

Original Article

Social pressure factors aimed at football referees in Turkey: a study on the 2nd league, 3rd league and amateur league referees

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Abstract

In this study, the football fans, club managers, coaches, football players and sports media have been problematized as various kinds of social stress elements against the referees. The objective of the study is to find out the most dominant social stress elements on the referees of the two minor Professional leagues and the amateur league. The implementation of the study includes questionnaire and depth interview data. In the training of the referees from the county of Istanbul in April, 2014, 55 referees in total were conducted a questionnaire. The data acquired from that are evaluated at SPSS statistics program. The in depth interviews made with 9 referees have been subjected to content analysis.

It is obviously seen 93.5% of the subjects in total (29+21+2) stated that they have been exposed to verbal or physical assault by football fans (Table 2); 20% of the subjects (1+3+7 individuals) have been exposed to assaults by club managers and coaches (Table 3); 38% of the subjects (21 individuals) have been exposed to physical assaults by football players (Table 4). The most evident of the factors that create stress on the referees are indicated as national sports media 14,5% (8 individuals), managers 14.5% (8 individuals), coaches 18.2% (10 individuals), fans 29% (4+12 individuals), football players 34,5% (4+15 individuals), insufficient safety measures 50.9% (9+19 individuals), respectively (Table 5). It has been concluded from the interviews that troubled football players constitute an important stress element. Club managers on the other hand can be a kind of potential stress element due to their close relation with the federation. Sports media has been concluded not to form a stress element when compared with the first professional league. However, insufficient safety measures have been concluded to form unfavorable fixture conditions.

Key words: Fans, Football Players, Managers, Coaches, Sports Media

Introduction

The referees, as well as the other actors of football like coaches and managers, are of vital importance. The critical position of the referee in the football game is to determine the states of the game with the exact decisions he gives applying the rational rules that draw the boundaries of the game. The referees have a distinctive function inside the game as the football player, the goalkeeper or the coach in the field. Besides, when the objections to him made by the other actors of the football are taken into account, it can be understood better that performing as a referee is a very tough job. It should be marked that such a circumstance in other sports branches apart from football is not at this level.

In the time of the football game takes part on TV via various program formats except the broadcasted matches and the referees' decisions are evaluated using electronic photocell drawings during the football commentary and discussion programs aired especially after the match, the referee profession is seen to become much harder. This process reinforces the difficulties of the referees related to this job together with presenting the faults that escape the referee's notice obviously with the help of computer technologies. Confirming decisively in the commentary programs that the referee has given a wrong penalty or offside decision in the match influences not only the fans or football clubs (football players, coach, managers etc.) which interest that match but also the general opinion that will be formed about coming matches the referee will conduct.

The fact that the profession of football referee is not carried out in relatively safe areas such as office clerk, teachers, soldiers, workers, engineers etc. brings "Social Pressures" with regard to the profession of football referee into mind. Though the pressures or potential risks that the worker can be exposed to in a shift made within 8-10 hours at a workplace are estimated in an average way, the outcomes of the referee's 90-minute-match shift can be very serious in terms of various pressure factors which he will encounter according to the importance of the match. The observations that reveal the presence of the physical assaults and blasphemy by the fans against the referees during the game; harsh objections by the players; the threats by the club managers; the criticism on the referee decisions that have almost daily coverage in sports media, all indicate the problems which can possibly be encountered by the referees. In our country, the referees might be harshly and undeservedly criticized repeatedly in sports programs even by those who are neither specialists of sports/football

nor sportswriters. However, it should be stated that those football programs dominating the sports media are interested in Super League mostly and include particularly the four great clubs. When the actors such as the sports media notably, club managers and the other elements are considered, refereeing conditions in 2nd, 3rd Professional leagues and amateur leagues are thought to be different when compared with the conditions of Super League and 1st League refereeing conditions.

The subject of this study is composed of the possible social stress that 2nd, 3rd and amateur league referees might be exposed to. Social stress on the referees has been problematized in this study considering the subjects of that stress caused. The objective of the study is to find out the effects of the social stress elements on the referees of the two minor Professional leagues and the amateur league. The agents that are possibly to cause stress before, during and after the game on the referees are thought to be football players, who are of the other agents in social context of football; fans, club managers, coaches and sports media. *In this study, accompanied by acquiring quantitative data in the "application-questionnaire" section, the content and the aim of this study is planned within the context of "qualitative survey".* By reason of being considered the complicated structure of survey problem includes apparent contingencies, rather than exact generalizations, it is aimed to examine and identify variables of the problem.

The profession of football referee

As it is in other sports branches, the duty of the referees is to conduct the game within the frame of rules in football, too. Just as in society the ones who keep the order are principally the judges who apply the rules of law, the ones who apply the rules of the game to carry out a football match in certain way are referees. "Just like everything, the base of football, too, is justice. The judges secure the justice about very detailed legal cases, and so do the referees in football." (Somali, 1989). Sarıbay and Ögün assert with a metaphoric language that Montesquieu's "separation of powers" principle spreads into football. "Club chairmans and boards of management represent the executive power, referee institution represents judgement, MHK represents Higher Judgement and the Federation represents legislation." (Sarıbay and Ögün, 2013).

It is seen that the profession and the decisions of referee are problematized among various sports branches, especially in the branch of football. The fact that football is a the sports branch which is the most popular, the best understood by society, exposed to the media's excessive interest and acts as a social identity by means of team partisanship make the profession of the referee in this branch difficult. In fact, "he will make a decision in one-tenth of a second and this decision will be fair." (Somali, 1989).

As for the situation in Turkey, it is seen that a referee's decision, which is thought to be inappropriate, is discussed by the football commentators in sports programs on TV almost the whole week. According to McGill (2006), "Performers, football players and coaches complain about them all over the world. Since the technology has been used more in recent years, we witnessed every decision, from offsides and penalties to the duration of the game, is continually analyzed. The referee is expected to control everything. When the modern technology supports the referee's decision, no one apologises from the poor fellow due to the criticism they directed." (McGill, 2006).

The imputations by football fans due to the wrong decision in their favorite team's match are a well-known fact. Football referees are accepted as the most important addressee pointing out audience deviance such as swearing, etc. (Ercal, Güven and Ayan, 1998). A man of letters explains the perception towards the football referees metaphorically with these words:

The linesmen, who help but do not decide, look the game from outside. Only the referee enters the field of play. While coming into the field, that is; when he dives into the roaring crowd, he says salavat with good reason. His duty is to make everybody hate him. The only common ground in football is that everybody hates him. They never applaud him, he is always catcalled (Galeano, 2008).

Social actors of football: pressure factors towards the referees

Football players, coaches, referees, managers, sports media etc. are accepted as social actors of football world. In Turkey, various criticisms about the dose of the faultfinding and the attitude towards the referees are directed by football public opinion. Those criticisms talk about negative attitudes towards the referees by club managers, coaches, sports media and fans which are the factors of the football's social context excluding referees. There are some criticisms such as club managers in Turkey have problems about moral values of sports and sports media instigates the violence (Gümüş, 2000). Head of Central Referee Committee(MHK), Zekeriya Alp, expresses the difficulties that the football referees face in Turkey with these words:

*Turkish referees conduct matches differently at home and abroad. In fact, in our country conducting a match is really a difficult situation. One day I asked Yap Yuranberk whether the referees in Turkey could conduct a match abroad or not. His answer was "It's not even a matter of discussion. That is, there's a lot of pressure. There is audience pressure. There is footballer pressure. When they all come together, there exists a lot of pressure on the referees. Then, difficulties appear in conducting the match of our referees feeling that pressure."*¹

¹ MHK başkanı Zekeriya Alp: İçerde başka, dışarıda başka yönetiyorlar. [Head of MHK Zekeriya Alp: They're managing different inside and different outside]. (2013). Retrieved September 20, 2014, from: 108

Super League Referee, Ali Palabıyık, gives that answer to the question related to the fact that the football referees in Turkey get more reaction than the referees in other countries.

*As we all notice, errors occur there, too. However, they are not overreacted as it is in Turkey. I think, this is about people's attitudes toward sports and sports culture. Unfortunately, Turkey has a high rate of fanaticism. People can use every trick in the books for the sake of their team's victory. It is not just regarded as a sport, unfortunately. There happen some situations that neither the opponents nor the referees are respected. This situation surely makes our job difficult in the field. Even when they give a wrong decision, we witness that the referees are respected abroad. However, we don't see such an act in Turkey. The players unfortunately instigate that, too. They may try to suppress the referee if a negative decision from their point of view is given.*²

The sports writer Çupi's (Çupi, 2002) remarks are in the direction of that there are negative effects of sports media and sports public opinion's partisan point of view. The outbreaks of this point of view which shows up international and inland matches emerge when evaluating the opponents and referees, especially in a decision or situation which is disadvantageous to the team:

The referee is stealthy, he is partisan, he is conditioned with rolls of Money to kill us, he is vile.

If he gets the kick or sole, "Go from bad to worse!" curses are revealed and if we get, the referee is turf-betrayer.

It is argued that the partisan attitude triggering the negative point of view towards the referees is a significant factor in making evaluations of referee decisions both before and after the match on sports media. The tendency in the attitude of public opinion towards the matches of Super League in Turkey, especially well-known İstanbul clubs' (GS, FB, BJK) and Trabzonspor's (4 greats), and the attitude of a group of sports media towards the referees or referee decisions after the match can be seen clearly. As Çulcu, one of the old chairmen of MHK, mentions from a research, among the causes that the fans become provoked, there are the thought that the referee takes sides and instigation of the thought the referee is prone to one side with the comments before and after the matches. Çulcu alleges that sportsmen and commentators instigate the tribune violence with their "Why did the referee show that card? saying (Çulcu, 2006).

It is also encountered that club managers create pressures on appointment of the referee. The main reason of this pressure is to safeguard the conduct the match for the benefit of their team and guarantee the result by creating pressures on appointment of the referee. Those rumours that clubs put pressures on the referees are claimed to reach out deciding the referees who will take the field aside from the request about the result in favor of their team (Kozanoğlu, 1996).

Mustafa Çulcu, who was the chairman of the MHK for some time, states that the clubs makes pressure during the appointment process as "Send that referee!" and "That referee won't come to us."³ A chairman of a club in Super League claims that some clubs' chairmen go to the dressing rooms in halftime and create pressure.⁴ According to Türe who is an old referee, "At the end of the football competition, the referees were kicked and raped hundred times. Moreover, there were some cases that the referees were peed after they fainted as a result of the kicks they got." (Türe, 2002).

Football players being the most important actor of football are criticized especially for their behaviors in the field towards the referees. These behaviors of the football players are objections to the decisions the referee gives. The objections in reaction to a referee after he shows red or yellow card are accepted out of the frame of professionalism due to the fact that a referee decision cannot be returned no matter how extensive the objections are the decision of a referee in a football competition can be liken metaphorically to a judicial decision. Bülent Yavuz, one of the old MHK chairmen, remarks the objections of the football players in our country as the following:

The referee says foul and shows a simple foul direction. Three football players suddenly run to the referee. I'm just saying that ask to the players. Why are you coming, man? Take the whistle, blow it your, go and kick a penalty, show red card. If three men attack the referee in an only simple foul and the technical committees stand up attempt to get into the field, who will prevent this football terror? (Yavuz, 2003).

In an interview with an English referee conducting a football play in Turkey in 1995, the answer of the English referee, Mr. Dellow gave about the relationship between the referee and player is very interesting in terms of comparing England, such a foreign country that exported the football play to the World, with Turkey. After the question "Can your player object to the referee?", he answered "They can't go over the line!" in the interview. It is argued that similar problems related to the profession of football referee still continue today

<http://www.beyazgazete.com/video/webtv/spor-4/mhk-baskani-zekeriya-alp-icerde-baska-disarida-baska-yonetiyorlar-418170.html>.

²Ali Palabıyık: "Korkulan değil, sevilen hakem olmak istiyorum". [Ali Palabıyık: "Not feared, I would like to be loved referee"]. (2014). Retrieved June 24, 2014, from:

<http://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=286&ftxtID=19858>.

³Hakemlere baskı var [There is pressure on referees]. (2006). Retrieved July 1, 2014, from:

<http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/spor/hakemlere-baski-var-3276>.

⁴Kızıl:Hakemlere baskı yapılıyor [Kızıl: Referees are being forced]. (2010). Retrieved July 1, 2014, from:

<http://www.fanatik.com.tr/2010/03/21/kizil-hakemlere-baski-yapiliyor-168917>.

(Sarvan, 2012). Kozanoğlu (1996) touches on the situation that the tradition of objection to the referees is over-settled in player-referee relationship.

Materials and methods

This research consists of two sections. The first section includes the literature review about the profession of referee in Turkey. In the literature review here, the social actors apart from the referees, in football as a social world are discussed within the context of their relationships with the referees. The major actors that are of primary importance have been determined as the football players, football fans, coaches, club managers and sports media within the study.

The surveys and in depth interviews form the second section of the study. The survey forms applied to 55 male referees of 5 classifications in April 2014 during referee trainings in İstanbul have been evaluated. According to the official website of the football federation, the number of referees in İstanbul when the survey was carried out is as follows: 24 national referees; 50 national assistant referees; 37 regional referees; 52 regional assistant referees; 3 FIFA referees; 8 assistant FIFA referees; 8 referees of upper classification; 14 upper classification assistant referees with the total number of 196 referees. The study excludes FIFA referees and the upper classification referees who are licensed to work in Super League and 1st league. The difficulties in data gathering from the mentioned classification referees due to drawbacks related to the federation management and sports media have been considered and therefore these mentioned referee group have not been included in the sample group. This attitude towards the sample group in field study is coherent in respect to our study which problematizes the social stress on referees in 2nd, 3rd and amateur leagues.

The survey includes questions that aim to reveal whether the referees have ever experienced any kind of verbal or physical assault by the fans, players, coaches and the club managers. The reason to ask those questions is to reveal the referees' real experiences about the problem in their careers. In the last table that is constructed in accord with Likert Scale, it is aimed to determine which of those factors that have potential to cause stress on the referees causes more stress. Insufficient safety measures have been indicated on the chart as an important variable as they create suitable conditions in which actors such as fans particularly, players, coaches and club managers might display negative behaviors against the referees. The survey results are evaluated at SPSS statistics program.

The limitedness problem caused by the size of the sample group which means the handicap in increasing the number of survey subjects, should be stated. The main reasons may be listed as the professional drawbacks; avoiding from responding some questions due to various concerns related to the current conditions in the country and the common reluctance in survey participation.

In-depth interview technique, which is a data gathering technique belonging to the Qualitative Method, has been employed in the study in order to overcome the limitedness problem in the size of the sample group and to identify the facts that hadn't been discovered yet. 2 of the 9 interviews were made in April 2014 and the remaining 7 interviews were made in July 2016. The interviews were recorded and then converted into texts. The samples during the interviews were specified according to the "Theoretical Sampling" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) method. The interviews were carried out until no more additional data were gathered and the size of the sample group were determined considering this size (Denscombe, 1998). In other words, the point where the number of samples were considered to be sufficient is the same point where the gathered data started to repeat itself and reached a saturation. Textualized raw data has been subjected to content analysis; parsed in accordance with the texts reflecting the referee perceptions of stress elements and has been converted into processed data. The interview technique is considered as an efficient data gathering method in accessing the conception systems of the interview subjects related to their lives, experiences and research question. Interview technique, which is based on conversation, is considered to be an effective technique since it reveals the experiences and senses of the individuals. Besides, this technique is argued to overcome the limitedness problem of the tests and surveys (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Interviewed research subjects are identified with the abbreviation "IS" under findings. The total number of the survey and interview (consisting the field study) participants is 64 people (55+9).

Results

The characteristics of the research group

The subjects who participated in surveys belong to 5 refereeing classifications. The lowest classification is county referee. The classification of the subjects ascends from county referee, regional assistant referee, regional referee, national assistant referee and national referee respectively. The age range of the subjects are as follows: 2 people between 18 and 23; 25 people between 24 and 29; 28 people between 30 and 35 and 1 person is between 36 and 41. The age range of the national referees (8 people) and national assistant referees (11 people) have been observed to be mostly between 30 and 35.

National referees who consist 12 people of the research group are licensed to conduct the 2nd and 3rd league games, which are not included in the top two Professional leagues, as referee or fourth official in all leagues and as referee or assistant referee in all amateur games. National assistant referees who consist 14 people of the research group are licensed to conduct the 2nd and 3rd league games, which are not included in the top two

professional leagues, as assistant referee or fourth official and as referee or assistant referee in all amateur games. 29 people from the research group (2+13+14) are of the referees who are licensed to conduct games in amateur leagues. 14 people who are of the regional assistant referees are licensed to conduct all amateur games as referee or assistant referee. 13 people who are of the regional referees are licensed to conduct Turkish Cup games and other games as fourth official except for the top 2 professional league games and as referee or assistant referee in all amateur games. County referees (2 people) are licensed to conduct amateur games within the county borders. The classification of the remaining 9 referees from whom data has been gathered through in-depth interview technique is as follows: IS 1(national assistant referee), IS 2(national referee), IS 3(national assistant referee), IS 4(national referee), IS 5(national referee), IS 6(national referee), IS 7(national referee), IS 8(national referee), and IS 9 (national referee).

Table I The classifications of the referees by gender

		Gender	Total
		Male	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	2	2
	Regional Referee	13	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	14	14
	National Assistant Referee	14	14
	National Referee	12	12
Total		55	55

All of the interview subjects are male. 47% of the research participants are (12+14) national referees and national assistant referees. 53% of the participants are county referees, regional referees and regional assistant referees.

Table II The states whether being exposed to swearing or physical assault by the fans before the match/during the match /after the match

		Have you ever been exposed to swearing or physical assault by fans before the match/ during the match/ after the match?				Total
		I've been exposed to swearing.	I've been exposed to physical assault.	I've been exposed to both swearing and physical assault.	I haven't been exposed to swearing or physical assault.	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	1	0	0	1	2
	Regional Referee	6	0	6	1	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	10	1	3	0	14
	National Assistant Referee	8	1	5	0	14
	National Referee	4	0	7	1	12
Total		29	2	21	3	55

It is obvious that 29 of the subjects (52%) have been exposed to swearing, 21 of them (38%) have been exposed to both swearing and physical assault; 2 of them (3,5%) have been exposed to physical assault; and 3 of them (5,4%) have not been either swearing or physical. It is evident that 93.5% of the subjects (29+21+2) in total have been exposed to verbal attack or physical assault by football fans.

Table III The states whether being exposed to physical assault by the manager or the coach of a football club

		Have you ever been exposed to physical assault by the manager or the coach of a football club?				Total
		I've been exposed to physical assault of the manager.	I've been exposed to physical assault of the coach.	I've been exposed to physical assault by both of them.	I haven't been exposed to physical assault by any of them.	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	0	0	0	2	2
	Regional Referee	0	0	2	11	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	1	1	1	11	14
	National Assistant Referee	1	0	2	11	14
	National Referee	1	0	2	9	12
Total		3	1	7	44	55

44 of the subjects (80%) indicated that they haven't been exposed to any assaults of the coaches or managers. It is stated that 7 of the subjects (13%) have been exposed to the club manager's assault; and 1 of

them (1.8%) has been assaulted by the coach. It is very clear that 20% of the subjects (1 + 3 + 7) have been assaulted by club managers or coaches.

Table IV The states whether being exposed to physical assault by a football player

		Have you ever been exposed to physical assault by a football player?		Total
		Yes	No	
Which classification do you officiate in?	County Referee	0	2	2
	Regional Referee	6	7	13
	Regional Assistant Referee	3	11	14
	National Assistant Referee	5	9	14
	National Referee	7	5	12
Total		21	34	55

It is seen that 21 of the subjects (38%) who participate in the survey have been exposed to physical assault of football players.

Table V The factors which cause stress on the referees in as much as their importance level

	Very important	Important	I'm undecided	Unimportant	Not important at all	Total
Football players	4	15	2	14	20	55
Club managers	0	8	0	22	25	55
Fans	4	12	9	10	20	55
Coaches	0	10	2	16	27	55
National Sports Media	1	7	6	15	26	55
Local press	0	6	5	18	26	55
Insufficient safety measures	9	19	6	7	14	55

19 of the subjects (34.5%, 4+15 individuals) who participate in the survey stated that football players cause stress; 8 of the subjects (14.5%) stated that club managers cause stress on them; 16 of the subjects (29%, 4+12 individuals) stated that fans cause stress; 10 of the subjects (18.2%, 10 individuals) stated that coaches cause stress; 8 of the subjects (14.5%, 1+7 individuals) stated that sports media cause stress; 6 of the subjects (10.9%) stated that local press cause stress; 28 of the subjects (50.9%, 9+19 individuals) stated that insufficient safety measures cause stress on them.

Football Players: principal stress element

Football players consist a stress element as they are the closest actors to the referees on the football field. It is stated that the attitudes of the players against the referee might differ depending on the significance of the game. Particularly the players of the team that fights against relegation or of the team fighting for championship are effective in creating stress on referee decisions through their behaviors during the game on the football field:

They become highly nervous during the game generally due to exhaustion or they get tensed up depending on the significance of the game. For instance, imagine two teams one is fighting against relegation and the other for championship. In such games the players might try to convince the management that the referee miscalled just for justifying themselves. (What do you mean management?) For instance club managers. Imagine a position taking place within the penalty area which clearly requires penalty. You give penalty and the player (...) throws himself on the ground, takes off his uniform. He pretends not to cause the penalty and tries to show you miscalled (...) they mislead the management. (IS 1, has an 8-year experience).

IS 3 on the other hand, claims the players cause the greatest stress on the referees and emphasizes the difference between the super league and the lower leagues:

(...)I think he experiences the highest stress by the player. The stress caused by the fans does not exceed 10% or 15%. Perhaps it might be different in Super League but I think it is different when you consider lower leagues, in 2nd and 3rd leagues for instance. (IS 3, 8 years of experience).

IS 5 mentions about the players causing problems during the game:

Those kind of players constantly object to your decision and cause problems just in order to make you miscall the positions and thus they can sometimes be effective on your wrong decisions. (IS 5, 17 years of experience).

An old referee, IS 8, also states that the greatest stress causing element on inexperienced referees are these problematical players:

Match stress is not something very challenging. Of course if you are experienced one. If you are inexperienced, the problem causing players cause stress on you. (IS 8, worked as referee for 14 years).

Club managers can be effective in parallel with their relation with the federation

Club managers, considered as another stress element, are evaluated according to their relation with the federation:

(...)If the referee is aware that the club manager has close relation with his masters in MHK or again the club manager has close relation with the federation then he experiences the stress of making true decisions. (IS 2, 16 years of experience).

IS 7, states that club managers are not an element of stress over 2nd and 3rd league referees:

Since there's not much people that we get in touch with in the games that we conduct or not many acquaintants, we don't sense any kind of stress on us. Since we do not witness or hear anything, we don't feel any stress. But as for higher classifications, I think a kind of stress exists because of the declarations by the club managers through media organs. (IS 7, 16 years of experience).

The opinion of IS 3 on club managers is in parallel with the IS 7's opinions:

How many club managers do we know from the 2nd league? Do we know their names? They are not so famous. These managers are not kind of people who can cause stress on referees. The most stress causing elements would be the score history of the teams in 2nd and 3rd leagues. It would be a mistake to expect from a game between the leader and the last teams of the 2nd or 3rd leagues cause stress on the referee because it wouldn't. (IS 3, 8 years of experience).

An old referee approaches the stress issue caused by the club managers on referees considering the relation between the club managers and the federation. It is stated in the following lines that the strong relation between the federation, club managers and referee directors cause stress on the referees:

Particularly the referees who are in close relation with the club managers who are effective on the federation or MHK, find it challenging to conduct those clubs' games. I witnessed this incidence. For example Ahmet, the manager of x club, is close to referee Mustafa. And the same Ahmet is quite effective on either the federation or MHK. The referee to conduct the mentioned club's match feels stressed. I witnessed referees thinking "If I miscall, I will be banned from matches" etc. (IS 9, worked as referee for 18 years).

Sports media is not an element of stress for 2nd and 3rd leagues

IS 2 and IS 4 argue that the pressure of the sports media is more effective on the Super League and 1st League rather than 2nd and 3rd leagues:

(...)I conducted plenty of matches in the Super League and the 1st league as the referee. The atmosphere is quite different there. Because you are on national media there. They criticize or praise you without knowing you well. As a result, ordinary people start to know you and watch your behaviors. The psychological state, the atmosphere and the way of preparation for the game are all different when compared with the 2nd and 3rd league or the lower categories. Therefore, what you feel there and here are quite different. (Then we should categorize 1st league and super league apart from the others. Right?). Absolutely, we should categorize second, third and amateur leagues one side and super and first league other side. Because, they have quite different atmospheres. The way that the referee gets prepared both mentally and physically for the game, psychological state, the public opinion against the match should all be considered. (IS 2, 16 years of experience).

The games that we conduct mostly appear on local media. Since those matches are like the match, for instance, Fenerbahçe vs. Galatasaray the local media does not affect as national media does. (IS 4, 9 years of experience).

Insufficient safety measures affect the referees of the amateur leagues negatively

It is stated that the safety measures in second and third leagues are sufficient but those in amateur leagues are not at the expected level due to the number of games:

Safety measures in Professional games of second or third league matches are generally sufficient. Because generally the team is the single team of the city or at most one of the two teams. Since there's no other team belonging to the same county in the second league, the game is a kind of super league match for the security forces of the county. (...) Therefore the measures are at the highest level. (Is it more troublesome in amateur league?) Exactly, it is. Because sometimes there's no police force assigned during the match or sometimes it is insufficient. But we can't blame the police force for the situation. For instance, consider İstanbul. There are 250 amateur matches played in Saturdays and Sundays. It is impossible to assign sufficient police force for each of these 250 matches. (IS 2, 16 years of experience).

IS 6 also mentions about the insufficient safety measures in amateur leagues:

It is totally impossible to talk about any kind of safety measures in amateur leagues. There, you are alone with your refereeing skills. You are the one to take precautions by predicting the course of the match. In İstanbul it is not possible to talk about safety measures. (Aren't there enough number of police officers in the matches?) In İstanbul you cannot expect police force at amateur level, just the games are played. Is this a kind of danger? If you investigate you may find plenty of amateur league referees being exposed to physical assault in İstanbul. (IS 6, 13 years of experience).

Discussion and conclusions

As displayed on Table 1 the survey participant football referees (55 referees) are all male ones. 47% of the subjects (26 referees) are national referees and national assistant referees who participate in second and third league professional games. The remaining part which is 53% (29 referees) are regional referees, regional assistant referees and county referees who participate in amateur league games. Besides, 7 of the 9 referees being interviewed are national referees and 2 of them are national assistant referees who conduct professional second and third league games.

It is evident that 52% of the subjects (29 individuals) have been exposed to swearing by fans; 38% of them (21 individuals) have been exposed to both swearing and physical assault; 3.5% of them (2 individuals) have been exposed to physical assault; 5.4% of them haven't been exposed to either swearing or physical assault. 93.5% of the subjects (29+21+2) have been exposed to verbal or physical assault by football fans (Table 2). The fact that the state of swearing or both swearing and physical assaults is encountered at the alarming rates gives the clues of a general tendency of football fans towards the referees. In the given findings, the point that more than half of the referees claim to be exposed to swearing, and it came out with physical assault, shows that the fans might create a serious social pressure factor for the referees. It can be said that such a fan behavior that develops in this way affects the conditions of the referee profession negatively.

It is stated that 20% of the subjects (1+3+7 individuals) participating in the survey have been assaulted by club managers and coaches (Table 3). This data indicates, as one of the other social factors except fans, managers and coaches might exhibit a physically assaultive behavior, too.

38% of the subjects (21 individuals) who participated in the survey claimed that they have been assaulted by football players (Table 4). This state is evident as a pressure factor which should be taken into consideration in terms of the process of the referees' working conditions in the field and conducting the match. The fact that the football players are together with the referee in the same field during the match indicates that, unlike other actors, they are the closest fellow workers of the referee. The fact that a significant number of the referees (38%) participating in the survey claimed that they have been exposed to physical assault makes the fact a current issue that a self-control problem in terms of football players has occurred within the context of sports ethics and work ethic in sports.

The elements that cause stress on the referees in ascending order are as follows: local media 10,9 % (6 people), national sports media 14,5 % (8 people), club managers 14,5 % (8 people), coaches 18,2 % (10 people), football fans 29 % (4+12 people), football players 34,5 % (4+15 people), insufficient safety measures 50,9 % (9+19 people) (Table 5). It can be observed that the stress causing rates of the local media and national sports media are low.

In Table 5, main stress factors that prominently stand out are stated as football players and fans. When the state of being exposed to verbal or physical assault by fans (93.5% in total) is considered, the football fans' being seen as a stress factor points out a natural outcome. Besides, the fact that insufficient safety measures are stated as a stress factor by 50.9% of the referees (9+19 individuals) is connected with the pressure potential the fans create. Many researches up to now have revealed that football fans are able to manipulate the referee decisions by affecting them as important stress elements (Downward and Jones, 2007; Buraimo, Forrest and Simmons, 2010; Dohmen, 2008; Dawson and Dobson, 2010; Lidbom and Priks, 2010; Scoppa, 2008).

A significant portion of the subjects in the study argue that the football players are important elements to cause stress. When the fact that the 38 % of the subjects have been exposed to physical assault by the players (table 4) and the 34,5 % opinion that considers the players to be a stress element (table 5) evaluated together, the afore mentioned argument is clarified. The following statements are argued in the study: Nervous players' attitudes on the football field depending on the importance of the game might affect the referee decisions (IS 1); the major stress element is the football players (IS 3); problem causing players might be effective on referee decisions and might prevent the referees from making healthy decisions (IS 5); the most important stress causing element for inexperienced referees are the problematical players on the football field (IS 8).

The following statements are also argued in the study: Strong relations between the club managers and the federation might cause stress on the referee (IS 2); since there is no media-club manager relation in professional leagues except for the super league and the first league, the club managers do not form a kind of stress element (IS 7); since the mentioned ones are not so well known people they do not cause stress (IS 3) and the club managers who have strong relations with the federation, MHK and the referees are able to cause stress and pressure on the games (IS 9).

10,9% of the referees consider the local media as stress element whereas 14,5% consider the national sports media such an element which indicates that it is not possible to mention about a strong stress of sports media in second, third and amateur leagues. As for the sports media, the following statements are argued: Top two leagues and the remaining ones should be considered as different categories; national media is effective in the mentioned top two leagues; these top two leagues and the lower leagues should be considered as quite different from each other in terms of game preparation by the referee and the public opinion (IS 2) and local media does not cause any kind of pressure (IS 4). The reason for these elements be considered as stress causing with a low ratio when compared with the other elements is that the games of 2nd, 3rd and amateur leagues do not appear on the national sports media and the local media does not have sufficient effect on causing stress. When

we consider the fact that those football discussion programs, which are nearly every day broadcasted, just deal with the super league games, mostly those among the top 4 teams; it wouldn't be an inappropriate conclusion to say that the effect of national media is mostly sensed over the referees conducting super league games.

50, 9% of the subjects state that the insufficient safety measures cause stress on them. It can be observed that referees were exposed to various physical assaults during amateur league games in recent years. The main reason for these assaults is stated to be the poor safety measures caused by insufficient number of police officers. Since there are numerous amateur league matches particularly in İstanbul, the number of the police officers assigned for the games is insufficient (IS 2). Moreover, it is alleged that the referees often get beat up during these amateur league games especially in İstanbul (IS 6). It is possible to encounter some football matches in which the penalized players verbally attack the referees from the tribunes where they sit to watch the game and then get prison sentence.⁵ Also physical assault against the referees by the club managers can be witnessed in amateur league games.⁶ Physical assault by the players and fans can be witnessed quite often in amateur leagues. Similar incidents that occur repeatedly indicate that violence in football became a kind of social phenomenon in amateur leagues.⁷

Gürpınar and Güven (2011) claimed in their study about football referees that the most unsporting behavior is exhibited by the spectators, then by players, and then by the technical team and it is exhibited mostly towards the referee. They ordered the unsporting behaviors as repression, protest, complaint about the opponent, complaint about the referee, objection, not helping the referee, disturbing the concentration, sedition, disrespect, invective, not appreciating, contradiction to athletic virtue, threatening, antimaterial behavior, physical assault attempts and physical assault. In this research, too, it becomes evident that the negative behaviors that create pressure comes mostly from fans and football players and the referees are the social actors who encounter most with the unsporting behaviors in football.

It is necessary that the football players should know the referees' decisions are ultimate and they shouldn't object, the club managers shouldn't criticize harshly against the referees in such a manner that sets a bad example for the football players, the fans should avoid such verbal or physical assaults that cause negative effect and evaluations on the referees' morale and conducting the match as well as worry about the security of the match, the soccer coaches and football coaches should not allow the football players to argue with the referees and should not set a bad example for the football players in this direction, printed and verbal press should not make news for the masses about that the referee is at fault and to condition the spectators negatively about the referees (Babacan).

Carrying out a study for the top two league referees that problematize the stress elements on them similarly will be quite appropriate so that comparison opportunity will be provided. It can be stated that conducting such kind of a study among the female referees shall provide an opportunity to fulfill another stimulating study.

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⁵ Hakeme küfüre 1,5 yıl hapis [1.5 years of prison sentence for blasphemy to the referee]. (2009). Retrieved September 9, 2016, from: <http://www.ntv.com.tr/spor/hakeme-kufure-1-5-yil-hapis.IntYB7MFgkqJubEAUpPxIw>.

⁶ Dayak yiyen hakem hastanelik oldu [The beaten referee ended up in the hospital]. (2013). Retrieved September 11, 2016, from: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dayak-yiyen-hakem-hastanelik-oldu-25141988>.

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