

Government Initiatives and Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic: The Case of Turkey



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Abstract COVID-19, a type of Coronavirus, has taken over the entire world and is threatening thousands of people's lives. Therefore, the World Health Organization (henceforth WHO) has announced that COVID-19 is now included in the pandemic diseases group. Governments around the world have adopted various policies to combat the pandemic. During this process, it has been observed that policy transfer between countries has improved significantly, and cooperation and solidarity have become prominent. Turkey is one of the most affected countries by the COVID-19 pandemic due to its high population density and movement and being a center for tourism, foreign trade, and transfer flights. The foremost aim of the study is to scrutinize the steps put forward by the Turkish government in terms of various policy fields. This study reveals that the Turkish government, with all its bodies, makes a valuable and promising effort during the pandemic process in different policy areas.

Keywords COVID-19 · Pandemic · Turkey · Public administration · Public policy actors · Health policy

1 Introduction

In recent years, the world has had to tackle severe transnational crises such as terrorism, global warming, and migration; now, it faces a new virus crisis following MERS and SARS. The situation has also been difficult for supranational organizations, which have emerged as a solution proposal for such supranational troubles. It cannot be said that international actors, who have previously dealt with terrorist attacks, global migration problems, and the resolution of humanitarian crises, have risen up to the challenge of the pandemic process.

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The novel strain of Coronavirus called COVID-19 was first detected in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (WHO, 2020a), where pneumonia cases of unknown cause were reported in a seafood market. On January 12, 2020, the WHO announced that the cause of these complaints was a new strain of Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) (TÜBA, 2020, p. 15). 2019-nCoV-induced pneumonia was officially named as novel coronavirus pneumonia in China on February 8, 2020. This new virus has become a global problem in a short time and has become a rapidly spreading health problem that knows no boundaries (Carter & May, 2020). On February 11, 2020, the WHO announced a name for the new coronavirus disease: COVID-19. On March 11, COVID-19 was named a global pandemic (WHO, 2020b).

The General Secretariat of the United Nations urged governments to make efforts to combat the COVID-19 epidemic on March 19, 2020 (Zhou et al., 2020, p. 78). As of August 24, 2020, COVID-19 is a public health emergency of international concern that has caused 865,154 confirmed deaths and 26,171,112 confirmed cases in over 216 countries (WHO, 2020c). Therefore, all governments need to develop early recovery plans, strengthen community-level preparedness, and build a strong base for the health and economic sectors (Bai et al., 2020). The European Union (henceforth EU), for example, focused on public health and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 (Djalante et al., 2020, p. 2). The EU policies, which are allegedly insufficient for member countries, have faced backlash in countries such as Italy and Spain. As opposed to an active decision-making force, the WHO's position as a reactive data gathering source will also be one of the issues discussed in the future after the pandemic. It can be argued that after this process, the formative effects of international actors regarding their national policies will be re-evaluated.

During the pandemic, having nationalistic orientations prioritizes local interests and poses risks to global cooperation (TÜBA, 2020, p. 29). It is conceivable that the international organizations that have allegedly failed during this period will face more challenges by this orientation. Furthermore, national public administrations have been affected by COVID-19 due to its multidimensional nature since it is an all-encompassing problem directly related to many different policy areas. Besides the health sector and health policies, other topics such as economic, commercial, security, administrative, and technological aspects of the pandemic have become constant discussion topics. Furthermore, a variety of studies were conducted from different perspectives (see Babaoğlu & Kulac, 2020; Dodds et al., 2020; Javaid et al., 2020; Lazzarini & Musacchia, 2020; Melo & Cabral, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020; Shaw et al., 2020; Ting et al., 2020).

Turkey is not immune to the discussions as mentioned above. During the pandemic period, production capacity in aid programs is an essential arbiter of success in the health system regarding the COVID-19 management process. Turkey was one of the earliest countries in the world to take precautions regarding COVID-19. Turkey has taken measures to determine the epidemic source, diagnose it, and develop treatment methods and follow-up. Actions have been taken, such as training health personnel, providing protective equipment and hygiene, limiting population movements to prevent contamination, and quarantine and observation practices for healthy people. (TÜBA, 2020, p. 30).

As Turkey is a significant transfer center between Europe and Asia and a leading tourist destination, it is overwhelmingly worth examining the Turkish government initiatives and responses to COVID-19 pandemic to gain a better insight into the future projection of the pandemic. Moreover, this pioneering study attempts to demonstrate the reactions of the new government system of Turkey to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, we examine Turkey's process management in terms of public administration and its activities in the context of fighting against COVID-19. To do so, we first scrutinize the spread process of the virus in Turkey and then move on to evaluating the decisions and practices. To this end, Turkey's policy responses to COVID-19 from public administration and policy will be discussed. In this framework, the Turkish government's legal, institutional, and administrative steps will be examined in terms of various policy fields.

2 The Methodology and Limitation of the Study

Countries have developed policies and programs under different headings to combat the epidemic. In this process, policies can be titled as Emergency Plans, Surveillance Policies, Health Services, Prevention Studies in Society, Continuity of Basic Services and Improvement Policies, Emergency Communication Policies, Research, Development and Evaluation (Yıldız & Uzun, 2020). This study is an effort to put forth the initiatives and the Turkish government's responses in the pandemic process. To this end, it aims to scrutinize Turkey's policies in the policy fields of health, technology, education, and economy. Also, issues such as preparations before the pandemic, policy actors playing a role in the pandemic process, and general measures are examined in the study. As the study's methodology, the relevant actors' official statements, legal regulations, and academic studies were reviewed in detail within the framework of the mentioned subjects and objectives. The authors shaped the analysis of higher education policies during the pandemic process due to their observations and experiences in higher education institutions they are affiliated. As with any study, it is possible to express that there are several limitations to this study. The study's most important limitation is that the pandemic process is still ongoing, and the measures are taken, and the policies followed can be changed very often. The determinations and evaluations made throughout the study are valid for the study's period. This study was conducted between 2020 and 2021, and therefore the findings and analysis cover and are limited to this period.

3 Case Study: Implementation of Polices in Turkey

The governance mechanisms, policymaking dynamics, and the countries' international engagement levels are the critical elements in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments in different parts of the world such as Asia, Europe, and

North America respond to the COVID-19 pandemic from a global to a national level. In this manner, various legal, lifestyle, health, and science recommendations are offered to contribute to disaster resilience (Djalante et al., 2020, pp. 4–5).

The USA is the most affected country by the crisis as of September 26, 2021, with total cases reaching 42,770,371 and total deaths 684,884 (CDC, 2021). Carter & May (2020) state that the USA's Trump administration being inconsistent in its targets and discourses about combating COVID-19 is one reason for the failure. In Turkey, the first cases were seen on March 10, 2020 (HaberTürk, March 11, 2020) and was followed by clear political rhetoric on March 11. In this process, Turkey has provided medical aid to nearly 80 countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Italy, and has taken a leading role in global solidarity in fighting against the pandemic (Imga & Ayhan, 2020, p. 5). The most important reason for this consistent and clear stance is the pandemic influenza action plan prepared in 2019 (Ministry of Health-Turkey, 2019).

The contribution of academics to the COVID-19 process is crucial to understanding policy formulations from various perspectives. The Turkish government can carry out the process more functionally by taking advantage of the determinations and analyses put forward by academics this way. Many scientific papers are addressing the COVID-19 from many different angles such as COVID-19 in children (Tezer & Demirdağ, 2020), the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Turkish economy (Açıköz & Günay, 2020), the evacuation of the citizens from different countries (Şencan & Kuzi, 2020), the protective measures for healthcare personnel (Ağalar & Engin, 2020), and the quarantine and its legal dimensions (Kılıç et al., 2020), pandemic's effect on digitalization of higher education in Turkey (Babaoğlu & Kulaç, 2021a), security issues during the pandemic (Babaoğlu & Kulaç, 2021b), Turkey's general policies for struggling against coronavirus based problems, (Kulaç & Babaoğlu, 2020), crisis management during the pandemic (Yıldız & Uzun, 2020), cooperative strategies against the pandemic (Duran, 2020), Turkey's combating policy and successful sides against this crisis (Presidency's Directorate of Communications, 2021) and the reflections on the pandemic in the future of the world have been analyzed (Şeker, Özer & Korkut, 2020).

Studies on pandemic preparedness plans in Turkey began in 2004 and were completed in 2006. The Avian Influenza and Human Pandemic Preparedness and Response (Amp) (World Bank, 2006) plan was carried out in the same year. The Pandemic Influenza National Preparation Plan was completed in 2019, in line with the previous outbreak experiences and the recommendations of the ECDC (European Center for Disease Prevention and Control) and WHO (Ministry of Health-Turkey, 2019, pp. 4–5). In this context and the preventive and protective services, preparations have been made to fortify health and laboratory services. Besides, capacity studies have been carried out to produce medicines and vaccines (Ministry of Health-Turkey, 2019, p. 3).

After the first COVID-19 patient in Turkey was notified on March 11, 2020, nearly 15 million tests were performed in total. Between 04 – 10 September 2021, 2,110,541 tests were performed. The total number of cases in the weekly report of this, the daily

Table 1 Weekly summary table of COVID-19 in Turkey (04/09/2021–10/09/2021)

Indicator	Rate/Number	Indicator	Rate/Number
Number of test	2,110,541	Rate of first dose of vaccine (by population)	86,28%
Number of new patients	155,346	Rate of dose dose of vaccine (by population)	70,59%
Number of deaths	1,825	Total number of vaccination	108,305,902
Number of new hospitalizations	7,902	Population of Turkey	83,614,000
Total number of patients	6,613,976	Rate of first dose of vaccine (by population)	86,28%
Total number of deaths	59,384	Rate of dose dose of vaccine (by population)	70,59%

Source Ministry of Health-Turkey (2021). *Weekly COVID-19 Situation Report of Turkey*

number of cases and vaccination of the second week of September 2021, are shown below (Table 1).

In total, 800,000 laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patients have been reported in Turkey. All laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patients' death rate was 2,70% (The Ministry of Health-Turkey, 2020). The total number of doctors in Turkey is 164,594, and the number of nurses is 198,465. The number of patients per doctor is 498,2, while the OECD average is 341,3. The number of patients per nurse is 431,2; the OECD average is 102 (TÜBA, 2020, p. 34).

3.1 Policy Actors

Turkey is also in cooperation with official, unofficial, and international policy actors within its strategy framework during the pandemic. Turkey has systematically followed a road map in the COVID-19 process and implemented regulations step by step (see TÜBA, 2020, pp. 30–31; Tufan & Kayaaslan, 2020, p. 501). In this context, Turkey adopted an incremental decision-making model while shaping its pandemic combat policy. In the incremental model (see Anderson, 1979; Birkland, 2016; Dye, 2013; Lindblom, 1959), minor and additional measures are taken to have a stable crisis management process. Following the first case in China, a Scientific Board was established by the Ministry of Health in Turkey. The Scientific Board, which is an advisory committee, has played a functional role in determining the measures to be taken in the pandemic process through frequent meetings. Composed of members with different medical specialties, the Scientific Board has made significant contributions in raising public awareness about the pandemic. Coordination, a principle in administrative science, has been prominent in the Turkish government's policy of combating the pandemic. Turkey's public body, which provides services in different policy areas, has worked in harmony during the pandemic process. Ministries and

the Presidency Policy Councils have been involved in the policymaking process on issues that fall within their jurisdiction. The mismanagement practices experienced between the government, scientists, and the public in Italy (Ruiu, 2020, p. 7), which led to policy failure, have not been observed in Turkey. In this manner, the decisions taken in the process of combating the pandemic in Turkey are formulated based on scientific data, and the process is progressing successfully with generous support from the public.

When Turkey's policy of combating COVID-19 is examined, it is observed that different practices have been implemented on a case-by-case basis in each province. Provincial pandemic boards convened under the governor's chairmanship and attended by the chief hospital physicians have had the authority to make province-specific decisions. Therefore, governors determine the measures to be taken in provinces, taking the population density and the number of cases into consideration. The establishment of the Fidelity Social Support Groups under the district administrations' authority has provided significant benefits for the citizens over 65 years of age during the pandemic period. In this context, the needs of citizens over the age of 65, such as shopping and health check-ups, have been met by the Fidelity Social Support Groups (Yıldız, 2020).

Local governments also have an essential role in the pandemic process. It has been observed that different local governments produce other solutions to similar problems and waste resources, primarily due to the issues of coordination between local governments and the central government. For example, local governments used intensive resources to disinfect schools, mosques, and other closed public areas, while these areas were soon closed for use, and efforts were wasted. It is possible to encounter many digital efforts at the central government and the local level. For example, the website established by Adana Metropolitan Municipality during the pandemic addresses different segments of society and other needs. Besides facilitating access to public services, audiobooks for children and some movie viewing extensions have been added to the website. Bursa Metropolitan Municipality defined the pandemic process as the "new normal" and took various measures. During this period, efforts were carried out to maintain social distance with the help of digital sensors. A crisis management example was exhibited alongside digital transformation with an action plan defined at short, medium, and high-risk levels.

Street-level bureaucrats play a crucial role in implementing policies (see Lipsky, 1980, 2010). It is known that the success of the policy is most likely related to the devotion and effort of the street-level bureaucrats. The services delivered by street-level bureaucrats during the pandemic process in Turkey have been highly functional. In this manner, healthcare professionals, law enforcement officers, teachers, and academics have made a notable contribution to crisis management with their services to the citizens in their areas of responsibility. Thus, through the street-level bureaucrats' diligent services, the citizens have been least adversely affected by the pandemic process carried out with a top-down implementation model (see Birkland, 2005; Ringquist, 1993; Sabatier, 1986).

Cities have been affected the most because of the growth and feeding of pandemic rates in cities (Florida, 2020). For this reason, city administrators are also prominent

actors in crisis management. Mayors of leading cities implement a few necessary preparations and arrangements for life after COVID-19, a milestone for safer cities' sustainability (The Guardian, 2020). Despite the claim that mayors in the United States were more successful in fighting COVID-19 (Watts, 2020), Turkey's process was mainly carried out by the central government. However, in the two largest cities, such as Ankara and Istanbul, social policies have been developed through crowdfunding practices (Deutsche Welle, May 19, 2020).

On the other hand, it was observed that some local or central plans made in terms of health workers, health supplies and health organizations were not adequately worked. For example, the field hospital established by Adana Metropolitan Municipality on the city fairground was never used during the outbreak. It was converted into a fairground just before the second wave of the pandemic began.

The Higher Education Council of Turkey-*the central institution that oversees and directs the higher education system* - has required universities to establish Distance Education Practice and Research Centers in all universities. On the other hand, it should be noted that not every university has the same material and human resource capacity. During the pandemic and after the distance education decision, it was later understood that many universities did not have such preparation or infrastructure. Thanks to the Turkish public administration's rapid adaptation capacity, the deficit was primarily closed by using schools with ready infrastructure such as Anadolu University. On the other hand, students' problems related to internet access were also quickly overcome thanks to cooperation between the private and public administration. Due to financial incapability problems for groups who have problems to access digital activities, central administration and local governments and civil society organizations demonstrated an extraordinary effort to overcome the issues. As of September 27, 2021, universities in Turkey have started education and training, mostly face-to-face. University administrations, academicians, and administrative staff make great efforts to ensure that education and training can continue face-to-face with the planning and precautions they take.

3.2 General Measures

Since detecting the first COVID-19 case in China, many arrangements have been made within preventive measures. As also mentioned chronologically by TÜBA 2020, pp. 30–31), some of the regulations can be listed as follows: Arrivals from countries with COVID-19 cases were to be tested with thermal cameras at airports; all flights from China were stopped; all passenger flights between Turkey and Italy, Turkey and South Korea, Turkey and Iraq were stopped as a precaution; education at all levels was terminated for the academic year; football, basketball, handball, volleyball activities have been postponed; and the number of centers performing COVID-19 test has been increased. Furthermore, the following measures have been taken in various policy areas: Flexible work in the public sector was initiated; public transport vehicle capacity was reduced to 50%, and social distancing measures between

passengers was introduced. Curfew was imposed on citizens under the age of 20 and over 65. Curfew restrictions have been assessed for all citizens in 30 metropolitan areas and Zonguldak province during the weekends. Later, the provinces with a weekend curfew were gradually reduced in line with the Scientific Board's recommendations. All kinds of scientific, cultural, and arts activities held in open or closed areas at national and international levels have been postponed.

The use of masks is of great importance in slowing the rate of transmission of the COVID-19 virus. The Turkish government has given priority to the use of masks and has developed various methods for distributing masks to the public free of charge. Although public access to masks is limited or impossible in many developed countries, Turkish citizens' protective mask needs have been met free and easily. Furthermore, a price ceiling was applied to the masks, enabling the citizens to purchase masks from pharmacies at very reasonable prices. The Turkish government provided practical support to dozens of countries requesting assistance during the COVID-19 process. In this regard, the medical supplies necessary for the pandemic process, especially the masks, have been meticulously delivered to other countries.

There have also been some digital security issues due to public officials being below a certain average at the point of digital literacy. Many public services need to be adapted to this new way of providing and operating services during the Covid-19 pandemic, standards, and procedures. The differentiation of service delivery standards, even between the same public organization units, is a significant problem. In this process, educational services were also often carried out remotely. During this period, universities were closed due to the pandemic, and distance education was switched. As of September 26, 2021, it has been decided to have flexibility on most of the measures mentioned. However, there are some precautions, especially for citizens who are not vaccinated against COVID-19.

3.3 Education Policy

In the pandemic process, various steps have been taken within the framework of education policies to ensure that education at all levels can be delivered smoothly. For this purpose, relevant institutions such as the Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education of Turkey have taken promising education policy initiatives. Doing so aims to provide direct interaction between students and teachers/academicians during the pandemic process. The pandemic process has created an essential window of opportunity (see Kingdon, 1984) for education policy. Significant steps have been taken to make maximum use of technology in educational processes. The Ministry of National Education has established a YouTube channel that includes Turkish and English narratives of Anatolian tales illustrated by teachers and illustrated by students. TUBITAK and the Ministry of Industry and Technology developed by COVID-19 Turkey Web Portal was launched. Since March 23, 2020 distance education has been started from <https://www.eba.gov.tr/> via the internet and established a new TV Channel and platform named EBA (Memurlar.Net, 2020).

Thanks to the EBA platform, students have access to thousands of various educational resources. Also, students have the opportunity to both attend live lectures and follow recorded lectures. The Ministry of National Education has made efforts to improve the EBA system's infrastructure to prevent any disruption in the distance education process during the pandemic process. The Ministry of National Education has cooperated with the leading GSM companies to connect to the distance education facilities more efficiently and smoothly. In this context, students are offered free internet access within a specific limit.

On the other hand, teachers' in-service training is also carried out through the EBA system (Özer, 2020a, pp. 1126–1128). It is considerably worthwhile that in-service training, one of the most fundamental principles of Contemporary Public Personnel Management, is offered to teachers during the pandemic process. Since personnel resource is a highly significant resource of public policies (Knoepfel et al., 2007, pp. 66–69), enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills through in-service can be seen as one of the essential gains of the pandemic process in the context of educational policies.

Vocational and technical high schools are types of high schools in the Turkish education system and cover a comprehensive education process within various professional branches. The relevant ministry created the idea of producing the materials needed within the scope of COVID-19 measures by vocational and technical high schools. For this reason, emphasis has been given to the production of cleaning materials for these high schools (Ministry of National Education- Turkey, 2020). As a result of the mentioned efforts, many materials such as masks, face shields, disposable aprons, and sterilization devices were produced by vocational and technical high schools (Özer, 2020b). The fact that vocational and technical high schools started to produce materials that are urgently needed during the pandemic process is both a remarkable success of the Turkish education policy and indicates that these high schools will be given more importance soon. It can also be described as a functional policy practice to be a policy transfer of learning for other countries in ordinary and/or extraordinary circumstances.

At the higher education level, universities started distance education, and each university has prepared a website that provides detailed information on the learning activities it has been conducting during COVID-19. COVID-19 measures were taken within the framework of the university administrations' decisions to combat the pandemic. It is of great importance to manage the process and implement step-by-step measures in crisis management. Due to thousands of university students and academics, its process must be meticulously (see Erkut, 2020, p. 126). Universities have taken steps to ensure that administrative and academic staff can work flexibly. Besides, it has been decided that personnel with chronic illnesses and pregnant personnel are considered on administrative leave. Various solutions have been offered by universities for students who do not have or have limited internet access. By using distance education programs, undergraduate and graduate courses and graduate thesis processes were handled comfortably. The Council of Higher Education has made institutionalization efforts to make the distance education process more systematic and organized. In this manner, a "Distance Education Policies Commission" was

established within the Council of Higher Education's body with the participation of academicians who are experts in the field of distance education (YÖK, 2020). As of September 26, 2021, as mentioned before, the majority of courses in universities in Turkey are delivered face-to-face. Both the Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education contribute to successfully implementing the process by being in intensive contact with educational institutions.

3.4 *Technology Policy*

In the context of the relationship between public administration and technology, electronic platforms have become widespread worldwide in providing public services in the last ten years. The Turkish government has also significantly increased the number of technology-based public services during the COVID-19 period. In this context, the number of services offered through the e-government gateway increased by approximately 25¹% (Afyonluoğlu, 2020). The opportunity to access more services from home was provided to the citizens. Moreover, The Ministry of Health has established the <http://koronaonlem.saglik.gov.tr> and <https://covid19bilgi.saglik.gov.tr/tr/> websites coronavirus control (Ministry of Health-Turkey, 2020). With the "Life fits into Home" (Hayat Eve Sığar)² application, citizens in contact with Coronavirus, who were diagnosed but decided to be isolated at home because they did not have symptoms or showed mild symptoms, started to be followed. This application made it possible to see the regions where COVID-19 cases are intense and access updated statistics.

Presidency Digital Transformation Office has opened a coronavirus information site, and the site also includes those who have recovered and the death rate. Citizens applied for their Travel Permit via the e-government portal, and applications for free face mask distribution were made through the same portal. Later, mask requests were collected through the application. Researchers will be able to access the images of the documents from the Presidency State Archives Document Scanning System (BETSİS). Presidency Directorate of Communication prepared for the April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day and "turkiyenincocuklari.org" website was opened. The Distance Education Gate designed by the Presidency Human Resources Office was put at the service of all public institutions and organizations and 3,3 million public personnel (Memurlar.Net, 2020). Besides, around \$ 275 million worth of aid was collected from more than 900,000 individuals and organizations through SMS Donations and crowdfunding through the website (Meijer & Webster, 2020, p. 264).

It is stated that Turkey's penetration rate is 74%, that means %74 of the general population has access to the internet, while the daily internet using time is four hours for the day is above the average in the world (We Are Social Digital, 2020). On the

¹ Reached at 5,058 services as the date of 05/15/2020 and it was 4,260 before pandemic (Afyonluoglu, 2020). (See, <https://afyonluoglu.org/e-devlet/tr-edevlet/>).

² See at, <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=tr.gov.saglik.hayatesigar&hl=tr>.

other hand, Aristovnik et al. According to his research Aristovnik et al. (2020), while the average of computer ownership is 84% on a global scale, it has been determined as 77% in Turkey. However, according to the results of the Household Information Technologies Usage Survey published by the Turkish Statistical Institute, the rate of internet-connected phone ownership is over 99% in 2020 (TURKSTAT, 2020). This intensive use of the internet also creates opportunities to provide many services in a digital environment.

In this way, information and communication technologies were used for both combat and revival purposes during the epidemic period, and efforts were made to ensure the continuity of service provision. In this process, digital tools were used in many areas such as monitoring and stopping the virus, information, and awareness campaigns, and providing basic services to citizens. From education services to tele-medicine applications, from commerce to communication, both service providers and service recipients benefit from technological tools (Babaoğlu and Erdoğan, 2021; Babaoğlu, 2020, p. 453).

In this period, the service titles offered in the electronic environment at the national level were diversified, the number of institutions integrated into these platforms was increased, and the smart city studies at the local level gained momentum. While focusing on infrastructure investments on one hand, digital services were quickly put into use on the other.

3.5 Economy Policy

According to the WTO's optimistic forecasts, global trade will fall by at least 13% in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These estimates rise by as much as 32% in worse scenarios (Balçı, 2020). At the G20 group's emergency meeting, which includes Turkey, on March 26, 2020, it was reported that measures would be taken to ensure financial stability against the coronavirus pandemic. Moreover, ensure job and income security, protect global trade, and balance public health and economic measures (Wintour & Rankin, 2020).

In different countries, monetary expansion policies have been implemented to eliminate the economic stagnation caused by the COVID-19 crisis. The European Central Bank announced monetary easing programs of \$ 850 billion, and the American Federal Bank announced monetary easing programs of \$ 700 billion. In the process, Germany announced a 750-billion-euro stimulus package, the United States \$ 2.1 trillion, Japan \$ 990 billion, Britain £ 30 billion, Italy € 25 billion, and Spain developed a € 200 billion stimulus program. (Escarus, 2020, p. 19; STM, 2020, p. 7).

Problems in the supply of raw materials and some products, especially from China, have brought new pursuits in Western economies. Turkey has also given weight to domestic production processes in this process (Escarus, 2020, p. 14). In this process, support has been given to respirator, medical mask, disinfectant, and protective clothing production. Some economic measures taken by countries during the pandemic period are shown below (Escarus, 2020, p. 64) (Table 2).

Table 2 Economic measures in different countries

	Dismissal Prohibition	Salary Increase for Retirees	Additional Payment to Healthcare Workers	Possibility of Tax Deferral for the Private Sector	Credit Support with State/Public Banks	Financial Support to Needy Families
Turkey	+	+	+	+	+	+
USA				+		+
Spain	+			+	+	+
Italy	+					+
France	+		+	+	+	+
Germany	+		+	+	+	+
England				+		+
China				+	+	+
Iran			+	+	+	+
Belgium			+	+		+
Brazil	+					+
Russia		+	+	+	+	+
Canada			+	+		+
Holland			+	+	+	+
Switzerland			+	+	+	+
Portugal			+			+
Australia			+	+	+	+
India				+		+
Ireland			+	+		+
Israel			+			+

Source Escarus (2020)

According to the OECD estimates, while the Turkish economy is expected to grow by more than 3% before the outbreak, Turkey's economic activity will fall by between 20 and 25% during this corona process. According to IMF forecasts, the Turkish economy will shrink by about 5% in 2020 (Deloitte, 2020, p. 5; STM, 2020, pp. 4–5). During this period, the following problems began in the Turkish economy (Eryüzlü, 2020, pp. 13–14):

- Increased health spending and overburdening the health sector
- Demand shock because of potential demand, not including the market.
- Supply shock because of supply chain disruption.
- Rapid increases in the unemployment rate
- Financial sector crisis.

In this process, The Turkish Government announced on March 18, 2020, a new economic relief package with 260 billion TRY (\$38.3 billion) called the Economic

Stability Shield (ILO, 2020). It was also attempted to ensure the continuity of money flow to the market with a low-interest rate policy. In this process, layoffs were restricted, and premium support was provided for workers' insurance. In this process, special credit rates, tax exceptions, premium supports and incentives were provided for small and medium-sized enterprises. (Escarus, 2020, pp. 107–108). In this process, state-owned banks made 20.5 billion Turkish Liras of enterprises; 795 thousand citizens also had a loan debt of 40.6 billion Turkish Liras (Balçı & Çetin, 2020, p. 34). Although two million new unemployment figures are mentioned for Turkey in bad scenarios due to shrinking business volume (STM, 2020, p. 7), there was no significant increase in this process than the previous year. In this process, government support and incentives should be considered an essential preventive. In this process, dismissals were prohibited, and measures such as short work allowances were intended to prevent layoffs (Law No. 7244, Official Gazette 17/4/2020). There is a significant contraction in the tourism and air transport sectors (STM, 2020, p. 5). Tax exceptions have been introduced to support these sectors, and some exemptions have been provided (Akbulak, 2020). Some obligations of enterprises operating in the tourism sector, such as easement fees, income share payments, accommodation tax, and payments to public banks are excluded by Law No. 7226, issued on March 25, 2020 (Balçı & Çetin, 2020, pp. 32–33). There are some measures implemented and presented below (ILO, 2020):

- Extra custom tax is lifted on medical masks and respiratory equipment.
- Custom tax is cancelled on the ethyl alcohol import.
- Stock financing support is given to exporters.
- The Credit Guarantee Fund limit is increased from 25 bln TRY to 125 bln TRY to provide SMEs loans.
- Tradesmen Credit Card is provided with a limit of 25.000 TRY without any payments for three months.
- All credit cards payments postponed until the end of July 2020.
- Exporters are given stock financing assistance to maintain capacity during a temporary slowdown in exports.
- Turkish public bank Halkbank postpones credit, interest and debt payments for three months of businesses and artists negatively affected. This decision is extended for another three months as of July 1 2020.
- The administration will increase the Credit Guarantee Fund limit from \$3.8 billion to \$7.7 billion. Credit will first be given to businesses and SMEs with a collateral deficit and need for liquidity.
- With the new legislation, the Wealth Fund will inject cash or take over private companies facing difficulty due to COVID pandemic.
- 1.6 million Craftsmen is provided with a support of 26 bln TRY. Seven hundred thousand craftsmen are benefited from a total of 17,3 mln TRY credit.
- The tariffs are raised in textile, shoes and leather to protect domestic producers.
- The utility debts will be postponed for households and workplaces whose activities are stopped due to COVID 19.
- Seven bln TRY personal finance credits is allocated

Also, very low-interest support loans were provided for citizens in need with direct cash payments. In this process, the amount loanable to buying apartment flats valued below \$77,000 is increased from 80 to 90%, thus reducing the minimum payment to 10%, so that citizens could use loans, and loan-based expansions were encouraged with low-interest rates supported by the state (Akbulak, 2020). During the pandemic period, 5.5 million people were provided with 1,000 Turkish Lira (\$125) of cash support per person, while 4.5 million people were paid a total of 6 billion rubles (\$750 million) from partial work allowance or unemployment benefits. Besides, a total of 11.5 billion Turkish Lira to the needy (Apr. 1.5 billion dollars) were made unanswered cash grants (Balçı, 2020).

4 Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The pandemic has shown the importance of crisis management. It also showed that the state administration is not merely a political function and that bureaucrats, especially street-level bureaucrats are important actors to this process (İmga & Ayhan, 2020, p. 7). Moreover, the power of the executive branch is crucial. The president's role in policymaking has increased with the new government system introduced in Turkey in 2018. The unique presidential system in Turkey aims to respond to social problems more urgently. As the timing of responses is crucial to the delivery of public services, especially in crisis periods, the Turkish government has given priority and the utmost attention to the continuation of the services without any disruption and delay. In other words, since time is regarded as one of the most fundamental resources of public policy (Knoepfel et al., 2007, p. 78), the initiatives taken by the government were formulated in a reasonable time frame.

As a highly significant official policy actor during the pandemic process, the Minister of Health has garnered public appreciation for his efforts, devotion, and interest. The considerable effort made by the Minister of Health has prevented the pandemic from rising to the level of crisis observed in other European countries.

Looking at the issue of illegal immigrants and border security during the pandemic period, Garrett (2020) states that the border walls are not preventive enough. Turkey has also renewed its border security policies due to the intense illegal migration flows in recent years. In some places, border walls have intensified inspections with the aid of drones (Yıldız & Ekmekçioğlu, 2018). These activities provided an advantage in the fight against the pandemic. After closing the borders, uncontrolled entry into the country was prevented, and a national quarantine environment was provided.

Policy transfer and policy recommendations are the functional subjects in public policy studies. Especially in crisis times, it is necessary to transfer policy from countries that have implemented successful practices. Therefore, Turkey, which is stably conducting the pandemic process, is a suitable country for policy transfer. A few policy proposals may be made to countries in the course of the pandemic, which

is expected to continue to take effect in the coming months. As successfully implemented in Turkey, Fidelity Social Support Groups can also be generated in other countries. By doing so, governments can help disadvantaged citizens more quickly and efficiently during the pandemic process. Public support may be gained if decisions on measures to be taken during the pandemic are taken incrementally, as is Turkey's case. In crisis management, public administrators and policymakers need to benefit more from technology. If technology and public administration integration is achieved, the delivery of public services will be more efficient. As the Turkish government has successfully carried out in the pandemic process, the countries should introduce economic measures and programs to support the public in crisis times. Countries should reconsider their health policies despite the risk of repeated pandemics like COVID-19 in the future. In this context, countries should significantly increase their investments in health policies. With the measures to be taken in various fields and the policies to be implemented, governments will become more prepared for the crises in the following processes.

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