



Determination of factors affecting the development processes of active fencing referees in Turkey

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to determine and interpret the opinions of the fencing referees who are actively involved in the competitions in our country on the issues affecting their development processes. The study group; The Turkish Fencing Federation consists of 80 referees who are on the list of referees with a visa for 2021. An online data collection form was used as a data collection tool in this study, which was structured through the qualitative research method. In the analysis process of the data obtained, the data analysis program called MAXQDA Analyctis Pro (2022) was used. While closed-ended questions were summarized by indicating percentages, the content analysis method was used in the process of analyzing open-ended question and answer reports. The data obtained were visualized with the help of frequency tables and code maps. Finally, some of the opinions of the participants, which were coded, were directly conveyed by interpreting the findings obtained through the tables and code maps. As a result of the research, negative and positive views that affect the development processes of fencing referees in Turkey were categorized. While the issues such as training and development seminars organized for referees, increasing the number of referees' duties, meeting the accommodation and meal expenses of the referees, and improving their wages are among the positive factors; Factors such as the excessive working hours of the referees, the pressure of the coaches and athletes, the low wages, and the lack of sufficient job opportunities were evaluated within the scope of negative effects.

Keywords: Fencing, referee, referee development, factors affecting referees

Türkiye'de faal eskrim hakemlerinin gelişim süreçlerini etkileyen faktörlerin değerlendirilmesi

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, ülkemizde faal olarak yarışmalarda görev alan eskrim hakemlerinin gelişim süreçlerini etkileyen hususlarda görüşlerini belirlemek ve yorumlamaktır. Araştırma grubunu; Türkiye Eskrim Federasyonu 2021 yılı vizeli hakem listesinde yer alan 80 hakem oluşturmaktadır. Nitel araştırma metoduyla kurgulanan bu çalışmada; veri toplama aracı olarak online veri toplama formu kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen verilerin analiz sürecinde ise MAXQDA Analyctis Pro (2022) isimli veri analiz programı kullanılmıştır. Kapalı uçlu sorular yüzde verilerle özetlenirken, açık uçlu soru cevap raporlarını analiz etme sürecinde içerik analizi metodu kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler, frekans tabloları ve kod haritaları yardımıyla görselleştirilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda Türkiye'de eskrim hakemlerinin gelişim süreçlerini etkileyen negatif ve pozitif yönlü görüşler kategorize edilmiştir. Hakemler için düzenlenen eğitim ve gelişim seminerleri, hakemlerin görev sayılarının artırılması, hakemlerin konaklama ve yemek giderlerinin karşılanması, ücret durumlarının iyileştirilmesi gibi hususlar pozitif etkenler arasında değerlendirilirken; hakemlerin çalışma saatlerinin fazla olması, antrenör ve sporcuların baskıları, ücret düşüklüğü, yeterli görev fırsatı verilmemesi gibi etkenler negatif yönlü etki kapsamında değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eskrim, hakem, hakem gelişimi, hakemleri etkileyen faktörler

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INTRODUCTION

Fencing is a sport that intersects both alternative and traditional domains. While intelligence, attention, perception, and other psychological factors are crucial, physical ability and tactical skills also play a significant role (Ganakas & Peden, 2023). Due to these characteristics and requirements of the fencing discipline, not only athletes but also coaches and referees need to develop certain specialized skills and qualities.

Unlike many other sports disciplines, fencing has not been the subject of extensive academic research (McDow, 2009). Although there are relatively diverse studies related to the physiological aspect of fencing, there is a limited amount of research specifically concerning fencing referees. Recently, some models have been developed to facilitate fencing referees in analyzing matches through image and sound analysis with the assistance of artificial intelligence (Mo, 2022). The rapid development of the digital age, particularly since the 20th century, has made the use of technological devices such as phones, tablets, and programs crucial (Arı & Öz, 2023). However, all these advanced models are only partially utilized in international organizations. Therefore, the individual performance and knowledge competence of fencing referees are highly important.

Each sports discipline has its own rules based on the principle of fair play. The proper management of a match and the high level of competition largely depend on the accuracy of decisions made and the sense of justice and impartiality among competitors (Hemmat et al., 2022). While referee decisions can have a vital impact on athletes and the outcomes of competitions, they have not always received as much attention from sports sciences compared to athletes and coaches. However, this situation has been gradually changing in the past twenty years. Studies on the physical and psychological aspects of refereeing, as well as their communication and interaction with other elements of sports, are available (Avugos et al., 2021).

The aim of this study is to investigate the positive and negative factors that affect fencing referees in Turkey. Given the multifaceted nature of the fencing discipline, there are numerous factors that fencing referees must consider within the scope of their responsibilities, which they encounter during competitions (Barsbuğa et al., 2020). Because of the significant importance and influence of referees, it is especially important to evaluate positive and negative factors based on their perspectives. It is possible to find research on many different subjects on fencing athletes. However, in the fencing branch, in addition to the athletes, referees who have a direct

impact on the game also have a very important place. This research aims to contribute to the literature by identifying the obstacles to the development of fencing referees.

METHOD

The descriptive content analysis method refers to the in-depth examination and organization of qualitative and quantitative studies conducted independently of each other in a particular subject or field. In this way, general trends in that subject or field are identified. The results obtained in this method are expected to guide future studies on targeted topics (Ültay et al., 2021). The analysis method designed in this study is content analysis. In addition, a case study design was used in the research. The negative and positive views of the referees participating in the research within the scope of development processes were tried to be classified with the help of code maps (Figure 1-2). In addition to these views, demographic information of the referees such as gender, education level, referee license level and English level are also included in the findings section.

Study groups

The research group consisted of 80 actively serving referees who are on the visa referee list of the Turkish Fencing Federation for the 2020-2021 season. 60% (N=48) of the referees participating in the research have national and international referee licenses, and 75% (N=60) are male participants. Detailed demographic and personal information about the research group is included in the findings section.

Data collection tools

An online data collection form was used as a data collection tool in this study, which was structured through the qualitative research method. The survey form, which was drawn up by the researcher by taking expert opinion, consisting of a total of nine questions, and devised to learn the opinions of the participants on the subject matter of the study, includes multiple-choice and open-ended question types. In this study conducted in collaboration with the Turkish Fencing Federation, the respondents answered the questionnaire online via the website of the respective federation and took part in the study voluntarily. Consent regarding the study was presented in the “Remarks” section of the form to the participants for approval.

Research design

In the analysis process of the data obtained, the data analysis program called MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2022 (Professional Data Analysis Software for Qualitative and Mixed Methods) was used. While closed-ended questions were summarized by indicating percentages, the

content analysis method was used in the process of analyzing open-ended question and answer reports. The data obtained were visualized with the help of frequency tables and code maps. Finally, some of the opinions of the participants, which were coded, were directly conveyed by interpreting the findings obtained through the tables and code maps.

In the research, eight closed-ended questions were asked to the participants, and the frequency tables created with the answers to the relevant questions are included in the findings section. Within the scope of the research, one open-ended question was asked to the participants. The answers to the question "What are the factors affecting the development processes of active fencing referees in Turkey?" were classified with the help of codes and sub-codes using the content analysis method.

Ethical approval and institutional permission

For this study, an approval was received from the Ethics Committee for Non-Invasive Clinical Research of the Faculty of Sport Sciences of Selcuk University (E-40990478-050.99-51583). In addition, permission was obtained from the Turkish Fencing Federation for the study.

FINDINGS

The demographic information of the referees participating in the research is as follows.

Table 1. Gender status of the referees participating in the research

	Variables	f	%
Gender	Female	20	25.0
	Male	60	75.0
	Total	80	100

Table 2. Educational status of the referees participating in the research

	Variables	f	%
Educational Status	High School and Below	27	33.8
	University and over	53	66.2
	Total	80	100

Table 3. License status of the referees participating in the research

	Variables	f	%
What is the degree of your Referee license?	Candidate Referee	10	12.5
	Provincial Referee	22	27.5
	National Referee	44	55.0
	International Referee	4	5.0
	Total	80	100

Table 4. Experience duration of the referees participating in the research

	Variables	f	%
Experience duration	1-3 Years	9	11.3
	4-6 Years	17	21.3
	7-9 Years	24	30.0
	10 Years and over	14	17.5
	Inactive referee	16	20.0
	Total	145	100

Table 5. Match duty status of the referees participating in the research (last 5 years)

	Variables	f	%
Match duty status	1-5 between	27	33.8
	6-10 between	53	66.2
	11 and over	0	0.0
	Total	80	100

Table 6. English level of the referees participating in the research

	Variables	f	%
English level	I don't know English.	10	12.5
	I can do simple daily conversations.	52	65.0
	I can write and speak English.	18	22.5
	Total	80	100

Table 7. Do you know the requirements for international referees?

	Variables	f	%
Information Status	Yes I know.	66	82.5
	No, I do not know.	14	17.5
	Total	80	100

The referees who participated in the study; 75% (N=60) consisted of male participants. According to their education levels, the majority of the participants were university graduates. When the status of the participants according to the refereeing license degree was examined, 44% of the referees participating in the study were national referees. Among the referees participating in the study, 88.7% (N=81) had 4 or more years of experience, and 66.2% (N=53) had 6 or more refereeing assignments in the last 5 years. Within the scope of the research, the participant referees were also asked about their English language level and it was determined that 12.5% (N=10) of them did not speak English. Again, the participants were asked a question to determine whether our referees were informed about the necessary conditions for international refereeing, which is an important scale for the developmental processes of referees, and it was determined that 17.5% (N=14) of the participants had no knowledge about the subject.

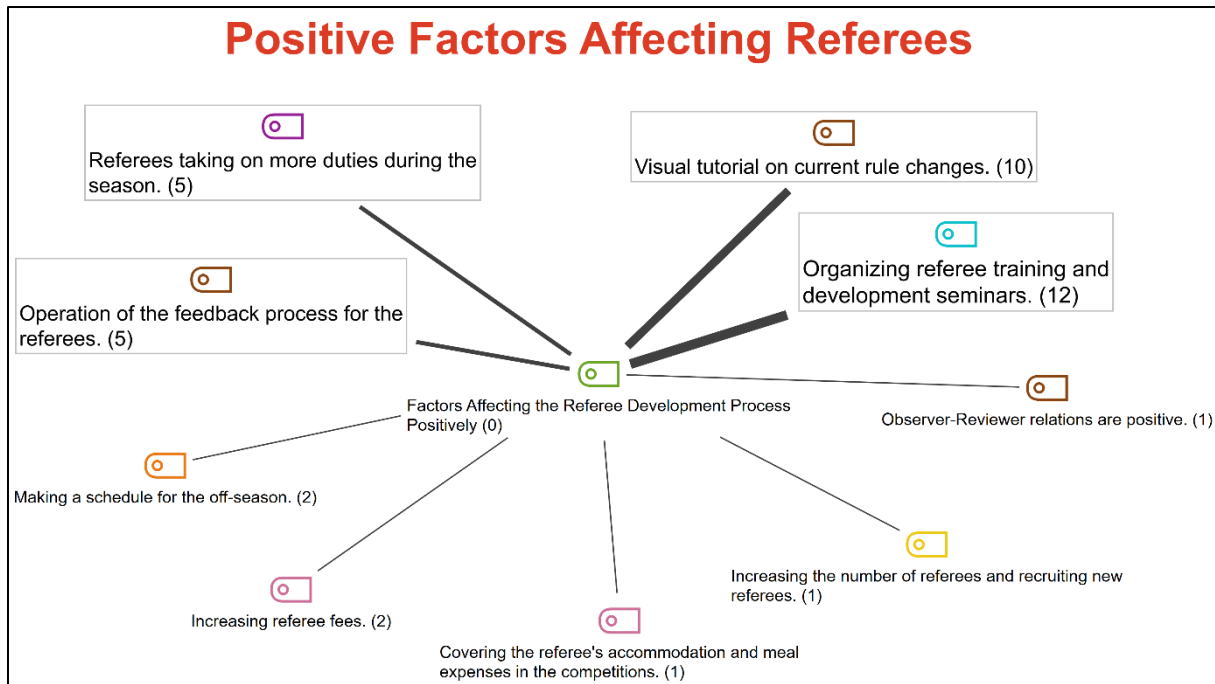


Figure 1. Positive factors affecting referees code-subcode map.

The code map of the opinions of the referees who participated in the study that positively affected their development processes is as above. In this context, there are 39 statements categorized under 9 different sub-codes.

1. Organizing referee training and development seminars.
2. Visual tutorial on current rule changes.
3. Referees taking on more duties during the season.
4. Operation of the feedback process for the referees.
5. Making a schedule for the off-season.
6. Increasing referee fees.
7. Covering the referee's accommodation and meal expenses in the competitions.
8. Increasing the number of referees and recruiting new referees.
9. Observer-Reviewer relations are positive.

Some examples of the opinions of the referees participating in the research, which opinions make up the code map, are classified as follows.

“Participant R38: *I think that the changing rules and the most common mistakes should be explained to the referees in a planned and organized way by experienced referees.*”

“Participant R7: *Organizing seminars for referees to be informed about changing game rules and current developments is a positive factor.*”

“Participant R10: *Establish a platform where referees can discuss current rules, controversial positions, difficult to understand rules, etc. and get expert support.*”

“Participant R68: *Continuous officiating and following the changes in fencing over time positively affect the development of our referees.*”

“Participant R19: *Regulating and improving referee salaries will positively affect the performance of referees and their willingness to officiate and will increase the quality of competitions.*”

“Participant R20: *Increasing the number of referees is important both for the course of competitions and for the referees to officiate competitions with higher performance.*”

“Participant R19: *The fact that food and accommodation during the competitions are provided by our federation has reduced the burden on the referees and has a positive effect.*”

“Participant R24: *Practices that can be done in order to spend the inter-competition periods actively and guidance in the direction of increasing the ability to watch and interpret videos, which is one of these practices.*”

“Participant R45: *Organizing referee development seminars has a positive effect.*”

“Participant R57: *The quality of fencing referees in Turkey would improve if seminars were organized for the referees at regular intervals and the topics of the seminars were shared with the participants so that they could repeat them frequently.*”

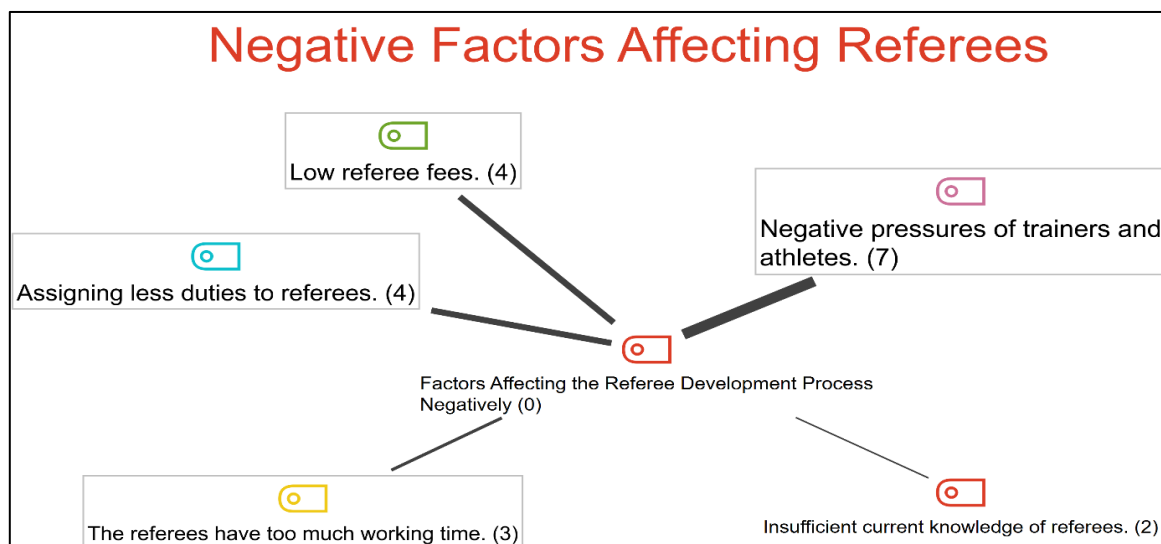


Figure 2. Negative factors affecting referees code-subcode map

The code map of the views of the referees who participated in the research on the negative effects on their development processes is as above. In this context, there are 20 statements categorized under 5 different sub-codes.

1. Negative pressures of trainers and athletes.
2. Low referee fees.
3. Assigning less duties to referees.
4. The referees have too much working time.
5. Insufficient current knowledge of referees.

Some examples of the opinions of the referees participating in the research, which opinions make up the code map, are classified as follows.

“Participant R34: *I think that the low frequency of referee seminars negatively affects the development process of referees.*”

“Participant R4: *Working time should be reduced.*”

“Participant R73: *Referees' misuse of gestures and facial expressions.*”

“Participant R69: *The efforts of athletes and coaches to put the referee under pressure have negative effects.*”

“Participant R14: *The fact that candidate referees could not participate in competitions during the pandemic has negatively affected the development process.*”

“Participant R64: *New referees have fewer opportunities*”

“Participant R65: *We don't see enough competitions and we can't progress.*”

“Participant R19: *The same problems have persisted for years regarding referee duty fees. Although it is known that there is a need for improvements in remuneration, no solution has been found.*”

“Participant R62: *The fact that refereeing is not a profession is a factor that negatively affects the long-term development process.*”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Following the development processes of fencing referees plays a critical role for the future of the sport and ensuring fair competition. According to Giel et al. (2020), referees are an indispensable part of a successful competition in almost every sport. Without referees acting as an impartial authority to ensure that competitors follow the rules, it is not possible to talk about

competitive sports. Fencing is a sport where athletes have to use their quick thinking, attention, perception and tactical skills frequently (Ganakas & Peden, 2023). It would be beneficial for fencing referees to have similar skills such as sudden decision-making ability and attention.

Due to the rapidly increasing technological developments, many innovations have emerged in the rules and equipment of sports branches. According to Slack et al. (2013), technological investments used in referee training reduce or eliminate errors that may occur during sporting events. Most of the referees who expressed their opinions within the scope of our research also emphasized the importance of referee training and development seminars. The sport industry, like other industries, tries to add meaning to people's lives and careers (Kim et al., 2022). This positive impact also applies to referees, who play a vital role in the sport industry. Referees, who are subjected to intense pressure from time to time, should take part in a continuous training and development process, both physically and mentally, in order to make the right decision. Again, Ridinger et al. (2017) reported that referee trainings are very important for their development process.

Pressure from athletes and coaches, which is included in the negative impact findings of the referees participating in the study, has also been the subject of many studies. According to Jacobs et al. (2020), referees not only face hostility from spectators and the media, but also verbal abuse and pressure from coaches and players. Another study on the negative effects of social pressure on referees has similar conclusions and recommendations (Dawson & Dabson 2009). Limiting these pressures on referees, who have a great role in the fair conduct of sports matches, with some measures and rules can have very important effects both for referees and for the fair administration of sports matches.

Another issue that the majority of the referees who participated in the study expressed a negative impact on referee development was the negative effects of the referees being away from sports and sporting activities, especially during the off-season. Ahmed et al. (2017) mentioned in their study that referees are expected to have sufficient fitness to keep up with the game and perform better. Many sports organizations or federations take measures in this regard. If referees, coaches or athletes are away from sporting activities, it will decrease their motivation. In a study conducted by Haddad et al. (2023) in some Arab countries, it was found that referees who stay away from sports activities will lose their fitness. They also reported that professional courses and trainings increase the application ability and performance of referees or sports personnel.

Within the scope of the research, some statements were identified with the low number of referees or the level of remuneration of the refereeing task. According to Kim et al. (2022), without a sufficient number of qualified referees, sport organizations cannot successfully host sporting events. Sport governing bodies should not only recruit new referees, but also try to minimize the turnover rate of referees by improving training and organizational support. Despite these efforts, a shortage of referees in different sports has been reported in many countries (Hong et al., 2019).

When the research results are evaluated; It is seen that the obstacles to the development process of fencing referees are affected by material and moral factors. Especially overtime working hours and low wage policies create negative effects for referees. Increasing the number of referees in organizations along with wage regulations can solve this problem. Although we accept that refereeing is a stressful and demanding job, referees must cope with the pressures of elements that are relatively involved in the game, such as athletes, coaches and spectators. This situation can be solved by increasing experience opportunities. It will make a positive contribution to the development of experience, especially in training and seminars that are evaluated positively by all referees.

As a result of the research, the negative and positive effects stated by the fencing referees are similar to the studies conducted with different participants and referees of different branches. It is important to organize activities for the training and development of referees, to strengthen them in social and moral dimensions, and to ensure fair and problem-free results of sports matches.

Limitations and recommendations

In this study, the opinions of the referees working in fencing competitions were evaluated. After the evaluation, a report on the factors that positively and negatively affect the development processes of fencing referees was shared with the relevant federation officials and it was aimed to contribute positively to the process.

The sample group of this study consists of 80 referees with visas who are included in the 2021 licensed referee list of the Turkish Fencing Federation. A research model with participants from different countries can strengthen the research results.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

GİRİŞ

Eskrim, alternatif ve geleneksel alanların kesiştiği bir spor dalıdır. Zekâ, dikkat, algı ve diğer psikolojik faktörler önemli yer tutarken fiziksel kabiliyetin yanı sıra taktiksel becerinin önemi oldukça fazladır (Ganakas & Peden 2023). Eskrim branşının bu özellikleri ve gerekleri nedeniyle sporcular kadar antrenör ve hakemlerinde bazı özel özellikler konusunda kendilerini geliştirmesi gerekmektedir. Her spor branşının, oynanma esasına göre kendi kuralları vardır. Maçın doğru yönetilmesi ve rekabetin yüksek düzeyde olması, büyük ölçüde yenilenen kararların doğruluğuna ve yarışmacıların adalet ve ön yargıdan uzak olma duygusuna bağlıdır (Hemmat ve ark., 2022). Hakem kararlarının sporcular ve müsabakaların sonuçları üzerinde hayati etkiye sahip olmasına rağmen, sporcular ve antrenörlerle karşılaştırıldığında spor bilimleri tarafından her zaman daha az ilgi görmüştür. Ancak son yirmi yılda bu durum giderek değişmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı da Türkiye’de hakemlik yapan eskrim hakemlerini etkileyen pozitif ve negatif yönlü etkenlerin araştırılmasıdır.

YÖNTEM

Nitel araştırma yoluyla kurgulanan bu çalışmada; veri toplama aracı olarak online veri toplama formu kullanılmıştır. Araştırma grubunu; 2021 yılında Türkiye Eskrim Federasyonu 2021 yılı vizeli hakem listesinde yer alan 80 hakem oluşturmaktadır. Türkiye Eskrim Federasyonu ile ortak hareket edilerek gerçekleştirilen bu çalışmada, katılımcılar ilgili federasyonun web sitesi aracılığıyla online ortamda soru formunu cevaplamış olup, çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmışlardır. Araştırma ile ilgili onam, formun açıklama kısmında katılımcıların onayına sunulmuştur. Elde edilen verilerin analiz sürecinde ise MAXQDA Analyctis Pro 2022 isimli veri analiz programı kullanılmıştır. Kapalı uçlu sorular yüzde verilerek özetlenirken, açık uçlu soru cevap raporlarını analiz etme sürecinde içerik analizi metodu kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler, frekans tabloları ve kod haritaları yardımıyla görselleştirilmiştir.

BULGULAR

Araştırmaya katılan hakemlerin; %75’i (n=60) erkek katılımcılardan oluşmaktadır. Eğitim seviyelerine göre ise katılımcıların çoğunluğu üniversite mezunları oluşturmaktadır. Hakemlik lisans derecesine göre katılımcıların durumu incelendiğinde, araştırmaya katılan hakemlerin %44’ünü milli hakemler oluşturmuştur. Araştırmaya katılan hakemlerin %88,7’si (n=81) 4yıl ve üzeri deneyim süresine sahip olup, %66,2’si (n=53) son 5 yılda 6 ve üzeri sayıda hakemlik görevi almıştır. Araştırma kapsamında katılımcı hakemlerin İngilizce dil seviyesi ile ilgili de kendilerine soru yöneltilmiş olup, %12,5’inin (n=10) İngilizce bilmediği tespit edilmiştir. Yine hakemlerin gelişimsel süreçleri için önemli bir skala olan uluslararası hakemlik için gerekli şartlar konusunda, hakemlerimizin bilgi sahibi olup olmadığını tespit etmek amacıyla katılımcılara soru sorulmuş ve katılımcıların %17,5’inin (n=14) konu hakkında bilgisi olmadığı tespit edilmiştir.

Hakemlerin gelişim süreçlerinin pozitif yönlü etkileri değerlendirildiğinde, hakemlerin eğitim ve gelişim seminerleri ile desteklenmesi, yarışmalarda görev alan hakemlerin ücret seviyesi ve diğer giderleri ile ilgili desteklenmesi, sezon içerisinde daha fazla görev alması gibi konular tespit edilirken; antrenör ve sporcu baskıları, çalışma saatlerinin fazla olması ve ücretlerin az olması gibi hususlar ise negative yönlü etkenler olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Eskrim hakemlerinin gelişim süreçlerinin takip edilmesi branşın geleceği ve adaletli rekabetin sağlanması açısından kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Giel ve arkadaşlarına (2020) göre hakemler hemen hemen her tür sporda başarılı bir müsabakanın vazgeçilmez bir parçasıdır. Slack ve arkadaşlarına (2013) göre hakem eğitimlerinde kullanılan teknolojik yatırımlar, spor karşılaşmaları sırasında meydana gelebilecek hataları azaltmakta veya ortadan kaldırmaktadır. Araştırmamız kapsamında görüşlerini ifade eden hakemlerin büyük bir bölümü de hakem eğitim ve gelişim seminerlerinin önemine vurgu yapmıştır. Spor endüstrisi tıpkı diğer endüstriler gibi insanların hayatlarına ve kariyerlerine anlam katmaya çalışmaktadır (Kim ve ark., 2022). Araştırmaya katılan hakemlerin negatif yönlü etki tespitlerinde yer alan sporcu ve antrenör baskıları da bir çok araştırmanın konusu olmuştur. Jacobs ve arkadaşlarına (2020)'göre hakemler sadece seyirciler ve medyanın düşmanlığıyla karşı karşıya kalmamakta aynı zamanda antrenörlerin ve oyuncularında sözlü taciz ve baskılarına maruz kalmaktadır. Sosyal baskının hakemler üzerindeki negatif yönlü etkilerini ele alan bir başka çalışmada benze sonuç ve önerilere yer vermiştir (Dawson & Dabson 2009). Araştırma kapsamında hakemlerin sayısal yönde az olması yada hakemlik görevinin ücret seviyesi ile bazı bildirimler tespit edilmiştir. Kim ve arkadaşlarına (2022) göre yeterli sayıda nitelikli hakem olmadan, spor organizasyonları spor etkinliklerine başarılı bir şekilde ev sahipliği yapamaz. Sportif yönetim organları sadece yeni hakem istihdam etmekle kalmamalı, aynı zamanda eğitim ve organizasyonel desteği geliştirerek hakemlerin, hakemlikten ayrılma oranlarını en aza indirmeye çalışmalıdır. Bu çabalara rağmen, birçok ülkede farklı spor dallarında hakem eksikliği yaşandığı bildirilmektedir (Hong ve ark., 2019). Araştırma sonucunda eskrim hakemlerinin belirtmiş oldukları negatif ve pozitif yönlü etkiler farklı katılımcılarla, farklı branş hakemleri ile yapılmış araştırmalarla benzerlik göstermektedir. Hakemlerin eğitim ve gelişimi için faaliyetler düzenlenmesi, onların sosyal ve manevi boyutta güçlendirilmesi, spor karşılaşmalarının adil ve problemsiz sonuçlanması için önem arz etmektedir.

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KATKI ORANI CONTRIBUTION RATE	AÇIKLAMA EXPLANATION	KATKIDA BULUNANLAR CONTRIBUTORS
Fikir ve Kavramsal Örgü <i>Idea or Notion</i>	Araştırma hipotezini veya fikrini oluşturmak <i>Form the research hypothesis or idea</i>	Tuncay SARIİPEK Yusuf BARSBUĞA
Tasarım <i>Design</i>	Yöntem ve araştırma desenini tasarlamak <i>To design the method and research design.</i>	Tuncay SARIİPEK Yusuf BARSBUĞA
Literatür Tarama <i>Literature Review</i>	Çalışma için gerekli literatürü taramak <i>Review the literature required for the study</i>	Tuncay SARIİPEK Yusuf BARSBUĞA
Veri Toplama ve İşleme <i>Data Collecting and Processing</i>	Verileri toplamak, düzenlemek ve raporlaştırmak <i>Collecting, organizing and reporting data</i>	Tuncay SARIİPEK Yusuf BARSBUĞA
Tartışma ve Yorum <i>Discussion and Commentary</i>	Elde edilen bulguların değerlendirilmesi <i>Evaluation of the obtained finding</i>	Tuncay SARIİPEK Yusuf BARSBUĞA

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