

Investigation of Self-Efficacy Levels of Different Sports Branch Referees

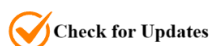
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Abstract: This study aimed to examine the self-efficacy levels of referees from different sports branches. The study sample consisted of 309 referees who were actively working in İzmir during the 2021–2022 season and were selected through a simple random sampling method. Data were collected using a “Personal Information Form” and the “Referee Self-Efficacy Scale.” The personal information form gathered demographic details such as gender, age, sport discipline, and refereeing experience. The “Referee Self-Efficacy Scale” is a 5-point Likert-type instrument comprising 18 items and five sub-dimensions. As the data were found to be normally distributed, independent samples t-tests were conducted to analyze the variables of gender, sport discipline, and refereeing experience, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the age and education level variables. As a result, it was found that male referees had higher scores in the game knowledge sub-dimension in terms of the gender variable. In terms of age, the 18–24 and 25–34 age groups scored higher than the 35–44 age group in the physical competence and game knowledge sub-dimensions. Additionally, the 25–34 age group scored higher than the 35–44 age group in the decision-making and communication sub-dimension and higher than the 18–24 age group in the pressure sub-dimension. Although no significant differences were observed across sports branches, self-efficacy scores were generally high. Regarding refereeing experience, referees with more years of experience scored higher in the pressure sub-dimension compared to those with fewer years of experience.

Keywords: Different sport branch, referee, self- efficacy.

1. Introduction

In contemporary sports, the fundamental components shaping the nature of the field are typically grouped into three primary categories: athletes, spectators, and referees. Every single factor mentioned here is undeniably essential, playing a crucial role in the overall outcome (Ari & Erdem, 2022). Referees must successfully perform multiple tasks under pressure to ensure accurate decision-making and avoid errors during competitions (Giel & Breuer, 2020). Referees must successfully perform multiple tasks under pressure to ensure accurate decision-making and avoid errors during competitions. Referees must evaluate actions under challenging conditions. They must make quick and clear decisions, manage the game efficiently, be open to communication, focus on multiple issues at the same time, maintain order, and resolve disputes effectively (Karaçam & Pulur, 2016; Orhan et al., 2022).

Referees are required to demonstrate a high level of physical competence to effectively follow the game and ensure its seamless progression. In addition to physical attributes, psychological preparation is essential for making accurate decisions under pressure. The ability to manage psychological factors such as self-efficacy, anxiety, fear, and stress significantly influences their performance (Saridede, 2018). Given the limited duration of competition, referees need to

maintain intense focus and exhibit unwavering attention to detail. Successful refereeing depends on both inherent qualities—such as strong instincts, fairness, mental resilience, confidence, and determination—and acquired competencies, including attentiveness, vigilance, and the ability to make swift yet decisive judgments, which are developed through experience (Diotaiuti et al., 2020).

Self-efficacy, along with other factors, affects the types of challenges people are willing to face and the level of goals they set. Individuals who possess high self-efficacy in a particular domain tend to select more challenging and assertive goals. The impact of self-efficacy on goal setting extends beyond the initial goal setting process, as it also fosters persistence in achieving these goals. Consequently, individuals who possess a strong sense of self-sufficiency maintain stronger goals (Luszczynska et al., 2005; Eskiyecek et al., 2019). Referee self-efficacy describes referees' self-efficacy belief that they can effectively fulfill their duties and responsibilities. This concept is crucial in referees' decision-making processes, their ability to perform under pressure, and their ability to manage the flow of the game (Guillén & Feltz, 2011). Bandura (1997) describes referee self-efficacy as the belief in one's capability to perform officiating tasks successfully and achieve expected results in sports. A strong sense of self-efficacy enables referees to officiate effectively while boosting confidence and positive emotions (Nazarudin et al., 2009). Research in the field highlights that referees with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to make precise decisions, perform more effectively, earn greater recognition from coaches, managers, and other officials, and experience reduced stress levels compared to those with lower self-efficacy (Guillén & Feltz, 2011; Karaçam & Pular, 2017; Myers et al., 2012). It is emphasized that experience is the most significant factor influencing referee performance (Spencer, 2015).

In this context, the aim of this study is to analyze the self-efficacy levels of referees in different sports branches in terms of various variables. Considering that the studies in literature mostly focus on the self-efficacy levels of referees in a single sport branch, the fact that this study focuses on referees working in different sports branches highlights the importance of the research.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Group

The population of the study consists of referees in various branches actively working in Izmir province in the 2021-2022 season. Within the scope of the study conducted by simple random sampling method, participants randomly selected from the research population were reached. The sample of the study is composed of 104 female and 205 male referees, with a total of 309 participants.

2.2. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design utilizing the descriptive survey method. The survey method is defined as an approach that explains a past or current situation as it exists (Büyüköztürk, 2018). In the descriptive research process, the stages of determining the research problem and objectives, defining the variables, selecting the sample, collecting data, and analyzing the data are carried out systematically. In this study, an attempt was made to reveal whether the self-efficacy levels of different sports branch referees show differences according to the variables of gender, age, previous playing status in the branch of the referee, sport branch and years of being a referee.

2.3. Data Collection

The data collection tool used in the study comprises two stages. In the first stage, a Personal Information Form was prepared by the researchers to identify the demographic characteristics of the participants. The responses related to the variables of gender, age, refereeing branch, and years of refereeing experience were collected through this form. In the second phase of data collection, participants were administered the Referee Self-Efficacy Scale (REFS), originally developed by Karacam and Pular (2017). The scale includes 18 items formatted on a five-point Likert scale. It is composed of five distinct subscales: physical fitness (5 items), game knowledge (3 items), decision-making (3 items), pressure (3 items) and communication (4 items). The scale does not contain any reverse-scored items. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) values reported for the subscales were .88 for physical fitness, .71 for game knowledge, .85 for decision-making, .88 for pressure, .81 for communication, and .90 for the overall scale.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data were analysed using SPSS 29.0 statistical package program. Normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis values, with thresholds set at ± 3 , as suggested by Karagöz (2021). Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA were performed with a significance level set at 0.05.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics related to the research

Sub Dimensions	x	Kurtosis	Skewness	Cronbach Alpha
Physical Fitness	20.05	-.147	-.397	.951
Game Knowledge	12.66	-.355	.321	.942
Decision-Making	12.35	-.554	.475	.905
Pressure	12.39	-.083	-.462	.925
Communication	16.61	-.191	-.508	.923

x; mean

2.6. Ethics Committee Permission

Ethics committee permission was taken from Dokuz Eylül University Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee with the decision dated 25.05.2022 and protocol number 2022/19-10. Before data collection, participants were thoroughly informed about the study through a detailed presentation and subsequently provided written consent. The research was carried out in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki.

3. Results

Table 2. T Test Results According to Gender Variable

Sub Dimensions	Gender	N	x	Sd	t	p
Physical Fitness	Women	104	19.73	3.34	1.137	.256
	Men	205	20.20	3.52		
Game Knowledge	Women	104	12.29	1.79	2.659	.008*
	Men	205	12.84	1.70		
Decision-Making	Women	104	12.13	1.84	1.552	.122
	Men	205	12.47	1.84		
Pressure	Women	104	12.20	1.92	1.179	.239
	Men	205	12.48	1.96		
Communication	Women	104	16.57	2.24	.211	.833
	Men	205	16.63	2.53		

x; mean, Sd; standard deviation, p; significance

Table 2 shows the t-test results for gender variable. When self-efficacy scores were examined, the difference in favor of males in the game knowledge sub-dimension was found to be significant ($p < 0.05$). No significant difference was found in other sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

Table 3. ANOVA Results of Self-Efficacy Scores According to Age

Sub Dimensions	Age	N	x	Sd	t	p
Physical Fitness	18-24 Age (a)	89	20.70	3.02	7.304	0.001
	25-34 Age (b)	106	20.58	2.99		a-c
	35-44 Age (c)	69	18.43	4.23		b-c
	45 Age and over (d)	45	19.96	3.35		
Game Knowledge	18-24 Age (a)	89	12.79	1.53	5.353	0.001
	25-34 Age (b)	106	12.96	1.71		a-c
	35-44 Age (c)	69	11.94	1.95		b-c
	45 Age and over (d)	45	12.78	1.70		

Table 3. (Continue)

Sub Dimensions	Age	N	x	Sd	t	p
Decision-Making	18-24 Age (a)	89	12.27	1.68	3.977	0.008 b-c
	25-34 Age (b)	106	12.68	1.68		
	35-44 Age (c)	69	11.77	2.09		
	45 Age and over (d)	45	12.64	1.92		
Pressure	18-24 Age (a)	89	12.07	1.72	3.318	0.020 b-a
	25-34 Age (b)	106	12.83	1.93		
	35-44 Age (c)	69	12.07	2.05		
	45 Age and over (d)	45	12.44	2.09		
Communication	18-24 Age (a)	89	16.57	2.39	6.357	0.001 b-c
	25-34 Age (b)	106	17.22	2.14		
	35-44 Age (c)	69	15.62	2.66		
	45 Age and over (d)	45	16.76	2.39		

x; mean, Sd; standard deviation, p; significance

The table shows the ANOVA results according to age. When self-efficacy scores were analyzed, a significant difference was found in all sub-dimensions ($p < 0.05$). Groups with differences are shown with letters.

Table 4. ANOVA Results of Self-Efficacy Scores According to Referee Branches

Sub Dimensions	Sports Branch	N	x	Sd	t	p
Physical Fitness	Football	37	20.22	3.56	0.856	0.464
	Basketball	164	19.76	3.57		
	Volleyball	69	20.38	2.75		
	Other	39	20.51	4.04		
	Total	309	20.05	3.47		
Game Knowledge	Football	37	12.62	2.33	0.163	0.921
	Basketball	164	12.71	1.59		
	Volleyball	69	12.54	1.68		
	Other	39	12.69	1.95		
	Total	309	12.66	1.75		
Decision-Making	Football	37	12.43	2.24	0.948	0.418
	Basketball	164	12.34	1.76		
	Volleyball	69	12.13	1.69		
	Other	39	12.74	2.01		
	Total	309	12.35	1.84		
Pressure	Football	37	12.51	2.45	0.447	0.720
	Basketball	164	12.29	1.82		
	Volleyball	69	12.38	1.84		
	Other	39	12.67	2.16		
	Total	309	12.39	1.95		
Communication	Football	37	16.65	3.05	1.259	0.289
	Basketball	164	16.54	2.33		
	Volleyball	69	16.38	2.21		
	Other	39	17.28	2.57		
	Total	309	16.61	2.43		

x; mean, Sd; standard deviation, p; significance

Table 4 shows the ANOVA results according to the branches of the referees. When self-efficacy scores were examined, no significant difference was found in the sub-dimensions ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5. ANOVA results according to refereeing experience

Sub Dimensions	Refereeing Experience	N	x	Sd	t	p
Physical Fitness	1-3 years (a)	84	20.13	3.31	1.746	0.176
	4-6 years (b)	93	19.51	3.81		
	7 years and over(c)	132	20.37	3.28		
Game Knowledge	1-3 years (a)	84	12.67	1.63	.137	0.872
	4-6 years (b)	93	12.58	1.70		
	7 years and over(c)	132	12.70	1.87		
Decision-Making	1-3 years (a)	84	12.01	1.64	2.851	0.059
	4-6 years (b)	93	12.29	1.82		
	7 years and over(c)	132	12.61	1.95		
Pressure	1-3 years (a)	84	12.06	1.90	3.312	0.038 c-a
	4-6 years (b)	93	12.23	1.79		
	7 years and over(c)	132	12.70	2.04		
Communication	1-3 years (a)	84	16.63	2.27	.124	0.883
	4-6 years (b)	93	16.51	2.30		
	7 years and over(c)	132	16.67	2.63		

x; mean, Sd; standard deviation, p; significance

Table 5 shows the ANOVA results according to the year of referee variable. When self-efficacy scores were analyzed, a significant difference was found in the pressure sub-dimension ($p < 0.05$). No significant difference was found in other sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$). Groups with differences are indicated with letters.

4. Discussion

The findings are discussed in the light of these variables. According to the findings, male referees scored higher than female referees in game knowledge self-efficacy in terms of gender. In this study, [Atıcı \(2024\)](#) found that male referees had higher scores than female referees in game knowledge, decision making and pressure sub-dimensions. [Sivri \(2023\)](#), in his study on tennis referees, found that male referees had higher pressure self-efficacy scores than female referees. [Dereceli et al. \(2019\)](#) found that male soccer referees had higher game knowledge, decision-making and pressure self-efficacy scores than female referees. [Karafil & Akgül \(2021\)](#) found a significant difference in favor of male referees in the physical competence and decision-making sub-dimension. In the same study, no difference was found in game knowledge, pressure and communication sub-dimensions according to gender. [Orhan et al. \(2022\)](#) conducted a study with basketball referees and found that male referees scored higher than female referees in the physical competence sub-dimension. [Koçak \(2019\)](#) stated that male referees had higher scores in physical competence and decision-making sub-dimensions than female referees. [Saridede \(2018\)](#) states that male referees have higher self-efficacy than female referees in terms of decision-making, game knowledge and general referee self-efficacy. It is seen that these studies are in parallel with the results of the study. There are also studies in literature that do not support the results of the study. [Karaçam & Pulus \(2017\)](#) found that female referees had higher average pressure self-efficacy scores than male referees. [Aygün & Murathan \(2023\)](#) and [Diotaiuti et al. \(2017\)](#) found no significant difference in the self-efficacy scores of referees according to gender. The difference could stem from traditional gender roles and the male-dominated structure of the sports world, which may foster a greater sense of competence among male referees.

When we examined the self-efficacy scores according to the age variable in the study, it was determined that the 18-24 and 25-34 age group obtained higher scores than the 35-44 age group in the physical competence and game knowledge sub-dimension, the 25-34 age group obtained higher scores than the 35-44 age group in the decision-making and communication sub-dimension, and the 25-34 age group obtained higher scores than the 18-24 age group in the pressure sub-dimension. When the literature is examined, there are studies that support and do not support the current findings. [Arı & Erdem \(2022\)](#), [Koçak \(2019\)](#), [Adıgüzel \(2018\)](#) and [Myers et al. \(2012\)](#) found significant differences between the age and self-efficacy of referees in their studies. These studies conducted by [Atıcı \(2024\)](#), [Sevinç et al. \(2021\)](#), [Sivri \(2023\)](#), [Dereceli et al. \(2019\)](#), [Adıgüzel \(2018\)](#), [Karaçam & Pulus \(2017\)](#) and [Ekmekçi et al. \(2021\)](#) do not support the research results. According to the results of this study, it was concluded that the age of the referees did not affect their self-

efficacy. These findings may indicate that younger referees, especially those aged between 18 and 34 years, tend to exhibit higher levels of physical capacity and cognitive flexibility, which may positively influence their self-efficacy perceptions in the domains of physical competence and game knowledge. In addition, referees in the 25-34 age group are likely to have reached an optimal balance in terms of refereeing experience and physical competence with increasing experience, which may explain their higher self-efficacy scores in the decision-making, communication and pressure management subscales.

In addition, referees aged 35-44 years may experience age-related declines in physical endurance and adaptability to the dynamic demands of the pace of modern sport play, which may negatively affect their self-efficacy in certain domains. In addition to these physiological factors, generational differences in self-concept and sociocultural variables such as evolving referee training and development programs and changing expectations in sport organizations may also play an important role in shaping self-efficacy perceptions in different age groups.

In the study, no significant difference was found between groups in self-efficacy scores according to sports branches. When the literature is examined, there are studies that do not support the current findings. [Karaçam & Pülür \(2017\)](#) stated that football and basketball referees had higher scores than handball referees in self-efficacy total score. In the current study it is thought that there is no statistically significant difference between the groups because the self-efficacy scores are generally high. The lack of significant differences in self-efficacy scores across sports disciplines may be due to the overall high levels of self-efficacy observed across all referee groups, potentially limiting the detection of statistical differences. Furthermore, despite the varying technical and tactical demands of different sports, referees generally undergo standardized training and certification processes, which may lead to similar perceptions of self-efficacy regardless of their refereeing discipline.

When analyzed according to the referee year variable in the study, referees with seven or more years of experience showed significantly higher self-efficacy in the pressure sub-dimension compared to those with 1-3 years of experience. This finding aligns with previous studies ([Arı & Erdem, 2022](#); [Orhan et al., 2022](#)) which emphasized that experience enhances confidence and decision-making under pressure. The lack of differences in other sub-dimensions may be because the study was conducted in a sample of referees from different sports.

5. Conclusions

As a result, it was found that the game knowledge sub-dimension scores of male referees were higher in gender variable. Regarding age, referees aged 18-24 and 25-34 scored higher than those aged 35-44 in the physical competence and game knowledge sub-dimensions. Additionally, the 25-34 group outperformed the 35-44 group in decision-making and communication and the 18-24 group in pressure. While there was no significant difference according to sports branches, self-efficacy scores were higher in all branches. In the pressure sub-dimension referees with more years of experience scored higher than those with fewer years of experience.

When we analyze the research findings, some suggestions can be presented. Examining the psychological, social and organizational factors underlying gender differences in self-efficacy levels may provide a more comprehensive perspective on this phenomenon. Extensive research is recommended to explore how self-efficacy develops over time with increasing age and experience. Finally, studies on the development of stress management skills to improve decision-making, communication and stress management skills, especially for younger and less experienced referees, may contribute to referee training and development processes.

Limitations

This study is limited to referees actively working in the İzmir province, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions and sports contexts. Given the potential cultural, organizational, and structural differences across provinces and sports branches, future research should consider expanding the sample to include referees from diverse geographical locations and various sports disciplines. Such an expansion would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing self-efficacy and other related variables and help identify regional and sport-specific patterns underlying these outcomes.

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