

POLITICAL CLIENTELISM IN TURKISH SPORT FEDERATIONS

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The aim of the study is to examine the clientelistic approach in the relations between sport federations and the political power. National organization of sport management in Turkey is the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MYS). Government bureaucrats, thereby the political power rules Turkish sport. Intervention of political power in the sport federations is the implicit fact of Turkish sport management. Until their legal statues changed into autonomous in 2004, sport federations in Turkey were the departments of government's sport organization. However the process of providing for autonomy was not completed. In 2011, the Constitutional Court decided that the autonomy of the federations was not acceptable since they were subjected to government interventions in administrative and financial implementations. Then the Court decided their statues to be "independent" instead of being "autonomous".

Actually the sport federations today appear to be in a semi-autonomous structure. The elements of this structure depend on both legal and political factors. Legal factors include the fuzziness of definition of autonomy in the current legislation and the loophole in the legislation that allows the government, so the political power to manipulate the federations. The political factors that damage the autonomy can be traced to the research and the press coverage on the political influence. For example Aydın et al. (2007:96) indicated that the managers in Turkish sport approach the issue not as a state policy but "*with political intentions*" and they defined this situation as an obstacle to implementation of sport policies. In another study, it is stated that the sport federations have been exposed to political pressure during the elections in terms of designating delegates among municipality clubs (Şahin, 2011). Additionally, political manipulation in the presidential election of federations in 2011 has found a wide coverage in the Turkish media.

Political manipulation to the federations brings to mind the clientelism. Scott (1972) explains clientelism as the process of dyadic ties of the "patron" who uses the power and the resources to protect and/or provide benefits for the "client" and the "client" who reciprocates by offering support and assistance to the "patron". In political terms "*clientelism entails votes and support given in exchange for jobs and other benefits*" (Roniger, 2004:354). In this respect, there are many studies pointing out the clientelism in Turkish politics. In the field of sport, clientelism has been examined in research in some other countries; however the literature lacks of contribution about the sport and clientelism in Turkey.

Utilizing qualitative research methods the current study has employed various tools to collect the data. Interviews with stakeholder representatives, analysis of the legal/political documents and of the press coverage provide the main data sources. Secondary data analysis that includes the legal/political documents and the press coverage analysis helped to determine the dimensions and the structural context of the study. The semi structured interview questions are generated based on this primary document analysis. Following a similar method to Henry and Nassiss's (1999) study on clientelistic relations in Greek sports, interviews are conducted with the presidents and board members of federations and the bureaucrats from MYS. Authors held and recorded the interviews (n=8) and transcribed and translated the texts for the analysis. In the report, an integration of interview findings and press news analysis is given.

Findings of the current study lead us to consider the existence of clientelistic networks in Turkish sport. First the findings shown that election process for presidents and board members are highly manipulated by the politicians and "their own people" are supported to be in the management. Findings also pointed out the reciprocal benefits between federations and political power. Those were the individual benefits that the presidents gain and the collective ones that the federations favor. Individually for instance, presidents gain fame and prestige through their position. Collectively, supported federations receive better conditions for inspections, facilities and budget allocations in exchange of giving the opportunities to political power. Those opportunities include the interventions to federation's operations in favor of the political party and chances to do party's –or one's own- propaganda in sporting events.

Keywords

Clientelism, Politics, Turkey, Sport Federations, Political Clientelism

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