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Sports Policies in Local Governments: The Case of Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the importance and impact of sports policies in local governments, using the case of Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality. The sports policies of local governments play a significant role in improving the health and well-being of society. In this context, the shaping and implementation of sports policies in Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality constitute the main research questions of this study. The study employs qualitative research methods, specifically in-depth interviews and document analysis. Interviews with key actors involved in the creation and implementation of sports policies in Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality serve as an important source of data. Additionally, official documents such as municipal council decisions, strategic plans, and reports are examined to analyze the reflections of sports policies in formal documents. According to the findings of the study, Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality actively participates in the creation and implementation of sports policies. Activities such as constructing sports facilities, organizing sports events, and providing sports opportunities for youth and children contribute to increasing the accessibility of sports for the local population. Furthermore, projects and campaigns focusing on the social integration and health impact of sports are also carried out. Factors influencing the success of Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality's sports policies include resources, institutional collaborations, public support, and sustainability strategies. The study suggests increasing resources, developing collaborations and joint projects with other institutions, fostering a sports culture within the community, and adopting sustainability strategies to further enhance the municipality's sports policies. This study highlights the importance of sports policies in local governments and examines the impact of Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality's sports policies. The findings can guide other local governments and researchers in the creation and implementation of local-level sports policies. Additionally, the study provides recommendations for Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality to further develop its sports policies.

Keywords: Sports, Sports Policy, Local Governments, Policy



INTRODUCTION

Sport is an important activity that enhances the health and well-being of society, and the policies of local governments in the field of sports play a critical role in promoting and expanding this activity. Local governments support sports policies through a range of measures, such as building sports facilities in cities, organizing sports events, offering sports programs, and encouraging the public to participate in sports.

This thesis focuses on the importance and impact of sports policies in local governments, using the example of the Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality. Located in the western part of Turkey, Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality implements various policies in the field of sports. The purpose of this study is to understand how the sports policies of the Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality are shaped and implemented, to identify successful policy examples, and to present a guiding model for other local governments.

Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality serves as an example of a local government that actively plays a role in the development and implementation of sports policies. The municipality increases opportunities for local residents to engage in sports by constructing sports facilities, organizing sporting events, and offering sports programs. It also focuses on special projects such as providing sports opportunities for children and youth, encouraging women to participate in sports, and supporting the involvement of individuals with disabilities in sports-related activities.

For sports policies to be implemented successfully and sustainably, it is important to manage resources effectively. Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality efficiently utilizes its resources to finance sports policies. Moreover, by collaborating with other institutions, non-governmental organizations, and sports clubs, the municipality increases available resources and strengthens the social acceptance and support of sports.

The research questions of this study focus on the formulation and implementation of the sports policies of the Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality.

Research Questions:

1. Can you evaluate the relationship between local government and sports from the perspective of a mayor?
2. As a mayor, what norms do you think a national sports policy should possess in order to be successful at the local level?
3. Compared to the previous term, what kinds of sports activities have you implemented differently since the beginning of your tenure? In general, what are the "sports policies" of Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality, including both the implemented and planned initiatives?
4. How is the allocation of financial resources carried out when developing and implementing sports policies?

The Individual and Social Importance of Sport

Sport is an activity in which individuals participate in physical exercises within a set of rules and evaluate their performance in a competitive environment (Kartal, 2020). This activity not only helps maintain physical health but also supports mental development and contributes to the strengthening of social relationships (Yavrutürk, 2025). Although there are many types of sports, their fundamental objectives include improving physical fitness, encouraging competition among individuals, and providing participants with enjoyable experiences (Yermakhanov ve Zorba, 2022). Furthermore, engaging in physical activities enables individuals to develop their physical capacities, reduce stress levels, and strengthen social bonds (Yüceant, 2023).

Sport is recognized as an important tool for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes, while improving overall fitness levels (Çalikuşu, et al., 2023). Additionally, sport has positive effects on mental health. These include reducing stress, alleviating symptoms of depression and anxiety, and enhancing mental focus (Başar & Sarı, 2018).

Sports Policies of Local Governments

Local governments, recognizing the positive effects of sports on individuals and society, have begun to develop various policies in this field. Practices such as establishing sports facilities, organizing events, and encouraging public participation in sports are among the fundamental elements of sports policies implemented at the local level (Güler & Yaman, 2023; Gumus, 2018). In this context, Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality has adopted a vision aimed at increasing public access to sports and has made investments in the field, particularly developing sports projects for children and young people (Karakaya, 2017).

However, for these policies to be effective, resources must be used efficiently. It is critically important for local governments to be open to joint projects and collaborations in order to enhance the social impact of sports (Özaydın, 2024). Moreover, for a sports policy to be sustainable, long-term planning must be carried out, and sports should become a cultural habit within society (Akça & Özer, 2016).

The Social Function and Multidimensional Structure of Sport

In modern societies, sport is regarded as a multifaceted institution that serves as an indicator of cultural and social welfare. Today, sport is associated with numerous phenomena such as economy, politics, education, leisure, international relations, propaganda, advertising, racism, violence, tourism, environment, organization, youth, women, individuals with disabilities, professionalization, and division of labor (İmamoğlu, 1992; Erkal, 1982; Yıldız & Gumus, 2017).

Among the fundamental functions of sport are improving individuals' physical and mental health, contributing to

personality development, facilitating adaptation to the environment, and promoting peace among societies. It also enables individuals to realize their motivations for competition, effort, and achievement within a structured system of rules. Sport presents a cultural structure that supports the development of individual abilities, promotes social integration, and embodies both competition and solidarity (Erkal, 1982).

Sports Policies and Constitutional Foundations

Sport, in addition to being one of the cornerstones of economic and cultural development, contributes to individuals' physical and mental growth, provides knowledge, skills, and social harmony, and serves the establishment of social peace (Yetim, 2000). Sports policy consists of the fundamental principles established to ensure that these functions reach society as a whole. Sports management, on the other hand, ensures that these principles are planned and implemented based on scientific foundations (Sunay, 2016).

The 1982 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey stipulates that the state must take measures to support the physical and mental health of citizens of all age groups, promote the widespread participation in sports, and support successful athletes. Local governments, as public legal entities, are also responsible for providing sports and recreation services (Uçar, 2014).

The Role of Sport in State Policies

In line with the increasing importance of sport, it has been addressed as an independent topic in documents such as government programs, development plans, and political party manifestos. Although sports policies in Turkey are generally carried out by the central government, attention has also been drawn to the responsibilities of local governments regarding sports. For example, the Second Five-Year Development Plan (1963–1969) highlighted the lack of coordination among the Ministry of National Education, the General Directorate of Physical Education, and local administrations in sports management (Gök & Sunay, 2010: 9).

Similarly, in the 30th Government Program covering the years 1965–1969, it was emphasized that the physical and mental education of young people should be achieved through sports, and that both the state and local governments should make greater efforts to ensure the participation of individuals of all ages in sports activities (Uçar, 2014).

Today, political parties include dedicated sections on sports policies in their election manifestos, creating public expectations for the realization of these promises. For instance, while the term “sport” was absent from the 2001 program of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), more recent documents feature detailed policies under the heading “Youth and Sports” (Aykın, 2013: 10). Moreover, many political parties participating in the June 24, 2018 elections prepared manifestos emphasizing sport as a

fundamental right and addressing it as a significant and independent theme (Akça & Esen, 2019).

Sport in the Republican Era

With the proclamation of the Republic, sport assumed a central role in Turkey's modernization efforts. It was regarded as an effective tool for both building national identity and facilitating social transformation (Kaya, 2017). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's emphasis on the importance of sport and the introduction of compulsory physical education courses increased its influence on younger generations (Tel, 2007). During this period, Turkey began to participate in international sporting platforms and achieved various successes (Yıldırım, 2018). Infrastructure investments necessary for the development of sports were made, and stadiums and sports complexes were constructed (Özkan, 2016). The sports policies of the Republican period aimed to improve public health and raise awareness of sports across society (Uyaniker, 2024).

In this era, sport was considered a strategic element in the process of building Turkey's national identity and was popularized with Atatürk's support (Korkut, 2019). Its unifying aspect was emphasized, particularly in schools, where it was seen as a means of contributing to the physical, mental, and moral development of young people (Okutan et al., 2023).

Sports Policy

Since sport is a multidimensional phenomenon, it can be defined from various perspectives. From a historical standpoint, sport can be described as a physical, technical, and social process with aesthetic dimensions—emerging from humans' struggle with nature and involving activities carried out for recreation, entertainment, and play (Fişek, 1980). According to another approach, sport can be defined as a set of competitive activities aimed at improving individuals' physical and mental health, contributing to their character and personality development, facilitating adaptation to the environment, and promoting social solidarity and peace (Aydin et al., 2007).

Sports policy refers to a set of principles that determine how sport is addressed, what goals it aims to achieve, the methods to be implemented, the planning of infrastructure, forms of organization, and approaches at both national and international levels. The primary goal of sports policies in Turkey is to institutionalize sports at the national level and to direct the athlete development process. Therefore, it is of critical importance that governments integrate sports into their programs to ensure its development (Aykın & Bilir, 2013).

The dissemination of sport throughout society in Turkey is guaranteed by legal regulations. The Constitution, laws, development plans, and government programs form the cornerstone of the nation's youth and sports policies. The 1982 Constitution obliges the state to take measures supporting the physical and mental health of citizens of all ages, promote the widespread participation in sports, and protect successful athletes. However, rather than adopting a

directly interventionist approach, the state is expected to create suitable environments for sports and establish conditions conducive to the development of athletes (Aydin et al., 2007).

Sport in Local Governments

In Turkey, the planning and implementation of sports services are not limited to the central government but are also the responsibility of metropolitan, provincial, and district municipalities. This division of duties was legally established by the Municipal Law No. 5393, enacted in 2005. Under this law, supporting and conducting sports activities are considered among the responsibilities of local governments. Thus, in addition to being a constitutional right, sport is promoted through municipal initiatives (Atalay et al., 2016).

In the case of the Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality, the Department of Youth and Sports Services has undertaken broad responsibilities. This department is responsible for identifying the needs and expectations of young people, monitoring the decisions of the City Council's Youth Assembly, and implementing these decisions in line with the resolutions of the Municipal Council. It also provides educational opportunities to help young people adapt to scientific, cultural, technological, and social developments, and organizes courses that develop sports skills.

While providing these services, the local government aims to enhance the effectiveness of youth policies by collaborating with universities, public institutions, NGOs, and educational organizations. It organizes vocational training programs, plans activities that enable young people to develop their talents and make productive use of their leisure time, and establishes youth centers as part of this framework.

The municipality also plans recreational areas for young people and carries out their construction in cooperation with relevant departments. Among its duties are following national and international youth events and participating in those deemed appropriate. The municipality also collaborates with other public institutions to coordinate and develop solutions for issues such as substance abuse and smuggling.

To encourage sports participation among youth, the municipality distributes sports equipment, provides financial support to amateur sports clubs, and organizes competitions—activities that stand out within its sports policy framework. In addition, educational programs, awareness campaigns, and various events are conducted to promote the love of sport among the general public and to encourage healthy lifestyle habits.

To ensure safe sporting events, the municipality cooperates with relevant institutions and considers the safety aspects of these events. The coordination of all activities of the Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality Sports Club, as well as the management, efficient use, and allocation of municipal sports facilities, fall under the responsibility of the Department of Youth and Sports Services. Presentations are prepared for the Municipal Council regarding long-term

or permanent allocations, and when necessary, processes are carried out jointly with the Department of Real Estate and Expropriation.

Overseas activities are carried out with the permission of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization through the Foreign Relations Branch Directorate affiliated with the Strategy Department. Support for amateur clubs, equipment provision, and the organization of events continue within this framework. Moreover, athletes, coaches, and administrators who achieve outstanding success in domestic and international competitions are rewarded by the decision of the Municipal Council.

Finally, to standardize activities and facilitate the opening and organization of courses that help young people develop their athletic abilities, several regulations and guidelines—most notably the Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality Sports Support Regulation—have been prepared (Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality, 2023).

METHOD

In this study, qualitative research methods were employed. Among qualitative interview types, the interview form approach model was used. In this context, during one-on-one interviews, semi-structured open-ended questions were directed to the Mayor of Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality, who participated in the study.

The study aimed to collect data through descriptive analysis. For this purpose, one of the qualitative interview methods—the interview form approach—was utilized. This approach involves creating an interview form to obtain similar types of information from different individuals (Ekiz, 2003). It is a powerful method for revealing individuals' thoughts, data, opinions, experiences, and emotions regarding a specific topic. Moreover, since it is based on spoken communication—the broadest form of human interaction—it minimizes artificiality and constraints, providing a more realistic environment (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2006).

In preparing the interview form, relevant literature and expert opinions in the field were consulted. Detailed and open-ended questions were developed to identify the sports policies of the Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the study, and it was explained that the interviews would be used for research purposes. Participants were also given the opportunity to respond to questions freely and were asked whether they had any additional questions before proceeding.

RESULTS

Balikesir Metropolitan Municipality Strategic Plan Report

In the Strategic Plan Report of the Balikesir Metropolitan Municipality, the introductory section on sports may be presented as follows:

“Sport plays a significant role in promoting a healthy and active lifestyle, strengthening social cohesion, and contributing to the development of young people. As Balikesir Metropolitan Municipality, our goal is to make sport a way of life for our youth and citizens, while maximizing its social and economic impact.

In this direction, during the strategic planning period, we aim to take comprehensive steps to support sports at all

levels, improve sports infrastructure, and increase access to sporting activities. This report has been prepared to define how sport will be evaluated as a strategic field for Balikesir and how the related policies will be shaped.

Together with our partners, who will collaborate in developing sport in a participatory, inclusive, and sustainable manner, we aim to make Balikesir a center of sports and ensure that sports activities reach all segments of society.

This strategic plan emphasizes the catalytic role that sport can play in areas such as health, education, youth, social cohesion, and economic development. As Balikesir Metropolitan Municipality, we will continue to work with determination to make the best use of the power and potential of sport.”

Table 1. Sports in the Balikesir Metropolitan Municipality Strategic Plan Report

Page	Title	Subject
16	Legal Framework of Strategic Planning in the Public Sector	Construction, operation, and management of social facilities in Balikesir (sports, museums, entertainment).
52	Culture and Tourism	Mentions sports that will increase the attractiveness of coastal tourism.
84	Social and Cultural Development	Sports areas and activities.
86	Social and Cultural Development	Regional recommendation table; includes regional proposals for sports areas and activities.
110	Goals and Policies of the Development Plan	Sports are addressed as a subtopic under the section on qualified human resources and society.
126	Identification of Fields of Activity and Services	Youth and sports activities are listed under the heading of culture and arts.
142	Opportunities: Economy, Health, Sport, and Lifestyle	Potential contributions of sports to individual development under the economy section.
166	Strategic Area – 4: Culture and Arts	Potentials and budget table.
180	Target Cards and Costing – Strategic Area 4: Culture and Arts	Distribution of the number of facilities by year.
195	Target Cards and Costing	Table showing the target number of sports areas constructed by year.
203	Target Cards and Costing	Table showing the target number of sports organizations.
210	Target Cards and Costing	Sports competitions.
212	Target Cards and Costing	Organization of mutual visits and events with sister cities.
256	Balikesir Strategy Document: Development and Growth, City and Life	Focus areas in the city: child development, promotion of sports, encouragement of sports clubs.
272	Social and Cultural Development: Recommendations for Activities in the Fields of Children, Youth, and Education	Organization of sports and cultural training courses, establishment of multipurpose sports fields, and promotion of underwater and surface water sports in coastal regions.
273	Recommendations for Pricing of Municipal Services	Keeping prices at municipal sports facilities at minimum levels.
280	Core Policies	Providing and supporting necessary courses, educational areas, entertainment, and sports activities to enhance citizens' social and cultural development.
280	Strategic Recommendations	Organizing sports and cultural courses for all groups and supporting sports activities.
300	Update–Justification Tables: Improving Standards of Parks and Green Areas within Balikesir Metropolitan Municipality	Table (indicators, costs) – activities and projects.
306	Update–Justification Tables: Spreading and Supporting Sports Activities Throughout the City and Increasing the Number of Events	Table (costs).

The Relationship Between Local Governments and Sports

Mayor: "Local governments are institutions that are in constant contact with citizens and provide public services. Naturally, citizens expect local governments to meet all kinds of needs and provide services that they require in their daily lives. In fact, even if an investment or service directly concerns the central government, citizens firmly believe that local governments are responsible for following up, insisting, and ensuring the completion of such matters. Sport has evolved beyond being merely a physical or mental activity; it has become a means of socialization and a part of healthy living encompassing a wide range of public benefits, from fostering healthy eating habits to preventing harmful behaviors. Consequently, sport has become a basic necessity for all segments of society today. This situation has compelled local governments to give due importance to sports activities and to the infrastructure and superstructure investments required for these activities. In other words, to allocate resources and organize accordingly. In summary, for local governments, sport is not merely an activity but an essential tool that contributes to public health, the fight against harmful habits, education, socialization, and even consumer habits and urban commerce."

The investments and services made by local governments in the field of sports contribute to promoting an active lifestyle by meeting the needs of citizens. Considering that local governments are institutions that maintain constant contact with the public and provide public services, it is evident that sport has transformed from being a purely physical and mental activity into a concept that influences and benefits many layers of society.

In addition to being part of a healthy lifestyle, sport is also viewed as an activity that supports socialization and embodies public benefit in many areas from helping individuals develop healthy eating habits to preventing harmful addictions.

It is understood that citizens are aware that the provision of services to meet their needs is not solely the responsibility of the central government but also of local administrations. Socially, there is an increasing recognition that the services provided to the public should come not only from the central state but also from local governments.

Sport assists local governments in numerous areas such as protecting public health, combating harmful habits, supporting education, fostering social interaction, and even promoting urban commerce. In this context, considering the importance and impact of sports, local governments must take strategic measures to further enhance their activities in this field and to reach broader segments of society.

In developed countries, municipalities serve their communities by providing and managing widely accessible sports facilities, organizing various sports courses and tournaments, and offering leadership and guidance to

volunteer organizations all with the goal of creating a healthier and more livable urban environment. Today, the prevailing trend in local government sports services is toward autonomy, encouraging the private sector, and cooperating with voluntary organizations (Öztaş & Zengin, 2008).

The Success of Sports Policy at the Local Level

Mayor: "In fact, there are no major differences between national policies and local implementations. This is because municipalities are not the only actors in local administration. At the local level, there are also governors, district governors, regional directorates, and provincial directorates that represent the state and the government in carrying out local services. Municipalities are, by necessity, required to work in coordination with these units. This requirement does not stem solely from legal obligations but rather from a strategic approach to uniting the city's resources toward common goals a reflection of the determination to achieve more in less time through collaboration."

For the sports policies of local governments to be successful, it is necessary for them to work in harmony with other units of the state and to develop policies suitable for the identity of the city. It can be said that municipalities can achieve success not on their own, but by working in coordination and cooperation with other institutions within their boundaries.

In every province, apart from the municipalities, there are Provincial and District Directorates that are units of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The main duty of these institutions is to carry out activities in accordance with the regulations and directives of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. In order for local governments to be successful, they must work in cooperation with these institutions while formulating and implementing sports policies.

From a political point of view, it can be said that in municipalities belonging to the same political party as the central government, these services are carried out more successfully and the processes operate much faster.

The reasons for the problems between the metropolitan municipality and the district municipalities have been determined in order of priority as follows: political party differences, the fact that district municipalities are rendered ineffective despite the metropolitan municipality having excessive authority, the uncertainty and overlap of duties, powers and areas of responsibility, the insufficient internalization of local democracy, and the imbalance in the distribution of resources and services.

In addition, the services that are thought to be more beneficial if provided solely by district municipalities are the issuance of licenses within district boundaries, the services covering green areas and parks, as well as municipal police, streets, boulevards, squares, and main arteries. These results were determined in line with the survey data (Alici, 2012).

Comparison with the Previous Term

Mayor:

"First and foremost, continuity is essential in public services. Every municipality allocates its available resources according to the importance and urgency of the city's needs. Where resources are insufficient, it either seeks external funding or mobilizes the city's existing idle assets. Likewise, every municipality comes into office through elections. Those elected both the mayor and the municipal council are obliged to follow and implement the policies envisioned by their political school of thought for the nation and the city. However, every city has symbols that represent its identity. A municipality develops and implements local policies that reflect both the political tradition it represents and the symbolic values that define the city's identity. In the case of Balıkesir, oil wrestling and traditional sports are the main branches that carry the city's cultural identity. Balıkesir is known as the city of Kuvayı Milliye the National Forces. It has a deep-rooted spirit of resilience inherited from history. Within this framework, we organize tournaments related to strength and endurance sports at national and international levels, and many planned projects in this field are ongoing. In addition, investments have been made and continue to be made in widely practiced sports such as basketball, volleyball, football, swimming, cycling, and athletics, extending even to neighborhood levels. Relatively large-scale investments such as sports halls and swimming pools that accommodate multiple sporting activities have also been continuing from the past to the present. Of course, Balıkesir is not a single-centered city; all its districts are large and developed. The level of development between the districts is almost equal. From this perspective, I can say that there is still much more investment to be made in the field of sports."

The continuation of sports investments and projects from previous periods indicates that steady progress has been achieved in the field of sports in Balıkesir. It can be said that local governments play an important role in ensuring continuity in public services and in allocating resources according to the city's needs. Municipalities operate in line with the policies determined by elected officials and develop local policies that align with the symbolic values representing the city's identity.

Cities are not only spaces where people live together but also places with political, social, and cultural dimensions. They cannot be considered separately from the cultural structure of societies and therefore aim to maintain both their connection to the community and cultural sustainability. Physical, structural, and sociological differences are significant factors in the formation of a city's unique urban culture. The functions of a city vary depending on its cultural structure and level of complexity. Hatt and Reiss state that this differentiation transforms the city from being merely a settlement area into a workshop that preserves and reproduces the culture of the society to which it belongs (Güler et al., 2016).

Throughout history, Balıkesir has stood out with its identity as the "City of the National Struggle." This identity is clearly visible in elements such as the sign at the city's bus terminal reading "Welcome to Balıkesir, the City of the National Forces," as well as in place names like Kuvayı Milliye

Junction, Altıeylül, Milli Kuvvetler Avenue, and Turan Avenue, and in the portraits of National Forces fighters painted on Okul Street and Murat Göçer Street. Similarly, the Kuvayı Milliye Museum and the Kuvayı Milliye Monument are physical embodiments of this identity. Therefore, the representations of the National Struggle found throughout the city's streets constitute one of the most distinctive elements of Balıkesir's urban identity (Aliğaoğlu & Mirioğlu, 2020).

In the case of Balıkesir, oil wrestling and traditional sports stand out as the main elements reflecting the city's cultural identity. It can also be noted that the mayor's role as the President of the Oil Wrestling Union explains his emphasis on this example.

Financial Resource Allocation

Mayor:

"In fact, we have already touched upon the answer to this question above. We hold a view that prioritizes cooperation within the city and the country, and competition between cities and nations. In other words, the ability to compete with the world and global cities depends on maintaining the discipline of cooperation at home. Being able to cooperate is a matter of discipline. Although sport is often associated with the concepts of competition and rivalry, the investments required to engage in sports become much more feasible through cooperation. As I mentioned earlier, the factors that determine our sports policies also help us generate the resources necessary to implement these policies."

Having an approach that prioritizes cooperation and competition both within the city and the country is an important factor for the successful implementation of sports policies. Although sport is often associated with the concepts of competition and rivalry, realizing the necessary investments through cooperation contributes significantly to the further development of sports. At this point, the elements that determine sports policies also play a role in generating the necessary resources. Cooperation and resource generation enable the wider dissemination of sports within society and support its sustainable development.

The majority of local governments establish strategic partnerships with various organizations including municipal councils, local security forces, and healthcare workers to deliver high-quality local services and improve the quality of life in their districts. Through such cooperation, local governments take significant steps toward responding more effectively to community needs and improving service quality. This close collaboration and strategic partnership contribute to making local services more efficient, accessible, and effective (İpek & Akman, 2008).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The investments and services carried out by local governments in the field of sports contribute significantly to promoting an active lifestyle within society by meeting

citizens' needs. Local governments play an essential role in encouraging an active lifestyle by providing the necessary sports investments and services that people require in their daily lives.

For the sports policies of local governments to be successful, it is necessary for them to work in harmony with other units of the state and to develop policies that align with the identity of the city. This harmony ensures that sports can reach broader segments of society and that services are delivered effectively.

The continuation of sports investments and projects from previous periods demonstrates consistent progress in the field of sports in Balıkesir. This continuity reflects the determination of local administrations to maintain sustainability in sports and to continue providing public services to citizens.

The successful implementation of sports policies requires the allocation of adequate financial resources. Combining resources through cooperation allows sports investments to be realized more efficiently. Local governments must collaborate with other state institutions to effectively utilize these resources and ensure the sustainability of sports investments. In this way, sports services can reach wider audiences, increasing public participation in healthy living and active sports culture.

The investments and services undertaken by local governments in the field of sports play a crucial role in promoting an active lifestyle within the community. Sport has evolved beyond being merely a physical activity it now serves as an essential tool for public health, combating harmful habits, education, socialization, and even influencing consumption habits. Therefore, it is vital that local governments allocate sufficient importance and resources to sports policies.

The continuity of sports investments and projects in Balıkesir shows that the city's sports sector is continuously developing and that public-oriented services are being maintained. In particular, activities such as oil wrestling and traditional sports, which reflect the city's cultural identity, contribute to the preservation of Balıkesir's cultural heritage. In this context, it is important to maintain the organization of national and international tournaments and to continue investments in widely practiced sports. Considering the minimal differences in development among districts, it is also emphasized that further investments in sports are necessary.

It should not be forgotten that the allocation of financial resources plays a critical role in the successful implementation of sports policies. It is important for local governments to collaborate with other state institutions, combine resources, and use them efficiently. A mindset that prioritizes cooperation within the country while fostering competition among cities and nations should be adopted. The factors that determine sports policies also play an effective role in the process of generating resources.

In conclusion, the efforts of local governments in the field of sports have a significant impact on the general welfare and health of society. For sports policies to be successfully implemented, continuity, cooperation, proper resource allocation, and the development of policies consistent with the city's identity are essential. In this regard, it is recommended that investments in sports in Balıkesir continue and that new projects be initiated. Moreover, considering that sport is a fundamental need for all segments of society, it is suggested that various campaigns and awareness activities be organized to help sports services reach wider audiences and encourage society to adopt a more active lifestyle.

Author Contributions

Yusuf Ziya Üzüm: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, formal analysis, writing—original draft preparation, and editing. Prof. Dr. Selçuk Bora Çavuşoğlu: Supervision, review, and validation.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Ethical review and approval were waived for this study because it involved only an interview with a public official (the Mayor of Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality), and no sensitive personal data were collected or analyzed.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from the participant (the Mayor of Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality) prior to the interview, and participation was entirely voluntary.

Data Availability Statement

The qualitative data generated and analyzed during this study (interview content and document analyses) are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This research was conducted independently and without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as potential conflicts of interest.

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