

Between Headlines and Diplomacy: Crisis Communication Analysis of the Fenerbahçe-Galatasaray Super Cup Final Repercussions

Manşet ve Diplomasi Arasında: Fenerbahçe-Galatasaray Süper Kupa Finali Yankılarının Kriz İletişim Analizi

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Abstract

Sports organizations can be crucial in advancing bilateral ties between nations, enhancing their mutual reputations, and developing sports diplomacy. In light of the Fenerbahçe-Galatasaray Super Cup match, this article discusses in detail the parties' crisis communication strategies, media coverage, and the role of sports diplomacy. Through a detailed analysis of the media coverage and the various communication strategies adopted by the clubs, officials, and stakeholders, this study highlights the complications surrounding the detrimental effects of the match cancellation. Using qualitative and quantitative content analysis techniques, 24 international news articles chosen at random were examined. This study, which closely examines media reports, reveals some of the adverse effects of canceling matches. The assessment highlights the organizational approaches used by stakeholders to address the issue and influence public opinion, drawing on crisis communication theories. The actors in the organization representing Saudi Arabia and Turkey are receptive to constructive discussion and mutual advantages, and their willingness to uphold their partnerships in the face of adversity indicates their regard for long-term relationships. It is evident that sports diplomacy, a reactive approach in public relations, is also effectively employed during the crisis.

Keywords:

Super cup, sports
diplomacy, crisis
communication

Öz

Spor organizasyonları ülkeler arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin, karşılıklı itibarın ve spor diplomasisinin gelişmesi açısından önem arz etmektedir. Bu makale, Fenerbahçe-Galatasaray süper kupa karşılaşması ışığında tarafların kriz iletişim stratejilerini, medyada yer alan haberleri ve spor diplomasisinin işlevini kapsamlı bir şekilde incelemektedir. Bu araştırma, medyada çıkan haberler ile kulüpler, yetkililer ve paydaşlar tarafından kullanılan farklı iletişim stratejilerini analiz ederek maç iptalinin olumsuz etkilerinin karmaşık yönlerini ortaya koymaktadır. Hem niteliksel hem de niceliksel içerik analizi teknikleri kullanılarak rastgele seçilen 24 uluslararası haber incelenmiştir. Maçın iptal edilmesinin olumsuz etkilerinin çeşitli yönleri, medyadan çıkan haberlerin incelendiği bu çalışmayla açıklığa kavuşturulmaktadır. Bu çalışma, kriz iletişimi teorilerinden yararlanarak organizasyonun paydaşlarının krizi yönetmede ve kamuoyunu etkilemede kullandıkları stratejilere dikkat çekmektedir. Organizasyonda Suudi Arabistan ve Türkiye'yi temsil eden aktörlerin zorluklara rağmen ilişkilerini sürdürme kararlılığı, uzun vadeli ilişkilere saygı duyduklarını, yapıcı iletişime ve karşılıklı faydalara açık olduklarını göstermektedir. Halkla ilişkilerde reaktif bir süreç olan kriz sürecinde, spor diplomasisinin de etkin bir şekilde kullanıldığı görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Süper kupa, spor
diplomasisi, kriz
iletişimi

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Introduction

Sports organizations play an essential role in strengthening bilateral relations between countries, improving mutual reputation, and effectively utilizing sports diplomacy. This essay explores the parties' crisis communication methods, media coverage, and sports diplomacy's role in the Fenerbahçe-Galatasaray Super Cup match. It examines how clubs, officials, and other stakeholders created communication tactics based on media coverage of the crisis scenario that evolved following the match's cancellation, as well as the impact of these strategies on the public.

This study, which investigates 24 randomly selected international news using qualitative and quantitative content analysis approaches, seeks to explain how sports diplomacy is employed effectively in crisis management in light of crisis communication theories. In this context, Saudi and Turkish players' cooperation and communication efforts throughout the crisis will be assessed in terms of their contribution to the long-term viability of relations and possible mutual benefit.

Sports Diplomacy

Sports diplomacy builds partnerships and understanding between nations. This review evaluates the landscape of sports diplomacy. It analyzes mechanisms, effects, and challenges. Major scholarly papers and articles are examined.

Joseph S. Nye's (2004) concept of "soft power" emphasizes a government's ability to achieve goals through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Sports diplomacy utilizes sports' global popularity to expand a nation's soft power. Events such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup serve as stages for diplomatic engagement, allowing countries to promote their culture, values, and hospitality worldwide. Chen and Wang's (2022) article explores the links between sporting mega-events and geopolitics, examining examples such as the Beijing Winter Olympics' impacts on diplomacy. It analyzes these settings' complex interplay of sports, politics, and diplomacy.

Sports can encourage communication between conflicting parties (Houlihan, 1994). However, sports diplomacy has limitations, including politicization, commercialization, and potentially exacerbating injustices (Donos, 2012). Recent developments include the use of mega-events in geopolitical rivalries (Grix & Carmichael, 2017) and authoritarian regimes using sports for public diplomacy (Manzenreiter, 2020). According to Abramczyk (2024), sportswashing has become more common, yet using sports as a diplomatic instrument is still a successful way to influence political opinions. Authoritarian governments use worldwide media attention by hosting international athletic tournaments to boost their stature and revenue. Society can use sports and sporting events to promote better respect for human rights, foster cross-cultural understanding, and strengthen favorable political relations by realizing the link between sports and diplomacy. Sports diplomacy falls under public diplomacy, which is uniquely used to improve immediate and long-term relations between nations by manipulating or influencing the foreign public to achieve foreign policy objectives (Chanda & Pathan, 2024). Zhang and Tang (2024) examine the domestic impact of China's digital diplomacy by examining the interaction between official diplomatic discourses and nationalist sentiments. Findings suggest

that a positive diplomatic tone enhances national identification and positive nationalist sentiments, while a negative tone intensifies social comparison and negative sentiments.

Crisis Communication

A *crisis* is defined as a specific, unforeseen, and non-routine organizationally based occurrence or series of events that creates substantial uncertainty and/or a perceived threat to an organization's highest priority goals (Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer, 1998). According to Fearn-Banks (1996), a crisis is a significant occurrence that could have a negative impact on a company, industry, organization, the general public, its goods and services, or its reputation. It ruins routine commercial dealings and, in some situations, jeopardizes the organization's survival. Friedman (2002) asserts that a crisis need not necessarily be dire; it can also significantly improve one's situation. A crisis, as defined by Mitroff and Anagnos (2001), is a circumstance that impacts or has the potential to affect the entire organization. Therefore, something may not be considered a major crisis if it only affects an organization's small, isolated part. A major crisis needs to have a significant negative impact on people's lives, property, revenue, reputation, and the overall health and well-being of the organization. "Turning points in organizational life" (Regeister, 1989) and "turning points for better or worse" (Fink, 1986) are other definitions of crisis.

All three stages of crisis management—pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis—involve crisis communication. During these three stages, crisis communication typically focuses on stakeholder response management or crisis knowledge management (Coombs, 2010).

Crisis response tactics are divided into three fundamental categories by Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT): deny, diminish, and rebuild, and one supplemental category for reinforcing. Denial approaches aim to show that the organization is not responsible for the situation. Either the crisis did not happen, or someone else was in charge of it. The goal of diminishing strategies is to reduce the perceived severity of the crisis and/or the organization's responsibility for the crisis. Rebuilding strategies are accommodating and aim to improve the organization's reputation by offering compensation and/or an apology. Reinforcing strategies include praising others (ingratiation) and/or reminding people of the organization's prior accomplishments (bolstering) in an effort to spread positive information about it. Crisis Response Strategies, Crisis History, Organizational Reputation, Affect, Past Linkages/Reputation, and Behavioral Intentions are the primary components and linkages in SCCT. An organization's crisis history reveals whether or not it has previously encountered crises of a similar nature. A history of crises increases the threat of a crisis. Past crises contribute to forming a pattern of "bad behavior" within an organization. As a result, stakeholders place more blame for the issue when there have been previous crises. A company's prior reputation describes how successfully or poorly it has handled stakeholders in the past and the general state of its relationships with them. Organizations with negative past reputations are deemed more responsible for the same catastrophe than those that are unknown or have a good past reputation. The intensifiers increase attributions of blame, which increases the risk of a crisis. To alter the threat posed by a crisis, only one of the intensifiers needs to be applied (Coombs, 2010; Coombs & Holladay, 2002, 2007; Coombs, 2004, 2006).

The Significance of the Super Cup Match in Turkish-Saudi Sports Diplomacy

The two nations have close economic relations as well as certain shared cultural and religious beliefs despite their occasional disagreements on domestic and international matters.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Türkiye began their political relations on August 3, 1929, by signing a Friendship and Peace Treaty (Ayhan, 2006). The Turkish-Saudi Coordination Council was founded during H.R.H. King Salman of Saudi Arabia's official visit to Türkiye on 11-14 April 2016, and its inaugural meeting was conducted in Ankara on February 8, 2017, under the co-chairmanship of both nations' Foreign Ministers (the Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Chadwick and Widdop (2022) investigate contemporary Saudi Arabian sport, focusing on the government's enormous investment in sports infrastructure as part of a larger reform agenda for economic, political, and social transformation. Despite these attempts, obstacles such as charges of sport washing, lingering unfavorable stereotypes, and reliance on volatile oil money persist. According to Konopka (2023), Reduced friction and mutual understanding with domestic and foreign publicity can be achieved by strategic talks with prominent international associations, information support, and the growth of the sports industry's local and international network. Large-scale government initiatives like King Abdullah Sports City, NEOM, the Kingdom's Capital of Entertainment, and Qiddiya Sports and Arts aim to improve national sports standards, enhance the educational environment, attract both domestic and foreign investment, and promote sports across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

There have been times of cooperation and disagreement in Saudi-Turkish ties (Aras, 2005; Cengiz, 2020). Due to differing regional agendas and alliances, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye's political ties have occasionally been acrimonious. Mutual mistrust and diplomatic spats have resulted from tensions over issues such as writer Jamal Khashoggi's murder and the diplomatic rift with Qatar (Al-Rawi, 2021). Over time, economic ties between Saudi Arabia and Türkiye have grown through trade, investment, and energy cooperation. Aras (2005) asserts that Saudi Arabia is an important trade partner for Türkiye in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The Super Cup match demonstrates Saudi Arabia's and Türkiye's commitment to leveraging sports to further their diplomatic relations. The organization of such events by the two nations shows their willingness to engage in constructive dialogue and cooperation on various issues outside of sports. Super Cup match serves as a stage for Saudi Arabia and Türkiye to showcase their soft power and provide a positive image to the international community. By organizing and participating in critical athletic events, these nations aim to gain more recognition and influence on the global stage (Yılmaz, 2021). The cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Türkiye in organizing the Super Cup match is a testament to the possibility of peace and harmony in the region.

These countries support the promotion of togetherness and solidarity in the larger Middle East by uniting for a shared athletic event (Khalifa, 2024).

Turkish Super Cup in Riyadh

Since hosting the Italian and Spanish Super Cups, Saudi Arabia has become more involved in the organization of international matches and events (Hayden, 2023). In anticipation of hosting the Men's World Cup in 2034, the Kingdom has taken steps recently to arrange international matches and competitions (AP News).

Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe, the two rival Istanbul teams of Türkiye, were supposed to play in Riyadh on December 29, 2023. The Super Cup was scheduled to take place in the capital city of Riyadh at Al-Awwal Park Stadium. This match was canceled due to a disagreement on the day of the match, and the Turkish teams returned to their home countries. Prior to this incident, Turkish citizens were outraged by the decision to host football in Saudi Arabia's capital on the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the modern Republic of Türkiye. Thousands of people flocked to social media after learning that banners with the words "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" by the Republic's founder, Atatürk, would not be permitted. While the Turkish Football Federation and Saudi Arabia faced criticism in Türkiye, Turkish teams returning to the homeland received widespread support. The rapid spread of incorrect information on social media about the Turkish flag being hoisted and the National Anthem not being sung fueled everyone's reactions. Atatürk is a significant value and a red line for the Turkish people. The news was immediately viewed as a loss of national value. Disinformation, misinformation, and mailinformation were also prevalent. It sparked a little crisis in Türkiye. It was projected that this would spark a crisis in international and bilateral ties.

Methodology

This study employs content analysis to examine news articles from 24 online newspapers published between December 29 and December 30, 2023. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to analyze 24 randomly selected news stories. The NVivo program was used to evaluate 24 news articles, including their titles and contents, and the most frequently used and comparable words in the articles were identified and displayed in Table 2 and Figure 1. It also examines the statements made on the topic by Saudi and Turkish delegates within the context of crisis intervention techniques and Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). It is possible to completely understand how the issue has been depicted in the media and how significant players have strategically responded by implementing a two-pronged plan.

Findings

Analyzing news from 24 Internet publications on December 29–30, 2024, and comparing Saudi and Turkish delegates' statements to Coombs' SCCT theory provided interesting new insights into the mechanics of crisis communication. The results provide insight into how the problem is portrayed in various media narratives.

The Analyses of News

Table 1 displays news items from multiple outlets on the cancellation and postponement of the Turkish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia. The leading cause of the dispute was wearing T-shirts and banners with Atatürk related emblems.

Table-1: The Healines of the News

NEWSPAPERS	HEADLINES	DATE
Aljazeera	Turkey Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia called off amid Ataturk T-shirt row	30.12.2023
Anadolu Ajansı	Turkish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia postponed	29.12.2023
AP News	Turkish Super Cup final in Riyadh canceled over jersey dispute with Saudi officials	29.12.2023
Arab News	Turkish Super Cup final cancelled due to teams not following match regulations- Saudi state TV	30.12.2023
BBC	Galatasaray v Fenerbahce: Turkish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia postponed	30.12.2023
Daily Sabah	Galatasaray-Fenerbahçe Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia postponed	29.12.2023
Daily Star	Galatasaray vs Fenerbahce cup final in Saudi Arabia cancelled ‘as clubs refuse to play’	29.12.2023
ESPN	Turkish Super Cup final in Saudi cancelled before kickoff	29.12.2023
Eurosport	Turkish Super Cup Final Between Galatasaray and Fenerbahce In Saudi Arabia Postponed	29.12.2023
Forbes	Galatasaray And Fenerbahçe Refuse To Play Super Cup In Saudi Arabia After Atatürk Banners Banned	30.12.2023
Ganga Mitra	Turkish Super Cup Final Postponed: Galatasaray vs. Fenerbahce Clash in Saudi Arabia Disrupted	30.12.2023
Goal	Turkish Super Cup between Fenerbahce and Galatasaray in Saudi Arabia cancelled as players refuse to leave hotels in row over t-shirts and ‘Peace at home’ banner	29.12.2023
Greek City Times	Turkey’s Super Cup in Saudi Arabia canceled over reported Ataturk row	30.12.2023
Hurriyet Daily News	Turkish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia postponed over banner row	31.12.2023
Medium	How Atatürk won over Saudi sportswashing from beyond the grave	30.12.2023
Millet News	Galatasaray-Fenerbahçe Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia postponed	30.12.2023

Mirror	Galatasaray vs Fenerbahçe 'cancelled' before kick-off in Saudi Arabia as teams refuse to play	29.12.2023
Politico	Atatürk row scuttles Turkish Super Cup football final in Riyadh	30.12.2023
Reuters	Turkish Super Cup final in Riyadh postponed amid row	30.12.2023
RTE	Turkish Super Cup final in Riyadh postponed over Atatürk T-shirt row	29.12.2023
Sarajevotimes	This is how the World saw the unimaginable Scandal: "Both Nations are ashamed"	30.12.2023
Saudi Gazatte	Turkish Super Cup in Riyadh cancelled due to non-compliance with agreed terms	30.12.2023
The Guardian	T-shirt row' causes Saudi Arabia-based Turkish Super Cup final to be postponed	29.12.2023
The National News	Turkish Super Cup final in Riyadh postponed over Atatürk T-shirts	30.12.2023

Most headlines highlight the issue with Atatürk's symbols but do not coherently explain the cancellation. This event has garnered significant media coverage and interest, as evidenced by the headlines. In general, they concisely give the essential details. The teams, setting, and primary issues are some examples. The incident has been covered internationally by Turkish and Saudi Arabian media as well as Forbes, BBC, and Reuters, emphasizing its relevance.

The word frequency analysis in Table 2 gives vital insights. It shows the main themes and dynamics of Turkish Super Cup news.

Table-2: Frequency of Most Word

MOST WORD FREQUENCY			
Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
Turkish	7	358	003
Saudi	5	280	002
super	5	210	002
Cup	3	202	002
match	5	176	002
final	5	166	001
galatasaray	11	154	001
football	8	148	001
arabia	6	138	001
turkey	6	132	001

clubs	5	120	001
aturk	7	106	001
fenerbahce	10	102	001
teams	5	102	001
federation	10	100	001
postponed	9	98	001
riyadh	6	96	001
authorities	11	84	001
played	6	84	001
stadium	7	84	001
game	4	80	001
also	4	74	001
republic	8	72	001
statement	9	72	001
friday	6	68	001
media	5	68	001
shirts	6	68	001
tff	3	68	001
2023	4	66	001
due	3	66	001
two	3	66	001
atatürk	7	64	001
decision	8	62	001
istanbul	8	62	001

The words “Turkish” and “Saudi” are prevalent, highlighting the leading players in this situation. It implies the importance of the Super Cup in both countries and the impact of the postponement or cancellation on their respective audiences. It also shows a strong connection between Saudi Arabian and Turkish sports. The terms “Super” and “Cup” are frequently used, showing the event’s importance to the media. It highlights the importance of this well-known tournament as well as the inconvenience that arises when it is canceled or postponed. Words like “match,” “final,” “football,” “clubs,” and “teams” draw attention to the event’s sporting component and the context in which it took place. The constant reference to “Galatasaray” and “Fenerbahçe” suggests that the argument was brought about by or affected by the choices or actions of these teams. This emphasizes how crucial individual teams are to creating more comprehensive sports narratives. The geographical and cultural ramifications of the event are highlighted with references to “Arabia,” “Turkey,” and “Ataturk.”

Figure 1 provides a clear understanding of how different news companies differentiate their coverage.

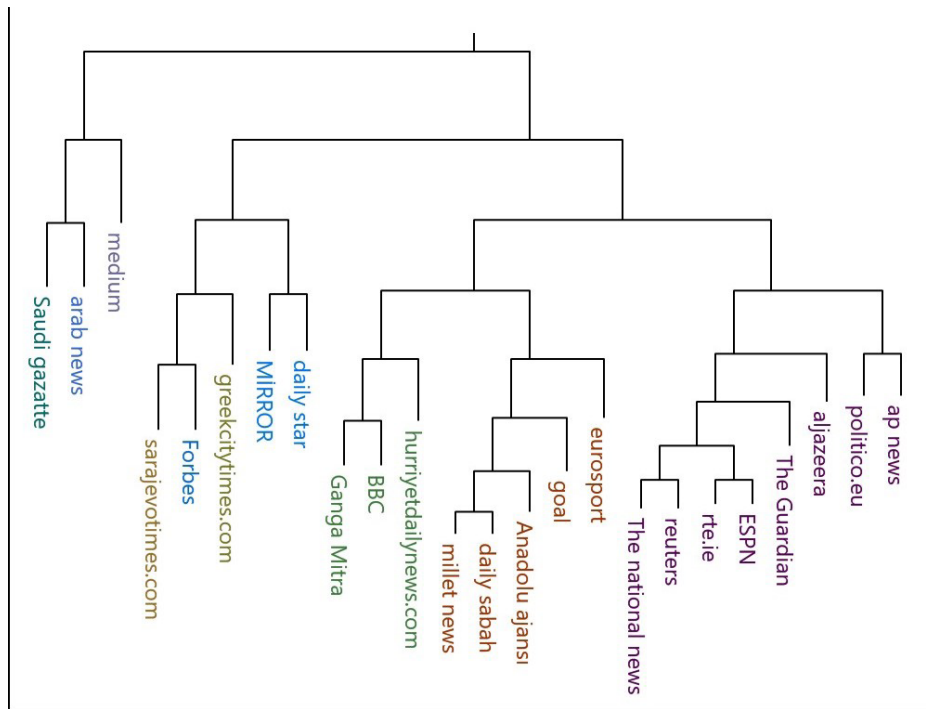


Figure-1: Newspapers clustered by word similarity

The newspapers clustered by word similarity present a convincing story in which some publications show remarkable language expressional parallels, suggesting stylistic and lexical preferences.

There were reports on social media and in some media outlets prior to the Super Cup match’s cancellation that “the Turkish Flag will not be unfurled and the National Anthem will not be played in the Turkish Super Cup Final Match to be played in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.” The Turkcell Super Cup flag, the flags of the participating teams, and the Turkish flag will all be raised during the game’s opening ceremony (The Directorate of Communications Center for Combating Disinformation, 2023). The statement also included details about ceremonial activities, like light displays that will take place prior to the playing of the national anthem and a minute of silence in honor of the martyrs. By providing this information, the statement dispels any doubts and highlights how national symbols and customs are honored and welcomed throughout the occasion.

Quotes from Some Newspaper News

- According to Reuters (Butler, 2023), Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan would rather Turkish sports, especially football, be known for their achievements than for getting entangled in political rivalries. Additionally, he said that the sports community gains nothing from the habit of utilizing athletics as a platform for political controversy.

“We want Turkish sports, and soccer in particular, to be on the agenda not with discussions, but with achievements,” Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday at an award ceremony in Istanbul. “For whatever reason, turning sports into an appetiser for daily political rivalry is wrong, misguided and does not do our sports any good,” he added.

- L'Equipe described Galatasaray's and Fenerbahçe's decision to withdraw from the Super Cup match at the last minute as "an unprecedented shame for both countries" illustrates how serious the problem is seen to be and suggests that there may be consequences that go beyond sports. The Italian Sportmediaset pointed out that the incident was framed as a "diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Saudi Arabia," highlighting the geopolitical intricacies involved in such situations (Sarajevo Times, 2023).

The famous L'Equipe writes that both clubs refused to play at the last minute and that this is an unprecedented shame for both nations. "Diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The Super Cup match between Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe has been postponed after disagreements with the Saudi authorities," writes Italian Sportmediaset.

- Sarajevo Times (2023) wrote that some media outlets referred to the announcement that signs and t-shirts honoring Mustafa Kemal Atatürk would not be permitted during the Super Cup as an "unprecedented diplomatic crisis."

"An unprecedented diplomatic crisis. The crisis arose when the local authorities prevented banners and T-shirts mentioning Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey, from being brought into the stadium," according to other island media.

- According to reports from Reuters (Butler, 2023), ESPN (2023), and The National News (2023), "the incident came amid a recent warming of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia." The main topic of conversation was the event, which was held as part of attempts to enhance ties between Saudi Arabia and Türkiye. This development highlights the region's geopolitical context as well as the complex dynamics of international contacts.

- Ankaragucu and other contentious national football issues were highlighted alongside news about the Super Cup in publications including Reuters (Butler, 2023), The Guardian (2023), RTÉ (2023), BBC (Abatay, 2023), ESPN (2023), Aljazeera (2023), and The National News (2023). The merging of Super Cup coverage with contentious issues like Ankaragucu adds a degree of complexity to the conversation. This intersection highlights broader worries within national football systems, going past sports into social, political, and cultural spheres.

- The Medium (Başaran, 2023) article explores the intersections between national identity, historical figures, and contemporary geopolitical processes involving Türkiye and Saudi Arabia. "Sportswashing" is utilizing athletic events or monetary contributions to improve a country's image or divert attention. The issue's presentation suggests examining the political implications of sports diplomacy and authoritarian governments' strategies to use athletic events politically. The phrase "from beyond the grave" suggests that Atatürk's influence continues to influence contemporary Turkish politics and foreign policy after his death. This underlines how national stories and identity-building are still molded by historical figures. It also shows how these tales still impact global affairs.

The Analyses of the Statements from Saudi and Turkish Representatives

Table 3 shows the strategies of Saudi Arabia and Türkiye's representatives in responding to the Super Cup competition. These statements shed light on how they are handling the situation.

Table-3: Crisis response strategies of Turkish Football Federation/ Fenerbahçe/ Galatasaray

Crisis response strategies in the SCCT	Turkish Football Federation/ Fenerbahçe/ Galatasaray
Excuse: Management attempts to minimize crisis responsibility by claiming a lack of control over the event or lack of intent to harm.	“Some problems in the event’s organisation.” (Turkish Football Federation, 2023).
Justification: Management attempts to minimize the perceived damage caused by the crisis.	“The 2023 Super Cup competition, which we organize with our clubs in order to celebrate the 100th anniversary of our Republic and the Turkish Football Federation abroad, in a way that will contribute to the brand value of Turkish Football and our clubs.” (Turkish Football Federation, 2023).
Ingratiation: Management praises other stakeholders and/or reminds people of past good works by the organization.	“We would like to thank the Football Federation and relevant institutions and organizations of the host country for the efforts they have made so far in the organization of the Super Cup.” (Turkish Football Federation, 2023).

The crisis response strategy utilized by the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) and Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray clubs involves employing an excuse tactic to minimize responsibility, citing “some problems in the organization of the event” as the cause. By emphasizing the importance of the event for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Republic and the attempts to enhance the reputation of Turkish football and clubs, the Turkish delegates seem to rationalize the circumstances. The justification technique seeks to cast the incident in a favorable perspective in order to lessen the perceived damage brought about by the crisis. The joint statement expressed ingratiation to the authorities and Saudi Arabia’s Football Federation for their efforts in organizing the event. This tactic seeks to promote cooperation and goodwill among interested parties, which could help reduce tensions or unfavorable opinions about the situation.

In an effort to mitigate the problem and influence public opinion, the Turkish Football Federation has combined excuse, justification, and ingratiation strategies in Table 4.

Table-4: Crisis response strategies of Turkish Football Federation

Crisis response strategies in the SCCT	Turkish Football Federation
Excuse: Management attempts to minimize crisis responsibility by claiming a lack of control over the event or lack of intent to harm.	In accordance with the FIFA Statute, the relevant competition is subject to the FIFA Instructions on the Organization of International Matches. All requirements and procedures that should be applied in international matches are also valid for this match. (Turkish Football Federation, 2024).
Justification: Management attempts to minimize the perceived damage caused by the crisis.	<p>“The proposal to play the 2023 Turkcell Super Cup match in Riyadh was conveyed to our federation by SMC (Saudi Media Company / Riyadh Season) and signed with the approval of both our clubs. All allegations that our President was involved in this process in any way are unfounded.” (Turkish Football Federation, 2024).</p> <p>“Our national values and Atatürk’s principles have not been open to discussion at any stage of the process. Claims to the contrary are unfounded, malicious and a provocation aimed at the integrity of our nation.” (Turkish Football Federation, 2024).</p>
Ingratiation: Management praises other stakeholders and/or reminds people of past good works by the organization.	<p>“As the Turkish Football Federation, we believe that politics should never interfere with sports. This belief and our transparent cooperation with our two distinguished clubs” (Turkish Football Federation, 2024).</p> <p>“As the Turkish Football Federation, we emphasize that we will never allow efforts to use sports, which is the most important unifying force of our society, for different purposes, and we express that we will continue to work determinedly to make Turkish football famous with success.” (Turkish Football Federation, 2024).</p>

The Turkish Football Federation (TTF) denies all allegations against its president and denies any role in controversial decisions regarding the location of a match in the statement provided. To avoid accountability and mitigate perceived harm, the TTF distances itself from decisions and places blame on outside forces. TTF praises other stakeholders or emphasizes past beneficial activities to gain support and deflect criticism. They hope to associate themselves with widely accepted ideals and position themselves as protectors of national interests and sporting integrity by highlighting their belief in the separation of politics and sports, as well as their commitment to the success of Turkish football. These crisis management techniques seek to influence public opinion, maintain organizational legitimacy, and reduce harm to an organization’s reputation during a crisis.

The Riyadh Season crisis response team used a combination of excuse, justification, and ingratiation strategies, as shown in Table 5, to try to lessen the impact of the problem and change public perception.

Table-5: Crisis response strategies of Riyadh Season on December 30, 2023

Crisis response strategies in the SCCT	Riyadh Season
Excuse: Management attempts to minimize crisis responsibility by claiming a lack of control over the event or lack of intent to harm.	<p>“Despite this consensus, it was unfortunate that the two teams did not adhere to what had been agreed upon, which led to the match not being held.”</p> <p>“We had been looking forward to holding the match on time and in accordance with the international football rules and regulations; which require presenting the sport without any slogans outside its scope, especially since this was discussed with the Football Federation of Türkiye within the framework of the match’s preparatory meetings, and the need to adhere to what is required by the regulations pertaining to this match, in accordance with the international rules and regulations, was emphasized.” (Riyadh Season, 2023).</p>
Justification: Management attempts to minimize the perceived damage caused by the crisis.	<p>“It was also agreed that the national anthem of the Republic of Türkiye will be played, along with the display of the Türkiye flag inside the stadium and in the stands, due to the appreciation we hold for the Republic of Türkiye.” (Riyadh Season, 2023).</p>
Ingratiation: Management praises other stakeholders and/or reminds people of past good works by the organization.	<p>“At the outset, we would like to emphasize our pride in the close relationship with the brotherly Republic of Türkiye in various fields, including the sports field.” (Riyadh Season, 2023).</p>

The Riyadh Season statement emphasized Saudi Arabia’s solid and multifaceted ties with the Republic of Türkiye, which includes sports.

Riyadh Season makes an effort to downplay its role in the problem by arguing that it had no influence over what happened or that it had no malicious intent. In this instance, the statement suggests that the two sides’ refusal to abide by the conditions of the agreement was the reason the match could not be held as scheduled. They are trying to shift blame and lessen possible blowback by portraying the problem as the consequence of the teams’ actions rather than the management’s failings. They aim to sustain positive ties with Türkiye while adhering to principles. This Riyadh Season strives to mitigate perceived damages from the situation. Their statement conveys a commitment to FIFA’s international football rules and understanding through respectfully playing Türkiye’s anthem and flying its flag. It demonstrates management’s dedication to norms and goodwill with Türkiye. The Riyadh Season expresses gratitude to stakeholders and recalls previous accomplishments. Management fosters rapport with all involved, including the public and Türkiye, by conveying pride in their Türkiye partnership and highlighting previous diverse collaborations.

These crisis management strategies show the Riyadh Season’s goal to control the story, clear blame, lessen harm, and keep good ties with all groups involved, especially in Türkiye.

Conclusion

The Super Cup match between the Turkish teams in Saudi Arabia was postponed due to disagreements. The incident highlights the difficulties and nuances of the sports diplomacy between the two nations. In sports diplomacy, overcoming barriers to social goals requires ongoing communication, collaboration, and diplomatic engagement.

Using content analysis, this study examines news from 24 online newspapers that were published between December 29 and December 30, 2023. Within the framework of crisis intervention strategies and Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), it also examines the remarks made on the subject by Saudi and Turkish representatives. Putting a two-pronged plan into action makes it possible to fully comprehend how the issue has been portrayed in the media and how important stakeholders have responded strategically.

The majority of the headlines address the issue of Atatürk's posters while providing a clear explanation for the removal. The headlines show how much interest and publicity this event has received from the media. They generally present the vital information succinctly. Examples include the teams, the setting, and the main issue. The incident has received international attention from media outlets in Türkiye and Saudi Arabia, as well as Forbes, the BBC, and Reuters, highlighting its significance.

The terms "Turkish" and "Saudi" appear frequently in the news, emphasizing the main parties in this occurrence. It demonstrates the significance of the Super Cup in both countries, as well as the effect of its cancellation on their respective audiences. The media frequently highlights the significance of the organization by using the terms "Super" and "Cup."

According to the news, canceled matches pose a harm to international relations. When the press comments and crisis management strategies of Saudi and Turkish authorities are analyzed, it is clear that both countries place a high premium on maintaining bilateral ties in the long term. During the Riyadh Season, it was seen that the Turkish Football Federation, Fenerbahçe, and Galatasaray used a mixture of excuse, justification, and ingratiation strategies to mitigate the negative impact of the situation and maintain their reputations and bilateral relations. The ingratiation strategy aims to acknowledge and/or remind people of the organization's past accomplishments. This tactic fosters cooperation and goodwill among interested parties, which may help to ease tensions or negative perceptions of the situation. This tactic was used by representatives of both nations. "We would like to thank the Football Federation and relevant institutions and organizations of the host country for the efforts they have made so far in the organization of the Super Cup." stated TTF, Fenerbahçe, and Galatasaray (Turkish Football Federation, 2023) "At the outset, we would like to emphasize our pride in the close relationship with the brotherly Republic of Türkiye in various fields, including the sports field," stated Riyadh Season (Riyadh Season, 2023).

Saudi Arabia and Turkey's commitment to continue their ties despite difficulties demonstrates that they respect long-term relationships and are open to constructive communication and mutual benefits. The statements of the stakeholders, who are non-

governmental actors in the organization, show that sports diplomacy, one of the application areas of public diplomacy, is also used effectively.

Future research could also assess the impact of the Super Cup cancellation on various social media platforms and compare people's reactions in the two nations. The Super Cup can also be handled in terms of sports' ecpolitics.

Genişletilmiş Özet

Önde gelen uluslararası kuruluşlarla stratejik müzakereler, bilgi desteği ve spor endüstrisinin yerel ve uluslararası ağının geliştirilmesi, çatışma ortamının azaltılmasına ve yerli ve yabancı tanımla karşılıklı anlayış kurulmasına yardımcı olabilmektedir. Spor organizasyonları ülkeler arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin, karşılıklı itibarın ve spor diplomasisinin gelişmesi açısından önem arz etmektedir. Türk takımları arasında 29 Aralık 2023 tarihinde Suudi Arabistan'da oynanacak olan Süper Kupa maçının, taraflar arasındaki anlaşmazlıklar nedeniyle ertelenmesi, bir kriz sürecini beraberinde getirmiştir. Yaşanan bu durum, iki ülke arasındaki spor diplomasisinin zorluklarını ve nüanslarını ortaya koymaktadır. Spor diplomasisinde sosyal hedeflerin önündeki engellerin aşılması, sürekli iletişim, iş birliği ve diplomatik katılım ile mümkün olmaktadır.

Bu makale, Fenerbahçe-Galatasaray Süper Kupa karşılaşması bağlamında tarafların kriz iletişim stratejilerini, medyada yer alan haberleri ve spor diplomasisinin rolünü detaylı bir şekilde incelemektedir. Araştırma, maçın iptaliyle ortaya çıkan olumsuz etkilerin karmaşık yönlerini, kulüpler, yetkililer ve paydaşlar tarafından benimsenen farklı iletişim stratejileri ile medyada yer alan haberlerin içeriklerini analiz ederek değerlendirmektedir. Bu amaçla, rastgele örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen 24 uluslararası haber, nitel ve nicel içerik analizi teknikleri kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Makale, kriz iletişimi teorilerini temel alarak, organizasyonel aktörlerin kriz dönemlerinde paydaş ilişkilerini yönetmek ve kamuoyu algısını şekillendirmek için uyguladıkları stratejilere dikkat çekmektedir. Özellikle Suudi Arabistan ve Türkiye'yi temsil eden aktörlerin, karşılaştıkları zorluklara rağmen ilişkilerini sürdürme konusundaki kararlılığı, uzun vadeli ilişkilere bağlılık, yapıcı iletişim ve karşılıklı fayda arayışını ortaya koymaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, halkla ilişkilerde genellikle reaktif bir süreç olarak ele alınan kriz yönetimi kapsamında spor diplomasisinin etkin bir araç olarak kullanıldığı vurgulanmaktadır.

Bu çalışma, içerik analizi yöntemiyle 29-30 Aralık 2023 tarihleri arasında yayımlanan 24 çevrimiçi gazetede haberleri incelemektedir. Coombs'un Durumsal Kriz İletişim Teorisi (SCCT) çerçevesinde, Suudi ve Türk temsilcilerin konuya ilişkin açıklamaları dikkatle incelenmektedir. İki yönlü bir analiz kullanılması, konunun medyada nasıl yansıtıldığını ve önemli paydaşların stratejik olarak ne kadar yanıt verdiğini tam olarak kavramayı mümkün kılmaktadır.

Manşetler, bu etkinliğin medyada yer bulduğunu ve ne kadar ilgi gördüğünü göstermektedir. Manşetlerin çoğunluğu Atatürk'ün posteriyle ilgili soruna değinmekte ve takımlar, ortam ve ana sorun manşetlerde yer bulmaktadır. Haber içeriklerinde "Türk" ve "Suudi" terimleri öne çıkmakta ve bu senaryodaki kilit aktörleri vurgulamaktadır. Süper Kupa'nın her iki ülkedeki önemini ve iptalinin ilgili hedef kitleler üzerindeki etkisini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu aynı zamanda Suudi Arabistan ve Türk sporları arasındaki

güçlü bağı da göstermektedir. “Süper” ve “Kupa” terimlerinin sıklıkla kullanılması, etkinliğin medyada taşıdığı önemi, bu köklü maçın öneminin yanı sıra iptalinin yarattığı aksaklıkları da öne çıkarmaktadır. “Maç”, “final”, “futbol”, “kulüpler” ve “takımlar” gibi kelimeler, olayın sportif yönünü ve sorunun ortaya çıktığı bağlamın altını çizmektedir. Sık sık “Galatasaray” ve “Fenerbahçe” ye yapılan atıflar, bu takımların eylemlerinin ve kararlarının devam eden tartışmayı etkilediğini öne sürmekte ve bireysel takımların daha geniş spor anlatılarını şekillendirmedeki önemli rolünü vurgulamaktadır. “Arabistan”, “Türkiye” ve “Atatürk” ifadeleri etkinliğin jeopolitik ve kültürel önemini vurgulamaya hizmet etmektedir.

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Merkezi’nden Suudi Arabistan’da oynanacak Süper Kupa maçı öncesi yapılan açıklamalar, organizasyonla ilgili önemli miktarda yanlış bilginin kriz ortaya çıkmadan var olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Raporlar, iptal edilen maçın ülkeler arasındaki ilişkileri gerginleştirme riski taşıdığını vurgulamaktadır. Suudi ve Türk yetkililerin basın açıklamaları ve kriz yönetimi stratejileri incelendiğinde, her iki ülkenin de ikili bağlarını uzun vadede korumaya büyük öncelik verdiği görülmektedir. Riyad Sezonu, Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu, Fenerbahçe ve Galatasaray’ın, durumun etkisini azaltmak, itibarlarını ve ikili ilişkilerini korumak ve kamuoyunu etkilemek amacıyla mazeret, gerekçelendirme ve kabul ettirme stratejilerinin bir karışımını kullandıkları görülmektedir. Kabul ettirme stratejisinin amacı, insanlara kuruluşun önceki başarılarını hatırlatmak ve/veya kurum paydaşlarından övgüyle bahsetmektir. Bu strateji, ilgili taraflar arasında iş birliğini ve iyi niyeti teşvik eder; bu da gerilimlerin veya duruma ilişkin olumsuz algıların hafifletilmesine yardımcı olabilmektedir. Bu strateji iki ülkenin de temsilcileri tarafından kullanılmıştır. TTF, Fenerbahçe ve Galatasaray tarafından yapılan açıklama “Ev sahibi ülkenin Futbol Federasyonu, ilgili kurum ve kuruluşlarına şu ana kadar Süper Kupa’nın organizasyonu için göstermiş oldukları çaba nedeniyle teşekkür ederiz.” (Turkish Football Federation, 2023), ve Riyad Sezonu tarafından yapılan açıklama “Kardeş Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile spor alanı da dahil olmak üzere çeşitli alanlardaki yakın ilişkimizden duyduğumuz gururu vurgulamak istiyoruz.” (Riyadh Season, 2023) ifadeleri, bu stratejinin kullanımını göstermektedir.

Suudi Arabistan ve Türkiye’nin anlaşmazlıklara rağmen bağlarını sürdürme kararlılığı, kalıcı ilişkilere değer verdiklerini, yapıcı iletişime ve karşılıklı faydalara açık olduklarını göstermektedir. Kamu diplomasisi uygulama alanlarından biri olan spor diplomasisinin, kriz yönetim sürecinde organizasyonun paydaşları olan ve iki ülkeyi temsil eden devlet dışı aktörler tarafından etkin bir şekilde kullanıldığı görülmektedir. Gelecekteki araştırmacılar Süper Kupa’nın iptalinin çeşitli sosyal medya platformları üzerindeki etkisini de değerlendirebilir ve iki ülkedeki insanların tepkilerini karşılaştırabilir. Ayrıca iptal olan Süper Kupa’ya, sporun ekonomi politikası açısından da yaklaşabilirler.

Etik Beyanı: Yazar çalışmanın, etik kurul izni gerektirmeyen çalışmalar arasında yer aldığını beyan eder. Aksi bir durumun tespiti halinde Kastamonu İletişim Araştırmaları Dergisi’nin hiçbir sorumluluğu olmayıp, tüm sorumluluk çalışmanın yazarına aittir.

Yazar Katkıları: Yazarın katkı oranı %100’dür.

Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı: Yazar, herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan

etmektedir.

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