

Analyzing the Professional Satisfaction and Organisational Identification in Football Referees

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the Professional satisfaction and organizational identification of football referees within the Turkish Football Federation and to explore the relationship between these concepts. The research employed a descriptive survey model, sampling 151 referees (129 males, 22 females) from the Black Sea region. The "Professional Pleasure Scale for Referees" (OHSR) developed by Karaçam and Pular (2018) and the "Organizational Identification Scale" (OAS) created by Mael and Ashforth (1992), which was adapted into Turkish by Tak and Aydemir (2004), were utilized for data collection. The statistical analyses conducted comprised One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Mann Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis H, and Spearman Correlation. The findings demonstrate higher levels of professional satisfaction and organizational identification among referees. A statistically significant and positive relationship was identified between these two variables ($p < 0.05$). Further analysis indicated that male referees exhibited significantly higher levels of organizational identification in comparison to their female counterparts, whereas no significant differences in professional satisfaction were observed between genders. Referees holding a bachelor's degree demonstrated greater professional satisfaction than their counterparts with associate or postgraduate degrees. Class A referees exhibited a greater level of organizational identification compared to those in lower classifications. Referees who expressed contentment with their assignment frequency and income levels indicated a significant increase in professional satisfaction and organizational identification. The findings indicate that demographic and professional factors, including gender, education level, classification, and income satisfaction, have a significant impact on referees' professional satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study emphasizes the necessity for customized interventions to improve referees' work experiences, indicating that enhanced training and support systems may significantly influence their satisfaction and professional identity.

Key Words: Football referee, professional satisfaction, organisational identification

1. INTRODUCTION

Sports activities have historically served a significant social and industrial function for individuals. Football is unequivocally the most popular team sport that facilitates collective action towards a common objective, a fundamental aspect of social life. Football can serve as a realm for individuals to explore their identities and self-perceptions from various perspectives. Irrespective of social and economic status, football, a phenomenon embraced by the masses and a significant employment sector that has evolved into an industry, is recognized as the most popular sport globally (Öntürk et al., 2019). Football, designed to unite diverse societal segments for a shared objective, transcends the mere pursuit of victory (Singh & Lamba, 2019). Football directly influences the economies of nations via international linkages. Nonetheless, it also seeks to eradicate unsportsmanlike conduct. Türkmen (1998) asserted that football serves as a unifying phenomenon that alleviates stress and intense environments, rejects discrimination, and fosters social rehabilitation by uniting diverse individuals.

The paramount element in the decision-making process in football, a highly popular sport today, is identified as referees (Görün et al., 2020). Football on-field administration is conducted by referees who have undergone prior training in this domain (Sunay, 1992). Referees must possess a refined sense of justice and comprehend human psychology and sociology (Orta, 2002). Refereeing is a professional domain that warrants comprehensive investigation due to its intricate and impactful components (Karaçam & Pular, 2016). The profession of refereeing encompasses positive emotions such as excitement, vitality, and happiness. Referees must attain a sense of satisfaction regarding both job and life fulfillment. The notion of professional satisfaction is significant for referees (Karaçam & Pular, 2018). Professional satisfaction is associated with the tasks performed across various professions (Hoy & Tarter, 2011). Job satisfaction is defined as a favorable emotional condition resulting from individuals' professional experiences (Lent & Brown, 2006). Life satisfaction is characterized by a positive emotional state (Lent et al., 2011). Peterson and Seligman (2004) established a classification to elucidate the concept of pleasure. This classification defines pleasure as engaging with life through hope, vitality, and enthusiasm. Park and Peterson (2010) assert that pleasure constitutes an individual's sensation of vitality and perpetual motion. Consequently, Park and Peterson characterize pleasure as a life replete with vitality and adventure.

The notion of professional pleasure encompasses the sensation of vitality. Job satisfaction encompasses a range of positive emotions. These positive feelings stem from an individual's career and work experiences (Lent & Brown, 2006). Life satisfaction is defined as the presence of positive emotions in an individual's everyday experiences (Lent et al., 2011). The notion of professional satisfaction is articulated as a broader and more extensive concept compared to job satisfaction (Karaçam & Pular, 2018). Josephson and Vingard (2007) state that the foundation of professional satisfaction is rooted in the concept of life satisfaction. It is also characterized as the assessment of the enthusiasm and satisfaction of an individual in relation to their professional engagement. Given the challenges associated with refereeing, it is a particularly psychologically demanding profession. They must demonstrate a strong character in the face of potential adverse conditions. All these phenomena stem from a significant degree of motivation, which is intricately linked to pleasure. Should a referee's enjoyment of officiating diminish, it could lead to a decline in motivation during practice and a reduction in their work efforts. One significant reason that contributes to referees discontinuing their profession is the loss of enjoyment in refereeing. It has been observed that they are under significant pressure (Ekmekçi et al., 2011).

Another concept that aligns with identity, values, and goals within organizations, including the refereeing profession, is organizational identification (Dutton et al., 1994). Organizational identification can enhance an individual's loyalty to their organization, increase their effort on behalf

of the organization, and demonstrate greater commitment to organizational goals (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Employees who have a strong identification with their organization develop a "psychological attachment" to it, sharing in both its successes and failures (Ashforth & Mael, 1992). Scott and Lane define organisational identification as the perception of oneself as a member of the organisation. Organizational identification represents a facet of social identification within an organization, elucidating the connection between the organization and the individual (Cheney & Tompkins, 1985). Strong identification fosters a robust and stable organizational identity, whereas weak identification results in fragmentation and alterations in organizational identity. Individuals associated with the organization perceive its objectives as their own and operate in greater alignment with the organization (Dutton et al., 1994). In this regard, refereeing can serve as a significant source of enjoyment for individuals who are passionate about football and wish to engage with the sport. The thrill of the matches and actively participating on the field serve as significant motivators for referees. Referees who find satisfaction in their roles are likely to navigate internal and external challenges more effectively, resulting in enhanced performance levels. It is essential to assess the satisfaction levels of referees and understand the variables influencing these levels to enhance their performance.

2. MATERIAL & METHOD

Research Model

The study aimed to assess the levels of satisfaction and organizational identification among football referees across various classifications associated with the Turkish Football Federation. A descriptive survey model, a standard approach in quantitative research methods, was employed for this purpose. The descriptive method seeks to uncover the relationships between various situations (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009; Erdoğan & Yıldırım).

Research Group

The study employed the convenience sampling method, which is categorized as a non-random sampling technique. Convenience sampling is a non-random sampling method where the researcher determines the sample segment to be selected from the main population based on their judgment. In convenience sampling, data are gathered from the primary population in the most straightforward, rapid, and cost-effective manner (Malhotra, 2004; Aaker et al., 2007; Zikmund, 1997; Haşiloğlu et al., 2015). The study population comprises 260 football referees operating across various classifications in the Black Sea region. The sample group comprises 151 individuals, including 129 male and 22 female football referees, operating across various classifications in different provinces. Participants engaged in the study on a voluntary basis. The study involved an analysis of the demographic characteristics of the participating referees.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distributions of demographic and refereeing information of referees participating in the study

Variable	Category.	f	%
Gender	female	22	14,6
	male	129	85,4
Age group	20-24	27	17,9
	25-29	44	29,1
	30-34	29	19,2
	35-39	38	25,2
	40-45	13	8,6
Education status	Associate degree	34	22,5
	Licence	107	70,9
	Postgraduate	10	6,6

	Class A	19	12,6
Classification	Class B	21	13,9
	Class C	23	15,2
	Regional referee	88	58,3
Satisfaction with the frequency of refereeing assignments	Yes	115	76,2
	No.	36	23,8
Satisfaction with refereeing income	Inadequate	10	6,6
	Partially insufficient	58	38,4
	Undecided	23	15,2
	Partially sufficient	36	23,8
Satisfaction with EPAK training content and frequency	Adequate	24	15,9
	Centre	126	83,4
	High	25	16,6
Perspective on transition to professional refereeing	Negative	5	3,3
	Undecided	7	4,6
	Positive	139	92,1

Table 1 indicates that 14.6% of the participants were female, while 85.4% were male. In terms of age distribution, 17.9% were aged 20-24, 29.1% were 25-29, 19.2% were 30-34, and 25.2% were 35-39. Additionally, 8.6% fell within the 40-45 age range. Regarding educational attainment, 22.5% held associate degrees, 70.9% held bachelor's degrees, and 6.6% were postgraduate graduates. In the study, it was found that 12.6% of the referees are employed in Class A, 13.9% in Class B, 15.2% in Class C, and 58.3% are classified as regional referees. Additionally, 76.2% expressed satisfaction with the frequency of their officiating duties. In the research conducted, 6.6% of referees reported that their refereeing income was insufficient, while 38.4% indicated it was partially insufficient. Additionally, 23.8% felt their income was partially sufficient, and another 23.8% deemed it sufficient. Furthermore, 15.2% expressed uncertainty regarding the adequacy of their income. Regarding the content and frequency of EPAK training, 83.4% of referees were moderately satisfied, and 16.6% were highly satisfied. Of the referees surveyed, 3.3% reported a negative experience regarding the transition to professional refereeing, while 92.1% indicated a positive experience, and 4.6% remained undecided.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form

A personal information form developed by the researchers was utilized to ascertain the demographic details of the participants. The personal information form includes inquiries regarding the participants' gender, educational status, and age, as well as their classification within officiating. It also assesses their satisfaction with officiating frequency, income satisfaction from the referee profession, the content and frequency of EPAK (education planning sub-committee) trainings, and their views on the transition to professional refereeing.

Professional Satisfaction Scale for Referees

The "Professional Pleasure Scale for Referees," created by Karaçam and Pular (2018), was utilized to assess the professional pleasure levels of referees. The scale comprises seven items and one dimension, utilizing a 5-point Likert format, with items rated as never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and always (5). In the scale development process, the internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.83. The elevated score from the scale signifies a high level of professional satisfaction among referees. The scale contains no reverse-coded items.

Organisational Identification Scale

The "Organisational Identification Scale," created by Mael and Ashforth (1992) and subsequently adapted into Turkish by Tak and Aydemir (2004), was employed to assess the organisational identification levels of the referees. The scale comprises six items and one dimension, utilizing a 5-point Likert format. Participants are instructed to select one of the following responses for each item: "1=Never Disagree," "2=Disagree," "3=Partially Agree," "4=Agree," and "5=Fully Agree." The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient derived from this study's data is .85.

Data Analyzes

The statistical software "SPSS 25.0" was employed for data analysis within the computer environment. Analysis of data distribution The One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test indicated that non-parametric analyses were employed due to the absence of normal distribution in the data. Man Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H analyses were employed to compare scale scores based on demographic and refereeing data. Spearman Correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between the scale scores.

Ethics

The research was presented at the meeting of The Gümüşhane University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee on 29/08/2023, recorded as number 2023/4. It was unanimously concluded that the study adheres to the current legislation.

3. RESULTS

Table 2. Descriptive statistics related to scale scores

	$\bar{X} \pm SS$	α	K-S (p)
Professional satisfaction scale	4,91±0,26	0,79	,000
Organisational identification scale	4,62±0,51	0,81	,000

The study indicates that the referees exhibit high levels of professional satisfaction and organizational identification. Upon examining Cronbach's Alpha (α) values pertaining to reliability, it is evident that both scales demonstrate adequate reliability for analysis. Furthermore, an assessment of the One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test results indicates that the data do not conform to a normal distribution.

Table 3. Examination of the relationship between professional satisfaction and organisational identification

	Organisational identification	
Professional satisfaction	r	,318
	p	,000

When the table is examined, it is seen that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between the levels of professional satisfaction and organisational identification levels of the referees participating in the study ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4. Comparison of scale scores according to demographic variables and variables related to refereeing

	N	Professional satisfaction ($\bar{X} \pm SS$)	Organisational identification ($\bar{X} \pm SS$)
Gender			
woman	22	4,95±0,13	4,45±0,51
male	129	4,90±0,27	4,65±0,51
Statistics		U=1303,50; p=,388	U=982.50; p=.016
Age group			
20-24	27	4,92±0,16	4,48±0,65
25-29	44	4,87±0,41	4,54±0,59
30-34	29	4,93±0,14	4,61±0,45
35-39	38	4,92±0,20	4,75±0,36
40-45	13	5,00±0,00	4,88±0,19
Statistics		$\chi^2 = 0,62$; p=,892	$\chi^2 = 4,16$; p=.245
Education status			
Associate degree	34	4,87±0,24	4,61±0,56
Licence	107	4,95±0,16	4,66±0,47
Postgraduate	10	4,64±0,70	4,30±0,70
Statistics		$\chi^2 = 11,42$; p=.003	$\chi^2 = 3,41$; p=,182
Difference		1<2, 2>3	-
Classification			
Class A	19	4,99±0,03	4,89±0,19
Class B	21	4,91±0,18	4,68±0,38
Class C	23	4,86±0,30	4,81±0,28
Regional referee	88	4,91±0,29	4,50±0,59
Statistics		$\chi^2 = 3,71$; p=,294	$\chi^2 = 13,78$; p=.003
Difference		-	1>2, 1>4, 3>4
Satisfaction with the frequency of refereeing assignments			
Yes	115	4,93±0,25	4,69±0,45
No.	36	4,85±0,27	4,40±0,63
Statistics		U=1707,00; p=,025	U=1440.50; p=.004
Satisfaction with refereeing income			
Inadequate	10	4,71±0,39	3,93±0,97
Partially insufficient	58	4,94±0,16	4,72±0,36
Undecided	23	4,83±0,48	4,41±0,50
Partially sufficient	36	4,91±0,19	4,73±0,39
Adequate	24	5,00±0,00	4,74±0,48
Statistics		$\chi^2 = 14,74$; p=.005	$\chi^2 = 18,41$; p=.001
Difference		1<2, 1<5, 2<5, 3<5, 4<5	1<2, 1<4, 1<5, 2>3, 3<4, 3<5
Satisfaction with EPAK training content and frequency			
Centre	126	4,90±0,28	4,61±0,51
High	25	4,97±0,09	4,69±0,53
Statistics		U=1462.50; p=.425	U=1366,00; p=,272
Perspective on transition to professional refereeing			
Negative	5	4,14±0,90	4,00±0,94
Undecided	7	4,82±0,32	4,38±0,46
Positive	139	4,94±0,14	4,66±0,48
Statistics		$\chi^2 = 17,45$; p=.000	$\chi^2 = 4,59$; p=,101
Difference		1<3	-

It is seen that the professional satisfaction levels of the referees do not differ at a statistically significant level according to gender ($p>0,05$), but the organisational identification levels of male referees are significantly higher than female referees ($p<0,05$).

According to the education level of the referees, it is seen that the level of organisational identification does not differ significantly ($p>0,05$), and the level of professional satisfaction of the referees with bachelor's degree is statistically significantly higher ($p<0,05$) than the level of professional satisfaction of the referees with associate degree and graduate degree. It is seen that there is no statistically significant difference in the levels of professional satisfaction of the referees according to the classification in which they work ($p>0,05$), but the organization identification levels of the referees working in Class A are significantly higher ($p<0,05$) than those working in Class B, Class C and regional referees.

When examined according to the level of satisfaction with the frequency of refereeing duties, it is seen that the levels of professional satisfaction and organization identification of the referees who are satisfied with the frequency of duties are significantly higher than those who are not satisfied with the frequency of duties ($p<0,05$).

It is seen that there is a statistically significant difference between the levels of professional satisfaction and organization identification of the referees according to the level of satisfaction with the refereeing income ($p<0,05$). In professional satisfaction, it is seen that the level of professional satisfaction of the referees who express their level of satisfaction with their income as sufficient is significantly higher than the referees whose satisfaction with their income is insufficient, partially insufficient, undecided and partially sufficient ($p<0,05$), and the level of professional satisfaction of the referees who think that their refereeing income is partially insufficient is significantly higher than those who think that their refereeing income is insufficient ($p<0,05$). In organization identification, it is seen that the organization identification level of the referees whose satisfaction level with the refereeing income is partially insufficient, partially sufficient and sufficient is significantly higher than the referees whose satisfaction level with the refereeing income is insufficient and undecided ($p<0,05$).

It is seen that there is no statistically significant difference in the levels of professional satisfaction and organization identification according to the age groups of the referees and their level of satisfaction with the content and frequency of EPAK training ($p>0,05$).

According to the referees' perspectives on the transition to professional refereeing, it is seen that the level of organization identification does not differ significantly ($p>0,05$), and in professional satisfaction, the level of professional satisfaction of the referees who stated that the transition to professional refereeing was positive was statistically significantly higher ($p<0,05$) than the referees who stated that the transition to professional refereeing was negative.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results acquired in this section of the study were assessed through the examination of multiple sources. Analysis of the gender variables of the referees involved in the study reveals that male referees constitute the majority in comparison to their female counterparts. This situation can be attributed to the predominance of men in sports organizations and the glass ceiling obstacles encountered by women (Sertkaya et al, 2013). The analysis of the gender variable reveals that the professional satisfaction levels of referees do not exhibit statistically significant differences; however, the organizational identification levels of male referees are significantly higher than those of female

referees. Karaçam and Pulus (2018) discovered that male referees exhibited significantly higher levels of professional satisfaction compared to female referees. The study's finding is interpreted as follows: "It is believed that this may be associated with the status of women within the social structure and the attitudes towards women referees affecting their perception."

Kahraman (2021) found in his study that referees aged 26-30 demonstrated higher professional satisfaction compared to those aged 31 and above. This study demonstrates that job satisfaction rises with age. A higher refereeing classification is associated with greater financial compensation. This circumstance is thought to positively augment job satisfaction. A study of volunteer football referees in Germany revealed that younger referees demonstrated a greater inclination to continue officiating compared to their older counterparts, despite facing negative experiences (Giel & Breuer, 2020). Young referees can sustain elevated job satisfaction despite facing challenging circumstances. This result contradicts the study.

Karaçam and Pulus (2018) determined that there was no significant correlation between the professional satisfaction levels of football referees and their age or years of officiating. Erdoğan (2013) and Karaçam et al. (2017) concluded in their research on educators that, in contrast to the study, higher age and seniority among teachers correlated with increased levels of professional satisfaction. The findings of the literature review and this study are divergent. The difference is attributed to the distinctive attributes of the referee group.

Kahraman (2021) discovered that novice referees possessing elevated professional expectations and a profound passion for sports exhibit greater motivation and job satisfaction as they seek to acquire experience. It resembles the findings of the present study. A statistically significant relationship exists between the professional satisfaction levels and organizational identification levels of the referees involved in the study. Conversely, a study on wrestling referees concluded that the participants exhibited high levels of professional satisfaction and above-average organizational identification (Küçükbiş & Gül, 2019). The greater effort and pressure experienced by football referees during matches render their profession more challenging than that of wrestling referees. Consequently, this disparity may have arisen between them regarding job satisfaction and organizational identification. The professional satisfaction level of referees is statistically significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than that of referees with associate degrees and postgraduate education. Kahraman (2021) investigated the correlation between career satisfaction and professional satisfaction among football referees, concluding that professional satisfaction remained consistent regardless of the referees' educational attainment. This outcome does not corroborate the study.

The professional satisfaction levels of referees remain statistically unchanged across their classifications; however, the organizational identification levels of referees in Class A are significantly higher than those in Class B, Class C, and the regional referee class. In a separate study, in contrast to this one, it was noted that referees' job satisfaction rose concurrently with the elevation in classification (Kahraman, 2021). This outcome corroborates the study. Karaçam and Pulus (2018) determined in their study that the professional satisfaction levels of football referees exhibited no significant variation based on classification. This outcome aligns with this study. It is believed that as referees' rankings improve, their financial earnings rise, consequently enhancing their job satisfaction.

The professional satisfaction and organizational identification levels of referees content with their duty frequency are significantly higher than those who are dissatisfied with it. A contrasting study revealed no significant difference in the results (Küçükbiş & Gül, 2019). The disparity in results may stem from differing perceptions regarding the frequency of duties between these two distinct

refereeing branches. A study on basketball and football referees indicates a significant positive correlation between the frequency of officiated matches and job satisfaction (Karaçam & Pulur, 2018). A separate study investigated professional satisfaction in relation to the year of refereeing, concluding that it remained unchanged across different years of refereeing (Kahraman, 2021).

The analysis of the research results revealed that referees who reported sufficient income exhibited significantly higher levels of professional satisfaction compared to those who indicated insufficient, partially insufficient, undecided, or partially sufficient income. Furthermore, it was concluded that the professional satisfaction level of referees who perceived their income as partially insufficient was significantly higher than that of those who deemed their income insufficient. A study revealed a significant correlation between income and job satisfaction, concluding that job satisfaction rises in tandem with income (Türker & Yılmaz, 2023). In organizational identification, referees with partially insufficient, partially sufficient, and sufficient income exhibit a significantly higher level of organizational identification compared to those classified as insufficient and undecided.

Turunç and Çelik (2010) analyzed studies on organizational support and identification, concluding that employees' perception of organizational support significantly enhances their level of organizational identification. This result aligns with analogous research (Tyler & Blader, 2013; Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006; Cheung & Law, 2008). This study reveals a disparity in masses, yet a congruence in levels of organizational identification. Kösterelioğlu and Olukçu (2019) investigated the correlation between organizational communication and organizational identification among educators and administrators in educational institutions, concluding that organizational identification was elevated. Lelebici (2016), Özgür (2015), Nergiz (2015), and Erel Yetim (2010) obtained analogous results.

The findings indicate notable disparities in professional satisfaction and organizational identification among referees, influenced by various demographic and professional factors, including gender, age, education level, classification, and income satisfaction. Research indicated that male referees exhibited greater levels of organizational identification compared to their female counterparts. Additionally, professional satisfaction tended to rise with age. Referees who expressed satisfaction with the frequency of their duties reported higher levels of both professional satisfaction and organizational identification. Furthermore, refereeing income had a positive impact on professional satisfaction, while perceived organizational support enhanced organizational identification. The findings suggest that the levels of professional satisfaction and commitment among referees are influenced by a range of personal and professional factors.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Regulating the content and frequency of EPAK training is believed to have a positive impact on the development of referees. In relation to the referees' viewpoints on the shift to professional refereeing, it is observed that the professional satisfaction levels of those who reported a positive transition to professional refereeing are statistically significantly higher than those who indicated a negative transition. In accordance with this outcome, it is believed that the transition to professional refereeing will enhance the referees' perception of their role as a distinct profession, along with the potential for significant financial rewards, thereby positively influencing their job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Author Contributions

All the authors equally contributed to the article.

Ethics Information

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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