

**REVIEW STUDY****Gençlik Politikaları Vizyonu: Ulusal Politikaların Analizi\***Gökhan Acar<sup>1A-B-C-D</sup>, Kayhan Serin<sup>2A-E</sup><sup>1</sup>Usak University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, <sup>2</sup>Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Institute of Educational Science**Author Contribution Rate:**

- A) Study Design
- B) Data Collection
- C) Data Analysis
- D) Article Writing
- E) Critical Reading

**Submission Date:**

December 18, 2024

**Acceptance Date:**

March 10, 2025

**Online Publication Date:**

March 12, 2025

**ÖZET**

Bu çalışma, Ulusal Gençlik ve Spor Politikası Belgesi'nde yer alan gençlik politikaları vizyonunu analiz etmeyi amaçlanmaktadır. Araştırma, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden SWOT analizi kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ulusal Gençlik ve Spor Politikası Belgesi'nde, gençlerin evrensel ve milli değerlere bağlı, toplumsal hayata aktif katılan, temel hak ve özgürlüklerini kullanabilen bireyler olarak yetişmelerini hedefleyen bir vizyon ortaya koymaktadır. Yapılan analiz sonucunda, politikanın güçlü yönleri arasında gençlerin sosyal katılımını destekleyen kapsamlı bir vizyon ve uluslararası rekabet edebilirliğe yapılan vurgu öne çıkmaktadır. Ancak uygulama sorunları, kaynak kısıtlamaları ve etkili izleme-değerlendirme mekanizmalarının eksikliği, belgenin hedeflerine tam anlamıyla ulaşmasını engelleyebilecek zayıf yönler olarak tespit edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, gençlerin potansiyelinin desteklenmesi, toplumsal katkının artırılması ve uluslararası işbirliği fırsatları, politikanın başarı potansiyelini yükseltmektedir. Öte yandan, değişen ekonomik ve toplumsal koşullar ile idari zorluklar, politikanın sürdürülebilirliğini tehdit eden faktörlerdir. Sonuç olarak, Ulusal Gençlik ve Spor Politikası Belgesi, Türkiye'nin genç nüfusunun gelişimine ve topluma katkısına yönelik önemli bir yol haritası sunmaktadır. Ancak bu potansiyelin hayata geçirilebilmesi için uygulama sürecinde kaynakların etkin kullanılması, izleme ve değerlendirme mekanizmalarının güçlendirilmesi ve zayıf yönlerin giderilmesine yönelik stratejiler geliştirilmesi gerekmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Gençlik Politikaları, Gelecek Vizyonu, Ulusal Spor Politikaları.**The Vision of Youth Policies: An Analysis of National Policies\*****ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the vision of youth policies outlined in the National Youth and Sports Policy Document. The research was conducted using the SWOT analysis method, a qualitative research technique. The National Youth and Sports Policy Document presents a vision that aims to cultivate young individuals who are committed to universal and national values, actively participate in social life, and exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms. The analysis reveals that among the strengths of the policy are its comprehensive vision that supports youth social participation and its emphasis on international competitiveness. However, challenges in implementation, resource constraints, and the lack of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have been identified as weaknesses that may hinder the full achievement of the policy's objectives. Nevertheless, the potential for supporting youth development, enhancing social contributions, and leveraging opportunities for international cooperation increases the likelihood of the policy's success. On the other hand, changing economic and social conditions, as well as administrative challenges, pose significant threats to the sustainability of the policy. In conclusion, the National Youth and Sports Policy Document provides a crucial roadmap for the development of Turkey's young population and their contribution to society. However, to fully realize this potential, it is essential to ensure the efficient use of resources, strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and develop strategies to address the identified weaknesses in the implementation process.

**Key Words:** Future Vision, National Sports Policies, Youth Policies.**ISSN:** 3023-535900**Doi Number:**

10.70701/makusbd.1603441

\*This article is an extended version of the study titled "National Youth and Sports Policy Document: An Analysis of Youth Policy Vision", which was presented as a full-text oral presentation at the 3rd International Konya Scientific Research Congress held on February 17-18, 2024.

## Introduction

Youth represent the dynamic and innovative elements of societies, constituting a strategic population group that shapes the future. Rapidly changing global conditions, economic transformations, technological innovations, and shifts in social structures have significant impacts on the societal and individual roles of young people. In this context, youth policies refer to systematic and sustainable approaches aimed at understanding the needs of the youth population, unlocking their potential, and ensuring their active participation in social life.

The development of national youth policies not only reflects the state's responsibility towards young individuals but also serves as a tool for social, economic, and cultural development. International organizations such as the United Nations (UN), UNESCO, and OECD have issued calls and established sustainable development goals (SDGs), compelling countries to design and implement more effective and inclusive youth policies. In countries with a high proportion of young populations, such as Turkey, the design and implementation of youth policies are considered a central component of development strategies.

This study aims to analyze the National Youth and Sports Policy Document and provide solutions to address the challenges young people face in social life. In this regard, the study seeks to answer how youth policies can be developed in line with the principles of social justice, equality, and participation. Furthermore, it aspires to serve as a significant reference for policymakers, academics, and non-governmental organizations working in the field of youth.

## The Concept and Importance of Youth

The concept of youth is a dynamic process subject to various definitions across historical, cultural, and social contexts. Youth represents the transition period from childhood to adulthood, where biological, psychological, and sociological developments are intertwined. This period is characterized as a phase in which individuals pursue identity formation, and social roles and responsibilities begin to take shape (Erikson, 1968). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2014) defines youth as those aged 15-24, while the United Nations (UN, 2018) expands this range to 15-29 years. However, the definition and scope of youth may differ depending on a country's economic, cultural, and social structures.

Youth is a critical phase encompassing the transition between childhood and adulthood, during which individuals undergo significant physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. While various cultural and institutional definitions exist, the 15-24 age group is generally accepted as the youth category (Coxe et al.). This period is crucial, as individuals begin to construct their identities, increase their efforts to participate in social life, and explore their personal potentials (Ben-Ali, 2011).

Youth is not only a biological developmental process but also a phase of identity construction shaped by societal norms and cultural values. As Bourdieu (1993) points out, youth is a period when economic and cultural capital accumulation is transferred. In this process, young people's interactions with socialization tools such as family, the education system, and the media play a critical role in constructing their individual and societal identities.

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In the modern world, where societal changes are accelerating, young people are exposed to new values shaped by globalization dynamics while simultaneously facing the pressures of traditional cultural norms. This situation increases the likelihood of identity crises and value conflicts among youth. Particularly under the influence of technology and digital culture, young people's ways of accessing information, learning habits, and communication tools have undergone significant transformations (Tapscott, 2008).

**The Role of Youth in Social Development**

The youth population is one of the most significant demographic groups shaping the future of societies. Youth represents the dynamism, innovation capacity, and future vision of a society. Developed and developing countries can achieve their goals of economic development, social justice, and cultural sustainability by effectively utilizing the potential of their youth population. In this context, access to quality education, employment opportunities, and active participation in social life is of critical importance for young people (Sen, 1999).

In societies with a high proportion of young people, referred to as the demographic window of opportunity, enabling youth to develop their competencies and contribute to society as productive individuals offers a significant advantage for economic growth. However, if this potential is not adequately utilized, young people may face risks such as unemployment, disengagement from education, and social exclusion. These challenges can lead to societal unrest and hinder economic development, resulting in a lagging position in global competitiveness (International Labour Organization, 2020).

**Sports and Youth Policies**

Recognizing the role and potential of youth within the social structure serves as a significant motivation in shaping national youth policies. National youth policies aim to develop sustainable and inclusive strategies for young people in areas such as education, employment, health, cultural participation, and social rights. These policies provide a foundation for young people to discover their talents, actively participate in social life, and have a voice in decision-making processes (UN, 2018).

Considering the role of youth in societal development, it is clear that youth policies represent a strategic investment that builds not only the present but also the future. In this context, youth policies must be formulated with a participatory approach that considers the needs and expectations of young people. Inclusive and innovative youth policies, developed in line with the recommendations of international organizations, aim to enhance the contributions of youth to societal development while supporting their individual growth (Sen, 1999; International Labour Organization, 2020).

In the context of sports and policy, youth are defined as individuals who participate in sports and recreational activities. Youth-related policies often address their participation, development, well-being, and opportunities within the sports and recreation sectors. These policies generally aim to promote physical activity, skill development, social inclusion, and positive outcomes within society (Schreiner, Mayer & Kastrup, 2021).

In general terms, sport refers to competitive activities governed by specific rules that aim to enhance the organic endurance of the human body, develop and maintain the physiological capacity of systems, and satisfy

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subconscious human desires such as winning and achieving success (Nuzul et al., 2023).

From a recreational perspective, sport encompasses organized physical activities and competitions in which individuals or teams engage in various exercises or games, typically for the purposes of entertainment, competition, physical fitness, or skill development (King & Church, 2015). In this regard, sport includes not only team sports such as football, basketball, and volleyball but also individual disciplines like tennis, swimming, and athletics, as well as activities like walking, cycling, and yoga (Lindsey & Bacon, 2016).

### Youth Policies in Turkey

According to the National Youth and Sports Policy Document, "50.5% of Turkey's population is under the age of 30. By the end of 2011, approximately 20 million of the population consisted of youth aged 14-29. If the current growth rate continues, it is estimated that by 2023, 70% of Turkey's population will be of working age. Turkey has the highest proportion of young people compared to the total population in Europe. This demographic structure can only be transformed into an advantage through effective and high-quality policies targeting youth. Research and long-term population projections (e.g., UN's *World Population in 2300*) indicate that Turkey's youth population will start to decline from 2050 onwards. This study also predicts a significant decrease in birth rates in Turkey after 2050. Accordingly, the birth rate, which was 2.43% during 2000-2005, is expected to drop to 1.85% during 2050-2055. Therefore, taking measures to preserve this demographic opportunity is among the state's primary objectives" (Official Gazette, 2012). Turkey is one of the

most dynamic countries in Europe in terms of its youth population ratio. The National Youth and Sports Policy Document emphasizes that 50.5% of the population is under the age of 30 and that youth aged 14-29 constitute approximately 20 million people. While this demographic structure holds significant potential for Turkey's future, it also entails substantial responsibilities. However, projections suggest that Turkey's youth population will begin to decline after 2050. Therefore, leveraging the current demographic opportunity through qualified policies that support the physical, social, and economic development of youth must be one of the state's primary goals.

In the context of youth and sports policies, sports play a crucial role in promoting physical health, social interaction, and personal development among young individuals. Sports policies aim to facilitate access to sports opportunities, promote fair play and inclusivity, and support the development of athletic skills at various levels, from grassroots to elite competition. These policies can be defined as contributing to the overall well-being and development of youth in society (Gilchrist and Wheaton, 2011).

The National Youth and Sports Policy Document articulates the vision of youth policies as follows: *"The vision of youth policies is to create the opportunities and environments where young people, who uphold universal and humanitarian values, are committed to national and moral values, respectful to the environment, knowledgeable, self-confident, active, entrepreneurial, socially cohesive, actively participate in social life, effectively exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms, and compete at the international level with their*



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*peers, can fully realize their potential”*  
(Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2013).

*The Rationale for Youth and Sports Policies:* Youth and sports policies play a critical role in addressing various societal issues. These policies aim to increase physical activity, develop essential life skills, promote social cohesion, and prevent health problems among young people. Investing in youth and sports policies contributes not only to individuals but also to the overall development of society (Strittmatter and Skille, 2017).

*Promoting Physical Activity:* One of the primary goals of these policies is to encourage physical activity among young people. Regular participation in sports and physical activities helps reduce the risk of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and other health problems. Additionally, by encouraging healthy habits at an early age, these policies promote lifelong commitment to active lifestyles (Ekholm and Lindström Sol, 2020).

*Skill Development and Personal Growth:* Youth engagement in sports fosters skill development and personal growth. Teamwork, discipline, leadership, and goal-setting are just a few of the valuable skills gained through sports participation. These skills extend beyond the sports field, preparing young individuals to face future challenges in education and employment (Ekholm and Lindström Sol, 2020).

*Social Inclusion and Integration:* Sports policies aim to promote social inclusion and integration. They provide opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to come together, interact, and build strong social bonds. This not only enhances tolerance and understanding but also contributes to a more harmonious society (Blum, 2006).

*Gender Equality:* Youth and sports policies must address gender equality by ensuring equal opportunities for young men and women in sports. Breaking gender stereotypes and providing girls with the same access to sports activities is crucial for achieving gender equality (Strittmatter and Skille, 2017).

*Accessible Infrastructure and Resources:* To ensure that all young people, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds, can participate in sports and physical activities, policies must prioritize the development of sports facilities, equipment, and resources in communities. This makes sports accessible to all youth (Açıkgöz et al., 2019).

*Monitoring and Evaluation:* Effective implementation of youth and sports policies requires continuous monitoring and evaluation. Regular assessments help policymakers identify successes and areas for improvement, ensuring that these policies remain relevant and effective over time (Ekholm and Lindström Sol, 2020).

Despite its significant potential, projections indicating a decline in Turkey’s youth population starting from 2050 necessitate the effective utilization of current opportunities through well-designed policies. The National Youth and Sports Policy highlights the contributions of sports policies in supporting the physical, mental, and social development of young people, particularly emphasizing areas such as health, skill development, social cohesion, and gender equality. Fully realizing the potential of the youth population can make significant contributions to Turkey’s societal development through the implementation of inclusive policies, supported by accessible infrastructure and resources, and reinforced by monitoring and evaluation processes.

## The Importance of Youth and Sports Policies

Youth and sports policies are essential for cultivating a healthy, active, and socially integrated generation. With goals such as promoting physical activity, fostering skill development, encouraging social inclusion, and advancing gender equality, these policies contribute to the holistic development of young individuals and the overall improvement of society. It is an undeniable necessity for governments, institutions, and communities to prioritize and continue investing in youth and sports policies (Lindsey et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the National Youth and Sports Policy Document defines the vision of youth policies as ensuring the development of individuals who uphold universal and humanitarian values, are committed to national and moral principles, possess self-confidence, are proactive, and contribute positively to society (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2013). This vision not only aims to maximize young people's potential and ensure their active participation in societal development but also addresses their needs holistically, covering diverse areas such as achieving gender equality and establishing accessible infrastructures.

## Method

This study was designed as a qualitative research study. Qualitative research involves extensive data collection methods aimed at gaining in-depth understanding and insights, focusing on comprehending the views and experiences of participants (Sertel and Günbayı, 2021). In this study, a SWOT analysis was deemed appropriate to

understand and interpret the vision of the policy document. SWOT analysis is a method used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of an organization or subject (Humphrey, 2005).

The data collection process was carried out using document analysis and content analysis methods. The National Youth and Sports Policy Document served as the primary data source. This document was utilized as the main text expressing the vision of youth policies. Content analysis was applied to examine the document in detail, coding the content into categories used to determine the vision of youth policies. These codes helped identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats emphasized in the policy document.

This research is limited to the content of the "vision" statement within the policy document. Data were obtained from publicly available and accessible sources, and no ethical approval was required.

## Findings

According to the results of the SWOT analysis conducted on the National Youth and Sports Policy Document: Vision of Youth Policies;

Table 1. National Youth and Sports Policy Document: Vision of Youth Policies, Strengths (SWOT Analysis)

Strengths
- <b>Vision:</b> The National Youth and Sports Policy Document has a strong foundation for defining the vision of youth policies.
- <b>Commitment to Humanitarian Values:</b> The document emphasizes the importance of youth embracing universal and humanitarian values, fostering social awareness.
- <b>Social Participation:</b> The policy encourages the active participation of youth in social life, helping them feel like an integral part of society.
- <b>Fundamental Rights and Freedoms:</b> The document provides a strong commitment to protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of youth.
- <b>International Competitiveness:</b> The policy promotes the development of youth to compete at the international level.

The strengths outlined in (Table1) highlight the potential for policies to create a meaningful and positive impact. The document's strong foundation for defining the vision of youth policies provides a guiding framework for the development of programs and initiatives. Additionally, its emphasis on fostering human values and universal principles among young individuals reflects a commitment to raising responsible citizens with social awareness.

By emphasizing adherence to humanitarian values, the document underscores the importance of equipping youth with moral principles, enabling them to contribute more positively to society. The social participation policy encourages active engagement of youth in social life, providing opportunities for them to feel like an integral part of society and fulfill their social responsibilities.

The focus on fundamental rights and freedoms demonstrates a strong commitment to protecting youth's rights, allowing them to think and express themselves freely. The international competitiveness policy supports the success of the younger generation on a global scale, enhancing their ability to excel internationally.

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Table 2. National Youth and Sports Policy Document: Vision of Youth Policies, Weaknesses (SWOT Analysis)

Weaknesses
- <b>Implementation Issues:</b> Problems and shortcomings may arise during the implementation of the policy document.
- <b>Resource Constraints:</b> There may be insufficient financial and human resources to achieve the policy objectives.
- <b>Monitoring and Evaluation:</b> Effectively monitoring and evaluating the policy document can be challenging.

In (Table 2), implementation issues refer to problems and shortcomings encountered during the implementation process of the policy document, which may reduce its effectiveness. Such issues can hinder the achievement of policy objectives and slow down the process of making necessary adjustments.

Resource constraints, including insufficient financial and human resources to achieve policy objectives, may negatively impact the success of the policy. Limited resources can lead to restricted implementation of policy initiatives.

Monitoring and evaluation may face difficulties in effectively tracking and assessing the policy document. This challenge can prevent accurate measurement of the policy's performance and hinder timely corrections, thereby reducing its overall impact.

These weaknesses are significant factors that could limit the success potential of the National Youth and Sports Policy Document. Addressing and improving these weaknesses can contribute to the more effective and sustainable implementation of the document. Additionally, careful planning regarding resources and monitoring processes may be necessary.

Table 3. National Youth and Sports Policy Document: Vision of Youth Policies, Opportunities (SWOT Analysis)

Opportunities
- <b>Youth Potential:</b> The policy provides an opportunity to help young people fully realize their potential.
- <b>Social Contribution:</b> Greater participation of youth in social life can contribute to the overall development of society.
- <b>International Collaboration:</b> The policy offers opportunities for collaboration with other countries that share similar objectives at the international level.

In (Table 3), the youth potential policy presents an opportunity to help young people fully realize their potential. Youth are a critical resource that can shape the future of the country, and this policy can provide the necessary opportunities to develop their talents.

Social contribution refers to the greater participation of youth in social life, which can contribute to the overall development of society. By fulfilling their social responsibilities and actively participating in social projects, young people can help enhance societal welfare.



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International collaboration offers opportunities for cooperation with other countries that share similar objectives on a global scale. This can help young people gain international experiences and increase the country's visibility on the international stage. These opportunities demonstrate the potential of the National Youth and Sports Policy Document to enhance youth development and their contributions to society. While emphasizing that youth are an essential resource that must be supported and encouraged, the policy also highlights the broader impact that can be achieved through international collaboration. Properly leveraging these opportunities can enhance the success of the policy.

Table 4. National Youth and Sports Policy Document: Vision of Youth Policies, Threats (SWOT Analysis)

Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Changing Conditions:</b> Societal or economic variables may hinder the achievement of the policy document's objectives.</li><li>- <b>Administrative Challenges:</b> Administrative difficulties and bureaucratic obstacles may be encountered in effectively implementing the policy.</li></ul>

The threats outlined in (Table 4) highlight potential societal or economic variables that could hinder the achievement of the policy document's objectives and jeopardize its success. Changes in societal or economic conditions may complicate or render the policy's goals irrelevant. Administrative challenges, including bureaucratic obstacles, could negatively affect the effective implementation of the policy. Such obstacles may slow down policy implementation or diminish its impact.

These threats point to potential issues that may adversely affect the success of the National Youth and Sports Policy Document. Policymakers and implementers must be prepared to address changing conditions and administrative challenges effectively. Additionally, ensuring that the policy document is flexible and adaptable can enhance its resilience against these threats.

## Conclusion

Within the scope of this study, a SWOT analysis was conducted on the vision of youth policies as outlined in the National Youth and Sports Policy Document. Based on the findings, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the document were comprehensively evaluated. The results aim to provide significant policy recommendations to help Turkey effectively utilize its youth potential.

According to the analysis results, the Strengths of the National Youth and Sports Policy Document include presenting a robust vision framework aimed at increasing the active participation of youth in social life, fostering their commitment to universal and humanitarian values, and enhancing their international competitiveness. This vision supports the protection of young people's fundamental rights and freedoms while maximizing their individual potential to contribute to society. Specifically, raising youth within the framework of universal values and social participation has the potential to strengthen the social fabric of society.

In terms of Weaknesses, the analysis identified key challenges such as difficulties in implementation, lack of resources, and the absence of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms as major issues that could hinder the full realization of the policy. These shortcomings may delay or limit the achievement of policy goals. Particularly, insufficiencies in financial and human resources pose challenges to ensuring sustainability during the implementation phase. Additionally, the lack of well-structured monitoring and evaluation processes is a critical shortcoming in

measuring and improving the policy's performance.

When examining Opportunities, Turkey's young population represents a significant demographic opportunity with great potential. Properly channeling this potential through sound policies can significantly benefit the individual development of youth and their contributions to society. Furthermore, enabling youth to benefit from international cooperation opportunities and gain global experiences can enhance Turkey's international competitiveness. Increased participation of youth in social life will contribute to strengthening social cohesion and improving national welfare. Enriching the policy with tools that support youth's education, sports, and social participation can ensure that these opportunities are utilized more efficiently.

Regarding Threats, economic and social variables that may arise during the implementation of the policy could undermine its objectives. Economic crises, resource constraints, and administrative challenges, in particular, pose significant threats to the sustainability of the policy. Bureaucratic barriers and the inability of policies to adapt to changing conditions are among the key risk factors preventing the achievement of desired outcomes. These threats necessitate the development of flexible and adaptive strategies by policymakers.

In conclusion, the National Youth and Sports Policy Document provides a significant framework regarding the vision of youth policies. While its strengths include a comprehensive strategy focusing on youth development, the identified weaknesses and potential threats must be addressed for the policy to be effectively implemented. The

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following recommendations can enhance the effectiveness of youth policies:

*Strengthening Implementation Processes:* Increasing the necessary financial and human resources to improve the feasibility of policy objectives.

*Improving Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:* Regularly assessing the impact of the policy and updating it based on evolving needs.

*Effective Use of Resources:* Prioritizing infrastructure investments to support the implementation of youth policies in regions with limited socio-economic infrastructure.

*International Cooperation:* Developing youth and sports programs with other countries to enhance the international experiences of youth.

*Encouraging Social Participation:* Supporting projects and initiatives that increase youth participation in social life.

In this context, building upon the strengths of the National Youth and Sports Policy Document, addressing its weaknesses, and effectively leveraging opportunities will enable Turkey to maximize its youth potential. Raising future generations as socially, economically, and culturally equipped individuals will play a pivotal role in achieving the country's sustainable development goals.

**Conflict of Interest Declaration**

There are no potential conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

**Support/Funding Information**

The authors has not received any financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Ethics Committee Decision**

There is no need for an ethics committee to make decisions for this research.

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