



Opinions of Football Referees on the VAR System and VAR Training

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the opinions of football referees who are actively working under the Turkish Football Federation about the video assistant referee (VAR) system and its education. Interview method, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the research. Research data were collected through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. The research group consists of 20 football referees who are actively working in different classifications determined by maximum diversity sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, which is one of the non-probability sampling strategies. In the research, the data were evaluated by content analysis method. According to the results of the research, the positive and negative categories of the referees' thoughts on how the VAR System applied in the world's major leagues and in our country affect the spirit of the football game and the pleasure of watching; fair decision, the formation of trust, the decrease in the pace of the game and the decrease in the pleasure of watching, they express their opinions against the spirit of football and the adaptation problem and under the name of negative impact categories, respectively; VAR application with a general philosophy of "minimum interference, maximum benefit", which provides a more systematic and open to advice environment, where the referees express their opinions of self-confident decision, mental comfort, excessive stress and conflict in decision making. In their thoughts that more definite decisions were taken together with the decision diversity and the contribution of the decisions to the game categories; final and clear decisions, variability in interpretations and decisions, decrease in the number of errors, increase in the rate of finding the truth, correction of the decisions affecting the result, objectivity and maximum benefit, the referees expressed their opinions on how the newly implemented VAR System in the world and in our country will contribute to the development of the game in the future. Under the categories of positive contribution and fair play; In their thoughts on the VAR System, which has been in practice in various leagues of the world and in our country for a short time, and the opinions of the referees on the training given to the referees; under the categories of gradual education, being advantageous, being useful and not being sufficient, respectively; increase in the levels of success and education of referees, expert educators and high level opportunity recognition, critical position analysis, upbringing equipped referees, gaining a different perspective and position uncertainty to be examined.

Keywords: Football Referee, VAR System, VAR Training

Futbol Hakemlerinin VAR Sistemi ve VAR Eğitimi Hakkındaki Görüşleri

Özet

Bu araştırmanın amacı, Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu'na bağlı faal olarak görev yapan futbol hakemlerinin VAR Sistemi ve eğitimi hakkında görüşlerinin incelenmesidir. Araştırmada nitel araştırma desenlerinden görüşme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma grubunu olasılıksız örnekleme stratejilerinden biri olan amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme ile belirlenen farklı klasmanlarda faal olarak görev yapan 20 futbol hakemi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma verileri, araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu yoluyla toplanmıştır. Araştırmada veriler içerik analizi yöntemi ile değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre hakemlerin dünyanın önemli liglerinde ve ülkemizde uygulanan VAR Sistemi'nin futbol oyununun ruhuna ve seyir zevkine nasıl bir etkisi olduğu hususundaki düşüncelerinde olumlu ve olumsuz kategorileri adı altında sırasıyla; adil karar, güven oluşması, oyun hızında düşme ve seyir zevkinde azalma, futbolun ruhuna aykırı ve adaptasyon sorunu görüşlerini ifade ettikleri, VAR Sistemi her bir durumu / kararı otomatik olarak "kontrol" ettiği için hakemlerin müsabaka yönetimlerindeki stres yönetimine nasıl bir katkı sunduğuna ilişkin düşüncelerinde olumlu ve olumsuz etki kategorileri adı altında sırasıyla; özgüvenli karar verme, zihinsel rahatlık, stres oluşması ve karar vermede çelişki görüşlerini ifade ettikleri, hakemlerin futbola daha sistematik ve tavsiyeye açık bir ortam sunan, genel felsefesi "minimum müdahale, maksimum yarar" olan VAR uygulaması ile birlikte daha kesin kararlar alındığı hususundaki düşüncelerinde karar çeşitliliği ve kararların oyuna katkısı kategorileri adı altında sırasıyla; kesin ve net kararlar, yorum ve kararlarda değişkenlik, hata sayısında azalma ve doğruyu bulma oranında artış, sonucu etkileyen kararların düzeltilmesi, objektiflik ve maksimum yarar görüşlerini ifade ettikleri, hakemlerin dünyada ve ülkemizde yeni uygulanan VAR Sistemi'nin gelecekte oyunun gelişimine nasıl katkılar sunacağı hususundaki düşüncelerinde olumlu katkı ve adil oyun kategorileri adı altında; yanlış kararlarda azalma, hakeme inanç ve güven, oyuna müdahalenin azalması, performans odaklanma, adaletli sonuçlar, incelemenin şeffaf olması ve aldatmaların azalması görüşlerini ifade ettikleri, hakemlerin dünyanın çeşitli liglerinde ve ülkemizde kısa bir süredir uygulamada olan VAR Sistemine ve hakemlere verilen eğitimlere yönelik görüşleri hususundaki düşüncelerinde aşamalı eğitim, faydalı olma ve yeterli olmama kategorileri adı altında sırasıyla; hakemlerin başarı seviyelerinin ve eğitim düzeylerinin artması, uzman eğitimsizler ve üst seviye imkân tanınması, kritik pozisyon analizi, donanımlı hakemlerin yetişmesi, farklı bakış açısı kazandırma ve incelenecek pozisyon belirsizliği görüşlerini ifade ettikleri tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Futbol Hakemi, VAR Sistemi, VAR Eğitimi

INTRODUCTION

Football is a sport that has become the focus of attention of a large audience, both in Turkey and in the world. Football, which is a sport used for prestige and commercial purposes both in Turkey and in other countries, has become an industry where large-scale incomes are obtained in the increasingly globalized world (4). While industrialization in football rapidly increased, football grew economically, the competitive environment increased, and it was no longer contented with just playing football, but it became played to win, succeed and earn a profit on the results obtained (5). In fact, it is seen that countries are making efforts and investments to organize football organizations organized by FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) in their own countries. The importance of football reveals that the instant decisions made by the football referees during the match are also of great importance (4).

With the increase in this interest in football, football has become a different sector and professionalized cadres have emerged in this field (11). When we look at the competitions played from the lowest category to the highest category, it is seen that the referee staff who manage the match is the subject of discussion rather than the score of the match. The reason for this is that everyone has a certain level of knowledge and skill in terms of whether the decisions made by the referees are wrong after the training of people who have taken their place in football and the developing technology. For this reason, referee decisions, which are of great material and moral importance, show that the job of football referees is not easy (4).

With the industrialization of football, it has become imperative to transform the green fields, which are seen as the focal point of large investments, into a fair and transparent environment that will minimize mistakes as much as possible. In order to

create a standard management approach, the use of technology in football has been increasingly given importance in recent years and significant studies have been carried out in this field. The most important and prime example of this is the Video Assistant Referee System, which is called the VAR System briefly (6). The VAR System; it is a system that provides the opportunity to watch the position again and change the decision in the positions that the referee misses, in which intense objections are made, in the positions that affect the score of the match and in the positions that the referee gave wrong.

It can be said that the VAR System, which has been frequently mentioned in world football in recent days, is one of the most important technological systems used in football organizations. So much so that the VAR System is a technological system that ensures that the referees return to the right decision by watching the wrong decisions made during the match on a monitor again, thus protecting the teams from material and moral damages that may occur, and relieving the referees as a conscience about the position. As a result, in football, which is the leading sport in the world in terms of popularity, the VAR System, which is frequently mentioned today, has brought up the questions of what kind of benefit it will have on football or what effects it will have on football referees, and what changes will it cause in referee decisions. In addition, with this research, it will be tried to determine how the football referees, who are the most important part of the VAR System, will adapt to this system, how the training given to the referees by the Turkish Football Federation contributes to this new system, and how the opinions and evaluations of the football referees about the VAR System are.

MATERIAL and METHOD

Model of the Research

Qualitative research method was used in this research. Qualitative research is defined as an effort to make sense of events as part of a specific context and interaction (19). Phenomenology research design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the research. Qualitative research designs can be defined as a strategy that determines the approach of the study to be carried out and guides the consistency of various stages thanks to the determined approach (21). The phenomenology

research design, which is one of the qualitative research designs, focuses on how individuals understand the phenomena they live and experience, what meanings they attribute to them, what they feel, how they describe them, and what meanings they share with other people (19). With the decision of Necmettin Erbakan University Social and Humanities Scientific Research Ethics Committee on 13.11.2020 dated 2020/80, there was no objection to the ethical implementation of the research.

Research Group

The research group consists of 20 football referees (18 Men, 2 Women) who are actively working in the 2020-2021 Football Season. The determined research group was selected according to the purposive sampling method (18), which is one of the most used non-probability sampling strategies in qualitative research, and the maximum variation sampling method, which is one of these purposive sampling methods (1, 21).

Table 1 shows the distribution of football referees, who constitute the research group, according to their gender, age, classification, task duration, education status, profession and interview date.

Table 1. The numerical distribution of the football referees, who make up the research group, regarding the refereeing gender, age, classification, task duration, education status, profession and interview date

Codes	Gender	Age	Classification	Task Duration	Education Status	Profession	Interview Date
H1	Male	23	RR	5	Master's Degree	Academician	05.01.2021
H2	Male	35	CRC	12	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	07.01.2021
H3	Male	22	RAR	3	Undergraduate	Student	09.01.2021
H4	Male	27	RAR	5	Bachelor's Degree	Officer	11.01.2021
H5	Female	22	RR	2	Undergraduate	Student	13.01.2021
H6	Female	25	CR	5	Undergraduate	Student	14.01.2021
H7	Male	24	RAR	2	Bachelor's Degree	Educator	15.01.2021
H8	Male	30	CR	10	Bachelor's Degree	Officer	17.01.2021
H9	Male	28	CAR	10	Bachelor's Degree	Nurse	19.01.2021
H10	Male	25	RAR	5	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	21.01.2021
H11	Male	22	RAR	6	Associate's Degree	Student	23.01.2021
H12	Male	23	RR	6	Undergraduate	Student	24.01.2021
H13	Male	22	RR	5	Associate's Degree	Student	25.01.2021
H14	Male	25	RR	5	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	27.01.2021
H15	Male	31	CAR	11	Doctorate	Academician	28.01.2021
H16	Male	30	CR	12	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	29.01.2021
H17	Male	30	CAR	11	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	31.01.2021
H18	Male	28	CAR	6	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	01.02.2021
H19	Male	29	CAR	6	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	02.02.2021
H20	Male	28	CR	10	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	03.02.2021

RR: Regional Referee CR: Classification Referee RAR: Regional Assistant Referee CAR: Classification Assistant Referee

Data Collection Tools

In this research, "Personal Information Form" developed by the researcher and semi-structured "Interview Form" were used as data collection tools.

In the "Personal Information Form" prepared to collect qualitative data, there is information about the independent variables of "referee's gender, age, classification, task duration, education status and profession". There were 5 open-ended questions in the "Interview Form".

In the research, the implementation of the semi-structured "Interview Form" developed by the researcher was carried out between January 5 and February 3, 2021, with the permission and appointment of the participants, and the interviews were carried out on the basis of voluntariness in the participants' own work or in different meeting environments.

The interviews were recorded with a tape recorder with the permission of the participants and to minimize data loss, and this provided significant convenience for the researcher. An interview lasted an average of 15-20 minutes. At the beginning and end of the application, the researcher told the participants that the research would only be used for

scientific purposes, all personal information would be kept confidential, and all raw data were kept by the researcher in order to resolve ethical issues.

The audio recordings obtained from the interviews were transcribed word by word by the researcher, edited and turned into a 35-page document.

Data Analysis

The data were evaluated by content analysis method (21). In content analysis, researchers examine communication products. In general, these are written documents or communication data recorded with technological systems. In a broader sense, content analysis is a research method used to make reproducible and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful content to contexts of use (17). In the content analysis method, it is necessary to conceptualize the data first, then organize it logically according to these concepts, and determine the themes that explain the data (21).

Content analysis consists of four stages: coding the data, finding the themes, organizing the data according to the codes and themes, defining and interpreting the findings (21).

Validity and Reliability of the Research

Validity and reliability in a study; they are important concepts in terms of revealing the scientificity, credibility, measurability, generalizability and reproducibility of that study (16). In this context, the strategies of credibility, long-term interaction, depth-focused data collection,

expert review, participant confirmation, confirmability, transferability, and consistency were used to ensure the validity and reliability of this research (21).

RESULTS

In this part of the research, findings based on the results of the analysis of qualitative data are included.

Table 2. Findings on the opinions of referees on how the VAR System applied in the major leagues of the world and in our country has an effect on the spirit of the football game and the pleasure of watching

Category	Themes	Codes	Participants	Frequency
Positive Effect	Fair Decision	Using of VAR System Contributes to Making Fair Decisions in Competitions	H3, H5, H7, H16	4
	Trust Building	Using the VAR System Increases Confidence in the Referee and His Decisions	H11, H18	2
	Total			6
Negative Effect	Decrease in Game Speed and in Viewing Pleasure	The Adverse Effects of the Navigational Pleasure Due to the Use of the VAR System Slowing the Flow Rate of the Game	H1, H2, H4, H5, H6, H9, H10, H12	8
	Against the Spirit of Football	Most Judges' Decisions Interfering and Forgetting That Football Is a Game of Mistakes	H8, H10, H16, H17, H19	5
	Adaptation Problem	Delayed Referee Decisions Due to VAR System Interfering with Positions, Distracting Players from the Game	H12	1
	Total			14

When Table 2 is examined, the opinions of the referees participating in the research on how the VAR System applied in the major leagues of the world and in our country have an effect on the spirit of the football game and on the enjoyment of watching are "Fair Decision" and "Trust Building" under the category of "Positive Effect"; Under the "Negative Effect" category, it was determined that the codes were "Decrease in Game Speed and in Viewing Pleasure", "Against the Spirit of Football" and "Adaptation Problem". Example sentences that make up these codes are given below:

"...The VAR System is not only a system developed to prevent mistakes made, but also takes place in our lives as a system that causes fair decisions in competitions. In this regard, I think it should be applied in all leagues in order to prevent mistakes." (H3-Fair Decision)

"...I think it has a positive impact. After making the right decisions, the trust in the VAR System and the referee of the match increases day by day..." (H18- Trust Building)

"...The sudden stop of the game in the fast-paced game has caused boredom by the people. In addition, long monitor reviews and delayed decisions have reduced the viewing pleasure to low levels." (H4- Decrease in Game Speed and in Viewing Pleasure)

"...I think it has a negative effect. Because mistakes will always happen and there are mistakes in the spirit of football, I think that the pleasure of watching has decreased with the VAR System and it is against the spirit of the game..." (H19- Against The Spirit of Football)

“...While waiting for a decision to be corrected, the rhythm of the game played and the players drops, so the player may experience disconnections from the game, and this situation creates problems in adapting to the game.”(H12- Adaptation Problem)

Table 3. Findings on how referees contribute to stress management in match management as the VAR System automatically 'controls' each situation/decision

Category	Themes	Codes	Participants	Frequency
Positive Effect	Confident Decision Making	Since VAR System Provides Referees the Opportunity to Correct Wrong Decisions, Referees Can Make Their Decisions Confidently	H3, H4, H5, H9, H10, H14	6
	Mental Comfort	The Referees Don't Experience Stress and Anxiety Due to the Reduction of the Thought of Making Mistakes with the Use of the VAR System	H2, H7, H6, H9, H13, H16, H17, H20	8
	Total			14
Negative Effect	Stress Formation	Having to Correct the Decisions of the Referees with the Use of the VAR System Causes Stress	H1, H4, H11, H15	4
	Contradiction in Decision Making	During the Competition, The Referees Have Thoughts While Deciding If My Decision Is Right Or Wrong	H8, H12	2
	Total			6

When Table 3 is examined, the opinions of the referees on how the referees contribute to the stress management in the competition management, as the VAR System automatically 'controls' each situation / decision, are “Confident Decision Making” and “Mental Comfort” under the “Positive Effect” category; Under the “Negative Effect” category, it was determined that it consisted of “Stress Formation” and “Contradiction in Decision Making” codes. Example sentences that make up these codes are given below:

“...Fear of referees to make wrong decisions before or during the match can sometimes cause loss of self-confidence. With the VAR System, the referees will decide with confidence as they know the possibility of correcting the wrong decisions to be made...” (H3-Confident Decision Making)

“The constant criticism of the referees for the mistakes they made before the VAR System could cause problems both in terms of performance and mentality. With the arrival of the VAR System, the thought of making mistakes decreases and the referees relax mentally and I think that the system affects the decision performance of the referees in a positive way. (H16-Mental Comfort)

“I believe that this system puts extra stress on the referees, as the VAR system causes the referees to think that I made the wrong decision while making the decision.” (H1-Stress Formation)

“...VAR System told the referee during the match, was my decision correct? I think that it causes the referees to conflict while making decisions and to get stressed during the match. I see this situation as a negative aspect of the VAR System.” (H12-Contradiction in Decision Making)

Table 4. Findings that more precise decisions are made with the VAR application, which offers a more systematic and advisory environment to football and whose general philosophy is “minimum intervention, maximum benefit

Category	Themes	Codes	Participants	Frequency
Variation of Decisions	Definite and Clear Decisions	Activation of the VAR System in Critical Positions Enables the Referees to Make Correct Decisions for Positions	H4, H6, H9, H11, H14, H17	6
	Variability in Comments and Decisions	Seeing Inconsistencies in Decisions and Comments in Leagues Where the VAR System is Applied	H2	1
	Total			7
Contribution of Decisions to the Game	Decrease in the Number of Errors and Increase in the Rate of Finding the Right	The Use of VAR System Enables Referees to Make Final and Correct Decisions and Contributes to Reducing the Number of Errors	H1, H8, H12, H13, H14, H15, H16, H19, H20	9
	Correction of Decisions Affecting the Outcome	Enabling the Correction of Incorrect Decisions by Using the VAR System	H3, H5	2
	Objectivity	Due to VAR System Ensuring Impartiality Between Teams, It Leads to Providing Justice in the Decisions Made in the Competition	H10	1
	Maximum Benefit	Minimum Intervention of the VAR System to the Game, Maximum Benefit to the Nature of Football	H3	1
	Total			13

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the opinions of the referees participating in the research that more definite decisions are made with the VAR application, which offers a more systematic and open environment for football, and whose general philosophy is ‘minimum intervention, maximum benefit’, under the category of “Variation of Decisions”, “Definite and Clear Decisions” and “Variability in Comments and Decisions”; Under the category of “Contribution of Decisions to the Game”, it was determined that it consisted of “Decrease in the Number of Errors and Increase in the Rate of Finding the Right”, “Correction of Decisions Affecting the Outcome”, “Objectivity” and “Maximum Benefit”. Example sentences that make up these codes are given below:

“...I think that more precise and clear decisions are made. Clear decisions are made at the point where the ball is not played or in positions where the ball is but no one can see it. These decisions are clearer decisions for the referee to influence the outcome of the match...” (H9-Definite and Clear Decisions)

“I think that VAR and its philosophy, which are included in the rules of the game, are governed by various decisions and different interpretations in the applied leagues. While the number of interventions in similar positions is very low in some leagues, the number of interventions in other leagues is higher, which is proof of the variability in comments and decisions. No matter how much we benefit from technology, it leads to the conclusion that the realities of the country are more influential in transforming philosophy into behavior, since people are involved.” (H2-Variability in Comments and Decisions)

“I think that when the decisions made by the referees are right or wrong, errors are minimized with the VAR System, and correct and fair decisions are maximized.” (H13-Decrease in the Number of Errors and Increase in the Rate of Finding the Right)

“...If we think that the VAR System is involved in correcting the wrong decisions that affect the outcome of the game, we see that it intervenes at a minimum level, and if we think in order to

correct the wrong decisions that affect the outcome of the game (goal, red card, penalty), we see that it exists for clear final decisions.” (H3-Correction of Decisions Affecting the Outcome)

“...Definitely the VAR System brought objectivity to football. He also served justice. For this reason, an atmosphere of trust was created among the players, fans and spectators...” (H10-Objectivity)

“I definitely think it is a system applied for maximum benefit. At the same time, it should be maintained in the form of minimum intervention, otherwise it will negatively affect the flow of the game...” (H3-Maximum Benefit)

Table 5. Findings on the opinions of the referees on how the newly implemented VAR System in the world and in our country will contribute to the development of the game in the future

Category	Themes	Codes	Participants	Frequency
Positive Contribution	Reduction in Wrong Decisions	Enabling the Correction of Incorrect Decisions by Using the VAR System in a More Accurate and Planned Way in the Future	H3, H9, H11, H14, H16	5
	Belief and Trust in the Referee	With the Development of the VAR System, the Errors will decrease to the Minimum Levels, and the Faith and Trust in the Referees will increase	H3, H5, H10, H13	4
	Decreased Intervention to the Game	Minimizing Game Intervention Without Disrupting the Course of the Game of the VAR System	H6, H8, H17	3
	Focusing on Performance	Players Focusing on Their Own Performance Instead of Objecting to Referees	H2, H18	2
	Total			14
Fair Play	Fair Results	VAR System Prevents Obvious Errors and Ensures Impartial Decisions About Positions	H4, H7, H12	3
	Transparency of the Review	Clearly and Transparently Displaying the Results of the Investigation Made with the VAR System to the Stakeholders Increases Confidence in the System	H7, H20	2
	Reduction of Deceptions	Reduction of Unsportsmanlike Behaviors Towards Referees with the Development of the VAR System	H2	1
Total			6	

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that the opinions of the referees participating in the research on how the newly implemented VAR System in the world and in our country will contribute to the development of the game in the future, under the category of “Positive Contribution”, “Reduction in Wrong Decisions”, “Belief and Trust in the Referee”, “Decreased Intervention to the Game” and “Focusing on Performance”; Under the “Fair Play” category, it was determined that the codes consisted of “Fair Results”, “Transparency of the Review” and “Reduction of Deceptions”. Example sentences that make up these codes are given below:

“...It is certain that it will contribute positively to the development of the game. With the VAR System, there will be a decrease in the wrong decisions made by the referees in the future.” (H14-Reduction in Wrong Decisions)

“I think that the referees, who are at the center of the discussions, will stay out of the agenda as much as possible with the VAR system, with the mistakes being reduced to a low level, and the trust in the referees will be full in the future.” (H5-Belief and Trust in the Referee)

“Currently, our country is being examined quickly in terms of position analysis, and this is a great thing, and the game is being examined immediately before it gets cold... I think that in the

future, the intervention in the game will decrease with the VAR System, and the VAR System will interrupt the game less without disturbing the course of the game.” (H6-Decreased Intervention to the Game)

“...With the development of the VAR system, players will realize what the system is used for and will want to focus on their performance and raise it to the next level instead of constantly objecting to the referee for positions...” (H18-Focusing on Performance)

“...With this system, questions such as questionable offside positions, whether the ball crossed the line or whether there was an erroneous decision will be eliminated. For this reason, it will be an important step towards ensuring the justice system and creating fair results in football in the future.” (H7-Fair Results)

“One of the issues discussed in our country about the VAR system is how the examinations are made. I think that the implementation of the VAR System will get better by improving the system in the future and making these reviews more transparent...” (H20-Transparency of the Review)

“...I think that behaviors such as cheating inside the penalty area to win a penalty or exaggerating simple interventions to punish the opposing player with a red card will decrease and disappear over time with the VAR System...” (H2-Reduction of Deceptions)

Table 6. Findings on the opinions of the referees about the VAR System, which has been in practice in various leagues of the world and in our country for a short time, and the training given to the referees

Category	Themes	Codes	Participants	Frequency
Progressive Education	Increasing the Success Levels and Education Levels of the Referees	Providing Trainings in a Systematic Way, Increasing the Training and Success Levels of the Referees	H2, H13, H16, H20	4
	Total			4
Benefit	Critical Position Analysis	Overemphasis on Critical and Important Positions in Training Contributes to Referees' Correct and Consistent Evaluation of Positions	H1, H3, H6, H8	4
	Expert Educators and High Level Opportunity	Referees Take Lessons in Terms of Equipment and Facilities, in High Level Conditions and from Expert Educators	H2, H12, H14, H15	4
	Gaining Different Perspective	Ability of Referees to Gain Different Perspectives on Various Positions in Training and to Make Consistent Decisions in Competitions	H4, H5	2
	Training of Equipped Referees	The Useful and Sufficient Level of VAR System Training Given to the Referees Ensures that the Referees are Equipped in All Ways.	H2, H10	2
	Total			12
Insufficiency	Uncertainty of the Position to be Examined	Uncertainty About Which Positions to Examine Due to Insufficient VAR Trainings and Inconsistent Decisions	H11, H17, H18, H19	4
Total				4

When Table 6 is examined, the opinions of the referees participating in the research on the VAR System, which has been in practice in various leagues of the world and in our country for a short time, and the training given to the referees, are “Increasing the Success Levels and Education Levels of the Referees” under the “Progressive Education” category; Under the “Benefit” category, “Critical Position Analysis”,

“Expert Educators and High Level Opportunity”, “Gaining Different Perspective” and “Training of Equipped Referees”; It has been determined that under the category of “Insufficiency”, it consists of “Uncertainty of the Position to be Examined” codes. Example sentences that make up these codes are given below:

“...Trainings for the VAR System are going through very serious stages, and those who are successful at the end of each level continue their education at the other level. First of all, it is very important to be a successful referee in the field, to be inclined to use technology at a good level and to have a command of foreign languages and related terms, all of which are among the stages of education...” (H2-Increasing the Success Levels and Education Levels of the Referees)

“I think the trainings are beneficial. In addition, in the trainings given, critical and important positions are emphasized too much and the referees are asked to pay extra attention for these positions and to analyze the positions correctly...” (H8-Critical Position Analysis)

“I think the refereeing of our country is very lucky in this regard, because we are at a high level in terms of facilities, technology and equipment compared to other countries, and most importantly, being one of the first leagues to implement this system in Europe puts us a few steps ahead in terms of experience and is at a level to train European referees. It is another advantage for us to have Turkish educators who are experts in the field...” (H2-Expert Educators and High Level Opportunity)

“I think VAR trainings are beneficial. Because by receiving serious training, the referees gain different perspectives and ideas about many positions, and they can easily apply them on the field...” (H4-Gaining Different Perspective)

“...I think the trainings given are sufficient and useful. The most important aspect of the training is that the referees learn the positions and procedure down to the last detail and come to the field as well-equipped referees...” (H10-Training of Equipped Referees)

“I think VAR trainings are not enough. There is uncertainty about which positions will be reviewed. Because many referees can often act inconsistently in their decisions. In order to prevent this, I think it is necessary to focus on this issue in the trainings given...” (H19-Uncertainty of the Position to be Examined)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Looking at the results in Table 2, the opinions of the referees on how the VAR System applied in the world's major leagues and in our country have an effect on the spirit of the football game and on the pleasure of watching, under the category of “positive impact”, respectively; fair judgment and confidence building; Under the “adverse impact” category, respectively; it is seen that they express their opinions about a decrease in game speed and a decrease in watching pleasure, contrary to the spirit of football and an adaptation problem.

Football referees, which are constantly discussed in today's media, and the positions formed in the struggle sometimes cause a sports agenda that lasts for weeks. With the development of technology, the VAR System, which is a system that is expected to

prevent these situations, started to be used for the first time in Turkey in 2018. This system, which was first used for trial purposes in the 1st League matches and achieved good results, was used for the first time at the Super League club level in the fight between Galatasaray and Akhisarspor. Of course, the aim in VAR is not to play a completely flawless and perfect match. Because in football, middle and assistant referees can sometimes make mistakes. It can be said that this system can help to make fair decisions, as the middle referee of the match can see whether it is the right decision with the VAR System, if necessary. From this point of view, the primary aim of VAR is to avoid some major mistakes made by the referees (goal / not a goal, not a penalty / not a penalty, a direct red card, a warning to the wrong player and a disciplinary penalty for sending out). It should not be forgotten that the most important thing in the football game is the performance of the referee on the field,

since the VAR protocol is based on the requirement that the referees “manage the match as if there is no VAR”. Despite all these developments, it can of course be said that this system implemented in Turkey also paves the way for positive or negative developments. Similar to the opinions expressed by the referees participating in the research, similar views were expressed by the sportsmen in the interviews they attended. Coach Mustafa Reşit Akçay said, “I think the VAR System is against the spirit of football. Who will play the video by making what decision and when? Loss of time and concentration. Crown with the feet was also on the agenda, but it was abandoned because it cut the speed and concentration of football. I think we should make the game natural with the free opinion of the referees.” (12). On the contrary, Coach Abdullah Avcı said, “When we look at the video referee application as nostalgia, it seems as if it disrupts the nature of football, but when we look at today's realities, it seems like a situation that should be in football.” (12). In this context, it can be said that the stakeholders of the sport could not come to a consensus on the VAR System. When the literature is examined, Erdoğan (7), in his study in which he examined “The Opinions of Football Players About the Video Assistant Referee “VAR” System, determined that the football players in the study group thought that the VAR System was a technology that reduces referee errors and ensures justice in football. Han et al. (15) in their study examining “The Effect of Video Assistant Referee on the Chinese Super League”, after the introduction of VAR, the number of offsides and fouls in the Chinese Super League decreased significantly, the playing time in the first and second half and the total playing time increased significantly, they found that the home team's advantage decreased after the introduction of VAR.

Looking at the results in Table 3, as the VAR automatically ‘controls’ each situation / decision, the referees’ thoughts on how they contribute to the stress management in the competition management, under the category of “positive impact”, respectively; self-confident decision-making and mental comfort; Under the “adverse impact” category, respectively; It is seen that they express conflicting views on stress formation and decision making.

Today, with the increasing popularity of the football game and especially in this environment where competition is at a high level, referees also play an important role. The stress and anxiety experienced

by the referees while making a decision during the competition may differ according to some variables. Examples of these are the constant and severe objections of the players, the objections of the coach and the technical club, the pressure of the manager and the media. With the development of technology, it will be difficult for referees, one of the important building blocks of football, to adapt to this developing technology, and this will inevitably cause them to experience stress before or during the match. Similar to the opinions expressed by the football referees participating in the research, it is seen that sportsmen express similar opinions in interviews and interviews. Zekeriyâ Alp, the former chairman of the Central Arbitration Board, stated that they have made progress in the correct use of the VAR protocol, but they have not been able to solve the problem of the game cooling down completely. “It is a difficult task to act as a referee in our country. I regret to say that as all stakeholders of football, we have made this task even more difficult and we are making it harder. In our league, the first half of which is left behind, perhaps the referee’s mistakes have never been discussed so much, never before have so many statements and statements been published for a crown, a corner, a penalty, a foul, and especially scenarios have never been produced on social media. It is a pity that as the football family, we have made our referees more debatable with the technology we have brought to minimize the error.” (11). When the literature is examined, Erdoğan (7) in his study, in which he examined “The Opinions of Football Players About the ‘VAR’ System”, stated that the VAR System of the players reduced the stress of the referees and increased their self-confidence, but caused a decrease in motivation during the game in the players, determined that they did.

When look at these, as a result; with the implementation of the VAR System, it is seen that the criticisms and pressures made by the sports clubs, the fans and the media on the referees rather than the score of the match before and after the match inevitably cause the referees to experience positive or negative stress. In order for the referees to get rid of this stress and pressure that will occur, the referees need to be self-confident and mentally go out to the competition without thinking about anything.

Looking at the results in Table 4, the referees’ opinions that more precise decisions are made with the VAR application, which offers a more systematic and open environment to football, and whose general

philosophy is 'minimum intervention, maximum benefit', under the category of "decision diversity", respectively; final and clear decisions and changes in interpretation and decisions; Under the category of "contribution of decisions to the game", it is seen that they express the views of decreasing the number of errors and increasing the rate of finding the truth, correcting the decisions that affect the result, objectivity and maximum benefit. It is known that in the past, when technology did not develop so much in football, referee mistakes were clearly seen and these mistakes caused material and moral losses. Today, one of the purposes of integrating the VAR System into football is to minimize these referee mistakes and to correct the decisions that will affect the result. Many comments have been made about the benefits of the VAR System. President of the Association of Active Football Referees and Observers of Turkey, Dr. Abdurrahman Arıcı emphasized that the most important benefit of VAR is seen in offside positions, "No goals are scored from offside. This is important because we need to show justice to the public, coaches and players. We need to contribute to good football as a referee. If we can't show justice, there will be problems, this system has come to prevent the clubs from being victims." stated the opinion (8). When the literature is examined, Spitz et al. (20) "Video Assistant Referees (VAR): The Effect of Technology on Decision Making in Football Referees", in their study, stated that the rate of correct decision making increased after VAR intervention, and the accuracy rate of the first decisions made by the referees after the VAR System decreased from 92.1% to 98.3%. They found that it increased.

As a result, since football is a fast-paced game, the referees try to make the right decision by thinking quickly and making as many mistakes as possible while making their decisions in instantaneous positions. For this reason, sometimes there were differences in referee decisions. It is thought that these differences cause problems in the final decision of the referees. With the implementation of the VAR System, it has been observed that more precise and clear decisions are taken, and the increase in the rate of finding the truth is very high. This shows that the VAR System is an important technological development in terms of ensuring justice in the game.

Looking at the results in Table 5, in the opinions of the referees on how the newly implemented VAR system in the world and in our country will contribute to the development of the game in the

future, under the "positive contribution" category of the referees, respectively; reduction in wrong decisions, belief and trust in the referee, reduced interference with the game, focusing on performance; Under the "fair game" theme, respectively; it is seen that they express their views on fair results, transparency of the examination and reduction of deception. As in every sports organization, mistakes occur in football. The stakeholders of the sport and everyone involved in this business should strive to make the game more enjoyable and work to minimize the mistakes made. In this context, it can be said that making football more important and making the game more fair so that everyone can enjoy this sport and increasing the trust in the referee, which is one of the most important parts of the game, will increase the enjoyment of watching football. FIFA president Gianni Infantino said: "I think VAR brings more justice to the game. It makes the game cleaner, helps the referees make the right decisions. Thanks to the VAR system, when a decision changes, some of the audience is happy, while others are sad. As a result, justice is served. You won't hear me say anything negative about VAR. Because justice is everything" (9). When examining the literature, Carlos et al. (3) "How Does Video Assistant Referee (VAR) Change the Game in Elite Football?" found that the rate of correction of wrong decisions increased after the VAR application, and then a decrease was experienced in offsides, fouls and cards.

As a result, it is thought that the VAR system, which has been developed with technology for the development of football and adapted to football, will provide the belief and trust in the referees, which is the subject of constant discussion, and will make an important contribution to making the game more fair, reducing mistakes and revealing fair results.

Looking at the results in Table 6, the opinions of the referees on the VAR System, which has been in practice in various leagues of the world and in our country for a short time, and the training given to the referees, are under the category of "progressive training"; the increase in the success level and education level of the referees is under the category of "being useful"; critical position analysis, expert trainers and high-level opportunities, different perspectives, training of qualified referees, under the category of "not enough"; It is seen that they express their opinions about the position uncertainty to be examined. Persons and institutions have always needed training in order to get the highest level of

efficiency from the work they have done. As in every field, education has an important place in football. Since the VAR System is a newly implemented system, it is aimed to get the highest efficiency from this system. In order for the referees to get used to this system in a short time and to use the VAR System correctly and efficiently, the referees undergo various trainings. Sabri Çelik, one of the former presidents of the Central Referee Board, said, "After each match, we train our referees face-to-face with the images of the matches they manage. We show their positive and negative decisions. These trainings will continue until the end of the season. In addition, we reinforce our training by sending video clips from our EPAK analysis center to our referees after the matches they directed and to our observers after the matches they watched." (13). As a criticism of these statements, the President of the Association of Active Football Referees and Observers of Turkey, Dr. Abdurrahman Arıcı "If the VAR System is being discussed, it should be revised. The training given is not enough, it is necessary to give more training. We need to think more." (10). When examining the literature, Armenteros et al. (2) stated in his study "The Use of Video Technologies in Football and Other Sports Referees" that the standards of education and development of elite referees should be the same, but not uniform. In the same study, researchers suggested that FIFA and UEFA should provide technical training and seminars for both referees and referee trainers. In addition, they expressed their views on making a joint effort to reach standardized approaches in education, decision making and performance, and using audio-visual and multimedia resources that support education in training.

The facilities appear to be sufficient. However, despite these, it can be said that the inconsistent decisions made by the referees after the trainings continued and did not reduce the discussions about the VAR System, and that the trainings were not at a sufficient level.

Suggestion

As a result of this research:

In addition to the VAR protocol determined by the TFF, MHK (Turkish Football Federation, Central Referee Board) at the beginning of the season and after the season, further extended VAR System introduction, usage and field applications trainings are given to the referees, and the correct use of the system and the mistakes to be made about the system. It can be suggested to help the referees adapt quickly

to this VAR application, which is a new system, by minimizing

In our country, the VAR System trainings, which will be given after the infrastructure of the VAR system is established, should be given not only to the referees who will manage the match, but also to the assistant referees in the field, football players and coaches who constantly object, club managers who increase the debate about the referee in the public, sportsmen and commentators in the media. It can be recommended for the system to work more efficiently.

Due to the scarcity of research on football referees, it is important that TFF and MHK encourage and direct research on football referees. For this reason, it can be suggested that the TFF, MHK pay attention to this issue in terms of the reasons for the referee's errors and arguments and to produce new solutions so that the referees do not encounter these problems.

In future studies:

Since this study on football referees is aimed at improving the VAR system, which is a newly implemented system, similar studies that do not include only referees; It can be suggested that it should be done on football players, coaches or people who are interested in sports, as it will give a different perspective to the researches to be done.

A draft should be prepared by experts in the field that measures the stress, pressure and anxiety levels that may occur on the referees before or after using the VAR system, psychologically and physiologically, and this draft should be applied to the referees before and after the competition throughout the season, and the effects of the VAR system on the referees should be determined. This method can be recommended in terms of shedding light on research.

The lack of participation of the referees using the VAR system in the research due to the newness of the system was seen as a deficiency. For this reason, it can be suggested that the participation of referees who use the VAR system and who have received VAR training in full in future research will gain similar or different perspectives to the research.

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