

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE 2024 TÜRKİYE LOCAL ELECTIONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AK PARTY AND CHP MANIFESTOS

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Abstract

On March 31, 2024, twenty-three out of the thirty-four political parties participating in Türkiye's local elections presented their promises to the public through manifestos published in the media and on their official websites. This study examines how the manifestos of the two major parties, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), align with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The main argument is that political parties' approaches to the SDGs at the local governance level are shaped by their ideological frameworks, influencing their commitments to sustainable development. Using content analysis and comparative analysis, this research evaluates how both parties address critical areas such as community development, social welfare, and environmental management. While neither party explicitly references the SDGs in their manifestos, various sustainability elements are embedded within their policy agendas. The CHP emphasizes environmental sustainability and participatory governance, whereas the AK Party prioritizes social welfare programs and infrastructure development. The comparative analysis reveals that the extent of alignment with the SDGs varies based on each party's ideological and strategic priorities. This study highlights the role of local political agendas in integrating global sustainability goals and underscores the necessity of explicitly linking political manifestos to the SDGs to enhance voter awareness, foster civic engagement, and promote concrete actions for sustainable development. The findings contribute to a broader discussion on how local governance can serve as a platform for global sustainability initiatives, emphasizing the need for greater policy transparency and measurable commitments to sustainable urban and social development.

Keywords: Election Manifestos, Sustainable Development Goals, Local Governance, Local Elections, Sustainable Cities

JEL Classification: H70, Q01, D72, M38

2024 TÜRKİYE YEREL SEÇİMLERİNDE SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİR KALKINMA: AK PARTİ VE CHP MANİFESTOLARININ KARŞILAŞTIRMALI ANALİZİ

Öz

31 Mart 2024 tarihinde, Türkiye'deki yerel seçimlere katılan otuz dört siyasi partiden yirmi üçü, medya ve resmi web sitelerinde yayımladıkları manifestolar aracılığıyla vaatlerini kamuoyuna sundu. Bu çalışma, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) ve Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti) olmak üzere iki büyük partinin manifestolarının 2030 Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Hedefleri (SKH) ile nasıl uyum sağladığını incelemektedir. Çalışmanın temel argümanı, siyasi partilerin yerel yönetim düzeyinde SKH'lere yaklaşımlarının ideolojik çerçeveleri tarafından şekillendiği ve bu durumun sürdürülebilir kalkınmaya yönelik taahhütlerini etkilediğidir. İçerik analizi ve karşılaştırmalı analiz yöntemleri kullanılarak, her iki partinin toplumsal kalkınma, sosyal refah ve çevresel yönetim gibi kritik alanlara nasıl yaklaştığı değerlendirilmiştir. Manifestolarında SKH'lere doğrudan atıfta bulunmamakla birlikte, her iki partinin politika gündeminde çeşitli sürdürülebilirlik unsurlarının yer aldığı tespit edilmiştir. CHP, çevresel sürdürülebilirlik ve katılımcı yönetime odaklanırken, AK Parti sosyal refah programlarını ve altyapı geliştirmeyi önceliklendirmektedir. Karşılaştırmalı analiz, SKH'lere uyum derecesinin, her partinin ideolojik ve stratejik önceliklerine bağlı olarak farklılık gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, yerel siyasi gündemlerin küresel sürdürülebilirlik hedeflerine entegrasyonundaki rolünü vurgulamakta ve siyasi manifestoların SKH'lerle açıkça ilişkilendirilmesinin seçmen farkındalığını artırmak, sivil katılımı teşvik etmek ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma için somut adımları desteklemek açısından gerekliliğini ortaya koymaktadır. Elde edilen bulgular, yerel yönetimlerin küresel sürdürülebilirlik girişimlerine bir platform olarak nasıl hizmet edebileceğine dair daha geniş bir tartışmaya katkıda bulunmakta ve politika şeffaflığının artırılması ile sürdürülebilir kentsel ve sosyal kalkınma için ölçülebilir taahhütlerin gerekliliğini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Seçim Beyannameleri, Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Hedefleri, Yerel Yönetişim, Yerel Seçimler, Sürdürülebilir Şehirler

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1. Introduction

The local elections in Türkiye were held on March 31, 2024, with a voter turnout of 78.55%. Out of 61,430,934 registered voters, 48,256,541 cast their votes, and 46,046,499 of these votes were deemed valid. This high turnout highlights voters' desire to be directly involved in local governance and underscores the significance of local policies (Baekgaard et al., 2014: 519). A total of thirty-four political parties participated in the 2024 Türkiye Local Elections. The Republican People's Party (CHP) received 37.77% of the votes, while the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) garnered 35.49%, surpassing other parties. The New Welfare Party (YRP) secured a notable 6.19% of the vote, closely followed by the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM) with 5.70%. The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) obtained 4.99%, while the Good Party (İYİ Party) received 3.77% of the votes. This distribution indicates that political competition in Türkiye is not limited to just two major parties, as alternative parties have also managed to secure a significant share of the vote in local politics. However, the vote share of other parties remained below the 1% threshold, emphasizing the decisive influence of these six parties on the election results (TRT Haber, 2024). The distribution of votes reflects how voters evaluate local governance approaches and their expectations regarding various political alternatives. The diversity in the elections demonstrates the vibrancy of local democracy and the existence of a healthy political competition environment. Furthermore, it suggests that local governments, through the interaction of social and economic diversity with electoral rules, can offer different approaches and solutions in environmental policies (Potter, 2014).

During election processes, voters shape their decisions by evaluating the promises made by parties and candidates. The content of these promises plays a critical role in determining the priorities of local governments in social, economic, and environmental areas. To enable voters to make informed choices, parties and candidates utilize various communication channels such as television, radio, social media, and online platforms. Additionally, parties elaborate on their policies and objectives through election manifestos. However, an important question in academic discussions is whether election manifestos are merely a part of a strategy to win elections or if they genuinely influence the policymaking process. Ansolabehere et al. (1991) examined how media usage during campaigns affects voter perceptions, demonstrating how media content shapes opinions about political parties and candidates. In this context, merely listing promises is not sufficient to determine the impact of election manifestos on voters; their feasibility, ideological foundations, and relationship with sustainable development must also be

analyzed. Local governments play a critical role in achieving the SDGs, particularly in areas such as environmental management, social welfare, and community development. By managing tasks such as waste regulations, promoting sustainable urban development, and supporting community healthcare services, they contribute to global sustainability goals. However, in the context of Türkiye, studies on how political parties integrate sustainable development into their local governance agendas and how they address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their election manifestos are limited. By employing content analysis, this study investigates how Türkiye's two major political parties, the AK Party and CHP, incorporate sustainability commitments into their election platforms. It evaluates how these parties can enhance public awareness of the SDGs and develop more effective policies and strategies to align with global sustainability targets. The core argument of this research is that the formulation and implementation of sustainable development policies at the local level are directly linked to the ideological orientations of political parties and their approaches to local governance. Within this framework, the study aims to analyze the differing approaches of the AK Party and CHP toward the SDGs and evaluate how local policies are associated with sustainable development.

1.1. The Impact of Election Manifestos

An election manifesto is an official document presented by political parties before an election, detailing their political agenda and commitments. These documents serve as crucial tools for informing voters about party policies and governance approaches, potentially influencing voting preferences. However, whether election manifestos are merely informative or if they also play a role in shaping the policymaking process has been debated in the literature from various perspectives. Political parties, particularly during election periods, prepare and utilize manifestos as a means of communication with voters, making them highly significant for democratic processes. The UK Parliament (n.d.) defines a manifesto as a publication that outlines the policies a political party represents and intends to implement if elected to power. This definition highlights the dual role of a manifesto as both a policy statement and a commitment to voters, forming the foundation of a party's campaign and its responsibilities toward the public. However, there is ongoing debate in the literature about whether election manifestos serve merely as campaign tools or if they are integral to long-term policymaking processes. Election manifestos enable political parties to clearly articulate their political vision and objectives to society. These documents not only shape voter preferences but can also influence government policymaking processes. Through manifestos, parties engage with voters, shaping public perception of their policies and commitments. Particularly in local elections, the

content of manifestos serves as a crucial resource for assessing the extent to which local governance policies align with sustainable development goals. Additionally, manifestos allow parties to highlight specific political issues during election campaigns and communicate effectively with voters. However, a key debate in academic discussions is whether election manifestos merely produce populist rhetoric or genuinely guide post-election policy processes. Norris (2019) emphasizes that election manifestos not only help voters make informed decisions but can also serve as a decisive factor in shaping post-election government policies.

A study on the preparation of the 2007 general election manifestos of major political parties in Ireland highlights the steps involved in this process and the perceived functions of manifestos. Research conducted by Däubler (2012: 51) emphasizes the strategic considerations in manifesto development, revealing their crucial role in shaping political discourse and party strategies during elections. This finding suggests that election manifestos are not merely influential documents during election periods but also integral components of parties' long-term strategies. The study provides valuable insights into the complexities of political communication and the importance of manifestos in conveying party policies to voters. Another study conducted on candidates following the 2013 general elections in Austria revealed that political party candidates generally perceive manifestos as important and useful. The significance attributed to manifestos is influenced by factors such as whether campaigns are policy-focused and the ideological distance between candidates and their respective parties (Eder et al., 2017: 83). This indicates that election manifestos are not merely documents aimed at voters but also reflections of internal party strategies. Nevertheless, existing literature primarily focuses on manifestos at the national level, with limited studies examining their role in local elections. In the context of Türkiye, analyzing local election manifestos presents a valuable opportunity to understand political parties' approaches to local governance and the extent to which they align with sustainable development goals. The 2024 local election manifestos of the AK Party and CHP provide a valuable case to explore whether these documents function merely as campaign tools or contribute to long-term policymaking processes. Election manifestos articulate parties' policy commitments to the public, yet an ongoing debate in the literature questions whether these commitments translate into actionable policies after elections. Understanding how local election manifestos align with the SDGs is essential for evaluating their influence on long-term policy frameworks and sustainable governance.

1.2. Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs, established by the United Nations in 2015, provide a comprehensive global framework aimed at ensuring a better and more sustainable future for all. The SDGs should be considered as an integrated set of policies designed to advance economic, environmental, and social development in a balanced manner. These goals consist of seventeen interconnected targets, formulated to address fundamental development challenges faced by both developed and developing countries (United Nations, 2015). This interconnected structure demonstrates that sustainable development cannot be achieved solely through isolated policies but requires multidimensional and holistic approaches. The SDGs address a wide range of socio-economic and environmental issues, including ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, promoting sustainable urbanization, combating climate change, and preserving natural resources. They not only continue the efforts of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but also aim to address their shortcomings, ensuring a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to global development. The inability of the MDGs to achieve sufficient progress in areas such as gender equality, environmental sustainability, and inclusivity was a key factor in the formulation of the SDGs (Woodbridge, 2015). The significance of the SDGs lies in their ability to mobilize not only governments but also local administrations, the private sector, civil society organizations, and individuals toward achieving these global objectives. These goals serve as a roadmap for policymakers while also providing a framework for assessing societal progress toward sustainable development (Sachs, 2015: 496). From the perspective of local governments, the SDGs function as a crucial guide, particularly in areas such as urban planning, infrastructure development, environmental management, and social policies. The interactive nature of the SDGs requires considering the direct and indirect impacts of success in one goal on others. For instance, the relationship between sustainable cities (SDG 11) and climate action (SDG 13) highlights the importance of environmentally friendly urban development policies. Similarly, the connection between decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10) underscores the need to consider the social dimension of economic policies. To visualize these goals and understand their specific objectives and impacts, Table 1 summarizes the core scope of the SDGs. This table outlines the fundamental components of sustainable development, providing a framework for understanding how the SDGs can be implemented at both local and global levels.

Table 1: Sustainable Development Goals and Their Definitions

Category	SDG No.	Goal	Core Scope
<i>Economic</i>	8	“Decent Work and Economic Growth”	Sustainable economic growth, job creation, labor rights
	9	“Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure”	Sustainable industrial policies, infrastructure investments, technology development
	10	“Reduced Inequalities”	Income inequalities, inclusive economic growth, equal opportunities
<i>Social</i>	1	“No Poverty”	Ending all forms of poverty
	2	“Zero Hunger”	Food security, sustainable agriculture, combating hunger
	3	“Good Health and Well-being”	Access to healthcare, basic health measures
	4	“Quality Education”	Access to education, lifelong learning opportunities
	5	“Gender Equality”	Empowerment of women and girls
	16	“Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions”	Rule of law, transparent governance, human rights
<i>Environmental</i>	6	“Clean Water and Sanitation”	Protection of water resources, access to clean water for all
	7	“Affordable and Clean Energy”	Renewable energy, energy efficiency
	11	“Sustainable Cities and Communities”	Inclusive urbanization, sustainable transportation
	12	“Responsible Consumption and Production”	Resource efficiency, sustainable production models
	13	“Climate Action”	Combating climate change, greenhouse gas reduction
	14	“Life Below Water”	Protection of oceans and marine life
	15	“Life on Land”	Biodiversity conservation, sustainable land use
<i>Global Partnerships</i>	17	“Partnerships for the Goals”	International cooperation, global sustainability financing

Source: United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

1.3. Previous Research on Local Election Manifestos

Political parties worldwide are increasingly incorporating environmental and climate change issues as core components of their election manifestos. The growing importance of sustainable development policies has led parties to emphasize these issues more prominently in their campaign promises. For instance, in the 2019 United Kingdom general elections, the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, and the Green Party included comprehensive climate action plans and net-zero carbon targets in their manifestos (Gabbatiss, 2019). Similarly, in election campaigns across European Union countries, environmental policies and sustainable development goals have become more prominent. In India, both the Bharatiya Janata Party and

the Indian National Congress have integrated sustainability and environmental protection into their election pledges, demonstrating that environmental commitments are not only addressed in national policy documents but are also directly linked to electoral processes (Simlai & Arif, 2023).

In international literature, research on election manifestos primarily focuses on general elections. For example, Fernández-Vázquez (2014: 1931-1932) examined how election manifestos influence voters' perceptions of party policies. The study presented empirical models to assess the extent to which manifestos shape voter expectations regarding party policies. While party brands tend to have strong persistence, the findings indicate that manifestos still exert a certain influence on voter perceptions. However, these studies do not directly address the relationship between manifestos and sustainable development policies. Election manifestos should not only be analyzed for their content but also for their feasibility and implementation potential (Muhammad, 2020, pp. 10-11). Schwarzbözl et al. (2020) examined the relationship between media coverage and election manifestos; however, these studies do not provide sufficient data on the extent to which election promises translate into policy processes. A significant gap in this area is the limited number of systematic analyses on how well election manifestos align with the SDGs. Studies analyzing environmental commitments in the 2014 general election manifestos in India reveal that the commitments made by eight major political parties were often inadequately implemented (Guha & Joe, 2019, p. 15). This situation indicates that inconsistencies between election promises and their implementation pose a significant challenge for sustainable development policies. Particularly within the scope of SDG 13 (Climate Action), the necessity for political parties' commitments to be realistic, feasible, and accountable is emphasized. Although environmental issues and climate change have started to gain more prominence in election campaigns, the impact of political parties' environmental commitments on voters and policymaking processes remains limited. This also demonstrates the need to strengthen accountability mechanisms, not only in relation to SDG 13 but also in connection with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Sanders et al. (2021, p. 524) examined how election manifestos addressed female voters in the 2015, 2017, and 2019 United Kingdom general elections. The study revealed how specific social groups were represented in manifestos, demonstrating that these documents are not merely policy statements but also instruments that drive social change.

Research on election manifestos in Türkiye focuses on different areas. However, the vast majority of these studies do not provide a systematic analysis within the framework of the

SDGs. Among the studies examining election manifestos, Kahramanoğlu et al. (2020) focused on analyzing the human characteristics targeted in manifestos, while Batuhan (2021) evaluated the tourism policies presented in these documents. Such studies demonstrate that election manifestos should not only be considered as political promises but also as texts reflecting the ideological orientations of parties. Adaman et al. (2023) focused on climate change and energy policies, whereas Erkmén and Doğan (2020) examined education commitments. These analyses reveal the roadmaps that political parties in Türkiye follow within the framework of the SDGs. However, studies on how election manifestos' commitments to the SDGs are translated into governance processes remain highly limited.

Despite various studies on election manifestos, research focusing on their alignment with the SDGs and their implications for local governance remains limited. While some studies have examined political commitments to sustainability, the extent to which these commitments influence municipal policies and governance strategies has not been systematically analyzed. Existing research on local election manifestos remains insufficient in examining the integration of global sustainability goals into local policymaking processes, highlighting a critical gap in the literature.

2. Overview of the AK Party and CHP Manifestos

Election manifestos are more than just informational tools; they are documents that reflect political parties' ideological orientations and governance strategies. These documents illustrate how parties approach society's fundamental issues, which areas they prioritize, and how they intend to implement their governance principles through specific policies (Mellon et al., 2023). Therefore, election manifestos are not merely short-term campaign promises but also encompass long-term policy visions. The manifestos of the AK Party and CHP are significant not only for understanding their current policy proposals but also for analyzing their governance approaches in Türkiye's urban and rural areas. These documents provide crucial insights into how both parties address social, economic, and environmental issues and what governance tools they employ to align with sustainable development principles. Examining election manifestos allows for a comparative evaluation of governance approaches, technological innovations, and perspectives on public participation. Particularly in the context of the SDGs, this analysis will explore how environmental, economic, and social policies are shaped. The following sections present a detailed analysis of both parties' election manifestos, beginning with the AK Party's comprehensive municipal governance approach, followed by CHP's perspective on democratic participation and sustainable urban development.

2.1. AK Party Manifesto ²

The 162-page 2024 AK Party manifesto, titled “Real Municipal Governance for the Century of Türkiye”, outlines the party’s vision for local governance. The manifesto's primary focus is to present a roadmap for managing cities within the framework of economic development, environmental sustainability, and social welfare. On the cover, a photograph of Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is featured, emphasizing his central role in the party’s policies and commitment to local governance principles. In the manifesto, Erdoğan highlights the relationship between urban environments and their residents with the statement: “A city reflects its people, and people reflect their city.” Going beyond the traditional concept of municipal governance, the manifesto comprehensively addresses topics such as urban transformation, smart cities, participatory governance, and social policies. Within this framework, the alignment of the AK Party's policies with the SDGs is reflected throughout various sections of the document.

The manifesto begins with an introductory statement by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, titled "Ready and Determined for the Cities of the Century of Türkiye", which appears between pages 5-7. In this introduction, a vision is outlined for how local governance will be shaped for the future. Following this, the "Real Municipal Governance Oath", emphasizing commitment to the manifesto’s core principles and values, is presented on page 8. The AK Party's 2024 election manifesto is structured into eight main sections, each reflecting a distinct aspect of its local governance vision and alignment with SDGs:

AK Party’s Local Governance Vision: Outlines the strategic framework for improving local governance and emphasizes its role in development.

Participation, Transparency, and Accountability: Proposes a governance model based on enhancing democratic participation, involving citizens in decision-making, and ensuring municipal accountability. (SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)

Resilient Cities: Aims to strengthen cities against economic, environmental, and social challenges. It includes urban infrastructure development, disaster risk management, and climate adaptation strategies. (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 13: Climate Action)

Cities and Environment in the Century of Türkiye: Focuses on sustainable urban development, environmental policies, and natural resource management. The manifesto highlights green

² The AK Party Manifesto can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/3widMHB>.

infrastructure projects, recycling systems, and renewable energy investments. (SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production)

Urban Economies with a Focus on Social Welfare: Aims to strengthen local economies, create employment opportunities, and integrate social policies with economic growth. (SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities)

Sensitive and Inclusive Social Municipalism: Addresses expanding social services, supporting disadvantaged groups, and reinforcing the role of local governments in social policies. (SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 5: Gender Equality)

Cities that Produce Culture: Focuses on how municipalities shape cultural policies, preserve cultural heritage, and promote artistic activities.

Municipal Services and Achievements: Highlights the party's achievements in municipal services and infrastructure development and outlines steps to enhance quality standards in local governance.

2.2. CHP Manifesto³

The 46-page 2024 CHP manifesto prominently displays the party's six-arrow logo on its cover, symbolizing its commitment to its foundational principles. Titled "Our Only Focus: Türkiye", the manifesto outlines a framework emphasizing national development, social justice, and democratic participation in local governance. On page 3, a portrait of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the party, is featured alongside a quote from his speech at CHP's 4th Congress "The fundamental idea and aspiration of the Republican People's Party is to protect its citizens from all forms of division and to make them beneficial to themselves and to the Turkish nation."⁴ This statement reflects the party's governance approach, which prioritizes unity, social solidarity, and public service. A statement by CHP Chairman Özgür Özel appears on page 4, where he emphasizes the party's commitment to improving urban living conditions with the declaration "Our cities will be safe, comfortable, and peaceful for everyone." Between pages 6 and 9, Özel's speech to the public is included, in which he highlights social justice, economic equality, and sustainable development as the core principles guiding CHP's local governance policies. Within this framework, the manifesto calls for a collective effort to enhance the quality

³ The CHP manifesto can be accessed at <https://chp.org.tr/yayin/2024-yerel-secim-bildirgesi/Open>.

⁴ This is one of the statements made by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk during his speech at the CHP's 4th Congress on May 9, 1935. Available at <https://bit.ly/4a4lC5c>.

of life for all citizens. The CHP manifesto is structured into three main sections, each reflecting the party's approach to urban governance, social justice, and sustainability, while aligning with key SDGs:

Urbanism and Local Governance Approach: Outlines CHP's vision for enhancing democratic participation, strengthening transparency, and making municipalities more effective in meeting public needs. (SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)

People-Oriented Municipalism: Defines local governance as a "safe haven" for citizens, focusing on access to public services, social assistance, and support for disadvantaged groups. This section also presents innovative waste management and renewable energy strategies, emphasizing environmental sustainability. (SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production)

Resilient and Livable Cities: Focuses on creating safe, accessible, and livable cities for all. Within this framework, the manifesto advocates for building cities that can withstand social and economic challenges and implementing sustainable urban development policies. (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 13: Climate Action)

The manifesto demonstrates that CHP's municipal governance approach extends beyond technical service delivery, offering an inclusive governance model that prioritizes social justice and environmental sustainability. In this context, it underscores the role of local governments in shaping social policies and argues that development should not be measured solely by economic growth but also by social welfare and environmental sustainability principles.

2.3. Scope, Objective, and Methodology of the Study

This study aims to analyze how political parties in Türkiye addressed the SDGs in their 2024 local election manifestos. Understanding the extent to which local governments align with global sustainability goals is crucial for examining how election promises translate into policy processes. Within this scope, the AK Party and CHP election manifestos are systematically examined using content analysis. Content analysis is an objective method used to identify dominant themes and strategic orientations in political discourse (Lasswell, 1948; Sapienza et al., 2015). This method is considered an effective tool for understanding how election manifestos are structured within the framework of the SDGs (Krippendorff, 2004, pp. 211-221). In particular, when analyzing political documents, content analysis goes beyond identifying word and theme frequencies—it also reveals how parties express their commitments to

sustainable development, either directly or indirectly. Researchers such as (Neuendorf & Kumar, 2016) and (Pressgrove & Kim, 2018) emphasize the significance of content analysis in evaluating the impact of political media on public perception. Accordingly, this study examines the extent to which the AK Party and CHP incorporated sustainability policies into their manifestos and how they framed these commitments. This analysis not only demonstrates how local political discourse integrates with the global sustainability agenda but also provides key insights into how municipal policies might evolve in the future.

2.4. Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the election manifestos of the two political parties that received the highest number of votes in the March 31, 2024, local elections: the AK Party and CHP. These parties secured 37.77% and 35.49% of the votes, respectively, garnering the largest share of voter support. The closest competitor, the New Welfare Party (YRP), received only 6.19% of the votes, highlighting a significant gap in voter preference. To maintain a manageable scope and provide a comprehensive assessment, the study focuses on the two parties that hold the most influential positions in Türkiye's local governance processes. While this does not imply that other parties disregard sustainable development policies, it enables a more in-depth analysis by concentrating on the parties with the greatest impact on local policymaking.

3. Method

The methodology of this study includes the determination of the research population and sample, as well as an explanation of the data collection and analysis methods used. Using the content analysis method, the manifestos of political parties participating in the 2024 local elections in Türkiye were systematically examined.

3.1. Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of political parties that participated in the 2024 Türkiye local elections and have publicly accessible election manifestos. Among the 34 parties that took part in the elections, 23 have available manifestos, serving as the primary data source for the analysis. Table 2 presents an overview of the manifesto availability and vote shares of all participating parties. Within this framework, the table clarifies which parties were selected for analysis and the rationale behind this selection.

Tablo 2: Overview of political party manifestos and voting outcomes in the 2024 Turkish Local Elections

No.	Party Name (Abbreviation)	Manifesto Availability	Vote Percentage (%)
1	Republican People's Party (CHP)	Yes	37.77
2	Justice and Development Party (AK Parti)	Yes	35.49
3	New Welfare Party (YRP)	Yes	6.19
4	People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM)	Yes	5.70
5	Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)	Yes	4.99
6	Good Party (İYİ Parti)	Yes	3.77
7	Victory Party (ZP)	Yes ⁵	1.74
8	Felicity Party (SP)	Yes	1.09
9	Free Cause Party (HÜDA-PAR)	Yes	0.55
10	Great Unity Party (BBP)	Yes	0.43
11	Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA)	Yes ⁶	0.33
12	Independent Turkey Party (BTP)	Yes	0.25
13	Democratic Party (DP)	No	0.20
14	Homeland Party (Memleket)	Yes	0.17
15	Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP)	Yes	0.15

Source: The vote percentages are sourced from TRT Haber's "Türkiye Geneli Yerel Seçim Sonuçları" section, available at <https://secim.trthaber.com/> (Last updated 01.04.2024)

The sample was determined based on the electoral context presented in Table 2. This study is designed to examine how the most influential political parties in Türkiye's local governance approach the SDGs. The selection of CHP and AK Party is based not only on their high vote shares but also on their central role in shaping local governance processes. CHP and AK Party received 37.77% and 35.49% of the votes, respectively. Their closest competitor, the New Welfare Party (YRP), secured only 6.19%, meaning that the gap between CHP and YRP is 31.58 percentage points, while the gap between AK Party and YRP is 29.3 percentage points. This significant difference highlights that these two parties play a decisive role in Türkiye's local governance. To enable a comprehensive and in-depth analysis, this study focuses on the two

⁵ The Victory Party has published its electoral pledges in X, consisting of six brief points.

⁶ DEVA Party has announced that they prepared a manifesto titled "Our Action Plan for Local Governments and Urban Planning" two years ago and have utilized it for the 2024 local elections as well. Available at <https://twitter.com/devapartisi/status/1764704756956577969> (accessed 01.04. 2025)

dominant parties in terms of voter support. While this does not imply that other parties disregard sustainable development issues, analyzing the policy orientations of the most influential political actors offers a broader framework for understanding local governance practices.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, content analysis and comparative analysis methods were used to examine the 2024 local election manifestos of CHP and AK Party. Content analysis systematically evaluates political discourse in texts, allowing for meaningful inferences based on predefined concepts (Koçak & Arun, 2006, p. 22; Durur et al., 2023, p. 45). This method was applied to identify references to sustainable development in the manifestos and analyze how both parties approach local governance policies. Comparative analysis, on the other hand, enables an evaluation of similarities and differences in the sustainability commitments of CHP and AK Party (Smelser, 2013; Mills et al., 2006). This method not only supports the findings obtained through content analysis but also provides a holistic perspective by revealing the differences in discourse and policy orientation between the two parties. The data sources for this study are the 2024 local election manifestos of CHP and AK Party, which were obtained from their official websites.

4. Findings

This section presents the content and comparative analysis results of the 2024 election manifestos of the AK Party and CHP. It evaluates how both parties address the SDGs, their priorities, and their national development strategies. Although the manifestos do not explicitly mention the SDGs, they contain various commitments related to environmental sustainability, social welfare, and economic development. Both parties emphasize policies aimed at increasing green spaces, limiting emissions, and adapting to climate change under environmental sustainability and climate action. These measures are directly linked to SDGs that promote climate resilience and sustainable urban environments. Similarly, both manifestos demonstrate a strong commitment to social welfare, with various initiatives aimed at improving healthcare, education, and infrastructure services. The commitments outlined in these manifestos aim to enhance quality of life and create inclusive, sustainable living environments that support disadvantaged groups.

Table 3 summarizes how the AK Party and CHP align their manifestos with the SDGs.

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of AK Party and CHP Manifestos in the Context of SDGs

SDGs	AK Party Commitments	CHP Commitments
SDG 1 - No Poverty	Social housing projects, rural development support	Fair distribution of resources, expansion of social assistance programs
SDG 2 - Zero Hunger	Increasing agricultural productivity, promoting sustainable farming	Supporting small farmers, strengthening food security policies
SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being	Expanding home care services, improving healthcare infrastructure	Expanding primary healthcare services, developing comprehensive public health plans
SDG 4 - Quality Education	Vocational training, technology integration in education	Equal opportunities in education, support for disadvantaged groups
SDG 5 - Gender Equality	Increasing women's representation in local governments	Promoting female employment, expanding childcare services
SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation	Water management projects, strengthening infrastructure	Wastewater treatment, water conservation policies
SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy	Promoting renewable energy, increasing energy efficiency	Sustainable energy policies, circular economy initiatives
SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth	Support for entrepreneurship, SME development	Fair labor practices, support for rural development
SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	Digital infrastructure expansion, industrial investments	Sustainable urban development, eco-friendly infrastructure
SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities	Expanding social assistance programs	Social integration policies, equal access to public services
SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities	Urban transformation projects, increasing green spaces	Inclusive urban planning, environmental sustainability policies
SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production	Waste management, recycling initiatives	Carbon emission reduction, sustainable consumption policies
SDG 13 - Climate Action	Reducing carbon emissions, climate resilience initiatives	Green roof projects, low-carbon city models
SDG 14 - Life Below Water	Conservation of marine and freshwater ecosystems	Sustainable water resource management
SDG 15 - Life on Land	Forest conservation, afforestation projects	Green infrastructure projects, preservation of natural habitats
SDG 16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	Enhancing local governance capacity	Democratization of municipalities
SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals	Inter-municipal collaborations	Partnerships with NGOs, academic institutions, and global networks

The analysis in Table 3 highlights the key differences in how the AK Party and CHP approach sustainable development policies. While the AK Party focuses on urban transformation and social housing projects under SDG 1 (No Poverty), CHP emphasizes the fair distribution of

resources and participatory governance. Similarly, in the context of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), the AK Party aims to increase agricultural productivity and promote rural development, whereas CHP seeks to strengthen food security by providing direct support to small farmers.

In health policies (SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being), the AK Party plans to expand home care services for the elderly and disabled and establish rehabilitation centers, while CHP aims to increase access to primary healthcare services by expanding public health centers. In the field of education (SDG 4 - Quality Education), both parties emphasize equal opportunities in education. However, the AK Party prioritizes technology integration and strengthening vocational education, whereas CHP aims to make educational services more inclusive.

In the context of gender equality (SDG 5 - Gender Equality), the AK Party takes concrete steps to increase women's representation in local governance, whereas CHP prioritizes social services and childcare facilities that support women's employment. Similarly, in environmental sustainability policies (SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation & SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy), the AK Party commits to enhancing water management and expanding renewable energy use, while CHP focuses on ecological governance and the circular economy model.

In terms of local governance policies, the AK Party emphasizes urban transformation projects and infrastructure improvements in alignment with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), while CHP prioritizes eco-friendly urban planning and social inclusivity. Both parties present commitments under SDG 13 (Climate Action) regarding emission reduction and investments in renewable energy. However, CHP's policies in this area appear to include more comprehensive sustainable infrastructure solutions compared to those of the AK Party.

In the context of natural resource conservation (SDG 14 - Life Below Water & SDG 15 - Life on Land), the AK Party emphasizes projects aimed at protecting marine and freshwater ecosystems, whereas CHP does not have a direct policy in this area. However, CHP commits to improving natural habitats and developing ecological projects.

Both parties commit to strengthening local governance and promoting transparent administration in alignment with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Similarly, under SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), both parties pledge to establish local and global collaborations and support development projects.

These findings reveal that AK Party and CHP adopt different approaches to the SDGs. The AK Party prioritizes a municipal governance model focused on infrastructure projects, energy

efficiency, and social assistance, whereas CHP emphasizes participatory governance, social justice, and ecological sustainability.

This study compares the local governance policies of Türkiye's two largest political parties within the framework of the SDGs, assessing the extent to which their election manifestos align with the global development agenda. The findings indicate that both parties demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental sustainability and social welfare policies, yet they shape these commitments through different governance models.

5. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

This study analyzes the 2024 local election manifestos of the AK Party and CHP within the framework of the SDGs, highlighting the connection between the local political agenda and global sustainability policies. The analysis results indicate that while neither party explicitly references the SDGs, both present various policy proposals related to sustainability. The AK Party adopts a development-oriented approach, emphasizing infrastructure investments, social welfare programs, and economic growth policies, whereas CHP focuses on participatory governance, social justice, and environmental sustainability. The findings demonstrate that although local election manifestos do not directly incorporate the SDGs, they align with these goals at various levels. However, neither party provides a clear and systematic framework for linking their policies to specific SDGs. This underscores the need to enhance voter awareness of sustainability policies and to ensure that political parties make their commitments to SDGs more transparent. Additionally, the implementation of the promises presented in the manifestos within local governance practices emerges as a critical area of discussion. The extent to which the sustainability policies proposed by political parties during the election process are effectively translated into municipal actions requires long-term monitoring. One of the key takeaways from this study is the need for election platforms to serve not only as tools for securing voter support but also as mechanisms for developing truly actionable and sustainable policies. This analysis provides a framework for evaluating election manifestos from a sustainable development perspective, while also contributing to broader academic discussions on how local governments can align with global sustainability goals.

Future studies should explore how the SDGs can be directly integrated into election manifestos. The relationship between election promises and implemented local governance policies should be assessed through large-scale quantitative analyses, making it possible to measure the effectiveness of sustainability policies. Additionally, comparative studies evaluating the

alignment of election manifestos with SDGs in different countries would be valuable in understanding how political parties shape sustainable development policies. Such a comparative analysis could highlight the potential of election manifestos to strengthen commitments to sustainability goals. Furthermore, longitudinal studies should track how sustainability commitments in election manifestos are translated into actual municipal practices. Research should examine which aspects of political pledges are implemented at the municipal level and which factors facilitate or hinder this process. Finally, studies examining voter perceptions of sustainability policies would provide key insights into how political parties can better align their SDG-focused policies with public expectations. Voter sensitivity to sustainability issues is directly linked to how political actors shape their future discourse, highlighting the need for further research in this area. While this study contributes to the examination of election manifestos from a sustainability perspective, it also raises new questions and methodological directions for future research.

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