



Investigation of Soccer Referees' Personality Profiles According to Their Career Positions

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine personality profile differences of soccer referees in relation to career positions. In the first study to explore personal and social adjustment characteristics of soccer referees, the Hacettepe Personality Inventory and a personal data collection form were administrated to 190 male soccer officials in Turkey. The overall personal adjustment and social adjustment scores were significantly higher for referees than assistant referees. More specifically, scores for referees were significantly higher than assistant referees for personal adjustment subscales of self-actualization and neurotic tendencies and for social adjustment subscales of family relationship. These results indicate that personality characteristics play an important role in referees' career development, leading referees with different personality profiles to take up different career positions. Personality tests combined with other evaluation tools may assist in identifying promising referee profiles that can aid in career development.

Keywords: Personal growth, personal adjustment and social adjustment, classification

Futbol Hakemlerinin Kişilik Profillerinin Kariyer Pozisyonlarına Göre İncelenmesi

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, kariyer pozisyonları ile ilişkili olarak futbol hakemlerinin kişilik profili farklılıklarını incelemektir. Futbol hakemlerinin kişisel ve sosyal uyum özelliklerinin ilk defa incelendiği bu çalışmada, Türkiye'den 190 erkek futbol hakemine Hacettepe Kişilik Envanteri ve kişisel veri toplama formu uygulanmıştır. Genel olarak, hakemlerin kişisel uyum ve sosyal uyum puanları asistan hakemlerden önemli ölçüde daha yüksekti. Daha spesifik olarak, hakemlerin puanları kişisel uyuma ilişkin kendini gerçekleştirme ve nevroitik eğilimler alt boyutlarında, sosyal uyuma ilişkin aile ilişkisi alt boyutunda asistan hakemlerden anlamlı derecede daha yüksekti. Bu sonuçlar, farklı kişilik profillerine sahip hakemlerin farklı kariyer pozisyonları alabileceğine işaret ederek, kişilik özelliklerinin hakemlerin kariyer gelişiminde önemli bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir. Diğer değerlendirme araçlarıyla birleştirilen kişilik testleri, kariyer gelişimine yardımcı olabilecek gelecek vaat eden hakem profillerinin belirlenmesine katkı sağlayabilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kişisel gelişim, kişisel uyum ve sosyal uyum, sınıflandırma

INTRODUCTION

Career development results from lifelong learning and education via the interaction of personal characteristics. Various relationships between personality and career development have been reported from different populations, although few studies have directly addressed personality and career progression. Lau and Shaffer (1999), for example, demonstrated a direct correlation between personality and career success while similar studies have shown that personality traits can also have a reverse influence on one's career (Ullrich, Farrington, and Coid, 2008). The current study was partly inspired by because the knowledge that a soccer referees' career success has not yet been sufficiently examined in relation to core psychological dimensions. Wu, Foo and Turban (2008) used structural equation modelling to investigate the different job careers of 278 full-time working individuals finding a significant positive relationship between extraversion and career satisfaction, but a negative significant relationship between neuroticism and career satisfaction. Ceyhan (1999) examined the relationship between job difficulties and personality in 534 school counselors finding that job difficulties were significantly related to personal and social adjustment levels.

Literature Review

The referee is the key official for regulating behavior in soccer by applying the rules of play (Reilly and Gregson, 2006). According to Balch and Scott (2007), studies of the personality of referees began with Sinclair's research on volleyball referees in 1975. Since refereeing decisions and actions directly affect each game and can critically affect its results, they play a vital role in modern soccer (Caballero, Ojeda, García-Aranda, Mallo, Werner; Sarmiento, Valdivielso, García-Manso, 2011). Referees also have to make decisions about nearly every act in a team game (Grunska, 1999). By managing game flow, referees also affect the quality of the game.

The literature provides clear evidence regarding the importance of personality in a referees' actions. From their meta-analysis, Mascarenhas, Collins, and Mortimer (2005) concluded that "personality and game management" is one of the corner stones of refereeing performance. The researchers also mentioned the relative importance of psychological factors in career development: "as referees progress, the focus shifts from developing the robotic factors to the humanistic factors". According to Grunska (1999), the specific personal characteristics of a good referee include courage, self-confidence, consistency, and decisiveness. Guillén and Feltz (2011) reported that the key psychological skills required for referees include attention and concentration, coping with adverse situations, and setting realistic goals.

Several studies report bi-directional interactions related to personality and performance. Jackson and Corr (1998), for example, found a negative relationship between openness personality subscale scores and performance assessments of rugby referees (Jackson and Corr 1998). Balch and Scott (2007) found that volleyball, wrestling, and hockey referees share similar personality characteristics compared with the non-referee population. Viviescas et al. (2018) developed a questionnaire to specifically measure the temperament of soccer referees, comprising four subscales (phlegmatic, sanguine, choleric, and melancholic). Similarly, Belov's temperament test, Voborný and Tomaš (2013) reported that the most frequently

reported characteristics of soccer referees are sanguine (optimistic), followed by phlegmatic (define with a phrase or synonym) and choleric (define with a phrase or synonym).

Further research by Stulp, Buunk, Verhulst, and Pollet (2012) found that height is also important for soccer officials during games and is positively associated with perceived referee competence. Their hypothesis was inspired by the fact that the larger animals tend to be socially dominant, reinforcing the known importance of body language for soccer referees. The researchers also found that referees tend to be taller than assistant referees. Similarly, Karagözoğlu (2013) found that referees were on average 2 cm taller than assistant referees.

Other studies have focused on differences between soccer referees and assistant referees. Dereceli, Ünlü and Erbaş (2019) found no significant differences between the starting age and self-efficacy of referees and assistant referees while Gencay (2009) found no significant differences in stress levels of each population. Cengiz, Pular, and Cengiz (2008) reported a significant difference in assertiveness between top referees and their assistants while Pietraszewski, Maszczyk, Roczniok, Gołaś, and Stanula (2014) found that assistant referees have much better visuo-perceptual abilities than referees. These results provided justification for comparing specific characteristics of referees and assistant referees instead of considering the two subsets as one single group. In support of this finding, Aragão, Passos, Araújo, and Maynard (2018) investigated 267 full text articles investigating soccer referees, and found only 19 studies (7.12%) compared referees and assistant referees.

Although there is no generally accepted age limit for soccer referees, many of them end their careers by 45 years of age. Weston et al. (2010) reported that physical performance in soccer referees decreased with age but found no evidence that age affected their ability to keep up with play. The issue explored by Weston et al., (2010) is not directly age itself, but how some referees manage better than others in different circumstances. In sum, different personality characteristics have been reported as essential elements for soccer and other referees while recent studies have increasingly focused on personality research of the referee population.

The present study therefore examined personality profile differences of soccer referees in relation to career progression, particularly to explore differences in personal and social adjustment levels between referees and assistants.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used a descriptive research design to explore how referees' personality profiles affect their career positions and how personality characteristics are associated with becoming a referee or assistant referee.

Participants

The sample consisted of 190 male soccer referees from all over Turkey. In terms of refereeing level, 4.7% were A class referees (n=9), 15.3% were B class (n=29), 31.1% were C Class (n=59) and 47.4% were assistant referees (n=93).

Data collection tools

The main data collection tool was the Hacettepe Personality Inventory (HPI) (Özgülven, 1992), developed by Özgülven in 1976. HPI has 168 items in two main scales: personal

adjustment (PA) and social adjustment (SA). Each scale has four subscales. The PA subscales include self-actualizing, neurotic tendencies, emotional decisiveness, and psychotic symptoms while the SA subscales are family relationships, social relationships, social norms and anti-social tendencies. Higher subscale scores are interpreted as positive for all subscales, according to the manual. A personal information form developed by the researcher was used to collect career related and demographic data, including personal main information, important career milestones, such as starting age of refereeing duty, duration of career in years, current age, refereeing class, body height, body weight and marital status.

Data analyses

Based on the study's data structure, ANOVA model analyses were used. A and B class referees were combined to conduct ANOVA analyses. A Shapiro test confirmed that the data was normally distributed. Homogeneity of the variances was evaluated with Levene's test. The results showed that the Emotional Decisiveness and Personal Adjustment subscale scores violated homogeneity. Therefore, Welch Robust test statistics (Field, 2009) were used instead of F values. Bonferonni tests were used for the post hoc testing, partial eta squared scores were calculated to present the effect size of the analyses and Pearson correlations were performed to examine the relationships of the HPI subscales with age and physical parameters.

RESULTS

The average age was 27.75 ± 3.25 years while the average starting age of their referee careers was 19.74 ± 2.78 years. Mean body height was 180.8 ± 4.8 centimeters while 44 referees (23.2%) were married and 146 were single (76.8%).

Scores for the HPI Personal Adjustment subscales revealed that Self-Actualization ($p < .01$) and Neurotic Tendencies ($p < .05$) differed significantly between referee classes. The Bonferonni test results showed that top-class referees' (A&B classes) had significantly higher Self-Actualization and Neurotic Tendencies than assistant referees whereas Emotional Decisiveness and Psychotic Symptoms scores were not significantly different (Table 1).

Table 1. ANOVA results for personal adjustment scores

Personal Adjustment Subscales	Referee Class	N	Mean	SD	F _(df)	Sig.	Partial Eta ²
Self-Actualization	A&B	35	18.34	1.26	4.319 _(2,187)	0.015*	0.044
	C	62	17.52	1.65			
	Assistant	93	17.34	1.92			
Neurotic Tendencies	A&B	35	17.77	1.85	3.165 _(2,187)	0.044*	0.033
	C	62	17.23	1.76			
	Assistant	93	16.8	2.19			
Emotional Decisiveness	A&B	35	16.14	2.46	2.120 _(2,187)	0.123	
	C	62	15.95	1.53			
	Assistant	93	15.37	2.52			
Psychotic Symptoms	A&B	35	15.86	2.00	.815 _(2,187)	0.444	
	C	62	15.31	2.08			
	Assistant	93	15.3	2.56			

Significant level at: * $p < .05$.

ANOVA results for SA subscale scores revealed that only family relationships scores differed significantly between classes of referees ($p < .01$). The Bonferonni test results showed that A&B class referees' family relationship scores were higher than assistant referees' scores. There were no significant differences between referee groups for social relationships, social norms or antisocial tendencies subscale scores (Table 2).

Table 2. ANOVA Results for Social Adjustment Scores

Social Adjustment Subscales	Referee Class	n	Mean	SD	F _(df)	Sig.	Partial Eta ²
Family relationships	A&B	35	18.63	1.19	5.961 _(2,187)	0.003**	0.06
	C	62	18.39	1.30			
	Assistant	93	17.75	1.67			
Social relationships	A&B	35	17.46	2.39	2.313 _(2,187)	0.102	
	C	62	16.39	2.61			
	Assistant	93	16.97	2.33			
Social norms	A&B	35	15.2	1.78	2.745 _(2,187)	0.067	
	C	62	14.31	1.77			
	Assistant	93	14.39	2.1			
Antisocial tendencies	A&B	35	17.63	1.59	2.288 _(2,187)	0.104	
	C	62	16.94	1.7			
	Assistant	93	16.84	2.11			

Significant level at: ** $p < .01$.

PA and SA scores and general adjustment (GA) scores differed significantly between referees ($p < .01$). Bonferonni test results confirmed that top referees' PA, SA and GA scores were higher than those of assistant referees (Table 3).

Table 3. ANOVA Results for General Adjustment Scores

SA,PA and GA Total	Referee Class	n	Mean	SD	F _(df)	Sig.	Partial Eta ²
Social adjustment	A&B	35	68.91	4.78	4.553 _(2,187)	0.012*	0.046
	C	62	66.02	4.61			
	Assistant	93	65.95	5.71			
Personal adjustment	A&B	35	68.11	6.18	3.419 _(2,187)	0.035*	0.035
	C	62	66	5.04			
	Assistant	93	64.81	7.26			
General adjustment	A&B	35	137.03	10.17	4.602 _(2,187)	0.011*	0.047
	C	62	132.02	8.47			
	Assistant	93	130.75	11.72			

Significant level at: * $p < .05$.

Bivariate Pearson correlation analyses revealed a significant positive relationship between duration of refereeing career in years and neurotic tendencies ($r = .148$; $p < .05$) and family relationships ($r = .174$; $p < .05$). However, there was no significant relationship between age and any PA subscales.

DISCUSSION

In this study, objective career level was represented by the soccer referees' refereeing class, starting age of career and age. Classification begins with assistant referee before C class, B class and finally A class referees. The subjective personality measures were the personal adjustment, social adjustment, and general adjustment dimensions. The study revealed that A or B class referees had significantly higher personal and social adjustment scores than assistant referees. Gregory and Choudhary (2018) investigated 120 soccer referees' adjustment ability in terms of social, home, educational, emotional, health and total dimensions. The majority of participants had high emotional adjustment levels. However, with the study did not distinguish between referees and assistant referees. As a communicative profession, refereeing requires social and personal interactions. Other personality models, such as the Big Five personality approach, break down extraversion into sociability, bias for social activity and interpersonal warmth (Seibert and Kraimer, 2001). Despite using a different personality model, the current study showed that referees have better social and personal adjustment than assistant referees. Slack, Maynard, Butt, and Olusoga (2013) found that excellent referees were approachable, honest, humble, reserved, and humorous. The current study also shows that individual characteristics can have an important role that influences referee career success.

Referees had significantly higher personal adjustment subscale scores than assistant referees for self-actualization and neurotic tendencies. Their emotional decisiveness and psychotic symptoms subscale scores were also, although the differences were not significant at .05 level. A linearly increasing tendency was observed in all PA subscales in that assistant referees had lower scores while top-class referees had higher scores. These differences suggest that personal adjustment ability may play a key role in becoming a top-class referee. Therefore, testing referees' personality trait factors, including personal adjustment, could be a useful way to identify promising candidate referees at the beginning of their careers. Previous studies indicate that individual personality is stable over considerable time periods (Uher, 2008) although personality traits may change due to aging (Ng and Feldman, 2013). This information has led some research on career success to focus on static dispositional differences (Lau and Shaffer, 1999) rather than unstable traits. Hancock, Dawson and Auger (2015) investigated 425 referees from 18 different federations to identify their tendencies to begin, continue and quit refereeing. Supporting the current study's results, the researchers found that intrinsic factors are important determiners of beginning and continuing whereas external factors, such disrespect from others, influence quitting. Other external factors that affect referees include job satisfaction, which is influenced by income (Çoban, 2010). Besides personal adjustment and motivating factors, referee efficacy – or “refficacy” (Guillén and Feltz, 2011) – seems to play a role. Johansen, Ommundsen, and Haugen (2018), for example, found that years of referee experience are related to referee efficacy.

In the current study, Personal Adjustment and Social Adjustment scores differed significantly between referees, with assistant referees scoring lower than referees. One reason could be that psychological factors, including different personality profiles, mean that assistant referees gravitate to the less demanding task than that of main officials. Reilly and Gregson (2006), for example, argue that assistant refereeing is less physical demanding than being the main

referee while assistant referees probably also face less demanding psychological expectations. Personal career goals, life expectations and locus of control may all affect to this psychological differentiation. Finally, Johansen et al. (2018) argue that if a referee is more physically prepared, their increased level of fitness can fuel their mental energy. In addition to mental energy, the increase in the referees' fitness level may have led to a decrease in social physical anxiety. It is stated that a decrease in social physical anxiety may lead to an increase in life satisfaction of physically active individuals (Üngür and Karagözoğlu, 2013).

Within the SA subscales, Family Relationships scores differed significantly. As for the PA scores, A&B class referees' scores were higher than those of assistant referees. The other subscale scores did not vary significantly. This result provides limited support for the importance of SA among referees. Austin et al. (2002) find that maladaptive and adaptive PA and SA are related with general ability in different ways, including facilitative and debilitative factors like wellbeing, emotional control or hostility, depression, and social anxiety. Top-class referees probably learn better than assistant referees how to interact with their environment, such as players, coaches, and spectators. Kahn, Nauta, Galbreath, Tipps, and Chartrand (2002) concluded the cognitive side of career development relates more to degree of social adjustment. Social adjustment and the cognitive dimension may affect referees' decision making because it is a cognitive ability and referees almost always make decisions under pressure. According to Lane, Nevill, Ahmad, and Balmer (2006), personality factor influences referees' decision making. Referees tend to be influenced by external psychological factors. For example, informing a referee before a match that one team has an aggressive reputation makes them more likely to award red or yellow cards to that team's players (Jones, Paull, and Erskine, 2002). In brief, due to the internal and external factors, soccer referees may experience psychological violence and pressure at the workplace (Polat, Sonmezoglu and Yalcin, 2017). Dereceli, Ünlü and Erbaş (2019) reported that decision making, communication and pressure handling are self-efficacy dimensions for soccer referees while referees with a higher educational level made better decisions.

Professional referees are evaluated in every official match by an official observer from the federation who takes notes about all of their actions and gives a technical score based on the referee's decisions in important positions. Social adjustment may play an important role in on-pitch relationships with players, so observers may change their opinion under the effect of this interaction. However, when objectively comparing personality-performance relationships in referees, Jackson and Corr (1998) found that openness personality scores had a negative effect on the best rugby referees. Wu et al. (2008) argued that personality characteristics influence careers through mechanisms like relationship closeness and other mechanisms jointly whereas Gelissen and de Graaf (2006) found no evidence that personality affects occupational career success in a male sample. Ullrich et al. (2008) investigated psychopathic personality traits, such as aggressive impulsivity, lack of goals, irresponsibility, and antisocial behaviors. The researchers found these traits had no effect on life success because others may focus on the individuals' beneficial acts. This finding puts in doubt the idea of an ideal personality profile for referees because individual subjective (emotional coping, anxiety, self-efficacy) and objective (physical performance, age, body height, education level, gender) factors are likely to influence each individual in different ways.

CONCLUSION

The current study provided evidence that Personal Adjustment and Social Adjustment personality characteristics influence soccer referees' professional development. In this context, referees may be chosen, eliminated, or evaluated based on these characteristics at the beginning of their career. However, it should be known that experiential learning, interactions, and maturation may change referees' personalities during their professional journey. The referees' adjustment scores were generally higher than those in other populations, such as female university students (Herken, Bodur, and Kara, 1998), prospective teachers (Erdoğan, 2013), students who participate or do not participate in sports activities (Duman and Kuru, 2010) and international woman athletes (Güçlü and Yentür, 2008). In contrast, Ceyhan (1999) reported similar scores for school counselors, whose PA, SA and most subscale scores were higher than the referees' scores. Educational level and experience thus seem to influence SA and PA scores in terms of individual maturity.

More understanding could be gained by investigating referees' personality and career development in relation to other factors, such as gender, refereeing success, game management and decisions made (e.g. yellow and red cards, fouls). Using personality test results with other evaluation tools during candidate referee recruitment may help identify promising referee profiles for better career development.

Limitations

The findings are limited due to the lack of woman soccer referees. Studies of women referees may provide more information for the field. Another limitation was that only soccer referees participated. Studies of referees in other sports may provide more detailed information on the relationship between career development and personality.

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