Vol. XXI, Issue 1 / 2020

G Y M N A S I U M

Scientific Journal of Education, Sports, and Health

Original Article

A Research on the Opinions of the School of Physical Education and Sports Students on the Video Assistant Referee System

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DOI: 10.29081/gsjesh.2020.21.1.01

Keywords*: football, Video Assistance Referee System, students.*

Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the opinions of the students in Physical Education and Sports School (PES) about the Video Assistance Referee System (VAR). The research was carried out at Cukurova University. Descriptive survey model was used in the research. A total of 84 students (60 male, 24 female) with a mean age of 21,82±3,21 participated in the study. As a result, it can be seen that School of Physical Education and Sports students have not fully positive opinions about the VAR system like many sections of the sports public and that there is a need for further development of the practice. It can be considered that the referees should be more careful and fair in deciding the level of education and practices of the referees in order to increase the level of success of VAR system and to be accepted by all the stakeholders of football.

1. Introduction

In all sports branches, athletes, coaches, managers, spectators, fans, media members and all other stakeholders expect the competitions to be managed impartially, fairly and accurately. In a sports branch that has become industrialized like football and has an economic size of 500 billion dollars as of 2013 (Ekmekçi, 2013) and today, with an economic size of trillion dollars, it has become a necessity, not an expectation, especially in recent years.

In this context, FIFA (The Fédération Internationale de Football Association), UEFA (European Football Federations Union), AFC (Asian Football Confederation), CAF (African Football Confederation), CONMEBOL (South Football Association) International football organizations such as the American

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Football Confederation), CONCACAF (North and Central America and the Caribbean Football Confederation) and OFC (Oceanian Football Confederation) are making great efforts. From time to time, these organizations organize referee training seminars, development courses, physical and conditional development programs, and psychological support programs in coordination with each other and from time to time independently. These systems are carried out by FIFA, UEFA and other continental federations in coordination with the country federations affiliated to them. Sports scientists are seriously supportive of these systems to maximize the performance of referees.

When national and international literature is examined in recent years, a great number of scientific researches related to physical, condition, psychological and social status of football referees are found. The following examples can be given in recent studies on football referees. When the national and international literature is examined in recent years, a great number of scientific researches related to the physical, condition, psychological and social status of football referees are encountered. The following examples can be given in recent studies on football referees. Similarly, Rontoyannis, Stalikas, Sarros, and Ve Vlastaris (1998) focused on the physiological, morphological and functional aspects of football referees and the physical and functional parameters required for the referees to be successful. Da Silva and Fernandez (2003), on the other hand, investigated the effects of the dehydration process on the referees by examining the physiological processes of football referees in the competition.

Riiser et al. (2018) studied the repeated speed skill tests of football referees and mentioned the relationship between referee performance and motoric features. Baştuğ et al. (2016), on the other hand, investigated the situation of these psychological features in football refereeing in their research on stress, self-confidence, and decision-making features of football referees. Efe, Öztürk and Koparan (2008), in their scientific research on the determination of the problem solving and assertiveness levels of the referees, touched on the relationship between the performance of football referees and their problem solving and assertiveness levels. In a study on the examination of the aggression types of football referees according to their classification levels, the status of the aggression feature in the referee profession was examined (Cengiz, Pulur and Cengiz, 2008).

Albayrak, İbiş and Kayışoğlu (2012), on the other hand, focused on the problems that football referees faced in their professional and family lives and examined the possible effects of their status on their referee performance. In their study, Özdayı and Uğurlu (2015) emphasized the importance of these components for refereeing by working on the relationship between emotional intelligence and communication skill levels of football referees. As it can be understood from the examples given in the literature, many different and different studies are carried out in order to ensure the development of football referees and to increase the performances. However, all these studies carried out by institutions and scientists managing football at national and international level could not prevent frequent referee mistakes.

Technological developments in recent years have shown themselves in sports as well as in all fields, and especially developing imaging communication technologies have started to be used in all fields of sports. In this context, intensive discussions have been made on the use of technological developments in the arbitration institution. Systems have been used in order to be able to watch controversial positions in different branches such as tennis (WTFO, 2019), volleyball (TVF, 2019) and increase the correct decision-making rates. Although the use of technology in football has been discussed extensively especially in the last 10-15 years, it was only possible with the introduction of the "Video Assistant Referee" (VAR) system in the last few years. Although football is a much more popular sport branch compared to branches like tennis volleyball, it is late in technology usage.

Orta (2018a) determined the situation as *"FIFA (Association of International Football Federations) has resisted the technology to enter into football, it is possible to manage football matches successfully, reducing the error rates. It has been explained that the technology has realized the necessity of entering the football in order to develop the management understanding".* FIFA allowed the use of video system for the first time to watch repetition of controversial positions in the friendly match between France and Italy on September 2016 (Orta, 2018a).

The "Video Referee Practice" used in controversial positions is applied in determining the wrongly scored goal, penalty, red card or wrongly penalized player. The system was activated when the referee asked for help for a decision or when a warning came from the VAR team and the event related to the match was examined from the video. The situation was reported to the referee via the communication set and the referee made his decision based on the information conveyed to him. When a warning came from the VAR team, the referee took his hand to his headset and stopped the game.

The referee then decided either with the information he received from the VAR team or made his final decision by watching the position once again from the screen on the field side (Orta, 2018b). It was seen that the VAR system was later used in many national and international leagues and organizations. However, the VAR system, which was put into practice with completely positive intentions, brought along many discussions like every new system. Discussions are held on many national and international platforms that defend, criticize and make recommendations for the VAR system.

The ongoing discussions in this context also attracted the attention of scientists. In the studies about the VAR system, the determinations and system statistics regarding the positive and negative aspects of the system started to be studied intensively.

In this study, it is aimed to reveal the opinions of the School of Physical Education and Sports students about the VAR system. In this way, it is thought that the opinions of these individuals who will take part in the sports environment after graduation can contribute to the relevant scientific literature.

2. Material and methods

Descriptive research model was used in the research. This model was used as a research design since it was evaluated based on the opinions of Çukurova University School of Physical Education and Sports based on the VAR system. The most prominent feature of the descriptive research model is that it describes an existing event or situation as it exists (Çepni, 2009).

Descriptive research, which is defined as a type of research that describes a phenomenon in its natural environment quantitatively or qualitatively, is frequently used in the field of social sciences. In the descriptive research pattern, the properties of science to observe, record, determine the relationships between events and reach generalizations on the invariant rules are used (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2000). Karasar (2008), on the other hand, defined descriptive research as research approaches aiming to describe a situation that exists in the past or still as it exists.

This research was performed at Çukurova University School of Physical Education and Sports. Descriptive scanning model was used in the research. 84 students (60 males, 24 females) with a mean age of 21.82 ± 3.21 participated in the study. A questionnaire form prepared by the researcher was used as a data collection tool. The survey questions include multiple choice and open-ended answers. The content of the questionnaire questions consisted of questions aiming to determine the awareness of the VAR system and to reveal the positive and negative opinions about the VAR system.

The data obtained after the data collection process with the above questionnaire was analyzed with SPSS 16.0 (SPSS, 2007) statistical package program. Descriptive statistics were applied on the measurements obtained in the study. All data obtained are summarized by descriptive statistical methods such as arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution. The summary findings obtained are presented with the help of tables.

3. Results and Discussions

As a result of analysing the data obtained in the study, the following findings were reached. In Table 1, findings regarding the participants' knowledge of the VAR system are presented.

Table 1. *Findings Regarding Participants' Knowledge of VAR System*

	Participants number (n)	**Percentage %**
I have not heard of the VAR system, I have no information	7	%8,33
I heard the VAR system but I don't have enough information	28	%33,33
I heard the system, I have detailed information	49	%58,33
Total	84	100

As seen in Table 1, 8.33% (7 people) of the participants did not hear the VAR system and had no knowledge of the system, 33.33% (28 people) heard of the VAR system but did not have enough information, 58%, 33 (49 people) stated that they heard the VAR system and had detailed information. In Table 2, the findings regarding how the participants look at the VAR system and their views are given.

Table 2. *Findings Regarding the Participants' Opinions on the VAR System*

	Participants number (n)	**Percentage %**
I think there are positive and negative aspects of the VAR System, so I am undecided about the continuation of the system.	43	51,20
I think the VAR system is completely positive and I think it should continue to be used	31	36,90
I am absolutely against the VAR system, I think it should be repealed	2	2,38
Total	84	100

As can be seen in Table 2, 51.20% (43 people) of the participants stated that they think that there are positive and negative aspects of the VAR System and therefore they are undecided about the continuation of the system. 36.90% (31 people) of the participants stated that they found the VAR system completely positive and thought that it should continue to be used. In contrast, 2.38% of the participants (2 people) stated that they were absolutely against the VAR system and thought it should be removed.

When the answers given to the open-ended questions asked in the study were examined, it was seen that they gave opinions on the following issues.

• “Whether the VAR system has been successfully implemented and whether it helps to make fair and correct decisions”,

• "Whether the VAR system protects the rights of large teams while adequately protecting the rights of other teams",

• “Whether the VAR referees are in good faith and whether they correctly inform the referee of the match”

• “Whether the VAR system can be applied in a technical and healthy manner (malfunction etc.)”

• “Whether the VAR system can be used more broadly in all arbitral awards”

Discussions

When the findings obtained in this study were examined, 8.33% (7 people) of the participants did not hear the VAR system and had no knowledge of the system, 33.33% (28 people) heard of the VAR system, but did not have enough information, 58%, 33 (49 people) stated that they heard the VAR system and had detailed information. In addition, 51.20% (43 people) of the participants stated that

they think that there are positive and negative aspects of the VAR System and therefore they are undecided about the continuation of the system. 36.90% (31 people) of the participants stated that they found the VAR system completely positive and thought that it should continue to be used. In contrast, 2.38% of the participants (2 people) stated that they were absolutely against the VAR system and thought it should be repeal. Şen, Özkan, Yilmaz, Bilici, and Kahraman (2018) reported in their study on 600 football fans that the percentage of those who positively viewed the VAR system was 82%, and that the rate of those who stated that football was played fairly thanks to the VAR system was 80.33%. With our study, Şen et al. (2018), it is seen that the positive viewers of the VAR system are similarly high.

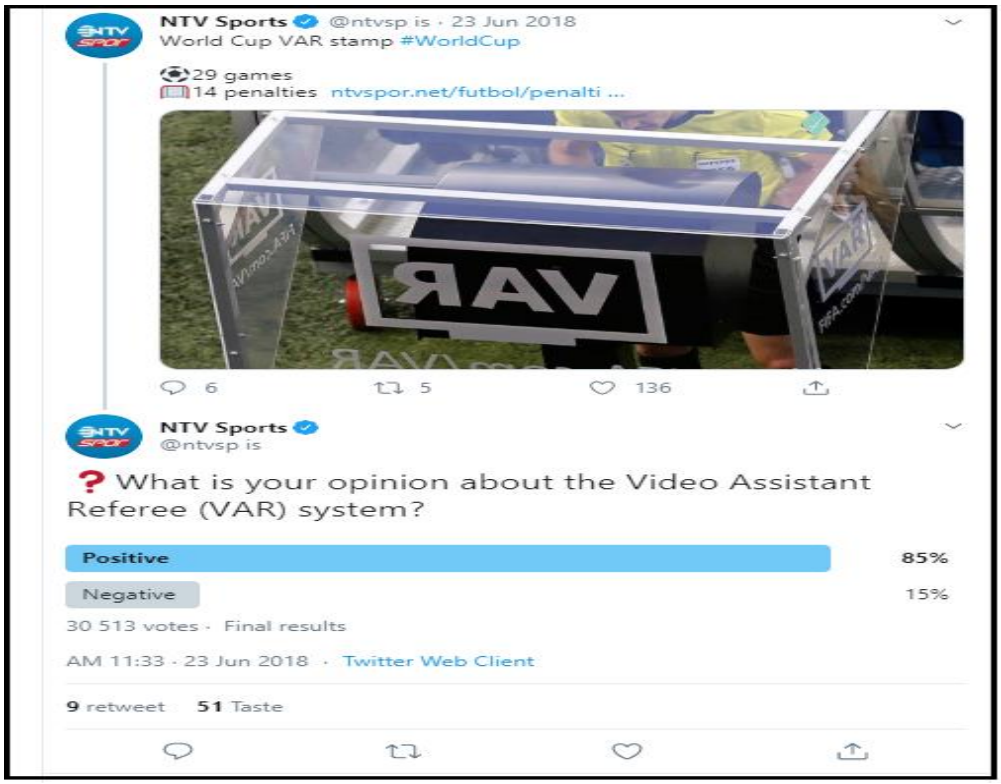

Figure 1. *An Online Survey Result about VAR System*

In a survey conducted on the website of the NTV Sports channel during the 2018 World Cup 30,513 votes were cast and 85% of the participants stated that they found the existing system positive, whereas 15% of the participants reported that they found the existing system negative (NTV Spor, 2019). The similarity of the findings obtained in these two studies conducted in similar populations and in a survey conducted online by a sports site suggests that the VAR system is generally viewed positively in our country.

When the answers given to the open-ended questions in our study were examined, it was seen that the participants were hesitant about the following issues. “Whether the VAR system has been successfully implemented, whether it helps fair and correct decision making accordingly”, “Whether the VAR system protects the rights of the big teams while protecting the rights of other teams”, “Whether the VAR referees have good intentions and whether they correctly inform the referee of the match.”, “Whether VAR system can be applied in a technically sound way”, “Whether VAR system can be used more comprehensively in all arbitrator decisions”. Engin and Çelik (2018) Turkey Football Super League, serving 5 as a result of qualitative research carried out by the referee if the correction of wrong decision of its VAR systems, ensuring justice, as the most suitable system for preventing injustice.

Uluöz and Nazlıcan (2018) reported that the content analyzed in their research in the national media, where they examined the content related to the VAR system, had some aspects supporting and criticizing the VAR system. Accordingly, "contributing to fair competition management", "media support", "audience and side satisfaction", "increase in confidence in referees", "increase in confidence in the Central Referee Board", "increase in the brand value of Country Football", " It has been reported that there are positive implications for issues such as “manager satisfaction and support”, “satisfaction and support of coaches and athletes”, “preventing financial losses”. In this study, the findings we obtained from open-ended questions are similar to those obtained by Engin and Çelik (2018) and Uluöz and Nazlıcan (2018). We believe that the VAR system in these three studies conducted in Turkey of the common emphasis on the positive aspects is a result of similar trends related issues in the football community.

When the opinions about the open-ended questions in our study were examined, it was seen that they were hesitant about the following issues: “Whether the VAR system was successfully implemented, whether it helped fair and correct decision making accordingly”, “Whether the VAR system adequately protects the rights of other teams while protecting the rights of big teams”. "Whether the VAR referees are well-intentioned and informing the referee of the match correctly", "Whether the VAR system can be applied in a technically healthy way", "Whether the VAR system can be used more broadly in all referee decisions". Hesitations on these issues have also been reported in some studies in the literature.

In the studies of Engin and Çelik (2018), they pointed out the positive aspects of the system, but in some cases they reported that there were disadvantages and related prejudices such as shaking the trust in the referee, the last word being in the middle referee and the final decision maker. Uluöz and Nazlıcan (2018) reported the following disadvantages in their studies regarding the VAR system: “continuing big team favoritism”, “delays in decision-making”, “decreased excitement in the game” and “inconsistencies in the referees in applying to the VAR system”. It has been reported that there are negative opinions such as "continuing injustice", "continuing distrust of referees", "violation of the nature of the sport", "excessive pause of the game", "audience reaction", "systematic failures and malfunctions".

Despite these similar and different views, according to Orta (2018b), 64 matches played in the 2018 FIFA World Cup have examined a total of 455 positions by VAR System. Orta (2018b) reported that the VAR system was not engaged in all positions, but only 20 of them intervened. While changing the decision of the referee in 17 of these 20 positions, he stated that he did not change the decision of the referee in 3 positions, and that the positions that the referee changed his decision were nine times a penalty decision and three times a cancellation.

Orta also reported that the referees twice exported the players from the 2nd yellow card, made a goal decision twice from the offside, and once changed their decision due to the card shown to the wrong player. The decision made by the VAR system in only 3 positions was implemented without being viewed by the referee. In the 455 positions examined; While 95.6% correct decision was made without using the VAR system, 99.35% correct decision was made with the VAR system. It has been reported that VAR achieved a high success rate of 99.35 percent in referee decisions (Orta, 2018b).

4. Conclusions

As a result, considering the numerical data about the VAR system, the opinions of the participants and the limited number of studies in the literature, it can be thought that the VAR system was considered as a general trend despite some reservations. Since the VAR system has a relatively recent system history of about two years, it is seen that a limited number of studies have been conducted when the literature on the subject is examined. We think that there is a need for more scientific research on the subject that covers the subject from different perspectives.

We also think that all stakeholders of football should reduce the pressure on the referees in good faith. We think that the institutions that manage football should do more work on the technical infrastructure, referee training, reward / penalty system that is necessary for the healthy use of the VAR system and to contribute more to football.

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