

# Victims of age restrictions in Turkish football: a study on the social consequences of the application

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## Abstract

In this study, it is intended to reveal the sociological effects of "age quota rule" on Turkish football, and how football players have been affected since it was applied in the Third League in Turkey in 2008. The research method is designed as "qualitative". This method was applied as data collection tools such as questionnaire, scale, etc. in quantitative methods provide only specific options to the subjects and that creates limitations on the research problems concerning the events and processes in carrying out this method. Research data was collected through using "interview" technique, one of the most widely used method of data collection in qualitative research. Subjects are the players who cannot play in the third league due to "age quota rule". "Semi-structured in-depth interview" was conducted to 10 people. The research sample was determined by "theoretical sampling". As a result of interviews with subjects, after putting records down into paper from the voice recorder, two themes were identified based on the concepts and ideas that the subjects' narratives focused: 1 "The inability to play in the third league," 2 "The quality of football has decreased." Under the theme of "the inability to play in the third league", there are the ones who have to leave the league after the rule applied and hence join to the amateurs and the ones who cannot play in the third league due to the rule although they get best offers from the third league teams while playing at higher leagues. Another outstanding finding under this theme is the assertion that there is a fall in the wages of footballers put forward by the subjects after the quota rule applied. It is revealed that subjects' living conditions have also been affected in the negative sense and some of them state that they have some psychological problems after the rule. Under the theme of "the quality of football has decreased", the main reasons of quality decrease are indicated as the experienced players of older ages having to leave clubs due to the age limit and the majority of the young inexperienced players in the third league. In the current situation, that the national team squad consists of the players who come from the youth setup of big teams in the super league rather than young players is an evidence of falling short of the goal that the third league creates a source for the national team by giving more space to young players by the quota rule. Age quota restriction on the amateur football is seen as an application which does not overlap with the philosophy of amateurism and prevents people of all ages to participate in sports as a human right.

**Keywords:** Footballers, third league age quota, age quota in amateur leagues, football's quality, low wages.

## INTRODUCTION

In the time of even amateur football leagues are known to be in the area of employment, it is likely players as the main actors of football to encounter some problems specific to the players in the labor market such as dismissal and so on. Commercialization of football, creating a variety of products, also reinforces its ability to participate liberal market economy in all conditions. While football's "playing" ontology fades away, it leaves its place to "job" with the necessity of adapting to global capitalism or capitalization. The football players make up "labor" part in this job market. "Player is an individual "whose capital is the ability to play." This skill commercializes by renting "player-labor" (with the transfer process) and is converted into wealth-creating economic capital. It's the structure of the football market that determines

the value of this commodity" (7). Football as a favorite field for shareholders, is, of course, witnessing the Labor-Capital conflicts in these peculiar production relations.

In general sportsman, in particular the football players having a short-term profession and football players having to leave their profession at much younger age compared to the other professions cause "unemployment" concerns appear in the last period of professional player. The compulsory early retirement as a sportsman is concerned with the unique business dynamics of this profession. A professional athlete's organizing his life according to the strict rules of the sports and living as a restricted body activist (1), shows the distinctive features of sportsmanship from other clerical profession like teaching, banking, advocacy, etc. with sharp lines. Galeano (9) summarizes football career in the

following way: "The end of the road comes with the senility in other occupations yet thirty year old can be considered as senile as a footballer. Muscle gets tired easily."

In 2008, age restriction started to be applied for the 3<sup>rd</sup> football league. The rule, known as "Age restrictions and quotas" under the heading of "footballers' eligibility" in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league category of professional football has become one of the most important issues of the 3<sup>rd</sup> league category of professional football. The purpose of the implementation of this rule, by the authorities, has been called to rejuvenate football and give more space to young people in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league. However, this rule is asserted to have negative effects on both footballers playing for a living in these leagues and the quality of football in these leagues since the day implemented. In addition to these effects, it is claimed that the rule has decreased the wages in the labor market. It is suggested that footballers between the ages of 24-30 have to quit the profession because of the quota that limit applications to a certain number. The quota restrictions also covering the amateur football league leads to the discussion in the context of the principle of human rights in relation with every man's right to participate in sports involving "amateurism".

Purpose of the research is to study the problems that the footballers who have to leave football or join amateur leagues instead or the ones who are affected indirectly while playing in other leagues encounter because of "age quota rule" in the professional 3<sup>rd</sup> league. In this study, it is aimed to show the consequences of the quota rules based on subjective experience of either directly or indirectly affected subjects since the rule is implemented.

### Age Quota Instructions

In Turkey, the organizer and executive of all football activities, Turkish Football Federation (TFF), made a decision in 2008 that from 2009-2010 seasons, TFF can make contract with the players less than 24 years while six players at most between 25-30 years can sign a contract; and only 4 of them can be written to the competition name list in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league.<sup>1</sup>

In every season since the 2009-2010 seasons, it is indicated under title of footballers' eligibility in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league competition status within the articles that

the contract can be made with players according to the dates they were born of the relevant season. According to this situation, in the 2013-2014 seasons 3<sup>rd</sup> league clubs can sign a contract with players who were born after 01.01.1989 and more, and with only 6 footballers who were born between 31.12.1988 and 01.01.1984 within the quota.<sup>2</sup>

While in the 2008-2009 season TFF 3<sup>rd</sup> League was played among 51 teams in five regional groups (Step-Promotion and Rank Group)<sup>3</sup>, the 2009-2010 season, when age limits and quotas was implemented, consists of 53 teams in TFF 3<sup>rd</sup> League in total. In that season, the 3<sup>rd</sup> league clubs could sign a contract with players who were born after 01.01.1985 and with at most 6 players born between 31.12.1984 and 31.12.1979.<sup>4</sup> Just for this season, footballers who had the ongoing contract with the clubs falling from the 2<sup>nd</sup> league to the 3<sup>rd</sup> league in the previous season, was accepted to 6 people's quota irrespective of their age.<sup>5</sup> TFF the 3<sup>rd</sup> league consists of 3 groups and 54 teams in 2010-2011 season<sup>6</sup>; 3 groups and 57 teams in 2011-2012 season<sup>7</sup>; and 3 groups and 54 teams in 2012-2013 season.<sup>8</sup> While TFF the 3<sup>rd</sup> league consisted of 3 groups in 2010-2011 seasons, it was decided to establish Regional Amateur League at the same year. BAL league, considered as the top amateur league, includes 143 teams and in BAL league having a similar status with the 3<sup>rd</sup> league, there are age limits and age quotas under the title of footballers' eligibility.<sup>9</sup> In 2013-2014 season, while the players at 28 years and younger (born in 1986 and younger) can play at the Regional Amateur League, Super Amateur League and 1<sup>st</sup> Amateur League, players 29 years and older (born in 1985 and older) are counted within the quota. Different from age quota in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league, there is no limit for the number of players over 29 year old in this league; clubs can have licences as much as they want for 29 years and over footballers. However, no more than 4 quota footballer may include in the 18 persons competition

<sup>2</sup> TFF, 2013 – 2014 Season Spor Toto 3rd League Competition Statute, article 2/1, article 2/2, p.1

<sup>3</sup> TFF, 2008 – 2009 Season TFF 3rd League Competition Statute, article 5/1, p.1

<sup>4</sup> TFF, 2009 – 2010 Season TFF 3rd League Competition Statute, article 2/1, article 2/2/a, p.1

<sup>5</sup> TFF, 2009 – 2010 Season TFF 3rd League Competition Statute, article 2/2/b, p.1

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.tff.org/Default.aspx?pageID=1062&grupID=727#grp>, Date of Access: 09.02.2014

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.tff.org/Default.aspx?pageID=1158&grupID=819#grp>, Date of Access: 09.02.2014

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.tff.org/Default.aspx?pageID=1240&grupID=908#grp>, Date of Access: 09.02.2014

<sup>9</sup> TFF, 2010 Regional Amateur League Competition Statute

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=285&ftxtID=4049>, Date of Access: 09.02.2014

name list in the Regional Amateur League, Super League and 1<sup>st</sup> Amateur League. As for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amateur Relegation Teams, there are no age restrictions.<sup>10</sup>

## MATERIAL & METHODS

Qualitative research methods were used in the study. The purpose of using the qualitative research method is examining the research problem in its specific context to clarify. In human-specific subjects of social science research, quantitative methods have some limitations, so it is necessary to resort to qualitative methods. Standardized instruments such as questionnaire, scale, etc. in quantitative methods are criticized as they examine subjects according to their response to certain options (12).

In the study, one of the most widely used method of data collection in qualitative research; "interview" technique was used. The reason of the widespread use of interview techniques is; "(...) being quite powerful in terms of revealing individuals' data, opinions, experiences and feelings and based on most common form of communication, i.e. speech. It eliminates the limitations and artificiality of writing or filling in questionnaires or tests in this aspect."(14).

In field observations, the existence of signs that effects of quota rules include a wider context than only players within the age limit in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league has been instrumental in the process of determining sample of the research. Starting from these considerations, in the study, "interview" was conducted with the players who had to quit the 3<sup>rd</sup> league due to the quota rules or attend amateur league instead and with the players who cannot be transferred to the teams in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league because of the age restriction quota. For this reason, "Semi-structured in-depth interview" was conducted to 10 people to reflect on various processes of wide range of the effects quota rules. The research sample was created by the method "theoretical sampling" (10). In this sampling method, number of subjects and the sample size was not determined at the initial stage of the research but shaped in the research process (11). In this type of the sampling, researchers cannot be sure how big it would be in the process of data collection. This sampling method is appropriate to study facts and events which are not studied yet or

much and where the theoretical framework is weak (14). In theoretical sampling (hypothetical sampling), "the researcher continues interviews to determine the sample, until no new data contributes to the the sample. Only at this point, sample size has been found sufficient." (5).

Duration of calls for each subject is the followings: 1. O(32): 13,23 min, 2. H(32): 13,32 min, 3. T(33): 13,02 min, 4. C(32): 17,02 min, 5. B(30): 18,17 min, 6. E(28): 8,05 min, 7. A(35): 7,51 min, 8. O(38): 7,26 min, 9. M(40): 8,51 min, 10. Y(33): 11,12 min.

The data collected by recording with the voice recorder in the interviews has been subjected to an extraction after listening to the recors carefully in accordance with the scope of the research problem. In order to avoid irrelevant data, only necessary parts of the interviews were transferred into text. Transferring records to text is considered the first step needed for the analysis. Qualitative data analysis consists of "data processing" (coding of meaningful concepts and themes), "data transferring to written form" and "inference and evaluation" stage (11).

After transferring Interviews records to the text, main themes were identified based on the concepts and ideas that the subjects' narratives focused. Thus, research findings were grouped under two main themes: 1 "Not being able to play in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league," 2 "The quality of football has decreased." It was paid attention to the findings covered in each main theme to be consistent with the themes in terms of content. It is carefully considered that the various narratives of the same themes are coherent with the main problem semantically.

There is no aim to generalize the findings accordance with the philosophy of qualitative method. It is intended to determine the attitudes towards the quota rule on the basis of the players' experiences since the day it was applied.

Credentials of the subjects have been kept secret in accordance with the principles of research ethics and the right of privacy.

There is no concern to generalize in relad with the philosophy of "qualitative method" used in this study. The philosophy used in this study should also be guided concern is generalization. But now since the formality of the quota rules, which affected the subjective experience of the players starting their reflections, are intended to make determinations concerning certain trends.

<sup>10</sup> TFF 2013-2014 Season Rules to be applied in the Amateur Football League <http://www.tff.org/Resources/TFF/Documents/0000014/LIGLER/AMATOR/Amator-2013-14.PDF>, Date of Access: 09.02.2014

Credentials of the subjects, and the right to privacy of individuals in accordance with the principles of research ethics has been kept secret.

## RESULTS

### Not being able to play in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league

O(32) who played football for 10 years as a professional player stated that he was relegated to amateur league due to the quota rule: "We, as Çıksalınspor, became champion in 2011 or 2012 in regional amateur league. However, (...) there is an age restriction in professional 3<sup>rd</sup> league. Therefore, I had to join to the amateur teams. [Did you have to join to the amateurs while you were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league?] I had to go back to the amateur league because of the age restriction when I was in Maltepespor in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league. [Did you return to regional amateur league (RAL)?] I returned to RAL. Then, I experienced a championship again. I had a chance to join the 3<sup>rd</sup> league one more time but I couldn't due to the age quota again so I was relegated to super amateur league this year, too.

While C(32) was playing on a team in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league in 2011, he has been necessarily in the amateur league since the age of 30, noting that: "I'm still in the Amateurs but of course it also causes difficulties in the amateur league, too. It is another market and has quotas, too. I do not know exactly, but teams can only have 4 players over 24 or 25 year of age. Teams have usually money problems so they cannot get more players and do not want to inflate their quotas. Thus there arise problems about money of course. The quotas have led us to quit football in a few years. We are affected psychologically, too. We are at the point to leave football. Therefore, we cannot be so helpful to our club even if we play."

O(32) pointed out that he had to leave his team just as he was in an experienced position: "Think that you are a captain during 2 years - playing approximately 55 matches excluding fines and disabilities. However, after a certain period of time, you have to leave the team and join to the lower leagues due to the age quota rule. You undergo the psychological devastation and needless to say, you are also financially straitened (...)"

H(32), had 10 year of experience as a professional football player, stated he had to quit football owing to the age quota in 2009: "I started playing football at 11 years old and I am 32 years old now. I grew up playing football until the age of 27. The first year was tough for me. It was in the same

year with my wedding. I had some savings and ran out of them. So at the first year (...) I had a lot of psychological problems. These problems affected my family, too. Afterwards, we started a business with my brothers. We are still trying to live like that."

T(33), left Bank Asya league because of some disagreements, could not play in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league due to the quota although he got best offers and joined an amateur team: "Some of us quitted playing football and some of us joined to the amateur teams. Everyone had many problems. It affected the football market. For example, people had to accept lower wages due to the age quota. Good players, qualified players became jobless."

O(38), playing in the amateur league now, left the professional football due to the quota rule after playing in super league teams like Beşiktaş for 16 years. He implied that he had to go back to the amateur league and missed many opportunities to play in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league owing to the "30 age limit" and said: "Although you can play football until 38 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league, you cannot play after 30 year-old in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league. It should be allowed in the amateur league at least but it is the same there, there is 4-persons-quota." What kind of system is that? You passed a law to give more chance to young players but you transferred foreign players in Bank Asya league. I think that is the end of Turkish football. It is the same for our national team. You don't train our footballers."

T(33) stated that the age quota was good for the club managers: "They got players form the amateurs and made them professionals. They made them play for salary only. For example, a player who can get 30.000-40.000 liras as advanced payment accepts only 5.000-10.000 liras just to be a professional player. The 2<sup>nd</sup> league is getting worse in financial sense. The age quota rule is in favor of the managers. Players cannot go to the 3<sup>rd</sup> league due to the age quota, or go back to the amateurs and there is a problem about military service, too. One should be a professional player to postpone the military service. Therefore, as a last chance, they agree to play without advanced payment, by being paid for each match. Instead of getting 40.000-50.000 liras advanced payment, he agrees to play for 5.000-10.000 liras as I said before. That is better for the managers."

B(30), played as a professional for 9 years and he is now playing in a team in Antalya in regional

amateur league: “Just as I was at the top, TFF made a big change. It made many players aggrieve and jobless. The rule 4+2 is applied in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league, meaning that you can only make 4 of them play while 2 are substitutes. The 7<sup>th</sup> one is not allowed. When I became 25 years old, the rule was introduced. We were treated like step-children. I was the luck one as I was accepted to a team within the quota at last. I played in Beykozspor and became the team captain. I was chosen for that position. Later, I was accepted to Antalya Kepezspor within the quota but the managers had the attitude like “don’t ask for much money” and “accept the money what we offer, you are from the quota”. They tried to imply them kindly. The only job that we can do and love is football. So we work for little money-money that we don’t get (...)”.

A(35), who played in professional leagues for 16 years, states that he could not evaluate the offers from the 3<sup>rd</sup> league due to the the quota: “Age restriction definitely affected us because we could not play in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league although there were many opportunities in those years. [You could not play?] Yes. [Which year was that, affected you more?](...) I think it was 2009 or 2010. It was approximately in the same year with the age quota rule was introduced.

E(28), who played in Bank Asya league, the 2<sup>nd</sup> league and other professional leagues for 7 years, reported that he has to play in the amateur league now: “If there were no age restriction, I could play as a professional in any team easily in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league. I could have insurance and life would be better for me. I might play football until 35-40 years old but now I think I will quit playing football in 2 years. It affects me, my family, and my living conditions so much. [I think you don’t do any other jobs other than football, don’t you?] No, I don’t do anything else. I earned some money before. I made some investments. That’s all. However, the question is whether they are enough for our future. Of course not (...)”

### **The quality of football has decreased**

O(32): “There aren’t any people who guide the young players in this system now. Therefore, they have their own world-view and their own rules in football. (...) What happened to football in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league? The quality has decreased. It is not training anymore; it is a kind of struggling. It causes to have players who are with low in quality and insufficient for the league they play. (...) Club chairmen claim it

is also enough for them. For example, they can make young footballer play for little money. They think they can do whatever they want with them. Thus the quality of football is getting decrease.”

After playing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league for 3 years and then joining the amateur league Y(33), indicated the negative effects of having too many young players rather than the experienced ones: “While I was playing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league, we had players at the age of 35 and still playing. If they can still play football, it is absolutely unfair to prevent it. They played in many teams. They were like role model for us as they were experienced in both life and football. That is why it was good to be with them in the same team. However, because of the age quota now, everyone is of the same age and has their ways. Therefore, I think it affects football in a negative sense.”

O(38) pointed out the decrease in quality of football by saying “the football has finished in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league: “The football has come to an end. The player cannot pass the ball but he plays there just because he is young. I understand he is young and we were young once but we learned how to play football from older players. Young players don’t know how to pass a ball. You pass him a ball but he cannot pass it back. Why? He doesn’t know football. But why is he playing? He is young and has bright future. It is nonsense. There is nothing like future in football. If the player is talented, he can play at 17 or 38 years old. It should not be prevented. Football has finished, anyone with crampon becomes a footballer now. Watch the amateurs, they are horrible. Nobody cares the amateurs.”

M(40) emphasized he has to play in the super amateur league instead of the 3<sup>rd</sup> league. He underlined there was a decrease in quality in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> leagues: “The quality has decreased in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> leagues. The players in these leagues have no background. Some of them play for free to postpone the military service. The quality has decreased considerably. When you watch the 3<sup>rd</sup> league’s match, you leave it on the 15<sup>th</sup> minute because the footballers who don’t have background and experience in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league play there. There is no quality anymore. While I was playing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league, there were players who had at least 10-15 years of experience in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league in my team and other teams. It is not the case now. When I watch a match, I can see that players are transferred randomly. The quality has decreased (...)”.

H(32) asserted there was a decrease in quality in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league: "I even played in A league. I learned much from the experienced players and their advices. When I watch the 3<sup>rd</sup> league's matches, I see that most players are 19-20 years old, and they are pretentious. When there are experienced and older footballers in the team, the younger ones learn from them. However, everyone in teams is young now due to the age quota. Some of my friends are playing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league now, they say that they never listen to them and they are pretentious."

T(33) complained about the decrease in quality of football in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> leagues and thought there were not enough players trained in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league for the national team: "The footballers, who cannot take part in the youth setup, play in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league. Today's young players are terrible. There were many qualified player at the age of 23-24 in our times. (...) Now that they have excluded us, whom will the young players learn from? (...) Only one player joined to the national team of all players last year. Think about it. We have three 3<sup>rd</sup> leagues this year. There are 18 teams and each has 20 players. Only one footballer out of 600-700 players achieved to be in the national team. Only one, no one else."

A(35) stated it was disadvantageous that there were no experienced players to be role models for young ones anymore. He asserted that situation has decreased the quality of football in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league: "We all know the 3<sup>rd</sup> league's situation. It is incredibly terrible and the quality has decreased. Why; because it is dangerous to keep the players of the same age. They start to compete with each other. There should be 2-3 experienced players with them as role models to guide and to motivate. We all worked with young players and we were young once. They didn't refrain from the manager or coach but the experienced players in the team. However, it is not the situation anymore."

B(30) emphasized that the quota rule decreased the quality in lower leagues: "The rule has no benefit as I see in my research for 5 years. The quality has notably decreased in lower leagues. The quality has decreased (...) There will be no qualified players if there are not experienced players in the leagues. Or only few ones are qualified. They do not have experienced footballers who know the job. I was different before. I went to the 2<sup>nd</sup> league, Karagümruk when I was 18 years old. There were many older and experienced players. I played with Volkan, Galatasaray's goalkeeper. He told me about

Hagi and Tugay. He told me about Galatasaray. My working passion and determination is different. However, there are no more experienced players like him in lower leagues. Why; because of the quota. They are all young. They try to train themselves."

A(35) implied that the quota rule affected the football's quality in a negative way: "It has definitely affected the 2<sup>nd</sup> league negatively. Some players have to renew the contract even in not desirable conditions in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league. Why? If there were not any age restrictions, they might sign the contract for more money. However, he has to bear it to play in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league because he cannot play in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league. There are players who accept little money as they cannot play in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league and that situation lowers the wages and the quality of football. [So do you think the managers' abuse that situation, the quota?] Definitely I do. I definitely think they exploit it. Of course, it is not the same for all of them. We should not blame all of them but most of them abuse the rule."

M(40) said that managers made use of the quota rule and there was a decrease in footballers' wages: "If there were no age restriction, the experinced players would be preferred. As there is an age quota, the cheaper players are preferred instead now. Nobody wants to go to military service so they want to play football either in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league or in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league without thinking about money. (...) [Have the managers made use of that?] Of course, that situation is good for them. For example, instead of giving 30.000 liras for me as an experienced player, they prefer to transfer 3 players by paying 10.000 liras for each. It serves their purpose."

E(28) also underlined the decrease in wages in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league: "the 2<sup>nd</sup> league has definitely been affected, for example I cannot join to the 2<sup>nd</sup> league due to the quota this year. They have offered me extremely low wages as I am playing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> league within the quota. They asked me to play in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league but they offered me one or two tenth of money that I got 7-8 years ago. It lowers the wages of all players in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league. I mean while a player used to earn 100.000 TL, he has to accept 50-70 TL in the 2<sup>nd</sup> league. It has decreased the quality of both football and footballers' lives."

The quota rule creates another problem as it is applied in the amateur league beside the 3<sup>rd</sup> league. The underlying reason for the problem is that

amateurism is, by definition, the right to do sports by all people in contrast to professionalism. The quota rule in amateur leagues, thus, gets many reactions. O(32) criticizes the quota rule in amateur leagues: "That's not fair. It is getting the right to do sports from people. That is for amateurs, think the name implies, amateur. What is that mean? Doing for pleasure. For example, buying a fishing pole and bait and going fishing is a kind of amateur fishing, isn't it? Think that they tell you you cannot go fishing after 30 years old. (...) We all earn our money from football. We cannot concentrate on other jobs because football is tough and compelling. However, when you turn 30 or 33, they say we cannot play football. What can we do? We spend time at coffeehouses. They have the rule for us but they transfer the players at the age of 35 in the super league such as Drogba and Hagi (...). Then (...) I think there should be restrictions for them, too."

## DISCUSSION

First theme identified in the research findings has been entitled in "not being able to play in the 3rd league". This theme consists of players playing in the 3rd league who have to resign from the team because of age restriction and players who have to go for another amateur team on account of the rule. In addition there are also players who have been playing in the 2nd league, 1st league or even in Turkish Super League getting offers from a 3rd league team but not having the opportunity to play due to the age.

One of the notable elements in the research findings is subjects' claiming the decrease of salaries after the restriction rule. It has been noted that the decrease is not only in 3rd league but in 2nd league, too.<sup>11</sup> This has a negative effect on their lives. That is, some of the subjects claim that after the rule, they have got psychological and familial problems.<sup>12</sup> It is clear that a notable part of the subjects have to

resign from professional football and signed with amateur teams because of the rule.<sup>13</sup>

The negative effect of players' resigning from professional football and signing to amateur teams is their having no social security. It is known that there is no social security for players in the amateur league because it is not officially arranged according to professional work relations and rules. Successful and leading professional sportsmen have the necessary social security facilities and it is advocated that the other players in sublevels should not be deprived of that support (8). This idea may serve a solution for injustices to relief the ones who do not have professional security in amateur leagues after leaving the 3rd league as they cannot find a job in the 2nd league. The agreements in amateur divisions have no official validity and the payments of the players is nothing but verbal agreement which shows this division's off-record feature. Even though in some situations there are some players who are being paid well, they lack social security and this lead them to have no rights to claim after they have been broken off the team.

The other theme in the research findings has been entitled in "the quality of football has decreased". This is one of the most important findings in the research taking the subjects statements into consideration. The decrease in the quality has been visible especially in 3rd and 2nd league. Players being inside the age restriction rule are being paid with lower salaries in the 2nd league and this is also a negative effect of this rule which leads to lower payments. The foremost reason of decrease of quality for the subjects is aged and experienced players having to resign from the 3rd league teams because of the rule or the majority of these teams consist of youngsters because experienced players don't have the opportunity to play there.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> T(33): "They got the guy from amateur and signed him a professional contract. For example, a player valued at 30 or 40 billion, just gets 5 or 10 billion to be professional".

B(30): "(...)Because of restriction, everyone like directors, managers approach us "don't expect for more", You're gonna sign as we wish", "you are restricted anyways".

<sup>12</sup> O(32): "You are being devastated not only psychologically but also financially (...)"

H(32): "First year was tough. There was also my wedding ceremony. We got money in first years, but after that it is inevitable to have problems".

E(28): "I don't know, I was thinking "I can play football until the age of 35 or 40. But now I am planning to retire in 2 years. It affected me so much. I got a family and that really hurts. I have a child too".

<sup>13</sup> O(32), C(32), T(33), O(38), E(28) after the rule comes up, they say they went for an amateur team.

<sup>14</sup> O(38): "The football has finished. They are not enough for it but they still play football. Why? Because they are youngsters. I know they are youngsters, we were young too but we learnt so much from our elders."

M(40): "Right now in 2nd league and 3rd league the football has poor quality. Just to be away from military service, the players without background play there and after 15 minutes you leave the stadium. You just can't stand the football there."

H(32): "I am going to watch some matches and I'm not kidding, a kid at 19 or 20 thinks himself a star, that is unbearable".

Another criticism to the restriction rule is the application doesn't satisfy the purpose. With this rule, the aim to provide more opportunities to youngsters and to make them a source for the under age national team is not reaching its destination. The opinion about this is in national team many of the players are being selected from the notable teams like Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray, Beşiktaş, other Anatolian teams and expats in European countries.<sup>15</sup> The claims that their senior teams and youth teams are not a source for the national team are calculated from the players selected for the national squad.<sup>16</sup> Observing the last term under age national team squads, it is clear that almost no players from 3rd league had been selected for the national team.<sup>17</sup>

T(33): "Youngsters right now are not good enough, they just suck. In our times there were so many players with talent at the age of 23 and 24. Now who will they have as a model without us?"

A(35): "Right now 3rd league is unbelievable. There is no one for them as a role model and having the same age groups in a team is always risky because they all want to show off. If there were 2 or 3 elder players, would be better."

B(30): "For the last 5 years, there is no advantage of this rule. The quality has decreased. I can truly say that without masters, apprentices are useless. There are a few skilled players, but that's all. It was not like that before."

<sup>15</sup>Ömer Gülhan, Criticisms of players, see below, so-called elixir of youth: no place for +30!, <http://www.yarisaha.com/sozde-genclik-iksiri-30-yas-ustu-futbolcuya-forma-yok/>, 19.06.2013, Date of access: 06.01.2014

<sup>16</sup> Ali Kemal Demir, <http://yerelfutbol.org/3-ligde-yas-sinirihangi-amaca-hizmet-ediyor/>, 09.05.2013, Date of Access: 04.01.2014

<sup>17</sup> 1) Squad of U20 National Team for the upcoming FIFA 2013 U20 World Cup

U20: 10 players from Super Lig, 2 players from PTT 1st League, 3 players from 2nd League, 6 Expat players, <https://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=648&ftxtID=18262>

2) Squad of U20 National Team for the 4 teamed tournament in Holland in October 10-14

U20: 7 players from Super League, 10 players from PTT 1st League, 3 players from 2nd League, 1 player from 3rd League, 2 Expat players, <https://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=648&ftxtID=19148>

3) Squad of U19 National Team for the match against Slovakia in February 12-14 in Alanya

U19: 9 players from Super League, 6 players from PTT 1st League, 5 players from 2nd League, 1 player from 3rd League, <https://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=274&ftxtID=19903>

4) Squad of U18 National Team for the Valentin Granatkin Tournament in Russia in January 3-13 2014

U18: 10 players from Super League, 1 player from PTT 1st League, 3 players from 2nd League, 1 player from 3rd League, 5 Expat players, <https://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=275&ftxtID=19672>

5) Squad of U21 National Team against Austria in November 14, Thursday

U21: 5 players from Super Lig, 9 players from PTT 1st League, 1 player from 2nd League, 4 Expat players, <https://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=284&ftxtID=19381>

Appeals of players suffering from the restriction rule<sup>18</sup> to the Turkish Football Federation Arbitration Board are giving no results because of constitutional bases<sup>19</sup> which rejects judicial acts against Arbitration Board decisions.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, an objection against Arbitration Board, which functions as the controller of Board of Management and Disciplines' decisions, is a special administrative application being applied to a special "administrative authority of complaints" and has to be solved by means of administrative judiciary system (3). Another judiciary solution can be to apply to Competition Authority. Age restriction rule affects the players in 3rd league and local amateur league and according to this, based on the law of "Preserving the Competition" (the law number 4054) an investigation against TFF can be processed as a solution.<sup>21</sup> Aforementioned application of complaint is based on that TFF organization and applications are not in the area of authority of Competition Authority and Law.

Application of restriction rule in amateur leagues, starting from the meaning of "amateur" is another discussion. As everyone knows, amateurism

6) Squad of U20 National Team in its last match in a tournament organised in Holland, 2013

U20: 7 players from Super League, 10 players from PTT 1st League, 2 players from 2nd League, 1 player from 3rd League, 2 Expat players, <https://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=648&ftxtID=19211>

7) Squad of U17 Young National Team to join a tournament named La Manga in Spain in February 4-10 2014

U17: 11 players from Super League, 1 player from PTT 1st League, 3 players from 2nd League, 1 player from 3rd League, 2 Expat players, <https://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=276&ftxtID=19865>

<sup>18</sup> In our meeting with the secretary of Workers of Football Union, Hakan Erhalaç, asking the number of sufferers from restriction rule, he gives us a number of 150-180 per year. He states, from the application of that rule almost 1000 players suffered from it. He claims some of the players had to go back to amateur leagues and others are unemployed. He states that they sued about the rule claiming the contracts of International Labour Organization, but Arbitration Board denied it stating TFF is autonomous and they will determine their own status and instructions themselves.

<sup>19</sup> ARTICLE 59: (Additional sub-clause: 17/3/2011-6214/1 article) Against the disciplines and organizations of sportive activities of federations, the only way is to go for Arbitration Board. Arbitration Board decisions are final and nothing can be done against these decisions.

<sup>20</sup> The decisions made after, a player named İhsan Mert appealed for a plea against Arbitration Board about the restriction rule, in 43 numbered meeting. See. <http://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=247&ftxtID=18471>

<sup>21</sup> For details see. Last Resort against Age Restriction and Quota Application of TFF: Application for complaint to the Competition Authority, [http://futbolhukuk.blogspot.com.tr/2013/11/tff-yas-snrilamasve-kontenjan\\_2972.html](http://futbolhukuk.blogspot.com.tr/2013/11/tff-yas-snrilamasve-kontenjan_2972.html), Publication date: 18.11.2013, Date of Access: 02.01.2014

in sports is a pastime activity which is just for hobby or fitness and opposite of professionalism. The status of many players in amateur leagues, their earning money and doing this as a job may be controversial, however, epistemologically the "amateur" term has close relations with "mass sport" and "sport for everyone". With this way amateur sports is for everyone who wants to do this as a pastime activity. In restriction rule, 4 players' above the age of 29 being able to get into the squad is also a problem that should be discussed by means of epistemology of amateurism. Although government supported policy of "extension of sport" <sup>22</sup> is present, the application of age restriction rule axes the participation to the amateur sports which is paradoxical. In modern world, sport is something which can be seen essential for every age groups and a right for every human being (6). The reflection of this rule can be claimed to be against to "the right for everyone to do sports" and also to the humanistic view.

Considering the sociological problems of restriction rule, this rule should be critically debated. With Bosman rule, in a world that teams can buy as many European footballers as they can (2), also in a world that the salaries are too high, restricting age in 3rd league in Turkey is contradictory. This shows that it is coherent for the managers of Turkish Football to make million dollar transfers as a result of globalism, and advertisement revenues, whereas they underestimate a problem on national level. It is not wrong to think that applying restriction rule in 3rd league whereas in other leagues letting teams to buy million dollar valued players causes a national employment problem. Throughout all his life playing football as a job but after the age of 30 having no opportunity to play in other teams and besides having transfer requests which are way below salaries than they had before also cause an ethical vocational problem. The ones on the limits of the rule is figuratively being called "leper of football". These people have been seen like in a caste system and their right to do their jobs has been taken from them. Even in the 1st league the restriction rule had been abated, while the limitless moving of "Bosman Rule" serves the money-meta circulation, restriction rule causes a player to retire at the age of 24 in 3rd league. This situation is

<sup>22</sup> ARTICLE 59- The government takes the precautions to improve every Turkish citizen's physical and psychological health, encourages sport to be spreaded. The government cares about the successful sportsmen.

against the vocational dynamism and promotion, in the meantime it is also against the concept of "open society". In other words it is against democracy.

This application by means of its results reflects the "national" part of "global", deterioration of national work power and "post-fordism" of football employment. Opening the way for youngsters is acceptable. But with this way leaving youngsters without a model like experienced players out will really increase the quality of football? Like in every branch isn't there a master-apprentice connection in football, too? While with Bosman rule the players in Europe having free roaming right and putting no limit to European citizens, besides the rights of players against the clubs have been increased (4), that restriction rule in 3rd league in Turkey brings a dilemma to Turkish policy of football. Whereas the rights for star players to transfer to another top level teams are present; limiting a 3rd league player by means of restriction rule shows a problem in weakening the local or national in global football.

Another result of this rule is the negative sociological effects of legal system and so many bureaucratic rational organizations based on "world of existence". According to Habermas "the resource of "system" is the world of existence, and in the process of complexity of system while processing its own structures, these structures have stress and control over "the world of existence". He stresses that system colonises the "world of existence". In favour of this rational structures pressuring over the "world of existence", it is limited for the actors to discuss things by themselves and to debate in a free environment (13). Taking Habermas' into conceptualization into consideration, TFF's putting this rule on the players in 3rd league and system that is limiting the legal action against TFF are also "colonising the world of existence". With this rule the limitation of their free will to communicate and debate over their own problems, and having a pressure on them can be an evidence for that.

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