

Crisis Management in Sports Organizations: The Case of Covid-19

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to reveal the economic problems that sports organizations may face in crisis management due to the emergence of Covid-19 epidemic disease and to present solutions by discussing the precaution taken against the crisis.

Sports organizations are the events accompanied by a program serving to conclude the management and administration of sports competitions and sporting events organized for sportive purpose such as seminars, meetings, panels, camps and similar sports activities.

In this sense, general economic conditions of the international sports organizations have been investigated, and the economic portfolios of local leagues have been revealed. Further, suggestions are made about the situations that clubs and countries may face since the organizations were canceled.

This is a descriptive research in which the existing situation was depicted and assessed. There view of the related literature was attempted to be provided through a systematic organization.

Consequently, despite the negative conditions that may be encountered economically, socially and culturally considering this pandemic affecting the world, it would be a right decision to delay the organizations since human health is of utmost importance. Also, we believe that what needs to be done as soon as the pandemic is taken under control should be planned in advance.

Keywords: Sports Organizations, Crisis Management, Covid-19, Pandemic

Introduction

The history of humanity witnesses the gorgeous achievements of science and technology while witnessing the wars, pandemics and natural disasters. Wars (World War I and II), epidemics and pandemics (Cholera, Plague, Spanish Flu, Corona virus and so on.), natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, fires and so on.) have led to consequences threatening the future of the human species, both regionally and globally and will continue to do (Nickol, Michaela, Kindrachuk&Jason, 2019). Indeed, these threats not only cause decreasing the human population but also causes political, economic, sociological and psychological problems. Organizations develop several strategies to respond to rapidly changing environment, technology, and health needs (Kayapali, 2020). If these events and phenomena are not managed well, the results may get worse. However, such crises are difficult to be dealt individually or socially but globally. Because the problem is a threat to humanity. In fact, such crises are a new test for mankind. There are problems that require people test what they knew, found, developed, and remember what they have forgotten and that need to be solved with the least loss. In addition, every crisis no matter in which field it appears enables humanity to become equipped for future by increasing their organizational skills more and more (Martini &Mariano, 2019).

Nowadays, humanity is facing a new disease pandemic. It is Covid-19. It emerged as a disease as one of the subfamilies of the *Coronaviridae* family which appeared in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province in China in December in 2019 and which caused diseases such as especially respiratory failure (WHO, 2020). This virus which causes pneumonia and does not respond to treatment and vaccines, was firstly named as "SARS-CoV-2".

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One of the main reasons why it was named as "SARS-CoV-2" was that in the 2000s and 2010s, other corona viruses called MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV from this family were revealed and it was anticipated that this new virus may be such a virus following SARS (Fox& Dan, 2020). The family of corona viruses which usually causes cold, flu and similar cases rather than fatal diseases in humans, rarely causes respiratory infections with a fatal risk. Corona viruses first began to appear in the 1960s (Caringly Yours, 2020).

This new corona virus which appeared in Wuhan was called "Covid-19" by the World Health Organization (WHO) in February in 2020 and WHO accepted this new corona virus as "Pandemic" disease in March 2020 (WHO, 2020). There are also 7 different human corona viruses that have been found out until now (CDC, 2020).

1. Human Corona virus 229E (HCoV-229E)
2. Human Corona virus OC43 (HCoV-OC43)
3. SARS-CoV
4. Human Corona virus NL63 (HCoV-NL63)
5. Human Corona virus HKU1 (HCoV-HKU1)
6. MERS Corona virus (MERS-CoV)
7. 2019-20 Corona virus (CoVID-19)

1. COVID-19 (2019-20 CORONAVIRUS)

Covid-19 is briefly an infectious virus that causes severe acute respiratory infections that affect people. Symptoms of Covid-19 have been identified as high fever, cough and respiratory distress. In severe cases, pneumonia, severe respiratory distress, kidney failure and death may occur. The incubation period of Covid-19 is generally between 2-14 days, but in some cases, it has been observed to extend to 24 days (Turkey Minister of Health, 2020).

1.1. Covid-19's Worldwide Status

According to the information provided by the World Health Organization which is last updated on 15 July 2020, there are 13.119.239 patients in the world who were diagnosed with Covid-19. During the process from the first date of Covid-19 up to present, there have been 573.752 deaths worldwide due to this virus. This pandemic, which spread to all continents except Antarctic continent, has been observed in almost 202 countries in total. The table (Table1.)below depicts the information obtained from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020).

However, the information provided by World Health Organization changes almost every day. Because the spread of the Covid-19 is increasing day by day. According to their report prepared by the World Health Organization, It took 67 days from the first reported case to reach 100,000 cases, 11 days for second 100,000 cases, and just four days for the third 100,000 cases and two days for the next 100,000 cases (WHO, 2020).

As a result of this report, it was seen that the spreading speed of the virus is fast and in this respect it is vital and urgent to take necessary precautions. For this reason, governments around the world have also warned their citizens not to go out if it is not necessary.

Table 1. Status of Covid-19 across different countries

Countries	Number of cases	Number of deaths
USA	3.344.783	135.053
Brazil	1.884.967	72.833
India	936.181	24.309
Russia	739.947	11.614
Peru	330.123	12.054
Chile	319.493	7.069
Mexico	304.435	35.491
UK	290.137	44.830
S.Africa	287.796	4.172
China	85.677	4.649
Turkey	214.001	5.382

Note: Data from WHO. <https://covid19.who.int/>

As it is illustrated in the table above, although the Covid-19 first appeared in China, it has surrounded the world especially Europe and North & South America. In addition, the number of cases and deaths is increasing day by day.

2. Sports Organizations and Crisis Management

There are many reasons that negatively affect sports organizations around the world. Regional or global wars, bad weather conditions, terrorist attacks, political conflicts and epidemics can be given as examples. Covid-19, which is one of these negative reasons, has cancelled the sports organizations and caused a global crisis in the world. Sports organizations are the events or practices accompanied by a program serving to conclude the management and administration of sports competitions and sporting events organized for sportive purpose such as seminars, meetings, panels, camps and similar sports activities (Devecioglu 2003).

The crisis literally refers to an unstable situation that needs intervention. The crisis is a situation which threatens an organization's high-level goals, sometimes risks the life of the organization and requires immediate response and in which the organization's crisis prediction and prevention mechanisms are inadequate (Can, 1997). Covid-19 has taken on a form that will threaten sports organizations as in every field all around the world.

Olympics is one of the most comprehensive sports organizations in the world. This can be explained by the participation number of the countries, the budgets spent for the Olympics and the importance of image and prestige in the name of the host countries.

It was inevitable that Covid-19, which first appeared in December 2019 and was recognized as a pandemic (transcontinental epidemic) by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020, would directly and indirectly affect 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Indeed, because of this virus, the games have been announced to be delayed until 2021 (23 July - 8 August).

There may be many reasons for crisis situations that may occur in sports organizations and therefore many suggestions have been proposed in the literature to solve these crises or problems. To illustrate, in one of these suggestions, O'Beirne and Ries in their study point out to prevention, reaction and renewal factors (O'Beirne & Ries, 1999). In Figure 1, this study was attempted to be explained with the help of the Venn Diagram.

Another researcher who dealt with the issue of crisis in sports organizations is Duke. He claimed that there are four basic things that can be done in a crisis situation (Duke, 2002). These basic cases are stated as in the following ones.

1. Preparing for the Crisis
2. First Reaction
3. Continuous and Regulatory Action & Reaction
4. Evaluation and Pursuit.

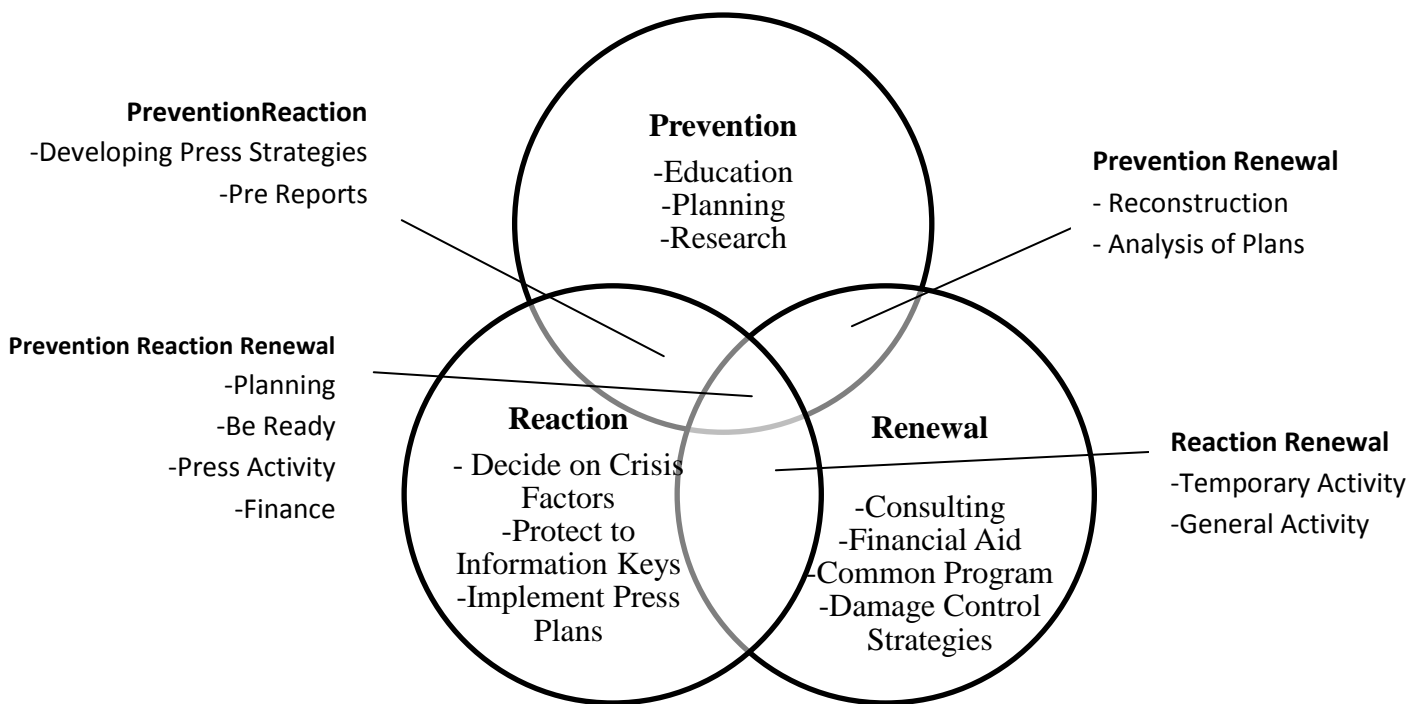


Figure 1. Crisis Management Model in Sports

In the present research, the effect of Covid-19 on sports organizations with in the frame of crisis management models and the possible effects of this virus in the future will be explained and also precautions and solutions to these effects will be provided.

3. The Effects Of Covid-19 On Sports Organizations

In this part of the study, the effects of Covid-19 on the sports organizations to be held in 2010 and the status of these sports organizations are examined within the social and economic frame work.

Covid-19 directly and indirectly affected sports and sports organizations. Covid-19 is transmitted very easily and quickly. Therefore, it caused postponement of sports organizations and almost all leagues worldwide. The sports administrators of the countries initially played sports competitions without spectators. However, they suspended sports events for health and safety measures.

Table 2. Sports organizations affected by Covid-19

Branches	Suspended Organizations			Postponed Organizations			Canceled Organizations	
Football	2020	Asian Cup,	Cup,	EURO 2020	2021 Jun			
				Champions League, UEFA European League	2020 Jun.	X		
	2021	World Cup,	Club	Copa America	2021			
				National Leagues.	Libertadores Sudamericana	2020 May	X	
Basketball	NBA, Euroleague, Euro Cup, National Leagues.			X	X		X	
Volleyball	CEV League National Leagues.			X	X		X	
Tennis	X				ATP & WTA Tournaments	2020 7 Jun.		X
Athletics	Diamond League			International Marathon	Mersin	2020 Oct.		X
Motor Sports	Le Mans 24, Australia, Bahrain, Vietnam, China, Spain and the Netherlands Grand Prix.			X	X			Monaco Grand Prix
Ice Hockey	NHL and National Leagues.			X	X			German Ice Hockey League
Olympics	X				2020 Olympics	Tokyo 2021 23Jul-8Aug.		X

Covid-19 pandemic not only negatively affects all markets in the world but also deeply affects the sports market. In Table 2, we see that many sports organizations, especially the Olympics, were either canceled or postponed to another date. This situation affects clubs negatively; The clubs, which are deprived of tickets, stadiums, fans and broadcasting revenues, also cause serious depreciation in the stock market. Table 3 shows the changes of football clubs in the stock exchange around the world.

Table 3. Football clubs stock exchange percentage changes

Clubs	% Change By Month						
	January 2020	February 2020	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	Jun 2020	Total
Manchester United	-6.82%	-5.82%	-13.38%	11.69%	-1.07%	-4.81%	-20.57
Juventus	-8.40%	-15.06%	-19.77%	14.81%	2.34%	0.54%	-26.254
Borussia Dortmund	0.23%	-12.87%	-29.21%	18.11%	-1.32%	-8.91%	-34.375
Olympique Lyon	-1.31%	-4.30%	-20.42%	-4.78%	2.28%	1.79%	-25.49
AFC Ajax	-5.61%	-11.14%	-17.83%	-3.05%	-1.68%	8.25%	-28.88
Benfica	1.10%	-11.06%	-14.63%	-8.18%	-11.55%	4.48%	-38.60
Fenerbahce	18.38%	-30.88%	-26.01%	17.47%	14.97%	6.42%	-12.99
Besiktas	4.49%	-1.56%	-22.62%	9.74%	14.95%	22.76%	23.265
Galatasaray	15.27%	60.68%	-40.96%	16.22%	31.40%	-14.16%	43.35

Note: www.investing.com Retrieved: 30 Jun 2020

According to the data obtained from 30 Jun 2020, undoubtedly the biggest factor of the losses is Covid-19 crisis. This tables how only the depreciation of the above football clubs in the stock market. However, because of Covid-19, Sports Clubs revenue sources such as broadcast, tickets, fans and match day revenues have been eliminated.

Table 4 shows the sorts of organizations held in North America and the annual broadcast costs of these organizations (Moody’s 2020). These broadcast contracts, which cost high amounts, will make the media sector and clubs financially difficult due to the suspension of leagues.

Table 4. The average annual magnitude of broadcast agreement for various sports organizations

Sports Organizations	Cost / Annually
NBA (Basketball)	2.6 Billion\$
Olympics	1.3 Billion\$
MLB (Baseball)	1.4 Billion\$
NCAA (American College Sports)	1.1 Billion\$
NASCAR (Motor Sports)	810 Million\$
NHL (Ice-Hockey)	200 Million\$

As it is induced from the table, the pandemic all over the world causes totally about 7.5-billion-dollar sports organizations held just in North American Continent to be unsustainable.

Graphic 1. 10 football clubs having the highest income of live broadcasting in 2019 (Million €)



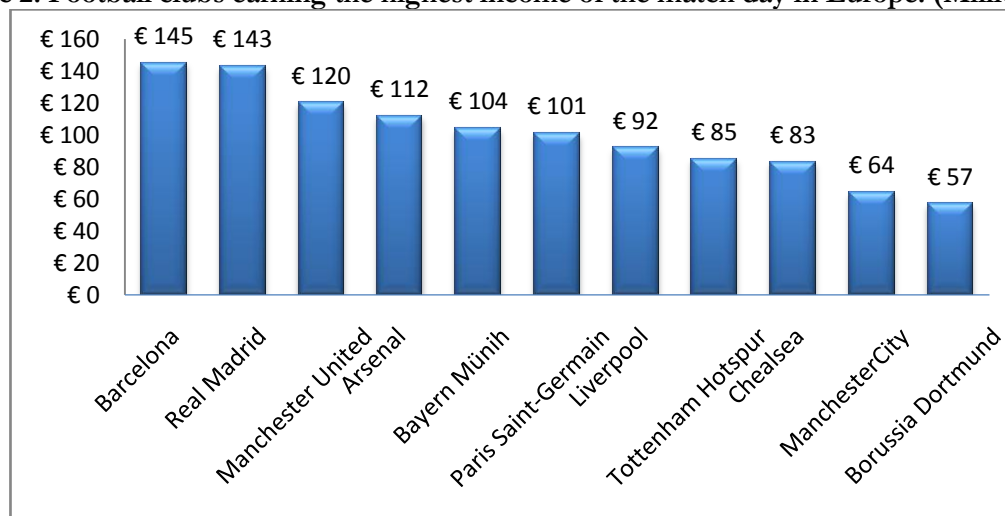
Football has the max number of spectators throughout the world. In addition, football is the largest economy among the sports branches worldwide. Therefore, the Covid-19 crisis has most affected the football industry. In Graphic 1, there are 10 football sports clubs which have live broadcasting comes the most (Deloitte 2020). Absolutely, clubs will be deprived of the financial gain due to the deferment of leagues. They will probably recoup the loss with the help of credits or pay decreases.

Table 5. The averages of spectators in the selected European leagues during the last 2 seasons

Leagues	2017/18 Season The Averages of Spectators	2018/19 Season The Averages of Spectators	The Averages of Stadium Capacity	Occupancy Rates in Regard to Capacity
Bundesliga	44.646	43.449	48.696	%89
Premier League	38.297	38.168	39.434	%97
La Liga	26.939	26.843	36.348	%74
Serie A	24.767	25.237	40.055	%62
League 1	22.524	22.799	32.710	%70
Dutch Eredivisie	19.001	17.964	20.829	%86
Russian PL	13.956	16.801	31.988	%53
Super League	12.821	13.939	28.146	%50
Portuguese PL	11.967	11.639	22.598	%52

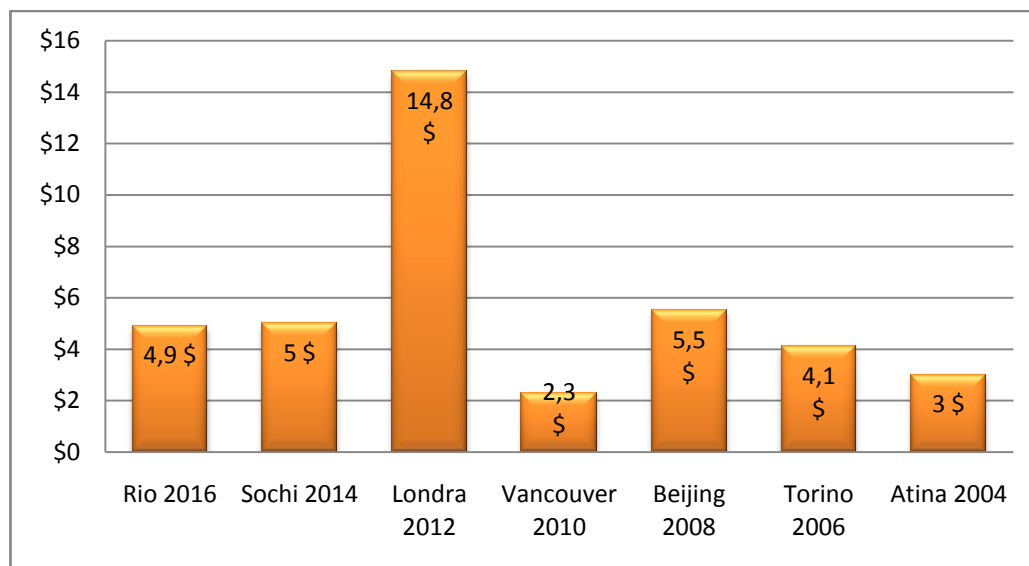
In Table 5, the averages of spectators of European Leagues and occupancy rates in regard to capacity are given (Ekolig, 2019). When it comes to Graphic 2, it is clear that clubs without spectators due to suspense leagues are deprived of incomes of the match day as well (Ekolig, 2019). In short, the crisis leads the football clubs to serious financial losses.

Not only does the pandemic crisis which is the subject of our study have economic effects but also social effects. The outstanding one of them is that people keep away from sports and social activities as a result of pending leagues of football and basketball addressing to a large number of audiences.

Graphic 2. Football clubs earning the highest income of the match day in Europe. (Million €)

As mentioned in other parts of the study, authorities decided matches to be played without spectators before suspending organizations. However, sports competitions without spectators are not suitable for sport itself in terms of clubs financial situations, watching pleasure, and also players motivations. As a matter of fact, sports organizations have been suspended, postponed, or cancelled in order to protect the health of players, sports managers, technical committees, staff inside and outside of stadiums since the pandemic has rapidly become widespread.

Graphic 3. The costs of actual sports, Olympic games 2004-2016 (Billion\$, Dollar Base Year: 2009)



In Graphic 3, we observe actual sporting costs of the summer and winter Olympics held between 2004 and 2016 expect for private costs such as substructure costs of highway, railway, and airport, of improving accommodation, and trade investments (Moody's, 2016). The extent of financial losses of Tokyo hosting the organization will absolutely clear when it is taken into consideration that the costs of only actual sports have been 5 billion dollars during the last two Olympics.

4. Conclusion

The study has been carried out on the purpose of indicating possible economic problems while sports organizations are managing the crisis after the pandemic has broken out and on the purpose of providing with solutions by discussing current precautions. The results have been listed below. Covid-19 was considered as a pandemic by The World Health Organizations in March, 2020. Its attack rate is really excessive. Thus, sports organizations have been suspended, postponed and cancelled. It keeps uncertainty when the pandemic comes to an end or when a treatment is invented. WHO asserts that it takes one year (WHO, 2020).

Time is running out day by day for sports competitions such as national leagues which are held annually, in addition, it is impossible to make a decision when pending sports organizations will be held due to the mentioned obscurities. There is no doubt that especially players will seriously be lack of performance and motivation as a result of the pending period even if the pending leagues continue under required healthy and safety precautions. It is a possibility that sports clubs and players with a significant tempo will be affected badly by Covid-19 which is unusually experienced and will be unable to gain the same tempo because of losing motivation and performance after the pending period. Even if leagues are restarted, clubs and players should be allowed to get ready for a while in order to avoid injuries. In this case, managers of sports clubs had better manage the pandemic crisis properly and effectively during the pending period. Moreover, club managers had better observe mental states of players and if it is necessary, they had better provide players with psychological support with the help of experts both during and also after the crisis of Covid-19.

The pandemic, Covid-19 has put governments into action. In addition, it has done harm to all of the continents on which there is life. Commissioners have warned citizens to stay at home and they have pursued such kind of policies. The ending of the pandemic does not mean that the crisis on sport will also come to an end. The faced economic and social matters during the pandemic are likely to keep going after the pandemic. Because people might not want to come together in masses and not to attend in any sports organizations although essential healthy and safety precautions are taken even after the pandemic is over. Ones of sports organizations which are prone to be affected negatively by the situation are 2020 EURO Cup and 2020 Tokyo Olympics which have been postponed until next year. In advance, the sports organizations with giant budgets had better take necessary precautions by means of the crisis management so as to prompt a large number of tourists to participate in the events.

In the light of these, it is clear that managers of the federation and sports clubs, most notably managers of the sports unit of governments have lots of responsibilities. After the pandemic, Covid-19 an unusual case all around the world is over, they should change the world back ordinary circumstances by crisis plans and information which is shared respectively with players within themselves and with audiences keeping up with

sports competitions. That's just possible by the crisis management which is planned effectively. In this period, it is necessary for ministries, federations and clubs of sports to set up crisis desks and make solution suggestions according to the course of the pandemic in an attempt to plan and reshape the future.

The data about why the virus has been declared as a pandemic is given in Table 1. It has a capacity of spreading in the manner of exercising control over all the world within a very short time. The situation does not enable sports organizations to keep going as at the natural pace of life. In the example of summer Olympics such as Rio Olympic Games in which roughly 7.5 million tickets are sold, the fact that one person has a potential of infecting approximately 625 people with the virus makes impossible to hold Tokyo 2020 even without spectators. Because 10.500 athletes attend Rio Olympic Games from 206 different countries, in Tokyo 2020, the number of participants is estimated up to hundreds of thousands with staff of the committee of the organization, volunteer workers, trainers, technical teams, national and foreign press. The number of participants makes impossible to hold the organization even without spectators. Hence, that's a correct choice by IOC to postpone the organization until 2021. In table 2, we can observe in details a lot of sports organizations which have been cancelled or postponed such as football, basketball, tennis, athleticism, motor sports, ice-hockey.

Football has a significant economy especially among branch-oriented organizations all around the world apart from NBA in America. In table 3, it is analyzed that prime teams of major leagues in the world fall by 40% on the stock market due to the cancellation of leagues. When live broadcasting incomes of clubs are examined in Graphic 1, it is the subject that clubs with earnings the most have roughly a-223 million-dollar income. The cancellation of competitions will result in a substantial decrease in broadcasting incomes of clubs.

Another option is to have matches played without spectators besides postponing them. The option is able to avoid clubs from losing broadcasting incomes, but it will cause organizations to be deprived of spectators who are the spirits of sport and it will cause sense of watching to decrease as well as depriving of the based-spectators incomes given in Table 5 and Graphic 1. When we analyze the averages of spectators in prime European Leagues of the last two seasons in Table 5, we infer that the leagues appealing to maximum spectators are Bundesliga with 44.047 spectators and Premier League with 38.232 spectators. In terms of occupancy rates in regards to stadium capacity, British Clubs come first by 97 %. It means that German and British Leagues are two ones to be affected the most by being deprived of spectators. When the data about European Clubs with the highest incomes of matches is examined, it is concluded that clubs earning the highest incomes from spectators are Barcelona with 145 million €, Real Madrid with 143 million € and Manchester United with 120 million €. The fact leads them to be the first ones to get damaged by having matches played without spectators or cancelling tournaments in terms of incomes from spectators.

When we analyze actual sporting costs of the summer and winter Olympics held between 2004 and 2016 except for private costs such as substructure costs of highway, railway, and airport, of improving accommodation, and trade investments in relation to organizations of Olympic Games, we infer that actual sporting expenses have been about 5 billion\$ in Rio 2016 and Sochi 2014 (Moody's, 2016). Japan has postponed its expectations within the scope of Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games until 2021 since it has not received the fruits of the preparation for the organization in 2020. While the number of TV viewers of Olympics held between 2002 and 2018 approximately rose to 3.1 billion, 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games were watched by about 2 billion people. Further, TV incomes of the last two Olympics (2018 Pyeongchang and 2016 Rio), on average, were 700 million\$ (Moody's, 2020). It is an undeniable fact that the postponement of major and costly organizations like Olympics influences negatively not only the financial budget and the sports sector but also many sectors such as tourism, transportation and accommodation in the sense of economy. In countries where sports organizations are held, the sector of tourism is affected badly by the number of tourists due to the postponement or the cancellation of organizations, the sectors of transportation and accommodation are affected badly by possible tourists who cancel transportation tickets and hotel reservations, the food sector is affected badly by possible tourists who do not spend money to eat, to drink and to have fun as they do not come to the country. How institutive sectors benefit from Olympic Games can be listed in the way of adds/TV, food and drinks, payment operators, renting a car, airports, the construction sector, and industries (Moody's, 2016).

Shortly, it is inescapable that a crisis on sport and sports organization has social and economic side effects, too. The side effects have impacts on tourism, transportation, food and so on besides the sports sector. When the first virus cases of the countries with major football leagues and later, their decisions of cancelling leagues are examined, it is found out that France (League 1- 52 days), Italy (Serie A- 38 days), Germany (Bundesliga- 38 days), United Kingdom (Premiere League- 42 days), and Spain (La Liga- 41 days) were too late to

take precautions. It is the gospel truth that the risk factor has significantly risen because they have had matches played with spectators for almost one month. As economic-social and cultural aspects of football were considered, human health was of secondary importance. Thus, they planned organizations to keep going. They made the decision of postponement only after the pandemic reached to a significant level. It is here by a matter of managerial negligence because it has likely resulted in significant increases in the virus cases by means of thousands of spectators and votaries displaying contact-based joy of shows.

The spectator factor is the most important element of sports organizations. It is assumed that it is essential to delay sports organizations indefinitely until the pandemic is brought under absolute control with regards to human health in spite of a significant economic loss all over the world, social-cultural hunger, people's deprivation of sport which is one of the major hobbies. The related unit managing sports organizations should arrange methods and plans to minimize effects of the crisis with all of the partners including health professionals in regard to the natural flow of the pandemic. Already now, a, b, c plans can be arranged by setting up crisis desks in which organization committees, delegates of athletes, scientists, delegates of written and visual media, referees, trainers and soon have a part. The plans should be specified in the short, medium and long term in regard to the flow of the pandemic. Giving an example for football, if the pandemic is brought under control within one or two months, leagues can be immediately restarted and played on week days and weekends. If controlling takes more time, holiday can be declared after leagues and they can be played in summer. If it needs much more time, leagues can be registered as they stands and the averages of current UEFA scores of the last five years of teams which will represent the league in European Competitions can be taken into consideration.

Sport has a substantial role for an individual to become socialized owing to the feature of sport which is a social activity leading him/her to attend dynamic and social circles. Considering that sport is mostly a collective activity in modern societies, individuals interested in sport have a social relation with various groups of people via sports activities. In other words, sport supports people in making new friends, strengthening friendship, and socializing. Sport is a vital source of chatting not only for athletes but also for spectators and watchers (Caha, 1999). When it is considered that individuals who have only a sports social circle will likely have no social life due to the cancellation of sports organizations, e-sports activities can be brought into the fore front so as to prevent possible mental diseases. Until the pandemic is brought under control, sports programs can broadcast fragments of previous sports organizations nostalgically. The point should not be forgotten that sport has a vital role in social mental development of individuals and that sport is the easiest way of activating individuals socially and psychologically. Because people are able to interact with others having different ideas from different cultures by coming together thanks to sport in many different environments. Sport is, therefore, one of the easiest way for people both to socialize and also to express themselves. During the period, individuals should be trained how to do exercises at home on the purpose of avoiding psychological and physiological diseases. In this respect, the awareness of societies should be raised with the help of required sports equipments.

As a consequence, in terms of managing the crisis properly, it gains more and more importance that authorities should search for ways to get rid of the crisis with minimal losses, individuals should help them by obeying the decisions of authorities and they should cooperate with one another during the period regarding the whole humanity.

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