

The Relationship Between Foreign Football Player Quota and Team Performance

Yabancı Futbolcu Kontenjanı ile Takım Performansı Arasındaki İlişki

¹Fatih Mehmet PARLAR
ORCID No: 0000-0002-3401-4078

¹Emre UYSAL
ORCID No: 0009-0006-8857-0535

¹Nedim TEKİN
ORCID No: 0000-0002-6249-3862

¹Karabük University, Hasan Dogan
Faculty of Sports Sciences,
Department of Sports Management

Yazışma Adresi
Corresponding Address:

Emre Uysal

Karabük University, Hasan Dogan
Faculty of Sports Sciences, Department
of Sports Management

E-posta: emreuysal@karabuk.edu.tr

Geliş Tarihi (Received): 17.02.2025
Kabul Tarihi (Accepted): 29.04.2025

ABSTRACT

In this study, the relationship between the foreign player quotas applied in the Turkish Super League (TSL) and the performance indicators of the Turkish National Team and Super League teams in European cups is analyzed. By adopting a quantitative approach in the study, the data on the foreign player quota practices of the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) Super League for the years 1996-2024 were analyzed, and the correlation between the foreign player quota and various performance indicators was investigated. The results reveal that there is no statistically significant relationship between the foreign player quota and national team and club performance indicators. Accordingly, no significant correlation was found between foreign player quotas on a yearly basis and the annual average score of the national team, UEFA country ranking, qualification stages reached in major tournaments, the participation of the national team in the World Cup and European Championship, the number of clubs participating in UEFA tournaments, and the number of matches played in UEFA's Club level leagues. However, a significant relationship was found between the total foreign player quota and the mean number of players called up from Turkish leagues in the starting 11 of the Turkish National Team ($r=-.739$; $p<0.01$) and the mean number of players called up from other leagues ($r=.739$; $p<0.01$). Again, a significant relationship was found between the quota of foreign players in the starting 11 and the mean number of players called up from Türkiye in the starting 11 of the Turkish National Team ($r=-.642$; $p<0.01$) and the mean number of players called up from other leagues ($r=.642$; $p<0.01$). These findings indicate that the foreign player quota is not the primary determinant of the performance of the national team or club teams in European cups.

Keywords: Foreign player quota, Türkiye Super League, Türkiye National Team, Football, Performance management

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada, Türkiye Süper Ligi'nde uygulanan yabancı oyuncu kontenjanları ile Türkiye Millî Takımı ve Süper Lig takımlarının Avrupa kupalarındaki performans göstergeleri arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Araştırmada nicel yaklaşım benimsenerek, TFF (Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu) Süper Ligi'nin 1996-2024 yıllarına ait yabancı futbolcu kontenjan uygulamalarına dair verileri analiz edilmiş ve yabancı oyuncu kontenjanları ile çeşitli performans göstergeleri arasındaki korelasyon araştırılmıştır. Sonuçlar, yabancı oyuncu kontenjanı ile millî takım ve kulüp performans göstergeleri arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ilişki bulunmadığını ortaya koymuştur. Buna göre yıl bazında yabancı oyuncu kontenjanları ile A Millî Takım'ın yıllık ortalama puanı, UEFA ülke sıralaması, büyük turnuvalarda ulaşılan eleme aşamaları, A Millî Takım'ın Dünya Kupası ile Avrupa Şampiyonası'na katılım durumu, UEFA turnuvalarına katılan kulüp sayısı ve UEFA'nın Kulüpler düzeyindeki liglerinde oynanan maç sayıları arasında anlamlı bir korelasyon tespit edilmemiştir. Ancak, toplam yabancı oyuncu kontenjanı ile Türkiye Millî Takımı'nın ilk 11'inde Türkiye liglerinden çağırılarak yer alan oyuncu sayısı ortalamaları ($r=-.739$; $p<0.01$) ve diğer liglerden çağırılarak yer alan oyuncu sayısı ortalamaları ($r=.739$; $p<0.01$) arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Yine, ilk 11'deki yabancı oyuncu kontenjanı ile Türkiye Millî Takımı'nın ilk 11'inde Türkiye'den çağırılarak yer alan oyuncu sayısı ortalamaları ($r=-.642$; $p<0.01$) ve diğer liglerden çağırılarak yer alan oyuncu sayısı ortalamaları ($r=.642$; $p<0.01$) arasında da anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Bu bulgular, yabancı oyuncu kotasının millî takım veya kulüp takımlarının Avrupa kupalarındaki performansının birincil belirleyicisi olmadığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yabancı oyuncu kotası, Türkiye Süper Ligi, Türkiye Millî Takımı, Futbol, Performans yönetimi.

INTRODUCTION

Football is more than just a sport; it is a global phenomenon that has the power to influence billions of people. Although this impressive game had an amateur spirit in its early days, it has managed to spread to large masses over time and has become a professional sports branch that is passionately played and followed all over the world. The transformation process in football has enabled its commercialization and development as a professional profession. Today, football is positioned as a large and significant industry organized from the local to the global level. The clubs, which are the most important cells in the organization of this magical game, compete in a system driven by revenues from broadcasting, sponsorship, ticket sales, betting, licensed merchandise, and player transfers (Gammelsæter, 2009; Wicker et al., 2013).

Undoubtedly, the primary factors influencing the presence of these revenue-expense balance instruments are the players. Since all elements involved in this game (coaches, managers, and fans) work towards the success of the team on the field, teams make plans to have the best football players. This desire forces club managers to look for higher quality players. When they cannot find the desired quality of players within the country, club managers turn to players from other countries (Trequattrini et al., 2019). However, while clubs act with an appetite for transferring foreign players, they may face difficulties in forming the best squad due to the regulations of national federations. In Europe, clubs in EU member countries can use players with passports from countries within the union as local players, while clubs in non-EU member countries may be subject to national quota limitations (Madichie, 2009). For example, in France, Spain, and Italy, players with EU passports can play as locals, while a maximum of 4 players without an EU passport can play in teams in these countries' leagues (La Liga, Serie A, Ligue 1) (Marcén, 2016). In the Belgian Pro League, while there are no restrictions on transferring foreign players, at least 6 players in the team squad must have been trained in the club's youth academy (Sports Interactive, 2024). "In Türkiye, currently, 14 foreign players can be included in team squads, but only a maximum of 8 of them can be in the starting lineup for a match (TFF 2020-2021 Status, 2020). In conclusion, it can be said that clubs form their squads based on the football regulations in their countries and can compete in their national leagues accordingly.

The foreign player quota policies that football clubs face also affect their transfer budgets, and they have to compete in international leagues with squads formed for national leagues, based on their economic conditions (O'Leary, 2017). There is no doubt that this situation makes squad engineering crucial (Madichie, 2009).

The foreign player quota applied to clubs not only affects the competitiveness of the clubs but is also related to the performance of the national team (Charyev, 2016). This is because foreign player quotas can play a role in the success of clubs by regulating the competition between local and foreign players. Foreign quotas, which primarily affect the playing time of local players, can indirectly influence various performance parameters as well. Players who do not get the chance to play in top-tier domestic clubs may move to different leagues or improve their individual performance to play at a higher level within the country. These dynamics can ultimately reflect on the success parameters of national teams and clubs. These parameters may include the national team's average points, the country's ranking, clubs' success in participating and advancing in UEFA competitions, and the national team's participation in international tournaments.

The restriction, freedom, or semi-restriction of the number of foreign players is debated with various arguments. It is claimed that if foreign player quotas are more restrictive, the increased chance for local players to play could contribute to their development and, consequently, enhance both the quantity and quality of the national team's player pool (Fişne and Bardakçı, 2019), thus, it is suggested that clubs would be more willing to invest in their youth academies

and develop young players, to create alternatives for the local player quota (Charyev, 2016). On the other hand, having more foreign players in the league would increase the level of competition (Flores et al., 2010), ...it is argued that local players will ensure local-foreign player competition in teams (Travlos et al., 2017), increase their performance by transferring to other leagues (Taştan, 2021), and gain international experience (Türkmen and Şenocak, 2021). The potential negative effects of a more liberal approach to foreign player transfers are that local players may get fewer opportunities to play and there may be a reduction in the support for developing young players. Federations, on the other hand, are updating regulations and, in a sense, experimenting through trial and error to find the most effective ratio of local to foreign players (Addesa and Delice, 2019). Therefore, it is clear that the relationship between team performance and foreign player quotas requires a detailed examination of a multifaceted, complex, and long-term process.

One of the countries that considers the foreign player quota an important issue, debates it, and seeks to improve performance through various implementations is Türkiye. Historically, it is known that the foreign player quota in Türkiye football has been continuously updated and is particularly associated with the success of both clubs and the national team (Fişne and Bardakçı, 2019).

The first restriction in the Türkiye Football League in 1951 allowed teams to have only 1 foreign player in their squads, and this restriction remained unchanged until 1966. The chronological changes regarding foreign player quotas in the Türkiye Football League are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Information on Foreign Player Quotas Applied in the Türkiye Football League from 1951 to 2022

Years	Foreign Quota			
	On The Field	Substitute	In The Tribune	Total
1951	1	-	-	1
1966	2	-	-	2
1989	3	-	-	3
1996	3	1	-	4
1998-1999	4	-	-	4
2000-2001	5	0	1	6
2001-2002	5	1	2	8
2004-2005	6	-	-	6
2007-2008 (First half of the league)	6	1	-	7
2007-2008 (Second half of the league)	6	2	-	8
2010-2011	6	2	2	10
2011-2012	6	2	-	8
2013-2014	6	-	4	10
2014-2015	5	3	-	8
2015-2016	11	3	-	14
2020-2021(Second half of the league)	11	5	-	16
2021-2022	8	6	-	14
2024-2025	11	1	2	14

(Fişne and Bardakçı, 2019; Gündüz et al., 2019; TFF 2008-2009 Status, 2008; TFF 2011-2012 Status, 2011; TFF 2012-2013 Status, 2012; TFF 2015-2016 Status, 2015; TFF 2017-2018 Status, 2017; TFF 2020-2021 Status, 2020; TFF, 2024)

According to the information in Table 1, when evaluating the evolution of foreign player quotas in Türkiye football, it can be seen that the pace of changes in foreign player quota applications between 1951 and 1996 was at a certain level. However, after 1996, the foreign player policy in Türkiye has undergone revisions every few years. Particularly, the provisions in the Türkiye Football Federation's regulations for the 2015-2016 season, stating that 'The A Team List consists of a maximum of 28 players, and at least 14 players on the A Team List must be eligible to play for

the Türkiye A National Football Team,' had a revolutionary impact on Türkiye football and was also considered a form of foreign player liberalization (Yüce et al., 2017).

The foreign player limit, which is currently a major topic of debate in Türkiye football, has led to sharper disagreements among football stakeholders since the 2015-2016 season. One group of football authorities believes that allowing a free number of foreign players has harmed Türkiye football and the national team, while another group argues that restrictions could positively impact the national team and the clubs' sporting performance. For example, the statement made by Mircea Lucescu, the then head coach of the Türkiye National Team, at the end of a national match lost to Ukraine on September 2, 2017, "When Turks played well, they used to beat Italians and English. Now, teams play with unlimited foreigners in matches. Therefore, it is difficult to reach the former level." (Cnntürk, 2019), supports the limitations on foreign players. The then head coach of the Galatasaray Football Team, Fatih Terim's;

"I am in favor of freedom. There is a mandatory 14 Turks. The 14 foreigners are not mandatory, but 14 Turks are. This is a Türkiye rule. At that time, this rule was considered a 'revolution.' We wanted the money, like \$50,000 for the first foreign player, \$100,000 for the second, and \$200,000 for the third, to be transferred to clubs for the training of young players. Clubs that fielded local young players would receive a substantial amount back. Later, this was restricted at the clubs' request. Because they couldn't get such high amounts in Europe, some players sat on the bench in their clubs... I wanted them to leave. Now, the most Türkiye players ever are playing abroad. This is a result of that rule. That rule has been beneficial for Türkiye players." (Beinsports, 2021)

and the then head coach of Antalyaspor, Tamer Tuna';

" There has always been debate about how foreign player rules can benefit Türkiye football, whether they contribute positively or cause harm. The reduction in the number of foreigners has been used as an advantage in terms of improving the quality of local players. It led to the recognition of many players. For instance, if Zeki, Çağlar, and all the other players who were transferred had not had this opportunity, they would not have been able to use the advantage of moving from the TFF 1st League to play abroad." (TRT Spor, 2020)

...statements have criticized the foreign player limit. Analyzing the potential positive or negative effects of the two differing viewpoints is quite challenging due to the presence of many factors affecting performance variables. However, identifying quantitative relationships between foreign player quotas and some long-term performance indicators can provide critical information for decision-makers and can also serve as a valuable data source for countries considering new decisions regarding foreign player quotas.

When the research on the foreign player rule in Türkiye is examined, it includes studies on the economic impact of quotas on sports clubs (Gündüz et al., 2019), opinions of players and fans (Fişne and Bardakçı, 2019; Yüce et al., 2017), the general and legal aspects of foreign player restrictions (Özer, 2022), the effects of foreign players on match performance and parameters (Özaydın and Aksu, 2019; Sever et al., 2023; Taştan, 2021) and the impact on local-foreign player profiles in clubs (Ayık, 2022). In other countries, the foreign player quota has been the subject of numerous studies, focusing on the socio-economic impacts of foreign player quotas in leagues (Lago-Peñas et al., 2019; Madichie, 2009; Mifsud, 2022; Royuela and Gásquez, 2019), legal aspects (Frick, 2009; Gardiner and Welch, 2011; Kornbeck, 2017), team performance (Hardman and Lorwerth, 2014; Marcén, 2016; Medcalfe and Smith, 2018; Papanikos, 2024) and

national and club team performance (Baur and Lehmann, 2007; Binder and Findlay, 2012; Karaca, 2008). When evaluating scientific studies in Türkiye and other countries, it is observed that no research has been conducted using a relational method to examine the long-term effects of changes in foreign player quotas on national team and club performances. Therefore, this study is different from other works in the literature as it aims to investigate the relationship between foreign player quotas and the sporting performance of the Türkiye National Team and Türkiye clubs competing in European competitions. While previous research has explored various aspects of foreign player regulations in Türkiye, including economic impacts, stakeholder perspectives, and short-term effects on match performance, it has not systematically investigated the long-term correlation between evolving quota policies and sustained performance outcomes.

This study addresses a significant gap in the existing literature by providing the first comprehensive, quantitative analysis of the long-term relationship between foreign player quotas and the performance of both the Turkish national team and Turkish clubs in UEFA competitions. In addition, the study contributes to the literature by employing a relational methodology to examine this complex relationship over an extended period, offering valuable quantitative evidence to inform policy decisions within Türkiye. Furthermore, by analyzing the multifaceted interplay between quotas, national team success, and club performance in European competitions, this research provides a comparative framework for other nations navigating similar policy challenges in the context of globalized football.

In conclusion, this study aims to determine the relationship between the changes in foreign player quotas implemented by the Türkiye Football Federation in the Türkiye Super League from 1996 to 2024 and the sporting performances of the Türkiye National Football Team and the teams competing in the Türkiye Super League in UEFA tournaments, with regard to certain parameters.

In this study, the dependent variable is the quantitative changes in the foreign player quota in the Türkiye Football Federation Super League (The highest-level football league in Türkiye) from 1996 to 2024. The independent variables include the national team and club performances during these years. Two different structures were generally applied during the evaluation period of the foreign player quota. Therefore, the maximum number of foreign players allowed in the team squad and the maximum number of foreign players allowed in the starting eleven constitute the dependent variables of the study. The independent variables are: the Annual average points of the national team (Q1), annual country ranking points (Q2), the national team's success rankings in UEFA European Championship qualifiers and FIFA World Cup qualifiers (Q3), participation status of the national team in FIFA World Cup and UEFA European Championship tournaments (Q4), the average number of players called up from Türkiye and other leagues who played in the starting eleven (Q5), the number of matches played by football teams in group and knockout stages of European leagues (Q6), and the number of teams participating in European cups (Q7). The reference year of 1996 was chosen because the pool system was first implemented in the Türkiye Super League in that year, marking the beginning of a fairer competition period among clubs and the subsequent frequent revisions of the foreign player quota. The data for all variables are evaluated on a calendar-year basis (January 1 - December 31) because national team matches are not based on a seasonal schedule like club matches. Thus, all data at the national team and club levels were analyzed on a yearly basis.

Several critical reasons guided the determination of each independent variable in the study. The average points of the national team were chosen as a performance indicator because the number of matches played each year varies (Q1). Another variable with annual variability is the UEFA country ranking points, which change based on clubs' performance

over the past 5 years and are related to the clubs' sports performance (Q2). One of the significant indicators of national team performance is related to their participation in international tournaments. The ranking performance obtained from the qualification groups determines the qualification for the tournaments. Therefore, the rankings achieved in qualification groups (Q3) and the success in qualifying for tournaments (Q4) were evaluated as performance measures. Another criterion related to national team performance is the leagues from which the players called up to the team come. In this context, the average number of players from Türkiye and other league teams who play in the national team's starting eleven was considered as a variable with potential variability (Q5). Additionally, the performance of sports clubs was measured based on the number of matches played in group stages and knockout stages of European Cups (Champions League [Cup 1], Europa League [Cup 2], Conference League [Cup 3]). This measurement accounts for the potential high number of matches a team might play in preliminary rounds due to status requirements (e.g., continuing in lower-tier tournaments if unsuccessful). Evaluating the number of matches in group and knockout stages allows for a more precise measurement of performance on an annual basis (Q6).

Finally, the number of teams from a country participating in European cups each year was also considered as a performance indicator. The relationship between the number of participating teams and changes in the country ranking points is crucial, as the number of teams a country can send to tournaments may vary according to UEFA competition status and country ranking (Q7).

METHOD

This study is designed using the relational screening model, which is one of the quantitative research models. In the screening model, statistical examinations are conducted using numerical data to obtain information about the structure and functioning of current events (Haslam, 2004). The type of correlation used in this study aims to determine whether the variables change together and, if so, how this change occurs.

Data Collection Process: The research data were obtained from the website of Transfermarkt (only open access data) page (01.01.2025-15.01.2025). The data obtained were cross-validated with the data on the UEFA and TFF websites. In the study, data for each variable were gathered individually by the research team using a manual notation method on the web, and the collected data were then organized into tables using Microsoft Excel. To ensure the reliability of the data, each variable's data was collected separately by two researchers and compared to ensure that the data were complete and error-free.

Analysis of Data: The analysis of the research data was conducted using the SPSS v26 software package. The study was carried out with data covering 29 years. To determine whether the dataset met the assumption of normality, the Shapiro-Wilk test was first applied. The test result was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), which indicated that the data deviated from a normal distribution. Supporting this finding, visual confirmation was obtained through the examination of histogram graphs, which also showed that the data did not exhibit a normal distribution. Furthermore, recommendations from the literature were considered; specifically, the advice to use non-parametric tests in correlational studies when the sample size is below 30 (Cohen et al., 2002) and the view that non-parametric methods should be employed when the Shapiro-Wilk test yields significant results (Field, 2005) were influential in this decision. In light of all these assessments, the assumption that the data were not normally distributed was adopted, and therefore, Spearman Correlation analysis, one of the non-parametric tests, was used to examine whether the relationship between the dependent and independent variables was statistically significant at least at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Ethical Aspects of the Research: Research data were obtained from open access sources. In addition, approval was obtained from Karabuk University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee (27.09.2024-2024/08) for this research.

RESULTS

In this section of the study, the data related to the research are presented in tables, and explanations are provided.

Table 2

Research Data

Seasons	Team Squad Foreign Limit	First 11 Foreign Limit	National Team Points Average	UEFA Country Score Ranking	National Team Qualifying Group Order	Number of World Cups and European Championships attended by the National Team	Average number of players from the Türkiye leagues who played for the national team	Average number of players from other national leagues who played for the national team	Number of Clubs' Cup 1, 2 and 3 Matches*	Number of teams participating in UEFA Club competitions*
1996	4	3	1,17	11	2	1	10,5	0,5	20	4
1997	4	3	2,00	8	-	-	11	0	20	5
1998	5	5	2,00	14	3	0	11	0	12	4
1999	5	5	1,86	14	-	-	11	0	10	4
2000	5	5	1,57	11	2	1	10	1	28	3
2001	6	5	2,22	7	-	-	7,33	3,67	24	5
2002	8	5	2,20	10	2	1	6,3	4,7	30	5
2003	6	5	1,75	10	-	-	7,3	3,7	30	3
2004	6	6	1,20	11	2	0	9,4	1,6	26	4
2005	6	6	2,22	15	-	-	8,11	2,89	16	4
2006	6	6	3,00	14	2	0	9,66	1,34	22	3
2007	7	6	1,67	11	-	-	8,55	2,45	20	3
2008	8	6	1,89	11	2	1	8,66	2,34	22	5
2009	8	6	1,17	11	-	-	8,5	2,5	22	5
2010	10	6	1,50	10	3	0	8,5	2,5	16	4
2011	8	6	1,50	11	-	-	9,12	1,88	14	4
2012	8	6	0,75	10	2	0	7,25	3,75	16	4
2013	10	6	2,17	11	-	-	8,66	2,34	24	4
2014	8	5	0,75	12	4	0	9,75	1,25	16	4
2015	14	11	2,33	11	-	-	9,33	1,67	20	4
2016	14	11	1,14	10	3	1	8,28	2,72	28	4
2017	14	11	1,67	10	-	-	8	3	28	4
2018	14	11	0,75	10	4	0	3,75	7,25	26	5
2019	14	11	2,30	11	-	-	5,1	5,9	28	4
2020	14	11	1,00	13	2	1	4	7	16	2
2021	14	8	1,62	20	-	-	3,15	7,85	18	4
2022	14	8	1,86	12	2	0	5,28	5,72	26	4
2023	14	8	2,13	9	-	-	5,87	5,13	26	5
2024	14	11	1,81	10	1	1	6,28	4,72	11	5
Average	9.07	6.82	1.69	11.35	2.5	-	7.98	3.02	21.57	4.04

* Cup 1= Champions League, Cup 2= Europa League (Formerly UEFA Cup), Cup 3= Conference League and Cup Winners' Cup matches played between 1996 and 1999.

Table 2 presents the foreign player quota in team squads, the number of foreign players allowed in the starting eleven, the national team's average points, country ranking points, the number of FIFA World Cup and UEFA European Championship appearances of the Türkiye national team, the average number of players from Türkiye and other league teams in the national team's starting eleven, and the number of matches and participations of Türkiye clubs in UEFA tournaments between 1996 and 2024. The data, it is observed that the number of foreign players that clubs in Türkiye can sign and the number of foreign players allowed in the starting eleven generally show an increasing trend.

Table 3

Results of Pearson Correlation Analysis for Research Data ($p < 0.01$)

Variables		National Team Point Average	UEFA Country points ranking	National Team Qualification Group Order	Number of FIFA World Cup and UEFA European Championship Participations by the National Team	Average Number of Players from Turkish Leagues Who Played for the National Team	Average of players playing in other country leagues who played for the national team	Number of Clubs' Cup 1, 2 and 3 Matches	Number of teams participating in UEFA Club competitions
Foreign player quota in the squad	r	-0,101	-0,124	0,093	0,048	-,739**	,739**	0,172	0,140
	p	0,601	0,520	0,742	0,866	0,000	0,000	0,373	0,467
Number of foreign players in the starting eleven	r	-0,060	-0,007	-0,055	-0,016	-,642**	,642**	0,115	-0,001
	p	0,757	0,972	0,847	0,955	0,000	0,000	0,551	0,997

Examining Table 3 reveals that there is a high to moderate correlation between the foreign player quota in team squads and the number of foreign players allowed in the starting eleven with the average number of players from Türkiye and other league teams who participate in national team matches. On the other hand, no significant correlation was found between the number of foreign players in the team and the starting eleven with the other independent variables.

DISCUSSION

Regulations regarding foreign players can vary between countries. The most well-known rule in this regard is player quotas. Following the Bosman ruling, the legal situation changed to allow players whose expired contracts to move freely between European Union countries and ended the restriction on unlimited contracts (McCutcheon, 2002). This has elevated the football transfer market to a different economic level. In parallel with advancements in communication technologies, the globalization of football products has increased competition (Horne and Manzenreiter, 2004). As a result, clubs place significant emphasis on transfers to build the best team and increasingly seek players from outside their country to include the best footballers.

However, national football federations' rules act as a legal barrier to clubs' desires to achieve sporting success through foreign player transfers. Federations, believing that foreign quotas negatively impact national team success, develop various rules (quotas, criteria, etc.) to aim at enhancing the sporting achievements of both clubs and national teams.

However, this situation is often debated by the stakeholders in football. While football clubs advocate for the absence of foreign player quotas in pursuit of sporting success (Fişne and Bardakçı, 2019), federations are developing restrictive rules to ensure opportunities for local players on the field. Due to the free movement of players within European Union countries, making definitive statements about the impact of foreign player quotas on team performances may be challenging too. For instance, despite the English Premier League's long-standing absence of a foreign player quota being widely recognized as one of the world's best leagues, it is quite difficult to assert that the England national team has been successful compared to its league teams (Eurosports, 2024; UEFA, 2024).

From this perspective, it can be argued that the freedom of foreign players in the English Premier League allows teams to be more competitive but also potentially hinders the development of English players (Burrows et al., 2014). In contrast, national football teams and clubs from Spain, Germany, and Italy, which do not have foreign player restrictions, have won titles in international tournaments over the past 20 years. For EU member countries, these two different examples suggest that the impact of foreign player rules on league teams and national teams may vary, and the sole criterion for success may not be directly linked to foreign player quotas. In countries outside the European Union, however, foreign player quotas might be more closely associated with sporting success. Particularly for non-EU countries that are members of UEFA, the importance of quota regulations on foreign player transfers becomes more significant.

Although not an EU member, Türkiye is a UEFA member and competes in the European football arena. The Türkiye Football Federation, which has exhibited a hesitant profile regarding foreign player quotas, has frequently changed regulations over the past 30 years, generally increasing the foreign player quota to find the most effective approach. Inspired by this situation, the study evaluated the issue based on rational indicators and ultimately found interesting and noteworthy results for decision-makers.

In the first research question (Q1), no significant relationship was found between the foreign player quota set for team and match squads and the national team's average annual points. This finding indicates that the performance of the national team between 1996 and 2023 did not vary linearly with the foreign player quota. The Türkiye National Football Team's average points have fluctuated between high and low over the years. Additionally, the national team's performance in World Cup and European Championship qualifiers, having finished second nine times, third three times, and fourth twice, mirrors the variability in the national team's average points. This situation may be because even though the foreign player quota has increased over the years, the quality of the pool of Türkiye players has not changed. It is also possible that Türkiye players have improved their personal performance with the increase in foreign quotas or that the national team coaching staff has called up players from other leagues. Therefore, no relationship can be established between the national team's average points and the foreign player quota. Binder and Findlay (2012) also highlight in their study that the major leagues have not been significantly affected by the free movement between member countries post-Bosman Case.

In the second research question (Q2), it was determined that there is no significant relationship between the changes in the foreign player quota in the Türkiye Super League over the years and the position of the Türkiye National Team in the UEFA country rankings. The UEFA country ranking is based on the performance of clubs in UEFA tournaments over the past five years. An examination of Türkiye's situation between 1996 and 2023, it is observed that Türkiye was ranked 7th in 2001 and 20th in 2021 ($\bar{x}=11$). This finding indicates that reducing or increasing the foreign player quota does not have a direct effect on the success of clubs in UEFA tournaments, and other factors may influence Türkiye's variable performance in UEFA rankings over the years. Contrary to this research finding, Karaca (2008) found that foreign players have stimulated club success. This difference supports the argument that the sporting success of clubs in Türkiye may be related to other factors.

It was found that the success ranking of the Türkiye National Team in FIFA World Cup and UEFA European Championship qualifying group matches (Q3) and participation in these tournaments (Q4) are not related to foreign player quotas (team and match squad). Since 1996, Türkiye has participated in only one World Cup but has qualified for the UEFA European Championships in 2008, 2016, 2020, and 2024. Despite the more liberal foreign player policy implemented since 2016 and the recent qualifications for the European Championships, there is no significant relationship

with national team success, suggesting that other factors may be more influential in sporting success. Karaca (2008) and Solberg (2008) report that foreign players in major European leagues do not have a negative impact on national teams. The results of these studies may reflect the high level of player import and export within the European Union due to the free movement of players within the Union.

The analysis revealed a high (Q5) and moderate-level (Q6) significant relationship between the changes in foreign player quotas over the years and the average number of Türkiye and foreign league players starting in the national team's official matches. According to the correlation test results, the high negative relationship between the team and starting eleven foreign player limits and the number of Türkiye players from local leagues joining the national team indicates that as foreign quotas decrease, the proportion of local league players in the national team increases. This suggests that during periods when local leagues provide more opportunities for Türkiye players, a significant number of players selected for the national team come from local leagues. As foreign quotas increase, local players might get less playing time in the Türkiye Super League or face increased competition, which can drive them to develop further or transfer to international clubs to gain experience. The high positive relationship identified in the fifth research question implies that Türkiye players in other leagues have a higher likelihood of playing in the national team. This is because players from more competitive and higher-level leagues may contribute more to the national team, leading national team managers to prioritize these players. Moreover, an increase in foreign quotas might lead dual-nationality players from other countries to choose to play for the Türkiye National Team, further increasing the presence of foreign league players in the national team over time. Contrary to this finding, a study on countries participating in the 2006 FIFA World Cup found that foreign quotas affected both local and foreign league players' contributions to national team success (Baur and Lehmann, 2007). In contrast, Travlos et al. (2017) reported that increases in foreign player quotas led to a reduced impact of domestic players on team success. Similarly, Solberg (2008) noted that countries like France, Norway, and Greece, which send players to higher-quality leagues, benefit from this strategy. The foreign player restrictions in Russia have also encouraged club owners to invest in youth academies (Charyev, 2016). These studies indicate that changes in foreign player quotas can impact the profiles of national team players and consequently, national team performance.

In the sixth and seventh research questions, the relationship between foreign player quotas and club performance indicators was examined. No significant relationship was found between changes in foreign player quotas over the years and the number of matches played by Türkiye football clubs in UEFA tournaments (Q6) and the number of clubs participating in European cups (Q7). This finding indicates that changes in foreign player quotas do not have a direct effect on the international performance of Türkiye football clubs. Specifically, the number of matches played by clubs in UEFA tournaments and the number of clubs participating in European cups can be considered independently of changes in foreign player quotas. While there is limited evidence that the competitive balance of national leagues in Europe was seriously affected post-Bosman ruling, it has been reported that top teams competing in the Champions League have noticeably strengthened (Binder and Findlay, 2012). Additionally, an increase in the number of foreign players may impact the quality of teams' play (Sever et al., 2023). Foreign players also affect the international performance of club teams (Karaca, 2008). Similarly, the relationship between foreign players' presence in matches and clubs' success at local and European levels has been observed (Varmus et al., 2019). Generally, leagues with a higher number of foreign players tend to have clubs ranked better in the world rankings. However, teams that have more foreign players but lack the ability to select better players may not achieve any success (Royuela and Gásquez, 2019). This emphasizes the importance of having not just any foreign players, but quality players. The information in the literature is not directly supported by the research results. This discrepancy highlights the need to evaluate the number of matches played in UEFA tournaments

and the number of clubs participating in European cups independently of changes in foreign player quotas. Therefore, Türkiye football clubs should be managed with broader strategies and policies to enhance their performance.

When evaluating the research findings, the lack of significant relationships in both national team and club-level sports performance suggests that foreign player quotas are not a primary factor in improving the success of the national team and clubs in international tournaments. Investments in youth development and infrastructure are crucial for the long-term success of the national team. Additionally, the quality of coaches and technical staff can have a direct impact on the national team's game strategy and tactical discipline. The decisions and policies of the federation also influence player development and overall team performance. Improvements in areas such as financial management, infrastructure investments, player development programs, and transfer policies are likely to be more effective in enhancing the international success of Türkiye football clubs.

CONCLUSION

In this study, which examines the relationship between foreign player quotas implemented by the Türkiye Football Federation from 1996 to 2024 and various performance indicators, no significant relationship was found between the national team's average points, country ranking, national team's qualification group ranking, participation in FIFA World Cups and UEFA European Championships, the number of matches played by clubs in UEFA Cup 1, 2, and 3, and the number of teams participating in UEFA club competitions ($p>0.05$). However, a significant relationship was found between the total foreign player quota and the number of players in the first 11 of the national team, Türkiye ($r=-.739$; $p<0.01$), and the average number of players in other leagues ($r=.739$; $p<0.01$). A significant relationship was also found between the foreign player quota in the first 11 and the number of players in the first 11 of the national team, Türkiye ($r=-.642$; $p<0.01$), and the average number of players in other leagues ($r=.642$; $p<0.01$). Specifically, there is a high and moderate level of relationship between the team squad's foreign quotas and the number of foreign players allowed in the starting eleven, and the average number of players from Türkiye and other leagues in the national team. These results indicate that annual changes in foreign player quotas are not a primary factor influencing the international performance of the Türkiye National Team and Türkiye Super League clubs. However, as the foreign player quota increases, it appears that more players directly playing in the national team's starting eleven come from other leagues. Having players invited to the national team from higher-performing European leagues may positively affect the national team's success in the future. Therefore, it is recommended that football managers consider these findings when making decisions regarding foreign player quotas. Additionally, since no significant relationships were identified between performance indicators at the club level and foreign player quotas, it is important to address foreign player quota practices comprehensively, engage in data-driven planning, and focus on other factors that may affect sporting success.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research: The study is limited to the foreign player quotas applied in the Türkiye Super League between 1996 and 2024 and the independent variables defined by the research team. Consequently, other factors that could influence these independent variables have been overlooked. As the evaluation is conducted on an annual basis, planning issues that might affect the performance of the national team and clubs (such as managerial errors, technical limitations), economic constraints, UEFA restrictions, pandemics, or natural events have not been considered. The policy on foreign player quotas implemented in Türkiye serves as an example for countries that are indecisive in this regard. The results obtained from the 29-year period evaluated in this study may change in the future. Therefore, the parameters examined in this study may yield different results if reassessed in the coming years. Researchers can contribute to solving this relatively under-researched topic by examining other factors potentially related to foreign

player quotas (such as foreign player profiles, profiles of players invited to the national team from leagues outside Türkiye, economic factors, or match statistics) at both the national team and club levels.

Author Contribution:

1. **Fatih Mehmet PARLAR:** Idea/Concept, Supervision/Consulting, Analysis and/or Commentary, Article Writing
2. **Emre UYSAL:** Design, Data Collection and/or Processing, Article Writing
3. **Nedim TEKİN:** Critical Review, Article Writing

Funding:

This research did not receive funding from any public, commercial, or non-profit organizations.

Declaration of Interest:

The authors declare no financial or non-financial interests that could have affected the objectivity or integrity of this research and have no financial relationships with any organization regarding the research findings.

Disclosure statement:

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Information about Ethical Board Permission

Committee Name: Karabuk University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee

Date: 27.09.2024

Issue No: 2024/08

REFERENCES

1. **Addesa, F., and Delice, E. (2019).** Reform effectiveness and unresolved issues of the football in the Turkish Super League. *Annals of Applied Sport Science*, 8(2), 2-7.
2. **Ayik, U. (2022).** 5+ 1, 5+ 1+ 2 or 6+ 2+ 2. A geographical perspective on the never-ending debate of home-grown versus foreign footballers in Turkey. *Soccer & Society*, 23(8), 932-948. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2021.1993195>
3. **Baur, D. G., and Lehmann, S. (2007).** Does the mobility of football players influence the success of the national team? *IIS Discussion Paper No. 217*.
4. **Beinsports. (2021).** *Fatih Terim'den yabancı kuralı açıklaması*. Retrieved 11.05.2024 from <https://beinsports.com.tr/haber/fatih-terimden-yabancı-kurali-aciklamasi-2>
5. **Binder, J. J., and Findlay, M. (2012).** The effects of the Bosman ruling on national and club teams in Europe. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 13(2), 107-129.
6. **Burrows, A., Massey, B., and Drakeford, S. (2014).** Why has England not won a major football competition since 1966? In *The Sports Monograph: Critical perspectives on socio-cultural sport, coaching and Physical Education. SSTO Publications*, 141-151.
7. **Charyev, G. (2016).** Consequences of the limit on foreign players in Russian football. *Soccer & Society*, 17(4), 571-587.
8. **CNNTURK. (2019).** *Last minute foreign rule move from TFF*. Retrieved May 15, 2024 from <https://www.cnnturk.com/spor/futbol/tffden-son-dakika-yabancı-kurali-hamlesi?page=11>
9. **Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2002).** *Research methods in education*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203224342>
10. **Eurosports. (2024).** *World cup previous winners*. Retrieved May 11 2024 from <https://www.eurosport.com/football/world-cup/palmares.shtml>
11. **Fişne, M., and Bardakçı, S. (2019).** A research on foreign player limitation in the Turkish football with the overview of the fans. *MANAS Journal of Social Studies*, 8(1), 541-565.
12. **Flores, R., Forrest, D., and Tena, J. d. D. (2010).** Impact on competitive balance from allowing foreign players in a sports league: Evidence from European soccer. *Kyklos*, 63(4), 546-557. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6435.2010.00487.x>
13. **Frick, B. (2009).** Globalization and Factor Mobility: The Impact of the "Bosman-Ruling" on Player Migration in Professional Soccer. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 10(1), 88-106.
14. **Gammelsæter, H. (2009).** The organization of professional football in Scandinavia. *Soccer & Society*, 10(3-4), 305-323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970902771373>
15. **Gardiner, S., and Welch, R. (2011).** Nationality quotas in European football. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 3(3), 316-320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2011.589169>
16. **Gündüz, B., Shamatava, K., and Sayan, İ. (2019).** The effect of the foreign football player limitation on teams economies. *International Sport Science Student Studies*, 1(1), 58-68.
17. **Hardman, A., and Lorwerth, H. (2014).** Player quotas in elite club football. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 8(2), 147-156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2014.931879>
18. **Haslam, N. (2004).** Relational models theory: A contemporary overview (pp. 3-25). *Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410611413>
19. **Horne, J., and Manzenreiter, W. (2004).** Football, culture, globalisation: Why professional football has been going East. In *Football goes east* (pp. 17-34). Routledge.
20. **Karaca, O. (2008).** The impact of foreign players on international football performance. *MPRA*. https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/11064/1/MPRA_paper_11064.pdf
21. **Kornbeck, J. (2017).** Bosman and athlete welfare: The sports law approach, the social policy approach, and the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers. *Liverpool Law Review*, 38, 307-323. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10991-017-9203-9>
22. **Lago-Peñas, C., Lago-Peñas, S., and Lago, I. (2019).** Player migration and soccer performance. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 616. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00616>
23. **Madichie, N. (2009).** Management implications of foreign players in the English Premiership League football. *Management Decision*, 47(1), 24-50.
24. **Marcén, M. (2016).** The Bosman ruling and the presence of native football players in their home league: the Spanish case. *European Journal of Law and Economics*, 42, 209-235.
25. **McCutcheon, J. P. (2002).** Free movement in European sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 2(4), 308-320.
26. **Medcalfe, S., and Smith, R. (2018).** The effect of foreign players on pay and performance in Major League Soccer. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 13(4), 297-318.

27. **Mifsud, J. (2022).** Proposed increase in foreign player quota in top-tier maltese football: An in-depth investigation of local attitudes. *MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice*, 6(3), 141-158. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0016.0900>
28. **Özaydın, S., and Aksu, Y. E. (2019).** The effects of foreign player regulations on player productivity in the Turkish Super League. *Journal of Research in Economics*, 3(2), 177-191. <https://doi.org/10.35333/JORE.2019.54>
29. **Papanikos, G. T. (2024).** Foreign players in the Greek Football League: Evidence from the 2023-24 regular season. *Athens Journal of Sports*, 11(1), 59-78. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajspo.11-1-4>
30. **Royuela, V., and Gásquez, R. (2019).** On the influence of foreign players on the success of football clubs. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 20(5), 718-741.
31. **Sever, O., Cigerci, E., Öztıp, M., İpekoğlu, G., Gönülateş, S., Akyıldız, Z., and Nobari, H. (2023).** How does the increase in foreign players affect football? *BMC Sports Science, Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 15(1), 32.
32. **Solberg, H. A. (2008).** The international trade of players in European club football: consequences for national teams. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 10(1), 73-87. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-10-01-2008-B009>
33. **Sports Interactive. (2024).** League information. Sports Interactive. Retrieved May 10, 2024, from <https://community.sports-interactive.com/sigames-manual/football-manager-2024/league-information-r4954/>
34. **Taştan, H. Ş. (2021).** The effects of the number of foreign players and market values of the super league clubs on the sports success of the clubs. *International Journal of Sport Culture and Science*, 9(2), 268-281.
35. **TFF 2008-2009 Status. (2008).** 2008 – 2009 Season Turkcell Super League Competitions Status. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.tff.org/Resources/TFF/Documents/TFF/statu2008/TSL-2008-2009.pdf>
36. **TFF 2011-2012 Status. (2011).** TFF 2011-2012 Status. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.tff.org/Resources/TFF/Documents/0002012/Ligler/SuperLig/2011.10.26-Spor-Toto-Super-Lig-Statusu.pdf>
37. **TFF 2012-2013 Status. (2012).** TFF 2012-2013 Status,. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.tff.org/Resources/TFF/Documents/000013/TFF/STATULER/Spor-Toto-Super-Lig-Statusu-2012-13.pdf>
38. **TFF 2015-2016 Status. (2015).** TFF 2015-2016 Status. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.tff.org/Resources/TFF/Documents/00000016/Ligler/Statuler/2015-2016-Sezonu-SporTotoSuperLig-Statusu.pdf>
39. **TFF 2017-2018 Status. (2017).** TFF 2017-2018 Status. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.tff.org/Resources/TFF/Documents/STATULER/2017-2018/2017-2018-Super-Lig-Statusu.pdf>
40. **TFF 2020-2021 Status. (2020).** TFF 2020-2021 Status. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.tff.org/Resources/TFF/Documents/STATULER/2020-2021/2020-2021-SL-STATU.pdf>
41. **TFF. (2024).** Number of foreign players in the Super League will be reduced to 12 starting from the 2024-2025 Season. Retrieved Dec 01, 2024, from <https://www.tff.org/default.aspx?pageID=687&ftxtID=43115>
42. **Travlos, A. K., Dimitropoulos, P., and Panagiotopoulos, S. (2017).** Foreign player migration and athletic success in Greek football. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 7(3), 258-275. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SBM-02-2016-0006>
43. **Trequattrini, R., Massaro, M., Lardo, A., and Cuzzo, B. (2019).** Knowledge transfer and managers turnover: impact on team performance. *Business Process Management Journal*, 25(1), 69-83. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BPMJ-06-2017-0169>
44. **TRT Spor. (2020).** Technical men evaluated the new foreign rule. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.trtspor.com.tr/haber/futbol/teknik-adamlar-yeni-yabanci-kuralini-degerlendirdi-18515948>
45. **Türkmen, A., and Şenocak, H. D. (2021).** Determinants of import and export in Turkish football. *Alanya Academic Review Journal*, 5(3), 1393-1410. <https://doi.org/10.29023/alanyaakademik.873091>
46. **UEFA. (2024).** UEFA Rankings. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.uefa.com/nationalassociations/uefarankings/>
47. **Varmus, M., Kubina, M., and Adámik, R. (2019).** Impact of the proportion of foreign players' appearances on the success of football clubs in domestic competitions and european competitions in the context of new culture. *Sustainability*, 12(1), 264. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12010264>
48. **Wicker, P., Feiler, S., and Breuer, C. (2013).** Organizational mission and revenue diversification among non-profit sports clubs. *International Journal of Financial Studies*, 1(4), 119-136. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijfs1040119>
49. **Yüce, A., Katırcı, H., and Kuzu, C. (2017).** Foreign Football Player Limit in Turkish Football Leagues and Opinions of Turkish Football Players. *CBÜ Journal of Physical Education and Sport Sciences*, 12(2), 24-39.