

ROLE OF THE TURKISH NEWS MEDIA IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

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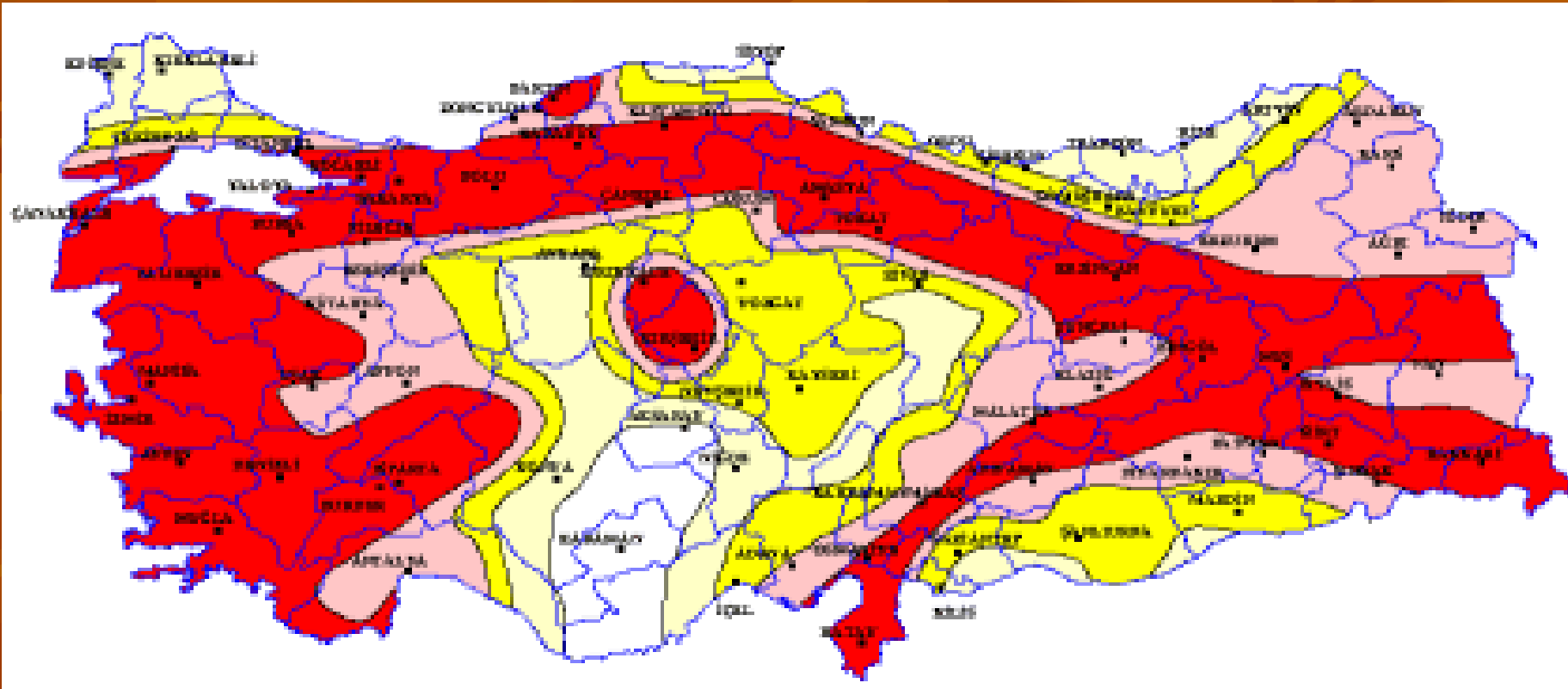
Media's primary function is giving news

Media can also influence how disasters are conceived by the people

As such, media may play an important role in:

- Disaster risk perception
- Disaster preparedness

95 % of Turkey's land is under earthquake risk









RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

- Data collection and documentation are important for evaluation and planning ahead.
- No norms or standard methods for collection of health data after disasters exists.
- MoH does not have any information about causes of death, kinds of injury, drugs and equipments used during disasters.
- Therefore; every disaster is a completely new experience.

METHODS

3 daily newspapers were scrutinised for news coverage of the 10 major earthquakes in Turkish history

1939 Erzincan

1975 Lice

1946 Varto

1976 Caldiran

1966 Varto

1983 Erzurum

1970 Gediz

1992 Erzincan

1971 Bingöl

1999 Kocaeli

METHODS

Papers were examined starting from the first day of the disaster to the day when disaster news no longer appeared

TV coverage could be examined only for the last 20 years.

Archives of the National Library was accessed to get the data

No detailed health report or health data about these disasters existed in MOH records

FINDINGS

- Press coverage in all papers was similar to each other
- First news appeared on the second day and ended in 2 to 3 weeks (excluding the last big one in 1999)
- All earthquakes came as a big surprise to both the public and responsible officials.
- Chaos and confusion of authorities during the first few days, injustice and disorder in distributing aid material was common in all earthquakes
- The military was always first to arrive in the disaster area

FINDINGS

- Geographic and climatic conditions have hindered rescue and aid efforts.
- No news exist of responsible contractors and engineers of collapsed buildings ever being tried or punished.
- There were no news of infectious disease epidemics, only few cases of resp. infections and diarrhoea
- No efforts for mitigation and preparedness could be documented until the last earthquake (17 000 killed)
- TV reaches more people and has more impact

DISCUSSION

- Mass media is imperative in communicating news and information to the public
- It can also help clear inaccurate rumors
- It can influence public attitude towards preparation for disasters
- People trust it more than the administrators or the Red Crescent
- It can be a good source of data where no records exist

DISCUSSION

- However, the present study has revealed that the press has largely failed in advocating preparedness and mitigation to the public
- One reason may be that goals of the media (profit) and state may not always coincide
- In disasters, experienced spokespersons can better deal with the press and also enlist its aid.
- TV is a better tool for information and education
- Growing use of the internet holds promises in Turkey