIQA+ dedicated safe spaces and special transportation arrangements as it may create even more risky situations by making LGBTIQA+s visible. Thus, working in a solidarity network and finding alternative solutions to the survival needs was a better way to proceed.

The Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network was not only a response to meet survival needs but also an act of resistance against transphobic and homophobic rhetoric. Being part of the network provided a sense of purpose and empowerment to its members, enabling them to help others in need and create safe spaces. The network faced criticism and targeting, but also received gratitude and appreciation from those they supported. The network also organized social gatherings, psycho-social and peer-support events, and discussions on expanding the network further. These initiatives aimed to provide safe spaces for affected individuals and promote positive coping mechanisms in the aftermath of the earthquake (Interviewee 1,2 4,5,6).

While meeting survival needs, such networks may have certain advantages to maneuvering around the existing barriers and challenges caused by the current governance. For example, CSOs and I/NGOs may already have ongoing projects and mechanisms to re-purpose the funding or integrate the earthquake response mechanisms into the existing mechanisms to avoid possible duplications in the field. This also provides the possibility of saving time in crisis settings, where working with familiar partners and stakeholders in the field and not dedicating all the energy and time to create a response plan from scratch (Interviewee 1,3). In addition, local grassroot CSOs, having

established partnerships with well-known INGOs, also provided them with certain advantages such as accessing information, network, and resources (Interviewee 2, 3). Vice versa, having focal points from the grassroot CSOs were also provided field-based knowledge that will be disseminated in wider networks and groups (Interviewee 3).

7.4.2 Coordination Mechanisms and Resource Mobilization

As mentioned above, having already in-place mechanisms such as hotlines and ongoing projects was advantageous as organizations could integrate the earthquake response into these mechanisms. Thus, creating parallel systems and causing duplications of the provision of aid and services was prevented. In such crisis settings, case referrals are made on a very frequent base. Therefore, working with professional organizations provides minimum standards on many levels, including the confidentiality of the cases referred between the organizations, i.e., having Inter-Agency Referral Mechanisms in place (Interviewee 3). Working with many other organizations within solidarity also opens the door to different networks of connections. Even though, i.e., referred cases to organizations that did not have enough resources to handle the case, they might find the right connections with other focal points to be able to solve the problem. Interviewee 1 emphasized the importance of having a wider connection network with different stakeholders, including lawyers, municipalities, and political parties.

The Ankara Lubunya Solidarity Network members shared their available resources and information about in which fields they can provide support and assistance through their messaging platforms. Accordingly, different sub-groups were created to have an efficient system (Interviewee 1). For example, one group was assigned to confirm received cases, and the other group worked on risk analysis and priority level of the case and made the referrals (Interviewee 2). Such division of responsibility also lessened the risks of burn-out among frontline workers. In a situation of experiencing a burn-out, the solidarity network did empower them in many ways as stated by Interviewees 1 and 2.

"The times we had were very challenging and extreme in many ways. However, being in such a solidarity mechanism gave us power; and the feedbacks that we received from our beneficiaries were the only reason we could continue to function" (Interviewee 1 and 2).

"Solidarity across issues and populations makes movements big and powerful" (Spade, 2020, p. 15). Without this connection, the group eventually disconnects from each other, starts to work in silos, undermines each other, and competes for public attention and funding (ibid.)

Information dissemination in an accessible and understandable manner in different languages is crucial in crisis settings. Interviewee 4, for example, disseminated the information on available services, including free psycho-social support provided by some specialized organizations and access to health care.

7.4.3 "Lubunyas Exist, and we resist!": Resistance through Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network

The Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network served as an active resistance against transphobic and homophobic rhetoric, providing a sense of hope and purpose to its members. Interviewee 6 expressed that the network gave them a chance at life during their most hopeless times, emphasizing the determination of the Lubunyas to exist and resist discriminatory policies. Interviewee 4, who joined the network after the earthquake, quickly became involved in supporting fellow Lubunyas in need, despite being a member for only one month at the time of the interview.

"…we are Lubunyas, we are here, we are not leaving anywhere; we will not die because of your policies! And we will continue to exist!" (Interviewee 6).

Although initially targeted and criticized in social media and in affected areas, the network members also experienced positive moments. Interviewee 4 recounted encounters, such as an old lady acknowledging the value of their assistance despite her initial comment about their appearance and a child expressing gratitude for their help and seeing beauty in their identity. These experiences demonstrated the impact of their actions and challenged stereotypes.

> after I gave candy to a little child. I think he saw my rainbow wallpaper on my phone and said, ' you are helping us, my brother; I think you are beautiful as every color of the rainbow'
>
> (Interviewee 4).

Such mutual aid initiatives also create safe spaces for people. Especially losing the already existing community-based protection mechanisms and existing safe spaces, LGBTIQA+s needed new safe spaces to gather. Lubunya Solidarity Network also managed social gatherings, including affected LGBTIQA+s, but the door was open to everyone. There were also specific events dedicated to psycho-social and peer-support, dedicated events to LGBTIQA+ publishers to discuss how to expand the network further and create more peer-support groups. These mechanisms were deemed lifesaving by the interviewees, as they helped individuals avoid negative coping mechanisms in the aftermath of traumatic events (Interviewee 6).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake and the Lubunya Solidarity Network exemplify the importance of mutual aid initiatives and community-driven responses in addressing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of marginalized communities, such as the LGBTIQA+ community, in the aftermath of disasters. When traditional and existing relief and recovery mechanisms often fall short or are unresponsive to the specific needs of these communities, mutual aid initiatives fill in the gaps and provide more than just survival needs. The importance of mutual aid initiatives lies in their inherent nature to foster community resilience, solidarity, and self-reliance. In addition, these community-driven efforts are often more responsive and adaptable to unique needs, ensuring that the assistance provided is timely, relevant, and respectful of the individuals' identities. For the LGBTIQA+ community, this tailored approach is crucial. It addresses their specific vulnerabilities and needs that traditional disaster response systems may overlook or inadequately address.

The earthquake revealed the existing gender inequality in Türkiye and the ways in which disasters exacerbate these inequalities. In this regard, Kahramanmaraş Earthquake and Lubunya Solidarity Network was critical case to focus on. It highlighted the need for a people-centered, whole-of-society approach to disaster risk management that takes into account the diverse needs and identities of affected individuals. Furthermore, since preparedness for disasters is a political issue

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with its pre, during, and after resource mobilization, creating local community-based initiatives, like invisible disaster governance and mutual aid framework, also creates a political resistance against the cis-heteronormative policies.

The research findings emphasize the importance of developing inclusive and gender-responsive disaster policies and governance mechanisms. It highlights the need to incorporate a people-centered approach that considers the specific needs of marginalized communities, including LGBTIQA+ individuals, sex workers, and other vulnerable groups. The establishment of the Lubunya Solidarity Network demonstrates the power of solidarity, mutual aid, and community resilience in providing support, resources, and safe spaces for those affected by the earthquake.

Additionally, this thesis makes significant contributions to the existing body of literature on disasters by examining the role of LGBTIQA+ solidarity and resistance. It emphasizes how mutual aid initiatives can be powerful platforms for advocacy, shedding light on the systemic issues that magnify the vulnerabilities of the LGBTIQA+ community during times of disaster. The findings have the potential to catalyze policy changes and foster more inclusive approaches to disaster response, as they bring attention to these critical issues and promote the development of strategies that prioritize the needs and rights of marginalized communities.

Furthermore, the research underscores the need for more queer researchers and activists to contribute to the field of gender and disaster studies. By amplifying the voices and experiences of marginalized communities, we can better understand and address their unique challenges and develop more inclusive and effective disaster response strategies. It was also acknowledged that there is an increased need on focusing different vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially sex workers, trans individuals, unregistered refugees, and survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence, as these groups become even more invisible during the disaster settings. It was also acknowledged due to the limitation of my study that more queer researchers are needed in the field of gender and disasters to be able to unpack more hidden details regarding increased risks and vulnerabilities.

Appendices

Appendix 1.1 Example of an Informed Consent Form

Date:
Registration Number:

Informed Consent Form

Dear participant,

This research is being conducted by Gizem Ece Tığlıoğlu Gümüş who is a master's student in the Social Studies of Gender department at Lund University. The research aims to examine LGBTIQA+ solidarity and resistance after the February 6 Kahramanmaraş Earthquake. Furthermore, the study seeks to emphasize the importance of civil society organizations that can focus on the needs of the process and provide analysis of the interventions and aid in the context of the LGBTIQA+ during the response and recovery process for disaster and emergencies. The participants of this research are selected from civil society organization staff and members of the LGBTIQA+ solidarity networks.

If you confirm your participation in the master's thesis titled ""Do You Hear My Voice?": LGBTIQA+ Resistance in Kahramanmaraş Earthquake in Türkiye through Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network" prepared within the scope of Lund University, you will be a participant in this research between April 1 and May 17, 2023. You will be expected to participate in the online interview that will be scheduled with you according to your availability. Your identity information

will not be shared with anyone outside the researcher without your permission during and after the study. The scientific information obtained within the scope of this study will only be shared in scientific publications, presentations, and in an online environment for training purposes by the researcher(s).

Participation in this study is based on voluntariness. Your participation in this project may inform and support you or your organization during and after the disaster period regarding LGBTIQA+ solidarity and resistance. Therefore, the online interview, planned to take approximately 95 minutes, will not contain questions of a personal discomfort nature from an ethical point of view. However, since the subject of the research is based on a traumatic event that has affected many people in Türkiye and for those who closely follow the situation in Türkiye, the questions may cause participants to recall the process or may trigger specific memories with regards to Earthquake. Therefore, if you feel uncomfortable for any reason during the interview, I would like to inform you that you are free to leave the study without explaining the reason. In such a case, using your given information can only be possible with the researcher's approval. Thank you in advance for participating in this study. You can contact Gizem Ece Tığlıoğlu Gümüş (email: email address inserted; phone number: phone number inserted), who is conducting the research, for more information on the study and for any questions you would like to have answered.

I voluntarily participate in this study, and I know that I can interrupt and leave at any time I want. I am aware that I will participate in an online interview organized within the scope of this research. I accept the use of the information I provide for scientific publications. I have been informed that notes will be taken during the interview to ensure the reflection of the data in the research. I know that these notes and the points where the participants' data are used in the study will be shared with the participants with transparency upon request. I have been informed that there will be no video and audio recordings during the interview, as well as no photographs, due to the possibility of sharing sensitive information.

I want to participate in this research:

Yes / No

Name and Surname:

Signature:

Date:

Consent Form for Processing/Using Personal Data

I consent to the **storage** of my personal data as described below and its use in the published

version of the research (my personal data can be used **when referring to my own statements in the text**).

Name

Surname

Name of the Organization/Network

Title

Number of years in the sector

I consent to the use of my personal data in the published version of the research described below (for example, my personal data can be indicated in a table where the interviewees are mentioned in the published version of the thesis):

Name

Surname

Name of the Organization/Network

Title

Number of years in the sector

Additional Information

Personal data will be processed as follows:

Personal data will be stored on Lund University's Microsoft-supported SharePoint cloud service. The personal data is only accessible by the researcher.

The data will be used for the purpose mentioned earlier and in accordance with this form. The legal basis for the processing of your personal data is your voluntary consent.

Lund University, Box 117, 221 00 Lund, with corporate identity number 202100- is the personal data controller. Detailed information on the processing of personal data at Lund University can be found at www.lunduniversity.lu.se

Your consent is valid until May 17, 2024, unless a second notice is given. As stated above, you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time. This can be done by informing Gizem Ece Tığlıoğlu Gümüş (email address inserted) or registrator@lu.se. In this case, the processing of the personal data collected on the basis of this consent will be stopped. However, the results already obtained, and the data obtained, including the results, will not be affected by the withdrawal of your consent. Certain data may be archived in accordance with Swedish laws.

I permit Lund University to process my personal data in accordance with the above provisions.

City/Country	Signature

Date	Name and Surname

Thank you for contributing to my research,

Gizem Ece Tığlıoğlu Gümüş

	Name of the Institution: Lund University **Name of the Thesis/Research:** "Do You Hear My Voice?": LGBTIQA+ Resistance in Kahramanmaraş Earthquake in Türkiye through Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity Network **Name of the Researcher:** Gizem Ece Tığlıoğlu Gümüş

Interview Topic Guide

Dear participant,

This document contains summary information about the purpose, method, and methodology of the research, as well as the questions that will be asked during online interviews in the data collection stage.

- **Purpose of the research:** The main objective of the research is to examine LGBTIQA+ solidarity and resistance in the aftermath of February 6 Kahramanmaraş Earthquake. The aim is to analyze the response, interventions, and aid provided in emergency situations in the context of heteronormative framework, to highlight the importance of civil society organizations that can provide a point of reference to the needs, and to examine the LGBTIQA+ solidarity and resistance in this context.

- **Research Methodology:** The research will use qualitative research methods and collect data through online interviews/meetings with civil society organization staff and members of the solidarity networks. The semi-structured interview technique will be applied during the online interviews. The question guide used during these interviews is provided on the next page. The question guide was prepared to ensure that the data collected from different organizations through these interviews is analyzed within a certain standard. Depending on the flow of the interview, which may vary based on the uniqueness of the organization, and the participant's willingness to share information in addition to answering questions, additional questions may be asked in line with the semi-structured interview technique.

Interview Topic Guide:

Stage I: Introductory Questions The researcher briefly summarizes herself and the research; information with regards to consent form will be repeated **Estimated Time:** **15 minutes**	**1.1** Can you briefly introduce yourself? **1.2** How long have you been in the organization and/or network where you work or be a member? **1.3** What is your title (position) in the organization where you work and/or solidarity network that you are a member of? **1.4** How long have you worked in this sector and/or volunteered at the solidarity network? **1.5** What is the general purpose of your organization or solidarity network? **1.6** What is the main target group that your organization aims to reach with its relevant activities and projects? or **1.7** How does your solidarity network operate?	**1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, and 1.7 To gain information about the organization, solidarity network, and participants themselves:** The aim is for the participant to provide information about their area of expertise and their organization or solidarity network. Although the researcher has conducted prior research on the organizations and solidarity networks, the researcher wants to confirm the purpose and main target groups of the organization solidarity network by obtaining information from the organization staff /solidarity network members.

Stage II: Post-Earthquake Response	**2.1** How do you evaluate the reflections of the relevant country mechanisms coordinated by the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) in the aftermath of the disaster in terms of LGBTIQA+? **2.2** How do you evaluate the reflections of the field assistance provided by alternative civil society organizations and solidarity networks during this process in terms of LGBTIQA+?	**2.1 and 2.2 Post-Earthquake Response** To understand the support provided by the existing country mechanisms and alternative civil society organizations and solidarity networks during the post-disaster intervention. If the participant has been in the field, they may share their personal experiences; if they have not been in the field, they may share information acquired through secondary data (i.e., from their field offices, colleagues, reports available online, and/or shared with the organization).
Estimated Time: **30 minutes**	**2.3** Does your organization/solidarity network have field offices in the areas affected by the Earthquake? **2.4** What activities did your organization/solidarity network implement in the aftermath of the Earthquake? **2.5** Were there any problems encountered when implementing/carrying out these	**2.3** Understand the accessibility of the organization/solidarity network to the earthquake-affected area. **2.4 and 2.5** Identify the activities and mechanisms of the organization that were affected by the information and communication gaps after the disaster. Identify if there is any political and social barrier.

	activities?	**2.6 and 2.7** To understand if there is any discrimination and hate speech against LGBTIQA+ during post-disaster response.
	2.6 Was there any discrimination against LGBTIQA+ in the areas affected by the Earthquake?	
	2.7 Based on your personal information, what kind of discrimination did LGBTIQA+ face (including search and rescue operations, camp areas, and during aid distribution)?	**2.8** To understand which channels have been used to reach people of concern.
	2.8 Which channels did you use while reaching out to people in need?	
Stage III: Lubunya Earthquake Solidarity **Estimated Time:** **35 minutes**	**3.1** What is Lubunya Earthquake solidarity? How and why did it form? **3.2** Is your organization/solidarity network part of Lubunya earthquake solidarity? **3.3** Based on your knowledge, what other organizations/solidarity networks are part of this earthquake solidarity network? **3.4** What activities do you carry out through this solidarity network?	**3.1, 3.2, and 3.3:** To understand the purpose and origin of Lubunya earthquake solidarity and confirm whether the organization is part of this network. **3.4 and 3.5:** To gather information about the meaning of the solidarity network for the organization and individuals and to understand the importance of this solidarity network.

	3.5 What does being a part of this solidarity network mean for you and your organization?	**3.6:** This question does not aim to gather specific information about beneficiaries but rather to gain a general sense.
	3.6 According to your knowledge, and if you would like to share, what does being part of this solidarity network mean for the people and/or beneficiaries that you reach?	
Stage IV: End of the interview Additional Questions **Estimated Time:** **Minimum 15 minutes**	**4.1** Is there any point that you think should definitely be included in the research (including pre-, during-, and post-disaster phases)?	

Appendix 1.3 The List of Interviewees

Name	Organization	City
Interviewee 1	Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Organization	Ankara
Interviewee 2	Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Organization	Ankara

Interviewee 3	Anonymous	Ankara
Interviewee 4	Antep Queer Solidarity Network Member	Gaziantep
Interviewee 5	LGBTIQA+ Activist	İstanbul
Interviewee 6	LGBTIQA+ Activist	Ankara

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