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# Evaluation of the Effects of the Covid-19 Outbreak on Private Sports Businesses in Batman Province: A Case Study\*

Abdullah YÜKSEL 📭 Mustafa Enes IŞIKGÖZ 🕞

<sup>a</sup>Batman Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Meslek Yüksekokulu, Batman, Türkiye. <u>yuksel72@gmail.com</u>

bMardin Artuklu Üniversitesi, Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Yüksekokulu, Mardin, Türkiye. m.enesisikgoz@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT				
Keywords: Covid-19	<b>Purpose</b> – In this study, it was aimed to evaluate the effects of the Covid-19 outbreak on private sports businesses in Batman province in Turkey.				
Service Processes Private Sports Businesses Epidemic	<b>Design /methodology/ approach</b> – The study population of this research, which was designed as qualitative research; During the Covid-19 pandemic process, includes a total of 13 private sports businesses serving in fitness-bodybuilding, sports-for-all-wellness and gymnastics branches under the supervision and supervision of the Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports in Batman City Center. The data of the study were gathered through a semi-structured interview form. In the first part of the interview form consisting of three parts; there are questions about the personal information of the operators, in the second part; there are questions about the field of activity of the private sports business, and in the third part; there are five questions, four structured and one unstructured question. In order to				
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Revised 6 February 2024					
Accepted 10 February 2024	ensure the internal validity of the research, the findings were reviewed by two experts in the field of sports business and management and the main themes were formed. Descriptive and content analysis techniques were utilized in the study.				
Article Classification: Research Article	<b>Findings</b> – In the research, it was observed that private sports enterprises were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in three main themes, namely "financial problems", "psychological problems" and "uncertainty", and nine sub-themes under these themes.				
	<b>Discussion</b> – As a result, private sports enterprises were most negatively affected by the Covid-19 outbreak in economic terms. The pandemic caused the operators to experience psychological problems and uncertainty in business management.				

#### 1. Introduction

Throughout history, epidemics have always threatened humanity. Communities suffering from epidemics have faced serious socio-economic crises while struggling with the disease. Countries suffered great economic losses during the epidemic process, and the people lived in poverty and misery. In the modern age, where medicine and technology have made tremendous progress, history has repeated itself and humanity has started to struggle with the Covid-19 outbreak that emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019. The Covid-19 pandemic, which rapidly spread to all countries of the world with its contagious nature (Macit & Macit, 2020), was declared a "public health emergency of international scale" by the World Health Organization (WHO) on January 30, 2020, and then a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020). In Turkey, the first Covid-19 case was reported on March 11, 2020 (T.C. Sağlık Bakanlığı, 2020).

In line with the recommendations of WHO, strict public health policies were implemented in Turkey to prevent the Covid-19 outbreak, although they differed from country to country. Within the scope of these policies, especially schools, mass gatherings, concerts, sports competitions and the activities of many production and service sectors were ceased. These measures taken during the pandemic severely affected social life and the production and service sectors economically. Due to the economic contraction and forced closures in the sectors, people's incomes decreased and some small businesses closed down due to economic losses (Akarsu & Alacahan, 2021). In order to reduce the negative economic impact of the pandemic, various financial incentive packages have been implemented by governments. As in every sector, sports businesses

<sup>\*</sup> This study is based on the Master's thesis of the first author.

were also negatively affected by the measures taken due to the risk of contracting the Covid-19 pandemic. (Türkmen & Özsarı, 2020).

Since 2020, when the Covid-19 disease emerged, research has been conducted in many fields, especially in health, education and economy. Although there are a limited number of socio-psychological studies on the impact of Covid-19 on sports, athletes and sports organizations, there is no study in the literature on the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on private sports businesses. For this reason, this research is considered important in terms of identifying the problems experienced by private sports operators during the Covid-19 process. The aim of this research is to evaluate the effects of the Covid-19 outbreak on private sports businesses in the province of Batman in line with the opinions of private sports operators. Therefore, in this research, an answer to the question "How did the Covid-19 outbreak affect the private sports businesses in Batman province of Turkey?" was sought.

#### 2. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

## 2.1. Sport Businesses

The main purpose of sports is to contribute to the development of physical and mental health of individuals in particular. One of the important factors in achieving this goal is sports businesses. Sports enterprises have an important place for many physical education, recreation and sports activities (Sunay, 2009). Sports businesses are commercial enterprises that provide physical, psychological and mental training and training services in order to prepare individuals and teams for national and international competitions and where production, distribution and marketing of these services are carried out (Serarslan, 2005). In a sports business, there are functions such as sales, marketing, financing, accounting, service production, human resources management and sports department similar to product-producing businesses (Breuer & Schlesinger, 2011; Kül, 2011). Sports businesses are expected to comply with general business principles like other businesses producing goods or services. Sports enterprises are divided into two as "public" and "private sports" enterprises (Uras, 2019). In countries where sports are considered a public service within the scope of social integration and economic development, sports enterprises are established by the state in order to provide social services and benefits, and sports are spread to the masses (Ramazanoğlu & Ocalan, 2005; UNESCO, 2021). Sport provides an important public service with cultural and economic impact within the world industry (Işıkgöz, 2015). In Turkey, as in many countries, it is emphasized in the Constitution that sport is a public service. Article 59 of the Constitution states that "The State takes measures to improve the physical and mental health of Turkish citizens of all ages and encourages the spread of sports to the masses" (T.C. Anayasası, 1982). Based on this provision of the Constitution, in the Eleventh Development Plan covering the period 2019-2023 (On Birinci Kalkınma Planı, 2019).

In addition to issues such as promoting sports at all levels of education starting from pre-school education, encouraging disabled individuals to sports, supporting the sports industry, expanding sports health centers, training sports physicians, drawing a road map for sports tourism, it is aimed to develop models for the construction and effective operation of facilities, construction and effective use of sports facilities by taking into account the geographical region and demographic structure, opening educational institutions and public sports facilities for common use and access to citizens under the coordination of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The Plan emphasizes that necessary steps will be undertaken at all levels to bring sports as a public service, athletes and sports enterprises to the desired level in Turkey. Within the scope of public service in Turkey, it is observed that the Ministry of Youth and Sports, municipalities, special administrations, universities, all schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education and similar public institutions have put various sports facilities into operation in order to meet the sports needs of individuals.

Private sports businesses, which are not affiliated with public institutions and organizations but are under the supervision and control of the state, are businesses owned and managed by individual or joint entrepreneurs and provide services for a fee in line with the wishes of customers (Ekmekçi, 2018; Uras, 2019). In addition to the idea of serving the society in private sports businesses, the business is to make a profit from the services provided (Donuk, 2005). Along with the desire and idea of making profit in private sports enterprises, there is also the idea of social responsibility and service to society. Because even if private sports businesses or recreation centers make a certain amount of profit in return for the services they offer, they are observed to be an effective place for people to do regular sports, training and exercise (Malkoç, 2018; Üzüm et al., 2016).

In order to open private sports facilities in Turkey, the necessary legislation must be complied with. The leading legislation is the Law No. 3289 on Youth and Sports Services. Article 28 of the mentioned Law titled "opening private halls" states that "Schools, training centers, sites, halls and similar facilities and organizations to be established by private enterprises for the purpose of physical education and sports activities are subject to the permission and control of the Ministry of Youth and Sports" (Gençlik ve Spor Hizmetleri Kanunu, 1986). The purpose of the Regulation on Private Physical Education and Sports Facilities (1999) issued on the basis of this law is as follows: "The purpose of the Regulation on Private Physical Education and Sports Facilities is to regulate the procedures and principles regarding the establishment and operation of physical education and sports facilities by real or legal persons in order to use all resources related to sports in the most effective way in order to develop and popularize Turkish sports and increase the number of athletes". (Özel Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Tesisleri Yönetmeliği, 1999). In addition, the federations to which each sport branch is affiliated also have special physical education and sports facilities instructions. These instructions enter into force as of the date they are published on the website of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Real and legal persons and sports clubs that comply with the provisions of the relevant legislation may establish and operate private physical education and sports facilities.

#### 2.2. The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Turkish Sports Business

Since the first day of the Covid-19 virus, the pandemic has rapidly affected the world. After the first Covid-19 case was detected in China, the virus spread to different parts of the world, especially affecting the European region more (Çöl & Güneş, 2020). With the pandemic, countries started to take various measures that restricted the freedom of their citizens and put their economies in trouble. After the first coronavirus case was identified in Turkey on March 11, 2020, measures were taken in areas such as education, tourism, travel, sports, international trade, etc. (Işık, 2021). Within the scope of these measures, entry and exit to the country by air was banned in the first place, face-to-face education was suspended in schools, many workplaces with human circulation were closed and a curfew was subsequently declared. In order to combat the pandemic in a healthy way, a "Coronavirus Scientific Board" was established in Turkey and the global follow-up and management of the disease began to be carried out by experts (Cora, 2021).

With the measures taken, the spread of the pandemic was prevented, albeit partially (Aksoy, 2021), and a controlled normalization process regarding social life, especially public services, was initiated as of 04 May 2020 (Güngör, 2020). With the controlled normalization process, the Ministry of Health General Directorate of Public Health's letter on "Measures to be Taken in Sports Halls within the Scope of COVID-19" stipulated the reopening of sports halls (T.C. Sağlık Bakanlığı, 2020). In the mentioned letter; the rules that should be followed meticulously in gyms against the Covid-19 outbreak in the form of measures for customers and staff, cleaning, disinfection and ventilation of gyms are included.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused economic contraction in Turkey as in all countries. The impact of the pandemic did not only remain in the field of health, but also created global economic damages in every sector (Bahar & İlal, 2020). Tourism, transportation, automotive, construction, manufacturing, textile, energy, agriculture, education, sports and artistic activities were negatively affected by the pandemic. Especially businesses operating in the service sector have been among the sectors most affected by the pandemic (Işık, 2021). One of these sectors is the sports sector, which has been severely affected by the pandemic. The cancellation / postponement of sports competitions and the temporary suspension of the activities of businesses serving in sports branches caused the sports market and individuals working in this market to suffer economic losses (Clarkson et al., 2020; Türkmen & Özsarı, 2020). Due to the measures and precautions adopted during the pandemic, the Turkish sports industry has become one of the sectors that lost the most added value with a loss of approximately 38% (Devecioğlu, 2020). Sports clubs, sports businesses and organization companies that tried to survive with their own means have become inoperable and most of these businesses have come to the point of shutting down their activities due to economic contraction (Aksoy, 2021).

#### 2.3. Literature Review

When the literature is examined, it is observed that some research has been conducted in the Covid-19 process in the fields of tourism, transportation, education, food and beverage industry, service sector, etc., especially in the field of health. However, no research on the impact of the Covid-19 process on private sports enterprises has been encountered, and some studies have been conducted on sports entrepreneurship, sports economics,

athlete health, etc. In their research, Bekci et al. (2022) stated that due to the measures implemented during the pandemic, many businesses were either closed or had to continue their activities by reducing their activities in order not to close or to minimize their losses. Sevim & Bülbül (2022), in their research examining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic period on the financial structure and reporting of sports clubs, determined that while the measures, restrictions and policies put into practice during the Covid-19 pandemic affected the activities of many businesses, they also seriously impacted sports clubs and there was a significant decrease in the income of the clubs.

In his study on Covid-19 and sports entrepreneurship, Ratten (2020) emphasized that the sports sector in particular has been influenced by the Covid-19 crisis in an unprecedented way and many sports businesses have had to develop new business ideas to cope with the crisis. Similarly, The International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) reported that the fitness industry, which reached 94 billion dollars in 2018, has hit bottom with the pandemic, fitness centers all over the country have closed, and some sports centers located in the USA, Canada, Australia and France were offering free classes on various social networks such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, etc. (Rodriguez, 2021). According to the statements made in the USA in April 2020, it was determined that the pandemic caused a loss of approximately 12 billion dollars in the sports industry (Yurtsızoğlu, 2021).

Türkmen and Özsarı (2020) emphasized in their study that the Covid-19 pandemic paralyzed the sports systems in countries both economically and psycho-socially, and that positive discrimination should be made to the sports sector in order to recover quickly in the post-pandemic period. Similarly, Bingöl et al. (2020), in their study, stated that the Covid-19 outbreak negatively affected the sports world as in all areas of life, that sports competitions and organizations came to a standstill worldwide due to the outbreak, and that planned and permanent common ideas should be put forward in order for the entire sports environment to be minimally affected by the troubled course, and made recommendations to all sports stakeholders in this direction.

Göksel (2020), in his research on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on sports organizations and the normalization process in sports; focused on the effects and possible financial consequences of the postponement or cancellation of major sports organizations due to the Covid-19 pandemic on the sports industry, as well as the expectations of sports fans regarding the normalization process in sports and providing recommendations to the people and organizations authorized to organize sports organizations. There are also other research findings that many sectors, including sports, education, tourism, agriculture, energy, banking, civil aviation, banking, civil aviation have been negatively affected by the measures taken with the Covid-19 outbreak (Bingöl et al., 2020; Duran & Acar, 2020; Üçüncüoğlu et al., 2021; Kıvılcım, 2020).

#### 3.1. Method

#### 3.1. Research Model

Qualitative research approach was employed in this study, in which the effects of the Covid-19 outbreak on private sports businesses in Batman province were evaluated. Qualitative research is defined as the process of making sense of social life and human-related problems by questioning them with unique methods (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative research, perceptions and events are revealed in depth in a realistic and holistic manner in a natural environment through qualitative data collection techniques such as observation, interview and document analysis. "Case study" was preferred as the research design.

## 3.2. Study Group

The study population of the research consists of 13 "Private Sports Businesses" serving under the supervision and control of the Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports in Turkey/Batman City Center during the Covid-19 pandemic process (2020-2021). Since the entire population was included in the study, sampling was not required. Of the private sports businesses interviewed in February-2022; 10 (77%) operate in the field of Fitness-Bodybuilding, 2 (15%) in the field of Sports for All (HSS)-Wellness, and 1 (8%) in the field of Gymnastics. It was explained that the identity information of the interviewed private sports operators would not be shared with third parties and for this purpose, the operators were coded using alphanumeric characters (O1, O2, O3,....O13). Descriptive information about private sports enterprises and their operators is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive information of private sports businesses and operators

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Private Sports Businesses								Ope	rator	
Operator Code	Period of Activity (Year)	Gender Requirement	Age Requirement	Pandemic Shutdown Period (Month)	Fee Refund	Covering Expenses in the Pandemic	Number of Employees in the Business	Sex	Age	Education*
O1	7	Yes	Yes	8	No	Yes	3	F	38	Levels 3-4
O2	17	Yes	No	10	No	No	0	M	37	Levels 5-8
O3	5	No	No	8	No	No	0	M	40	Levels 3-4
O4	4	Yes	Yes	7	No	No	1	M	25	Levels 3-4
O5	12	No	No	8	No	No	2	M	31	Levels 5-8
O6	2	Yes	Yes	8	No	No	0	F	28	Levels 5-8
O7	30	No	No	8	No	No	0	M	50	Levels 5-8
O8	13	No	No	12	No	No	1	M	46	Levels 3-4
O9	3	No	Yes	9	No	No	0	M	40	Levels 3-4
O10	4	No	No	8	No	No	3	M	46	Levels 5-8
O11	20	No	No	12	Yes	No	3	M	35	Levels 5-8
O12	1	No	Yes	8	Yes	No	5	M	42	Levels 3-4
O13	3	No	No	9	No	Yes	4	F	39	Levels 5-8

\*ISCED 2011 (levels of education)

When Table 1 is examined; it is observed that the activities of the businesses in the sector vary between 1 and 30 years, they have been in the sector for an average of (M=9.3) years, only 4 of the businesses take into account the gender role in member acceptance, while the other 9 accept members without any gender discrimination, 5 of them seek age requirement in member acceptance, while 8 of them do not seek any age requirement. It was determined that the businesses were closed for an average of (M=8.8) months between 7 and 12 months with the pandemic, and during this period, 2 operators refunded the fees to their members, while 11 operators did not refund the fees to their members. (The operators who did not refund the fees stated that they gave additional working time after the hall opened instead of refunding the fees.) While the operators stated the number of employees between 1 and 5, 2 operators stated that they were able to meet their operating expenses during the pandemic, while 11 operators stated that they could not meet their expenses. It was determined that 10 of the private sports operators were male, 3 were female and their age distribution was between 25 and 50 with an average of (M=38.2). 6 of the operators have education at Levels 3-4 and 7 of them have education at Levels 5-8.

## 3.3. Data Collection Tools

"Semi-structured interview" technique, one of the qualitative research methods, was employed in the study. The interview technique, which is a communication process based on asking and answering questions for a predetermined purpose, is one of the most preferred and oldest known data collection tools in qualitative research (Beycioğlu & Aslan, 2012). In the preparation of the semi-structured interview form, especially the literature review on the Covid-19 period was utilized, and the interview questions were finalized by interviewing with academicians who are experts in their fields. In qualitative research, interview questions can be theoretical questions that can be researched in different regions or with different examples, and when the research is specific to a particular region, it is possible to prepare questions related to a particular region, a particular people or a community (Best & Kahn, 2017).

The semi-structured interview form is composed of three sections. In the first part, there are questions about the personal information of the interviewed operator, in the second part, there are questions about the field of activity of the private sports business, and in the third part, there are five questions, four structured and one

unstructured interview questions. For the research, the necessary ethics committee decision dated 09.02.2022 and numbered 2022/2-7 from Mardin Artuklu University Ethics Committee and the necessary legal permissions were obtained from Batman Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports.

#### 3.4. Statistical Analysis of Data

In this study, descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) were used to analyze demographic data, and "descriptive analysis" was used to analyze qualitative data. The descriptive analysis was carried out in five stages as suggested by Miller et al. (2014): conducting the interview, creating summaries, creating a thematic schema, creating an extended schema, and drawing conclusions. In this context, first, the data obtained from the interview form were transferred to the word processing program and converted into summary texts suitable for analysis. Then, the main and sub-themes were determined and the data were defined according to these themes and explained as findings. In the last stage, the data related to the themes were interpreted and conclusions were drawn (Kıncal, 2015).

To ensure the internal validity of the research, the findings were reviewed and thematized separately by two experts in the field of sport business and management. The final version of the themes was prepared by the researcher in accordance with the opinions and suggestions of the experts. The data of the research were archived so that they could be studied by others. Data were collected in a detailed and focused manner as required by the research questions. The research questions were clearly communicated to the other party. The research findings are consistent with the data and are clearly linked to the data.

#### 4. Findings

In this part of the research; the findings obtained as a result of the analysis of qualitative data related to the question "How did the Covid-19 outbreak affect the private sports businesses in the province of Batman?" are presented and interpreted in line with the purpose of the research. In the interviews, it was determined that the findings obtained from the content analysis of how the participants evaluated the subject, what their thoughts were, what were the factors affecting their emotions, attitudes and feelings, the phenomena affecting their behaviors and the frequently repeated concepts and their answers to the questions were grouped under three main themes Figure 1.



Figure 1. Main themes identified in the research

The main themes are defined as "Financial Problems", "Psychological Problems" and "Uncertainty". The subthemes determined based on the main themes are presented in Figure 2.

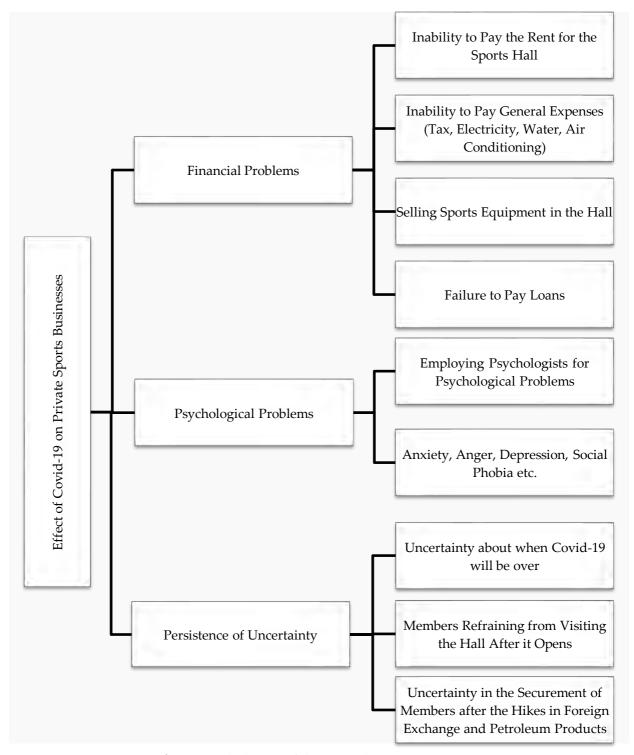


Figure 2. Sub-themes of the research

#### Main Theme-1: Financial Problems

The private sports operators who participated in the research stated that they did not have a precise prediction about the Covid-19 pandemic process, and that they had great financial difficulties due to the implementation of the curfew and the decision to temporarily close the halls completely due to the prolongation of the process, and that they had great difficulties in paying the hall rents, taxes, worker wages, pre-drawn loan payments or the installments of the purchased materials.

Operator O1 expressed his views on the subject as follows: I had to pay the rent, tax, electricity, water, natural gas expenses by taking out a loan. When it was time to pay the loan, I closed the previous loan by taking out another loan. The O5 operator also stated that he had economic difficulties in the same way as follows: My

biggest problem during the prolongation of the pandemic was rent. I had to sell some of my sports equipment to cover rent and other expenses. I could not take out a loan again because I had taken out a loan before. Although O7 operator stated that when he saw that the Covid-19 pandemic spread all over the world in a short time, he said that they could also be affected by this process and took the necessary measures accordingly, he stated that he had economic difficulties and expressed the following opinions: As in every sector, gyms were also negatively affected by the restrictions.

There was no decrease in our expenses for the months we were closed, but our income completely stopped. Table 2 presents the responses of private sports operators to the question about whether they received loans, support or any assistance to reduce or overcome the economic distress they experienced.

Government Support in the Scope of Pandemic Total Operators Loan O1, O2, O4, O9, O12 5 Tax Reductions 0 Rent Support O2, O3, O6, O7, O13 5 5 Short-Term Working Allowance O3, O4, O10, O11, O13 0 Postponement of Social Security Premium Debts Other Financial Supports (Grants, etc.) O5, O8, O11, O13 4

**Table 2.** Status of private sports operators receiving loans or support

When Table 2 is examined, it is observed that 3 (O1, O9, O12) of the businesses benefit from loans, 2 (O5, O8) from grants, 2 (O6, O7) from rental assistance, and 1 (O10) only from short-time working allowance. Enterprise I2 benefited from both loan and rent assistance, enterprise O4 benefited from both loan and short-time working allowance, enterprise O11 benefited from both short-time working allowance and grant assistance, enterprise O3 benefited from both rent and short-time working allowance, enterprise O13 benefited from both rent and grant and short-time working allowance.

#### Main Theme-2: Psychological Problems

Private sports operators stated that they experienced psychological problems to a great extent due to the pandemic. As a matter of fact, the operator O1, who sensed this psychological effect, tried to provide psychological support to the participants whose members were only women. Thinking that women's psychological problems would increase, he stated that they employed a psychologist at that time and answered the questions sent to them via social media. Operator O8 stated that they were both financially and psychologically depressed during the pandemic process, and operator O10 stated that we were very financially affected during the Covid-19 pandemic process.

Naturally, this situation caused us to lead a stressful life and our psychology deteriorated. Operators O9, O11 and O13 also stated that they were materially and emotionally affected by the pandemic and their psychology deteriorated due to the measures taken due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the closure of sports halls and the long duration of this closure, the stress caused by practices such as curfews and quarantine practices, and the economic difficulties experienced with it.

## Main Theme-3: Persistence of Uncertainty

With a decrease in Covid-19 cases, it was decided to open gyms in accordance with the rules set by the Ministry of Health. However, due to the fluctuations in the number of cases, they expressed their concern and worry about whether the operators would work at full capacity as follows;

O1 operator; We opened our hall with the decrease in the virus, but our concern continues. What affects us the most in the pandemic is the fluctuations in foreign currency and the hikes in electricity, natural gas and petroleum products. Therefore, there is complete uncertainty right now. O5 operator; we cannot receive new registrations due to the pandemic; we cannot foresee what lies ahead. The future for gyms is not very bright. Along with all these negativities, the increase in foreign currency has also increased our general expenses. O8 operator; Although everything has been increased, we have not increased our membership fees significantly. I hope to see the light at the end of the tunnel, but there is no light yet. O12 operator; We are worried about the situation. We were expecting support from the Ministry of Sports, but unfortunately that did not come. The successive increases in rent, natural gas and electricity have also forced us. At this rate, I will have to shut down my gym.

One of the entrepreneurs who wanted to turn the pandemic crisis into an opportunity was the operator of O3. This operator stated that he prepared opportunity packages for future registrations in order to turn the crisis into an opportunity during the period when the gym was closed, but since there was uncertainty about when the Covid-19 pandemic would end, he could not get the desired level of member registration from this step. Operators were asked the question "As an operator, what kind of a future awaits you after the Covid-19 pandemic process?" and the findings are provided in Table 3.

<b>Table 3.</b> Expectations of private sports operators after the Covid-19 pandemic
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Sub-themes	Findings	Operator		
	Concerns of citizens to play sports indoors	O1, O5, O6, O8, O9, O10, O13		
Anxiety-Concern	Sudden hikes in foreign exchange and petroleum products	O1, O4, O5, O8, O10		
	Hikes in rent, natural gas and electricity	O3, O4, O7, O10, O12		
	Low membership fees	O1, O4, O8, O10, O11		
	Increase in the number of cases	O5		
Instability	Prolonged process of opening and closing of sports halls	O11		
I camina I cocono	Implementing contemporary business methods	O2		
Learning Lessons from the Crisis	Taking measures against the pandemic and training staff	O13		
	Expectation of member growth after the pandemic	O6, O11, O13		
Hopefulness for the Future	Expert comments on the benefits of playing sports on			
	television and social media, emphasis on sports and	O11		
	healthy living			

Regarding the future expectations of private sports operators after the Covid-19 pandemic; 3 operators (O6, O11 and O13) have positive expectations. There is an expectation that after the sports halls start to operate at full capacity, there will be an increase in individuals who want to relieve the boredom and stress that occurred during the quarantine period, to eliminate the inactivity during this period and to continue to attend sports halls for a healthy life. 1 operator (O12) stated that they should learn lessons from the crisis they experienced and that they will implement modern business methods to eliminate the uncertainty about what to do when they face such negativities in the future.

The other 9 operators stated that they experienced economic difficulties during and after the pandemic. They also stated that they did not have positive expectations for the future due to the unexpected sudden increase in foreign exchange, natural gas and petroleum products and accordingly the prices of sports equipment increased 4-5 times, the rent, electricity, water, natural gas bills, which are general expenses, are very high, people prefer to do sports outdoors instead of the gym because they have not yet overcome the fear of going indoors, they could not increase the gym membership fees, they could not get the necessary support from the Ministry of Youth and Sports despite all these negativities. The answers they provided to the question "Were you able to offer different alternatives to your members during the period when your business was closed due to the Covid-19 outbreak?" during the interview with the operators are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** The situation of offering different alternatives to members by the operators during the period when the businesses were closed due to the Covid-19 outbreak

Sub-themes	Findings	Participant		
Ouline	Organizing live sessions via social media	O1, O5, O6, O7, O8, O10, O11		
Online Education Support	Psychologist, dietician and physiotherapist support	O1		
	Recommending the HissApp app	O7		
Supply of Sports Equipment	Lending portable sports equipment	O5		
Maintaining Communication	Phone calls, sending SMS,	O1, O5, O6, O7, O8, O10, O11		
with Members	communication via social media	01, 03, 06, 07, 08, 010, 011		

When Table 4. is examined, it is observed that 7 of the operators offer different alternatives to their members, and among these alternatives, different methods such as organizing live sessions via social media, sharing training videos showing simple exercise movements that can be performed at home or demonstrating the movements with alternative materials that can be found at home by the trainer himself, lending portable sports equipment to enable members to exercise at home, and organizing sessions with distance education and mobile applications are employed. It was observed that 6 of the operators did not offer any alternative to their members, but they gave additional time such as time freeze and additional time as long as the hall was closed. The alternatives offered to members by the operators during the period when private sports facilities were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic are summarized in Figure 3.

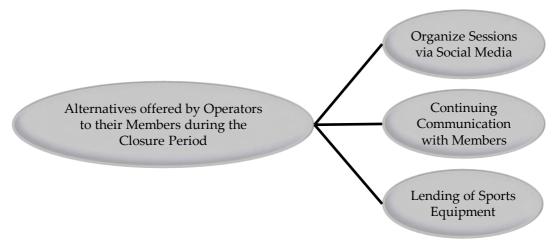


Figure 3. Alternatives offered by operators to their members during the closure period

#### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The fact that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought many uncertainties in every field from health to education, politics to international relations, economy to psychology has made risk and risk management issues important in societies (Tunç & Atıcı, 2020). In this study, which was designed as qualitative research, the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on private sports operators was evaluated, and it was determined that it had negative effects, especially financial, psychological problems and uncertainty in business management. Koçak & Kaya (2020) stated in their study that many sports organizations were canceled due to the Covid-19 outbreak, and thousands of athletes and sports clubs needed economic support to avoid bankruptcy. Bingöl et al. (2020), in their study titled the impact of Covid-19 on the sports sector; stated that sports clubs and businesses faced unforeseen economic problems during the Covid-19 period, Ağılönü & Göral (2021), stated that during the pandemic period, the tourism sector came to a standstill as in every sector, and water sports centers were negatively affected by this situation. It is even predicted that there may be a downsizing in the sports industry in the future (Hoş, 2020).

There is research evidence that the Covidien19 pandemic has had a negative impact on companies in sectors other than sports. Gümüş (2023) found that the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the turnover, profits, compulsory expenditure payments and employment of companies in the food and beverage sector. Yayla and Özer (2022) examined the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the 100 companies with the highest trading volume (BIST100), which are traded on the Borsa Istanbul. In their study, it was found that 70% of the companies had a decrease in efficiency ratios when comparing the 2020/2 period with the 2018/2 period, and 64% of the companies had a decrease in efficiency ratios when comparing the 2020/2 period with the 2019/2 period. Similarly, Zeytinoğlu & Önder (2023) and Şeker (2020) found that the announcement of the first case in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected about half of the firms in the BIST XKURY index, while return on assets and return on equity ratios increased in the post-coronavirus period, while current ratio and earnings per share decreased in the post-COVID period.

Within the scope of the pandemic, it is known that governments in different countries have supported the culture, arts, entertainment, recreation and sports sectors to overcome these difficulties (Khlystova et al., 2022). As a matter of fact, in order to minimize the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the country's economy in Turkey, a 100 billion lira "Economic Stability Shield" package was put into effect by the Presidency on March

18, 2020. In the following period, comprehensive support packages were implemented at regular intervals in order to minimize the negative effects of the pandemic on the economy, security, tourism, trade, working life and daily life (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı, 2021). All these measures adopted and the findings obtained from research confirm our research findings.

It has been observed that the unpredictability of when the pandemic will be over, the uncertainty of when the sports halls will be opened at full capacity, and the ongoing uncertainties such as the hesitancy of individuals to come to the sports halls when the sports halls are opened have led to the emergence of various psychological problems in the operators. Among the measures taken to combat Covid-19, the most psychologically severe one is the effect of inactivity and social isolation on physical and mental health during the quarantine process. Soysal (2020), in his study, states that within the scope of the measures taken to reduce the spread of the epidemic in our country, as in the whole world, social, cultural and artistic activities could not be carried out within the scope of the measures taken to reduce the spread of the epidemic, individuals' socialization opportunities were restricted, and as a result of the increase in social isolation, it brought psychological and physical health problems such as depression, anxiety, obesity. Aşkın et al. (2020) stated in their study that the Covid-19 pandemic, which threatens human health and life, has a psychological impact on individuals due to factors such as difficulty in providing basic needs such as health, safety, shelter, nutrition, prolonged quarantine period, inadequate social support, economic losses in the epidemic and changes in socio-economic status of individuals.

In their study, Kurt & Karaaziz (2021) found that the uncertainty of the course of the epidemic in the society and the possibility of irreparable consequences caused increased stress, fear and panic in individuals. Işıklı (2020) stated that during the pandemic period, social isolation and temporary closures cause psychological problems especially in families and individuals with low socio-economic status. Likewise, Bilge & Bilge (2020) determined in their study that the attitudes and behaviors of individuals changed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and psychological effects such as stress, anxiety, boredom, frustration, anger and loneliness emerged in individuals.

According to the results of the 3rd period of the Institut Publique de Sondage d'Opinion Secteur (IPSOS, 2020) "Coronavirus Outbreak and Society General Public Opinion Survey"; it was determined that the anxiety of individuals increased by 15 points from 79% to 94%. As a matter of fact, Soylu (2020), in his study on the sectoral effects of Covid-19 in the Turkish economy, determined that Covid-19 has social, social and psychological effects on individuals, especially on health. Araç et al. (2022), in their research examining the metaphorical perceptions of sports managers regarding the concept of Covid-19, determined that the Covid-19 pandemic was perceived by sports managers as a traumatic, anxious and restrictive obstacle in cognitive, affective, physical and social terms. The findings obtained from the studies support our research findings.

Today, businesses face global economic crises and the uncertainties created by these crises in a constantly changing environment. The most important issue for businesses in the face of changes, crises and uncertainties is the ability of companies to continue their activities, adapt to environmental changes and respond quickly to changing risks. The closest crisis and instability we are experiencing nowadays is observed in the atmosphere arising from the global Covid-19 pandemic. Along with the global economic crises experienced by businesses, it also brings uncertainties and concerns for the future. In such an environment, the most important issue for businesses is to ensure the continuity of their activities and to respond quickly to changing risks. Therefore, in times of crisis and uncertainty, companies should have the ability to act faster, take faster action and get results (Bircan, 2020). Businesses may not be able to realize their activities during periods of economic crisis. It is even possible for them to come to the brink of bankruptcy. In such cases, operators should take advantage of crises and try different methods. In fact, crises should be regarded as a stepping stone that increases the success of the business (Erol, 2010).

Although private sports operators experienced anxiety about the future, economic difficulties and psychological problems, they made their best efforts to support their members and to keep them doing sports during this process. In summary, it has been observed that when the sports halls are closed, the operators do not stop communicating with their members, they constantly support their members both by phone and through social media applications, they enable them to do their exercises at home, some operators provide psychologist, dietician and physiotherapist support to their members online, and some operators provide

support to their members by lending them portable sports equipment in the gym. Such practices not only kept the member-operator relationship alive, but also helped members maintain their health and fitness by exercising at home during the closure period.

In this study, in which the effects of the Covid-19 outbreak on private sports enterprises in Batman province were evaluated; it was concluded that they experienced problems under the main themes of "financial problems", "psychological problems" and "uncertainty". The theme of financial problems has gained weight due to the fact that private sports enterprises are most negatively affected economically, followed by the effects of psychological problems and uncertainty. When the sports industry is taken into consideration; active and passive sports participants, organizations, sports media, sports education services, sports equipment and clothing, sports facilities, sports management services and sponsors. At this point, it is expected that the measures taken and the process experienced during the Covid-19 period will also deeply affect private sports enterprises economically. Likewise, it is natural for private sports enterprises, whose main input and output is people, to experience socio-psychological problems due to stress, future anxiety, depression and future uncertainty in the face of economic losses and social isolation.

It is hoped that this research, which evaluates the condition of sports businesses serving in the private sector during the Covid-19 outbreak through the eyes of the operators themselves, will contribute to the foresight of the relevant parties, especially private sports businesses, about the financial, social and psychological problems they will experience in such crises in the future. In this context, the following recommendations have been developed.

- 1. Since private sports businesses generally operate indoors, they should take the necessary ventilation, hygiene and security measures at the highest level in their sports halls.
- 2. Businesses should be prepared to put alternative plans into effect in terms of measures to be taken for various reasons such as Covid-19 and similar epidemics, economic crisis, war, nuclear explosions.
- 3. Businesses should keep emergency action plans ready in advance that they can implement for their sports branches when they encounter similar incidents.
- 4. Sports clubs and halls that train athletes for the sports community should be financially supported by federations in order to be able to send athletes to competitions.
- 5. In order for operators to manage their costs effectively, efficiently and strategically, they should abandon the classical business management approach and manage their businesses with a professional and contemporary business management approach.
- 6. Support for all public-private sports clubs and enterprises, regardless of sports branch, should not only be expected from the central government, but should be supported by local governments and local economic forces.

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