

Social Construction Of Justice In Refereeing In The Amateur Football Community In Sinjai District

Muh. Rizal Gunawan^{1A-E*}, Arifuddin Usman^{2B-D}, Muh. Adnan Hudain^{3B-D}

^{1,2,3} Universitas Negeri Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia

muhrizalgwn17@gmail.com¹, arifuddin.usman@unm.ac.id², muh.adnan.hudain@unm.ac.id³

ABSTRACT

Fairness in refereeing is an important element that greatly influences the course of a football match, including at the amateur community level. In Sinjai Regency, the amateur football community is developing quite actively. In this context, perceptions of referee fairness can play a big role in shaping social dynamics between various actors, such as players, coaches, referees, and supporters. Therefore, this study aims to examine how the social construction of justice in refereeing is formed in the amateur football environment in Sinjai Regency. The main focus of this study is individual perception, personal experience, as well as patterns of social interaction that occur during matches. This research was conducted using a quantitative approach and descriptive method. The research participants consisted of 40 people, including players, coaches, referees, and spectators, who were purposively selected. Data collection instruments included questionnaires and structured interviews, which were designed to gain a deeper understanding of their views on fairness in refereeing. The results showed that most respondents (75%) had a positive view of referee fairness, while 25% were neutral. In addition, 90% of respondents stated that they had good experiences with referees, while the rest were neutral. These findings indicate that refereeing in this community is effective, although further evaluation and training are needed to strengthen the objectivity and consistency of referee decisions in the future.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 2025/06/05

Accepted: 2025/06/16

Published: 2025/06/25

KEYWORDS

Social Construction;
Justice;
Refereeing;
Amateur Football;
Social Interaction.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

A. Conception and design of the study;
B. Acquisition of data;
C. Analysis and interpretation of data;
D. Manuscript preparation;
E. Obtaining funding

Cites this Article : Gunawan, Muh. Rizal; Usman, Arifuddin; Hudain, Muh. Adnan. (2025). Social Construction Of Justice In Refereeing In The Amateur Football Community In Sinjai District. **Competitor: Jurnal Pendidikan Kepeleatihan Olahraga**. 17(2), p.1076-1082

INTRODUCTION

Refereeing in sports, especially football, has a crucial role in maintaining fairness, integrity and sportsmanship. In amateur football communities, such as in Sinjai District, South Sulawesi, the role of referee faces unique challenges compared to the professional level. These challenges include limited formal training, social pressure, and personal relationships between the referee and the surrounding community, which can affect objectivity in decision-making.

In this context, the social construction of justice is important to study (Aspa, 2020). Justice is relative and influenced by cultural norms, social values, and group interests.

The social construction of justice refers to how people understand and interpret justice in social interactions (Jatra, 2017), including in refereeing. Social construction theory, proposed by Berger and Luckmann (2011), emphasises that social reality is formed through ongoing interactions.

Sinjai Regency is known to have a strong tradition in amateur football. Football is not just a sport, but a social space and community identity. This is where the role of amateur referees becomes very important. However, in carrying out their duties, they are often faced with a dilemma between formal rules and social demands. In various local tournaments, referee decisions are often a source of conflict that affects social relations and even the sustainability of the competition.

Some previous research, such as that conducted by Mascarenhas, Collins, and Mortimer (2004), shows the importance of referee training to improve the ability to make fair and consistent decisions. Meanwhile, Friman, Nyberg, and Norlander (2015) revealed that perceptions of fairness are strongly influenced by local culture and community values. In Indonesia, studies related to amateur refereeing are still minimal, although research by Kusuma, Salabi, and Marzuki (2023) has touched on the common challenges faced by amateur referees.

In the context of Sinjai, there are a number of factors that influence the social construction of justice in refereeing. First, local cultural norms such as the value of "siri" na pacce" (self-respect and empathy) can shape the way people perceive fairness. Second, personal relationships between referees and players or spectators can lead to bias or perceptions of non-neutrality. Third, the social and economic pressures referees face, as well as limited financial incentives, can affect motivation and integrity. Fourth, the lack of formal training means referees' decisions are often based on intuition or social influence.

This research is expected to make theoretical and practical contributions, especially in the realm of sports sociology. Theoretically, this study adds to the understanding of how social and cultural factors shape perceptions of fairness. From the practical side, the results of the study can be used as a basis for developing referee training that is in accordance with local values and supports the integrity of refereeing at the amateur level.

Furthermore, this study also has the potential to provide recommendations to local football associations and local governments in designing local culture-based training and creating conflict resolution mechanisms. By understanding the social construction of justice in this community, the research is expected to help build a refereeing system that is more fair, professional, and in accordance with the local socio-cultural context. The purpose of this study is to analyse the social construction of justice in amateur football refereeing.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method (Jariono et al., 2025) to deeply understand the social construction of justice in amateur football refereeing in Sinjai Regency. This approach was chosen because it is able to explore the perceptions

and subjective experiences of various parties, such as referees, players, coaches, and spectators. The research location in Sinjai Regency, South Sulawesi, was chosen because of its active amateur football community and strong social and cultural context.

The research was conducted in October 2024, involving 40 respondents consisting of referees, coaches, players, and supporters. Data collection was conducted by the researchers themselves through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Qualitative data analysis was conducted through a thematic approach, which included four stages: data reduction, coding, narrative data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This process aimed to identify key themes related to the perception and application of fairness in referee decisions in the field.

In addition to qualitative analysis, the data were also processed quantitatively to support the findings, especially the data obtained through questionnaires. This analysis is descriptive in nature to interpret the data systematically and draw conclusions that represent patterns of social construction of justice in the amateur football community in Sinjai. Thus, this research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches in a complementary manner to understand the phenomenon holistically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This research discusses the social construction of justice in refereeing in the amateur football community in Sinjai Regency. The data is presented through tables and diagrams from the questionnaire results. Geographically, Sinjai Regency is located in South Sulawesi, has a diverse topography and an active amateur football community. Sports activities are spread across nine sub-districts, especially in North Sinjai, which is the centre of social and sports activities. The football community includes village clubs, school teams and inter-district communities, with high participation from the community as players, coaches, referees and spectators.

Table 1.

Gender and age of the Amateur Football Community in Sinjai Regency

No.	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Men	34
		Women	6
	Total	40	100%
2	Age	18-24 Years	9
		25-34 Years	21
		35-44 Years	7
		45 Years and Above	3
	Total	40	100%

The study involved 40 respondents, consisting of 34 men (85%) and 6 women (15%). Based on age, the respondents were dominated by the 25-34 years group (52.5%), indicating high involvement of the productive age group. Their roles were equally divided between players, coaches, referees and spectators, with 25% each.

Table 2.

Results of descriptive analysis of research data on social construction of justice in refereeing in the amateur football community in Sinjai Regency

Statistics	Perceptions of Fairness in Refereeing	Experience and Social Interaction
N	40	40
Mean	23,85	15,95
Std. Deviation	3,95	2,39

The descriptive analysis consisted of two main aspects: perceptions of fairness in refereeing and social experiences and interactions. The mean value of perceived fairness was 23.85 with considerable variation (standard deviation 3.95), reflecting the non-uniformity of views on the fairness of refereeing decisions. Meanwhile, the mean of experience and social interaction was 15.95 with a lower deviation (2.39), indicating that this perception is more stable. This difference in perception is influenced by personal experience, understanding of the rules, and frequency of involvement in matches.

These results indicate that fairness in refereeing is not merely a matter of rules, but is also shaped by social experiences and interactions within the community. Therefore, increasing transparency, training, and equalising access to referee coaching is essential to improve perceptions of fairness at the amateur football level.

Discussion

This study aims to analyse how social construction towards fairness in refereeing is formed in the amateur football community of Sinjai Regency. The results of descriptive analysis show that the majority of respondents' perceptions of fairness in refereeing are in the good category. Of 40 respondents, as many as 35% stated "Strongly Agree" and 40% stated "Agree" that the referee led the match fairly, which means 75% of respondents gave positive responses. Meanwhile, 25% of respondents chose a "Neutral" answer, and no one stated "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree". This shows that negative perceptions of refereeing fairness are low, although there is still room for improvement in terms of the consistency of refereeing decisions, which is reflected in the mean perception value (23.85) and standard deviation (3.95).

This finding is in line with various previous studies. For example, Anderson and Pierce's (2017) study showed that perceptions of fairness in refereeing are influenced by previous experiences with referees and expectations of on-field leadership styles. Positive experiences encourage players to trust the fairness of the referee, as was also found in the Thai context.

Weinberg, McDonald, and Smith (2018) also emphasised the importance of transparency and communication in shaping perceptions of fairness. Communicated referee decisions, as well as good interaction with players, contribute to positive judgments. In addition, Jones and Fawcett (2019) emphasise that good training is necessary for referees to maintain consistency and strengthen social relationships with the football community.

Meanwhile, Taylor, Johnson, and Richards (2020) mentioned that pressure from players and spectators can affect the objectivity of referees. This is consistent with the

results of the research in Sinjai, which shows that there is a group of neutral respondents who may feel the impact of decision uncertainty due to external pressure.

Hancock, Williams, and Green (2021) support the need for technology-based evaluations, such as the use of video in referee training to improve decision-making skills and strengthen the fairness aspect of match leadership. On the other hand, Morris and O'Connor (2021) emphasise the importance of communication in building trust; referees who can convey decisions calmly are likely to receive support from players.

The importance of education is also discussed in the study by Evans, Thompson, and Robertson (2022), which shows that understanding the rules by players and coaches can reduce conflict and increase sportsmanship towards referee decisions. Teams that understand the rules are more likely to accept decisions gracefully.

Carter and Hughes (2023) revealed that community involvement in refereeing evaluation can improve the quality and trust of referees. A community-based approach with open feedback creates a more accountable evaluation system.

The psychological pressure faced by referees was also highlighted in a study by Lopez, Gonzalez, and Fernandez (2023). They found that stress due to excessive criticism can lead to emotional decisions and decrease the perception of fairness. In this context, it is important for referees to have pressure management strategies to remain objective.

Fernández, Silva, and Torres (2024) showed that the moral integrity of referees plays an important role in ensuring fairness. Referees with high ethical awareness tend to be more consistent and fair, despite being in stressful situations. The implementation of a strict referee code of conduct is a solution to maintain their credibility.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the social construction of fairness in refereeing in the amateur football community of Sinjai Regency is influenced by several important factors. First, effective referee training and evaluation are key to maintaining consistency of decisions (Jones & Fawcett, 2019; Hancock et al., 2021). Second, external pressure must be well managed to maintain objectivity (Taylor et al., 2020; Lopez et al., 2023). Third, good communication between referees, players, and coaches has been shown to increase acceptance of referee decisions (Weinberg et al., 2018; Morris & O'Connor, 2021). Fourth, education about refereeing is essential to reduce conflict (Evans et al., 2022). Finally, community involvement in monitoring and improving the quality of refereeing contributes greatly to a sense of fairness on the field (Carter & Hughes, 2023).

Thus, although the refereeing system in Sinjai Regency was generally rated positively, the results of this study provide several recommendations to improve the quality and perception of fairness, including further training for referees, improved communication, strengthening of the code of ethics, and community involvement in referee evaluation.

CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis showed that 75% of respondents considered refereeing in the amateur football community in Sinjai to be fair, while 25% were neutral, indicating the need to improve the consistency and transparency of referee decisions. In terms of

social interaction, 90% of respondents had a positive experience with the referee, while 10% were neutral, indicating a relatively harmonious relationship but not quite ideal. Academically, these findings reflect that perceptions of refereeing fairness are influenced by the quality of social interactions and consistency of leadership, which are important elements in building legitimacy in amateur sporting practices.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, J., & Pierce, T. (2017). Referee Fairness and Player Perception in Amateur Football. *Journal of Sports Ethics*, 32(4), 215-230.
- Aspa, A. P. (2020). The Effect of Endurance and Speed on the Performance of the National C1 Football Referee PSSI Riau Province. *Sports Centre: Journal of Physical Education and Sports (JPJO)*, 3(2), 116-122. <https://doi.org/10.31539/jpjo.v3i2.1044>
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (2011). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Open Road Media. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=Jcma84waN3AC>
- Carter, J., & Hughes, D. (2023). Community-Based Approaches to Refereeing Quality Improvement. *Journal of Amateur Sports Studies*, 17(1), 112-127.
- Evans, P., Thompson, G., & Robertson, L. (2022). The Role of Education in Fair Play and Refereeing. *International Journal of Coaching and Officiating*, 12(3), 195-210. <https://doi.org/10.17309/tmfv.2022.4.01>
- Fernández, B., Silva, P., & Torres, C. (2024). Ethical Standards and Decision-Making in Football Officiating. *Journal of Ethics in Sport*, 30(1), 57-74.
- Friman, M., Nyberg, C., & Norlander, T. (2015). Threats and Aggression Directed at Football Referees: An Empirical Phenomenological Psychological Study. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2004.1908>
- Hancock, C., Williams, S., & Green, T. (2021). Training and Evaluation of Referees in Amateur Football. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 19(4), 265-278.
- Jariono, G., Usman, A., Ihsan, A., & Nurhidayat, N. (2025). *Physical Education and Sport Research Methods* (1st ed.). Depok: RajaGrafindo Persada.
- Jatra, R. (2017). The Effect of Extensive Interval Training Methods and Fartlek on the Speed Endurance Ability of Padang City Football Referees. *Journal Sport Area*, 2(1), 79. [https://doi.org/10.25299/sportarea.2017.vol2\(1\).594](https://doi.org/10.25299/sportarea.2017.vol2(1).594)
- Jones, P., & Fawcett, D. (2019). Referee Development and Consistency in Decision Making. *Journal of Sport Management*, 21(1), 88-102.
- Kusuma, D., Salabi, M., & Marzuki, I. (2023). Fairplay Character in Football Sport: Perspectives of Coaches, Athletes, and Referees. *Scientific Journal of Mandala Education*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.58258/jime.v9i1.4187>
- Lopez, M., Gonzalez, R., & Fernandez, A. (2023). Psychological Pressure on Referees in Amateur Leagues. *Journal of Applied Sports Psychology*, 25(2), 80-96.

- Mascarenhas, D., Collins, D., & Mortimer, P. (2004). Elite Refereeing Performance: Developing a Model for Sport Science Support. *Sport Psychol*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.19.4.364>
- Morris, R., & O'Connor, F. (2021). Referee Communication and Social Interaction in Football. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 36(5), 329-345.
- Weinberg, R., McDonald, J., & Smith, L. (2018). Social Construction of Justice in Sports Officiating. *International Journal of Sport Sociology*, 27(2), 145-162.