

An overview of the professional conditions of the football referees in Turkey

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Abstract

The aim and the question of this study is to present the variables and the processes of the football refereeing's professional conditions. Owing to the fact that there aren't any studies done before in the present literature relating to this matter, this study is summarized based on related instructions in Turkey, news from newspapers and examples from some countries in literature review section of this study. The method of the study is based on questionnaire technique. Due to the standardization in professional conditions and wages, questionnaire application is limited with Istanbul, and 55 male referees are found during the training in Istanbul Beylerbeyi Facilities. The subjects consist of the referees from 5 classifications and it is seen that the duration of experience increases from county refereeing to national refereeing. The referees are seen to conduct from 1 to 6 matches in a month. 44 of the subjects works in another job and insured through that job. This makes it obvious that the refereeing has not reached to the level of total professionalization. The fact that they remark 10.9% of the subjects are policemen, 12.7% of them are teacher, 14.5% of them are officer and 50.9% of them work in "other" lines of business and the rate of the ones who earn their livings only through refereeing corresponds to 3.6% validate the given situation. The fact that 50.9% of the subjects demand the refereeing to become a full-time profession testifies the request of the people who performs refereeing for professionalization. 50.9% of the subjects in total reported that Physical Aptitude Test causes stress. The fact that 36.3% of the subjects reported they do it as a hobby and 58% of them reported they do it both as a hobby and their own job exhibits the "semi-professional" appearance of football refereeing.

Keywords: Football refereeing, semi-professionalism, professional conditions, wages.

INTRODUCTION

As in all the other sport branches, the "Referee" factor is of vital importance in football as being a decision-maker responsible for presiding over the game. The duty of the "Referee" metaphorically resembles a judge who rules a case about the controversies between the individuals. Both two have authority to punish. So much so that, according to Somali, "(...) the judges secure the justice in legal cases, and so do the referees in football" (13). Also, Sarıbay & Ögün claims that club chairmen and boards of management represent the executive power, Referee Institution represents judgment, MHK represents Higher Judgment and the Federation represents legislation based upon Montesquieu's "separation of powers" principle (11).

While the judges use power of retribution when they punish the juridical or manage mentor control punishment, a football referee use it with warnings

they give to the football players, yellow or red cards they show them. Just as the judges implement on behalf of social order, the referees endeavor to provide the tranquility and order in the game.

As it is well known, the "job" or "professionalism" factor, which is a process of income generation to survive, supports people wage and social security for the duration of their service. However, in Turkey, football referee profession is witnessed to function as a perk rather than having a feature of "professionalism" or a permanent "job". The subject and problem of this study consist "How football referee profession is carried out in Turkey in a professional view" and "What kind of study factors it includes".

Professional processes, wages and social security in football referee profession

There are four official referees in a professional or semi-professional game. Those four people

consist of Referee, 2 assistant referees (formerly known as linesmen) and 4th referee. Assisting referees help the referee conduct the game in accordance with the game rules. Besides, they are especially responsible for determining which team deserves goal kick or corner kick or throw-in after the ball leaves the field, or determining when the player is off-side position or detecting an incident which occurs out of the referee's standpoint. Fourth referee assists the referee in conducting the game in accordance with the game rules and he conducts the game in such cases as the other three referees cannot carry on the match. Controlling the people in technical field, assisting in substitution during the game, and assisting any administrative function required by the referee before, during or after the game are their special responsibilities (15). Yet, when it comes to "football referee", first the "referee" as the main decision-maker and game conductor and then the assistant referees come to mind.

At various stage of each match or game, there is an appointment institution responsible for assigning the referees. While UEFA Champions League appointments are assigned by UEFA, the authority who assigns for FIFA World Cup matches is FIFA. In England, Premier League and Football League Appointments (FA) are assigned by Professional Game Match Officials Ltd (PGMOL), which is a distanced company owned jointly by Premier League and Football League. This establishment manages the referee of the elite games in England (16). In Turkey, the appointments of the football referees are assigned by Turkey Football Federation Head of Referees' Committee (MHK).

In 2014 – 2015 Season MHK Summer Seminar organized by Turkey Football Federation Head of Referees' Committee, it was indicated that there would be rise in the referee salaries and professional referee target was emphasized (17). In 2014-2015 Season MHK Winter Seminar, besides realized increase, total professionalism target was repeated (18). With the mentioned increase, referees' salaries conducting a game in Super League rose from 3000 TL to 5750 TL, assistant referees' salaries in Super League rose to 2750 TL, fourth and extra referees' salaries rose to 2200 TL. Latest current salaries per match are seen in the table below.

Despite over 80% raise in referee salaries, the referees' wages are still below in comparison with the referees in leading countries such as Germany,

England or France. In France, the referees conducting the games get 2500 euro payment per match beside receiving a salary about 2800 euro every month. In Germany, a referee in Bundesliga gets 3600 euro per match and in Italy and Greece, referees earn about 3000 euro. In Spain, it is remarked that a referee's annual earning is about 200.000 euro. In Turkey, it is seen that the wages haven't reached those prices, and Super League referee salaries have just passed 655 euro which is paid in Championship known as 2nd League of England and 800 euro which is paid in Bundesliga 2nd league (20).

On the other hand, only England Premier League has a professional state among these leagues. The other leagues have semi-professionalism; that is, the referees have other jobs as it is in our country. In Premier League, it is stated that the referees do this job professionally and each season they are paid about 52.000 euro collectively in compliance with the contract they sign. When the fact that a referee in Premier League reveals excellent performance and conducts 30 league matches is taken into consideration, he gets 733 euro per week, and with the 300 euro payment separately given per match, every 90 minutes correspond to about 8.800 TL (21).

When examined current regulations towards football referee, a professionalization tendency in responsible establishments draw attention. A cooperation protocol has recently been signed between Turkey Football Federation and Anatolia University (AÜ) towards raising football referees and in accordance with this protocol, "Football Referee Certificate Program" has been initiated. It has been agreed by Anatolia University to organize certificate program in this field three times within the year. According to this system, it has been planned that the ones who want to be nominee referee from each city will track the lessons broadcasted on AÜ TV and online apart from the materials prepared by MHK educators and AÜ experts and at the end of 14 weeks, they will enter the exams applied in 81 cities. The ones who gain right to get the certificate as a result of the exams will apply to Provincial Juries and Provincial Juries will start the ones successful in athletic tests in "Nominee Referee" status in accordance with the current instructions if required (22).

Table 1. Football Referees' Salaries Per Match In Turkey (19)

	Super League	PTT 1. League	TFF 2. League	TFF 3. League	BAL League
Referee	5.750 ₺	1600 ₺	1400 ₺	600 ₺	130 ₺
Assistant Referee	2.750 ₺	850 ₺	800 ₺	430 ₺	75 ₺
Fourth Referee	2000 ₺	700 ₺	700 ₺	370 ₺	65 ₺

Football referee model in England and Germany

Before 2001-2002 season, all the referees in England got paid for conducting the game (10). In the process of transition from the system of payment per match to the system of salaried contract, it was confirmed that the number of cards per match decreased after 2001 (2).

A remarkable feature about the referees in England is, also, that the organization of appointment of the referees is made by a company named PGMOB which was jointly established by Federation (FA), Premier League and Football League (2). As a part of professionalization of football referee profession, the referee is required in salaried contract to train regularly off the job to improve their abilities necessary for the referee profession. That kind of fifteen day's training sessions consist of a combination of very hard and physical fitness trainings which require expertness including watching videos of earlier performances. These trainings take place in Premier League clubs. Therefore, the referees train with the players to some extent (2).

In England, poor performer referees' status are relegated to the second league matches. In 2001 – 2002 season when the contract application first started in England, the referees' contract time was fixed to 2 years, and from 2003- 2004 till now, they have been rewarded by PGMOB with annual dynamic contracts facilitating the dismissal of the poor performer referees and the promotions of the promising referees in National List (2).

The referee institution in Germany, which is one of the trivets of European football, has distinctive features different than other examples. In Germany, every referee is a member of a football club and they have to be. The clubs they belong to pay their dues and provide them necessary outfit. Every club has to possess a specific number of referees in accordance with the league they exist. For each missing referee, the club pays a considerable amount of fine to the federation. For this reason, the clubs are continually in search of referees. The clubs which have more referees than it is required receive money from the federation. Another distinctive

feature is that a person in Germany has the opportunity and freedom to be a football player and a coach and a referee at the same time. The referees are not assigned to the leagues in which the team/teams they play and/or manage take place. They take the matches apart from the hours when their team has a match. This is arranged automatically (1).

MATERIAL & METHOD

In this study, questionnaire technique is used, which is one of the important researching tools. It is applied 55 football referees in the referee training in TFF Istanbul Beylerbeyi Complex in April, 2014. The nature of the study consists of the referees from Istanbul region and it is restricted with the referees from Istanbul region. The number of the referees in Istanbul: There are 24 National referees, 50 National Assistant Referees, 37 Regional Referees, 52 Regional Referees, 3 FIFA referees, 8 FIFA Assistant Referees, 8 Top Class Referees, 14 Top Class Assistant Referees, 196 referees in total.

In this study done with Simple Random Sampling, the referee classifications which take place in the sampling are County Referee, Regional Assistant Referee, Regional Referee, National Assistant Referee and National Referee. Top Class and Top Class Assistant Referees are not included to the sampling due to FIFA and FIFA Assistant Referees access problems. The referees' professional drawbacks for justifiable reasons decrease the attendance to the questionnaire. The fact an important number of the referees want to stay out of the questionnaire due to the professional drawbacks and legal restrictions serves as another important factor restricting the research. The attitude of the referees in this way impedes the increase in the number of the referees who want to fill in the questionnaire and it keeps the number of the subjects to take the place in the sampling at a certain level unavoidably. For this reason, instead of pursuing a goal of any generalizations, in this study it is intended to explain the main variables about the professional processes of football refereeing in Turkey. This study from this aspect forms a descriptive feature rather than having the aim of a hypothetical verification.

In the application section of the study, two types of question are asked. First one is "Factual Questions" towards determination of current situation about age, duration of experience in refereeing, the number of matches per month, the status of insurance, union membership and if there are other sources of income. Second type of questions is "Opinion Questions" towards the subjects. These questions are the question types to determine the attitudes and/or opinions of a sampling group about a subject or a concept. These questions are, in this content, the questions to determine the referees' opinions about physical aptitude test, their assessment type of referee profession and their opinions about whether the referee profession should be a completely professional job or not.

RESULTS

The subjects who attended the study consist of 55 referees. The 5 referee classifications indicated above shows the rise of degrees in refereeing from County Referee classification to National Referee Classification. 2 of the subjects who attended the

study are County Referees, 13 of them are Regional Referees, 14 of them are Regional Assistant Referees, 14 of them are National Assistant referees and 12 of them are National Referees.

When the referees are assessed in terms of their refereeing experience, it is seen that the county referees just at beginner level have 0-1 year and 2-3 year-experience (1+1 individuals); 35% of regional assistant referees(5 individuals) have 4-6 year-experience, 64% of them in total (8+1 individuals) 7-9 and 10 –above 10 year-experience; 84% of regional referees in total(5+6 individuals) have 7-9 and 10-above 10 year-experience; 29% of national assistant referees (4 individuals) have 7-9 year-experience, 71% of them (10 individuals) have 10- above 10 year-experience; 41% of national referees (5 individuals) have 7-9 year-experience and 58% of them have 10-above 10 year- experience.

It is concluded that the referees can conduct at least 1 and up to 6 matches in a month. As it can be understood from the table, some referees can conduct 6 matches and more than 6 matches in a month.

Table 2. The classifications of the referees by their ages.

		Age				Total
		18-23	24-29	30-35	36-41	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	1	1	0	0	2
	Regional Referee	0	8	5	0	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	0	10	4	0	14
	National Assistant Referee	0	2	11	1	14
	National Referee	0	4	8	0	12
Total		1	25	28	1	55

Table 3. The classifications of the referees according to the duration of their refereeing.

		For how many years have you been refereeing?					Total
		0-1	2-3	4-6	7-9	10 and above	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	1	1	0	0	0	2
	Regional Referee	0	0	2	5	6	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	0	0	5	8	1	14
	National Assistant Referee	0	0	0	4	10	14
	National Referee	0	0	0	5	7	12
Total		1	1	7	22	24	55

Table 4. The approximate number of the matches they conduct by classification.

		How many matches do you conduct in a month?						Total
		At least 1	2	3	4	5	6 and above	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
	Regional Referee	2	2	3	3	1	2	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	0	1	3	3	2	5	14
	National Assistant Referee	1	6	3	4	0	0	14
	National Referee	0	3	3	4	0	2	12
Total		3	12	12	14	4	10	55

Table 5. The status of having insurance or not by classification.

		Do you have insurance? If so, from where?				Total
		I don't have insurance.	I have insurance through my other job.	I pay for my own insurance.	I have insurance both through refereeing and my other job.	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	0	1	0	1	2
	Regional Referee	1	10	1	1	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	3	11	0	0	14
	National Assistant Referee	0	12	1	1	14
	National Referee	0	10	2	0	12
Total		4	44	4	3	55

Table 6. The status of having any other job apart from refereeing according to the classification.

		Do you have any other job that you earn your living apart from refereeing?								Total
		Officer	Teacher	Lawyer	Tradesmen	Policeman	Physical Education Teacher	Other	I earn my living just through refereeing	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
	Regional Referee	4	1	2	0	1	0	4	1	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	3	2	0	0	2	0	6	1	14
	National Assistant Referee	1	3	0	1	1	1	7	0	14
	National Referee	0	1	0	0	2	0	9	0	12
Total		8	7	2	1	6	1	28	2	55

Table 7. The status of demanding refereeing to become a profession completely or not by classification.

		Do you demand that refereeing become a profession completely?			Total
		Yes	No	I'm undecided	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	1	0	1	2
	Regional Referee	6	5	2	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	10	2	2	14
	National Assistant Referee	5	6	3	14
	National Referee	6	4	2	12
Total		28	17	10	55

When examined the referees' insurance status, it is understood from the table that they have no insurance-social security through refereeing and they get their insurance through other jobs they work. It is remarkable data in this table that 44 subjects out of 55 (80%) works in other professions and they get insured through this profession.

It is stated that 10% of the subjects (6 individuals) are policemen, 12.7 of them (7 individuals) are teachers, 14.5 of them (8 individuals) are officers and 50.9 of them (28 individuals) work in other lines of business. The ones who earn their living just through refereeing correspond to a rate of 3.6% (1+1 individuals).

50.9% of the subjects in total (28 individuals) reported that they demand refereeing become a profession completely, 30.9 of them (17 individuals) reported that they don't demand this and 18.2% of them (10 individuals) reported that they are

undecided. 46.2% of regional referees (6 individuals), 71.4% of regional assistant referees (10 individuals), 35.7% of national assistant referees (5 individuals) and 50% of national referees (6 individuals) reported that they demand refereeing become a profession completely.

It is evident that 89% of the subjects (49 individuals) reported they are not a member of any sports union and 10.9% of the subjects (6 individuals) reported they are members of a sports union (Table 8).

30.9% of the subjects (17 individuals) reported that Physical Aptitude Test causes stress on them due to the anxiety of not taking a charge in the matches till next test. 20% of them (11 individuals) reported Physical Aptitude Test causes stress due to the anxiety of not being able to go up higher level classifications in case of a failure. 49% of the subjects (27 individuals) reported that Physical Aptitude Test

does not cause stress on them. As it is evaluated in terms of classifications, 100% of county referees (1+1 individuals), 69.2% of regional referees (6+3 individuals), 64.2% of regional assistant referees (4+5 individuals), 28.6% of national assistant referees (3+1 individuals) and 33.3% of national referees (3+1 individuals) reported that Physical Aptitude Test causes stress. It is a very remarkable fact that 66.6% of national referees (8 individuals) and 71.4% of national assistant referees reported Physical Aptitude Test doesn't cause stress (Table 9).

36.3% of the subjects (20 individuals) reported that they do refereeing as a hobby, and 58% of the subjects (32 individuals) reported that they do it both as a hobby and as their own job. Only 1.8% of the subjects (1 individual) reported that he does it as his main profession and 1.8% of the subjects (1 individual) reported that he does it as a temporary job.

DISCUSSION

The subjects who attended the research consist of 55 referees (Table 2). From county referee which is the lowest classification to National Referee which is the highest classification, it is seen that the duration of experience in refereeing increases (Table 3). The referees are seen to conduct a number of matches from 1 to 6 in a month (Table 4).

One of the notable findings of the research is that 44 of 55 referees (80%) participating in the survey works in another job and insured through

that job (Table 5). This situation makes the matter whether football refereeing can be done as a survival profession with a social security a current issue, and it is evident that the refereeing has not reached to the level of total professionalization. In the given findings, most of the referees do another job at the same time. Football refereeing leaves the feature of professionalism under these circumstances. The fact that they remark 10.9% of the subjects (6 individuals) are policemen, 12.7% of them (7 individuals) are teacher, 14.5% of them (8 individuals) are officer and 50.9% of them (28 individuals) work in "other" lines of business and the rate of the ones who earn their livings only through refereeing corresponds to 3.6% (1+1 individuals) validate the given situation (Table 6). In conjunction with this, the fact that 50.9% of the subjects (28 individuals) demand the refereeing to become a profession completely (Table 7) testifies the request of the people who performs refereeing for professionalization.

It is seen that 89% of the subjects (49 individuals) do not have any membership to a sports union (Table 8). The fact that the referee profession has not become a profession completely can be accepted as the reason why those people are nonunion. It is necessary to note down that, contrary to other business lines, the referee profession still has not reached to the level of union organizations for employee rights institutionally.

Table 8. The status of being a member of a sports union by classification.

		Are you a member of a sports union?		Total
		Yes	No	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	0	2	2
	Regional Referee	2	11	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	2	12	14
	National Assistant Referee	0	14	14
	National Referee	2	10	12
Total		6	49	55

Table 9. Their opinions about physical aptitude test by classification.

		What is the most important reason why physical aptitude test causes stress on you?			Total
		"When I cannot pass the tests, I won't be able to take charge in matches till next test "anxiety"	"I cannot go up to higher classification in case of a failure" anxiety	Physical Aptitude Test don't cause stress on me	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	1	1	0	2
	Regional Referee	6	3	4	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	4	5	5	14
	National Assistant Referee	3	1	10	14
	National Referee	3	1	8	12
Total		17	11	27	55

Table 10. The way that referees evaluate referee profession by classification.

		How do you evaluate refereeing?				I'm undecided	Total
		I do it as a temporary job	I do it as my own job	I do it as a hobby	I do it both as a hobby and my own job		
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	0	1	0	1	0	2
	Regional Referee	1	0	5	7	0	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	0	0	6	8	0	14
	National Assistant Referee	0	0	5	8	1	14
	National Referee	0	0	4	8	0	12
Total		1	1	20	32	1	55

Physical Aptitude Test (short distance running) and Cooper Test (long distance endurance running) are practised for the purpose of preserving the referees' sportive performances inside the pitch at optimum level (23). The referees in specific classifications are supposed to pass these tests periodically. The ones who fail cannot be charge with a match and they miss their opportunity to be promoted. 30.9% of the subjects in total (17 individuals) state that Physical Aptitude Test causes stress on them with the worry of not being able to be assigned in any matches till the next test and 20% of them (11 individuals) emphasize that Physical Aptitude Test cause stress on them with the worry of not being promoted in case of a failure. In National Referee and National Assistant Referee Classifications, the rate of that Physical Aptitude Test causes stress has notably decreased (Table 9). Based on this, it can be concluded the circumstance that Physical Aptitude Tests creates stress shows a tendency to decrease as long as rising-up in the classification increases. These tests are accepted as a piece of the referees' profession. Indeed, given their function to keep the performance at a certain level and improve it, it can be suggested that they function as a kind of in-service training for football referees.

The fact that 36.3% of the subjects (20 individuals) reported they do it as a hobby and 58% of them (32 individuals) reported they do it both as a hobby and their own job comes up as important data in the sense of displaying the amateurism dimension in refereeing (Table 10). From this aspect, while football refereeing has a professional feature with its "endowment" element, it includes an ingredient about amateurism with its "hobby" element. Starting from this point of view, it is obvious that football refereeing exhibits a "semi-professional" appearance.

There are criticisms towards the continuation of refereeing as a hobby or as an additional income. Üçışık expresses his criticism (14) as "In an

environment where the football players, coaches, trainers and managers earn much more than those in other areas and other sportsmen, it can't be approved to slide over the refereeing's financial provision with a compensation such as attendance fee or a nominal fee for once. In other words, in the football sector where million dollars are discussed, the affair that the referees' monthly or annual earnings are far below the football players appears like an unfair income distribution in football labor market. Although the football players in Turkey are paid high fees, it can be asserted that the referees cannot get what they deserve from the football fund unlike it is in European football.

In addition to the wage towards the professional factors in football refereeing and the factors whether it should be a professional full-time job, the social and psychological dimensions of the football matches the referees officiate reflects another vital context of professional factors.

As is known to all, football referees are exposed to swearing and insults and they appear as a significant addressee related to audience deviance (7). Many studies have such findings that confirm this case and it is claimed that unsporting behaviors are mostly acted towards the referees (8). Many researches reveal that football fans, as a social factor, affect the referees' decisions (biased referee) and shape these decisions (6, 3, 5, 4, 9, 12).

It is clear that until quite recently, the referees in Turkey were lack of even insurance. As soon as the Ministry of Youth and Sports confirmed that the referees officiating amateur football matches had no insurance, the referees have been supported to be under the auspices of social security by this protocol including amateur sportsmen (24).

Orhan numbers the outcomes of the fact that the referees do not take place in social security context as that the referee who has an accident while going to or coming from the matches is left to his own fate, and that the referee who has a work

accident during the match are not endowed except emergency aid, and that the referees who become inadequate after years in refereeing (without being a commentator or a writer) are not entitled to the state pension, and that the widow and orphans of the referees who die for any reason as he is working are not endowed. Orhan stresses social security problems and concern for the future within this context (25).

Football referees in such countries as England and Germany train with football players by joining football clubs and they are supported by an annual social security with stable payment (England). Moreover, it is possible that the referees can be a football player, a coach and a referee at the same time as it is in Germany. The main outstanding indicator of those examples is that the referee profession is carried out integrated with the football clubs being the most important component in the football system. It can be easily said that it won't be accepted by football public opinion, sports media and partisanship perception in Turkey to start such a system that is applied in Germany. However, the fact that football refereeing should be secured with a social security to be a professional job and it should be organized as a full- time job is still a problem to be solved.

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