

Comparison of the Refereeing Structure of Iranian Football and Selected Asian, Oceanic and European Continents

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Abstract

Purpose: Investigating the refereeing structure of professional football in selected countries of Asia, Oceania and Europe and comparing it with Iran.

Method: The descriptive-analytical research method is based on the comparative approach. Australia from the continent of Oceania, Japan from Asia and England from Europe have been selected purposefully and on the basis of having a higher professional league level and a lead in the respective continent according to the geographical position as the geographical level of adaptation. Information was collected through library documents, websites, scientific articles and documents and analyzed in the form of Beredy's model (description, interpretation, Juxtaposition and comparison).

Results: The findings showed that Iran pays the lowest and England the highest salary to its referees, and except for Iran, three other countries have full-time referees (monthly salaries). All countries have set a minimum age for becoming a referee. The highest number of Premier League teams is England with 20 and the lowest is Australia with 12 teams. Japan has the most experienced referees with 40.81 and Australia has the youngest average age of judges with 35.91. Iran has the least number of referees and assistant referees with 22 and England has the highest number of referees with 42. Also, the findings show that England has the most professional leagues (five leagues), the highest classification of referees (11 categories) and the most modern refereeing technology.

Conclusion: It is necessary to use the successful experience of the selected countries and follow them as appropriate examples by those involved in the field of arbitration in order to move on the path of progress and becoming professional in the arbitration of the country.

Keywords: Structure of Football Refereeing, Professional Sports, Comparative Study, Selected Countries.

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Introduction

Today, it can be safely said that professional sports have a special and privileged position among the enthusiasts. In order to generate income, professional sports are considered as an important part of the sports industry, and if the public's acceptance of a particular sport is high, professional athletes in that sport will have high financial rights. Football is one of these sports. Due to the fact that this field has a special place among all sports fields, it has become a global phenomenon, and due to its social, cultural, political and economic dimensions, there are no limits for It was imagined (García-Sánchez, 2007).

Football referees are one of the valuable human resources and representatives of the referees committee and at the that head of the football federation in the field of sports competitions (Ramezani-Nejad et al., 2018). Referees as one of the main pillars of football compared to the other two pillars, i.e. players and coaches, who work professionally in different dimensions and in terms of conditions and facilities; Unfortunately, they have been neglected in Iran and have fallen behind in the field and category of professionalism. For example, by examining the financial situation of referees with other countries with professional refereeing, it can be seen that the salary of Iranian football referees is very low compared to their colleagues in other prestigious leagues of the world. So that in Iran referees receive a small amount (compared to players, coaches, etc) as wages for each game they judge. In England, referees of the Premier League receive a fixed salary based on monthly experience, and they are also paid for judging each game. Thus, in the Premier League, professional referees with a lot of judging experience earn more than 130,000 dollars annually, and in addition to the basic salary, they also receive a bonus of about 2,000 dollars for judging each game. In addition to receiving a fixed monthly salary of \$3,200, referees in the Italian Serie A league are also

paid \$4,000 for judging each game. Among the prestigious European leagues, the Spanish La Liga pays the highest salaries to its referees, so that in addition to the fixed monthly salary, the middle referees receive an amount of 5400 dollars for refereeing each game (Murphy, 2021).

Another problem of refereeing in Iranian football compared to other leading countries in the field of football, such as England, Spain, Italy, Germany, etc., is due to the fact that all the referees of the Iranian Premier League have their own main job. They are not considered full-time employees of the federation, and for this reason, they do not have the conditions of salaries and pensions, pension insurance and other welfare facilities through football, and the federation or the referees' committee can terminate cooperation with them at any time. Despite this lack of psychological security due to the lack of job security (as a referee) and... it is a misplaced expectation that the referees would spend most of their time and energy on the refereeing profession. Despite the prevailing conditions, it can be expected that some referees will say goodbye to the world of judging due to job conflict (such as the problem of vacation) and despite their high ability; As in the past, we have witnessed the resignation of many prominent and experienced people. Therefore, one of the most important factors in creating favorable conditions for judges is the issue of mental security and peace of judges, and one of the most important reasons for its creation can be related to job and financial security, which was stated in the interview. It has been mentioned repeatedly by referees; The job and financial security of referees will not be possible unless refereeing is accepted as a profession and, in simpler words, becomes professional.

So that in some developed countries (in terms of football) and in places where refereeing is done professionally, referees are considered as employees of the federation and retired from

the job of refereeing. Despite the creation of such conditions (financial security, health insurance, and social security during employment and retirement), judging is no longer considered an extra program for them, but will be considered one of the main programs, and the referees are also required to raise the quality of their own performance and on the other hand, the federation and the judges' committee can hold them accountable for poor and inappropriate judgment and vice versa.

Due to the fact that football referees are an important part of the human force in football and also despite the importance and sensitivity of their role in organizing better sports competitions, few researches in the field of refereeing profession. Other human resources available in football such as athletes, coaches and sports managers have been conducted and these researches have often focused on specific and limited aspects. The first research in the field of football refereeing was started by Taylor and Daniel (1988) on the stress of football referees.

Recent studies on referees in Iran include different dimensions and variables, which can be referred to the following studies:

The results of the study by Loqmani and Ramezani-Nejad (2014) indicated that independence in work, task identity and feedback are the most important job characteristics affecting the job of football referees. Saidi-Kian (2014), showed in their research that the low level of salary and benefits of Iranian football referees is the most important job injury. Rafiei et al. (2017) found that from the point of view of the referees, among the factors affecting the judgment of the referees, five components are important, including factors related to the day of the competition, external factors, cultural factors, time factors, and job and salary factors. There have been more. In Emami et al.'s research (2021), the most important indicators of

professional competences of referees in Iran's premier football league were: dimensions of sociological, managerial, psychological, physical, and field competences. E, technical, and the dimension of knowledge competences. Shajie et al. (2022), In their research, identified 57 cases of injury in Iran's football refereeing department in their research, among which structural, background and behavioral injuries in the human group of referees are of great importance. Fahimi and Shajie (2023), In their research came to the conclusion that the analysis of moral ideology in the world of sports, games and competition is not as simple as it seems. In any case, solving ethical issues in Iranian sports without considering the intellectual and ideological foundations is an action that will not only not solve the problem but will add to its complexity.

The results of Briyan's research (2004) showed that Italian Serie A referees receive the highest salary among other European leagues, so that they are paid between 15,000 and 32,400 euros annually before the start of the season, and also for Each judgment is paid separately, about 5000 euros. After Italy's Serie A league, the referees of Germany's Bundesliga are in the second place with an amount of about 3000 euros received for each game. The referees of the Premier League of England are in the 10th place in the European leagues with the amount of 570 euros received for each game, although each of the referees of the Premier League of England is paid 23 thousand euros annually and before the start of the season. Also, the results show that the referees of the League of Azerbaijan are in the last position among the European leagues in terms of salary.

Lin (2007), in his research, came to the conclusion that several factors can affect the decision-making process of a referee, but the key element in such cases is the presence of a large and noisy crowd of fans of the host team, which is affected by the noise of these fans Anxiety increases.

The findings of Al-Abidi's research (2018) indicated that the job characteristics, professional commitment and job satisfaction of Iraqi football referees are in a good condition.

In relation to the review of the history related to the research topic, it should be acknowledged that one of the few comparative researches that have been conducted regarding Iran's football refereeing with other countries is related to the research of Abdi et al, (2010). The title of this research was a comparative study of the situation of football refereeing in Iran and England. The results of these findings showed that Iran's football refereeing organization does not match England's and the evidence shows that the refereeing organization in England is very diverse and scattered compared to Iran. Also, in this regard, Ali Gil et al. (2022) with a comparative study of refereeing and general self-efficacy between elite football and hockey referees of Pakistan showed that football referees and technical officials have physical fitness, knowledge of the game, decision-making, communication and They have a high referee self-efficacy score compared to hockey referees. Also, the results of this study show that although football and hockey referees have the same level of self-efficacy, the pressure of hockey referees is more than that of football during the match.

Reviewing the history of research variables (both domestic and foreign), shows that despite the fact that the field of refereeing has a share of scientific research, but comparative research, especially in the field of Professional football refereeing is considered one of the nascent studies that has been neglected by past researchers, and previous studies have mostly dealt with various issues other than comparative studies in the field of football refereeing, so there is a need for research Comprehensive studies, especially in the field of comparative studies with advanced countries in this field, are more felt in order to smooth the

ways of success in the arbitration sector through the use of the experiences of successful countries in this field. Based on these studies, planners and decision-makers can take useful steps towards achieving modern systems by modeling advanced countries (according to the cultural, social and economic standards of their country). to provide the ground for the development of their country, which comparative study in the field of professional football refereeing is not an exception to this rule.

Since football refereeing in all age groups and leagues of the country, especially the Premier League, is considered as a side profession, therefore, referees have many problems to work in this field, such as: conflict between jobs, The major and profession of arbitration, career future, insurance and retirement concerns, etc. are facing. Therefore, this issue can lead to one of the important factors in the withdrawal of judges from the judging scene. However, by analyzing the obstacles facing refereeing from a professional point of view, it is possible to examine the various dimensions of professionalism in refereeing and reduce existing problems, concerns and conflicts to a minimum. Paying attention to this issue can be very important from the point of view that a lot of time, energy and expenses are spent over the years to educate, train and produce skilled referees, which on the other hand can lead to favorable results through Paying attention to the effective factors in training, attracting, employing and retaining skilled referees, or on the other hand, causes the waste of funds due to inattention, in the aforementioned matters.

Therefore, according to the mentioned materials, in the development of the country's refereeing, achieving the best and most efficient methods in training, recruiting, employing and retaining referees is the researcher's concern. Therefore, the researcher intends to make a comparative study in this field with the aim of using the researches and experiences of other

countries, especially the developed countries. With a comparative study, Iran's arbitration system with other countries of the world (developed and successful) can find out the differences and commonalities in terms of structure and other factors, and in this way and by identifying the obstacles and problems, the necessary effort towards Formulating strategies and providing effective and useful solutions in solving existing obstacles and problems. One of the most important reasons for the necessity of applying comparative studies in the field of arbitration is to examine and study the issues and problems of other countries in the world and to use the experiences. Because this work makes him aware of the causes and methods of special planning, the goals and the extent of their achievement, the training of different methods, plans, failures, solutions and experiences of other countries and the occurrence of gross and unnecessary mistakes as well as To prevent the wastage of material and spiritual capital in the country. It is also possible to take advantage of effective experiences and applied methods in setting programs, according to the cultural, social and economic situation of the considered society.

Since many years have passed since the beginning of comparative studies in the field of sports, it can be safely said that this research in the field of football refereeing has not had much history and has a limited scope. On the other hand, the discussion of refereeing, like other parts of football, has taken a scientific form. Therefore, based on all the mentioned contents, it is necessary to apply this method in professional football refereeing in Iran and the world, and accordingly, it is necessary to conduct research regarding the identification of obstacles and effective solutions in the field of professionalization of refereeing in order to comprehensively plan and also realize the mentioned items And in order to improve the quality level of judging (through professionalization) in football refereeing of the Premier League, it is completely tangible and

tangible. Therefore, due to the lack of research in the past and the feeling of its necessity, taking into account the importance of the role of referees and the existence of their possible problems and shortcomings in this field and its results, it seems necessary to conduct research in this regard.

Therefore, considering the existence of differences in the cultural, social, economic and political characteristics of the countries, this research aims to systematize the subject without any bias of the current realities and by using a comparative study to answer the research questions regarding the status of the refereeing structure of Iranian football and selected countries. In this way, by explaining the points of commonality and difference and taking into account the various conditions and contexts that lead to solving the disorders and repairing the shortcomings, discuss and draw conclusions. Finally, to answer the question what are the differences and commonalities between the refereeing structure of Iran's professional football and football refereeing in selected countries of Asia (Japan), Oceania (Australia) and Europe (England)?

Materials and Methods

The method of the current research is descriptive-analytical, which was done using comparative studies and through content analysis of documents. This research compares the similarities and differences in the field of study with a comparative approach, and for this purpose it has used George Beredy's method, which includes four stages of description, interpretation, juxtaposition and comparison, respectively. Based on this fourfold pattern, from the first to the last stage, it is done as follows

1. Description stage: the researcher should describe the studied phenomena based on the evidence and information obtained from different sources (through direct observation, study of documents and reports of others).

2. Interpretation stage: This stage includes a complete and detailed verification of the information that the researcher has described in the first stage (examination and analysis of the information described in the first stage). In fact, the goal of the researcher is to describe the characteristics of a specific situation or a specific subject in an objective and systematic way.

3. Neighboring or juxtaposition stage: During this stage, the information obtained and analyzed in the previous stages are classified and by putting them together, a framework is provided for a better and easier comparison of the similarities and differences of the phenomenon under investigation next level.

4. Comparison stage: This stage is considered the last stage of conducting comparative studies, during which, the research problem that the researcher briefly passed on in the previous stages (especially in the juxtaposition stage) with exact attention It is examined in detail based on similarities and differences. Also, the research questions are answered at this stage.

Collecting the desired information (according to the goals and questions asked) in this research through FIFA official sites, confederations of each continent and federations, documents, documents, evidence, scientific articles, works, writings, related books and finally e-mail and WhatsApp (For further explanation and clarification of the collected data) with specialists in the target countries have been done. After collecting, this information was classified and finally analyzed and evaluated according to the four mentioned steps.

The statistical population of the research consisted of 112 federations present in three selected continents (Asia 46 members, Oceania 11 members and Europe 55 members) which are official members of FIFA. In between, 3 countries England (Europe), Japan (Asia) and Australia (Oceania) due to the geographic

location of the mentioned continents along with Iran were selected in a targeted manner and based on having a national status and professional league level higher than other member countries in the respective continent in the field of football (all three selected countries are ranked in their respective continent both in terms of national status and professional league level) based on the scoring and ranking of reliable sources (As to the FIFA site, International Federation of Football History & Statistics and the teamform website) as well as the available information were considered as the geographical level of comparison. Since football referees are more busy judging in their country's leagues than national games, therefore, according to this issue, the level of their professional league was more the basis of work. Also to determine the validity and reliability in this research, the collaborative consensus method was used. In this way the opinions of the experts themselves have been used so that those who have been interviewed have seen the material and expressed their agreement in this regard.

Results

Question 1. How are the conditions for entering the field of football refereeing in selected countries? What are their similarities and differences?

The findings showed that in Iran, the age requirement for becoming a referee is at least 17 and at most 27 years old (applicants over 27 years old can also participate in the course, but only the 3rd grade referee certificate belongs to them and their details are not registered in the federation system, so they are not allowed to be promoted to higher levels). The existence of a medical certificate of physical health is required to enter the field of refereeing, and passing theoretical and practical training courses for those interested, as well as success in the written test with at least 75% of the total marks and passing the FIFA physical fitness test. Another requirement is to be a referee. The

registration and submission of applications for refereeing applicants in Iran is done through the person in charge of the training of the referees committee of the cities or provinces, then if the class reaches the maximum number, the details of the participants are mandatory and centralized by The referees' committee (by the IT manager of the provincial football board) takes place in the training system of the football federation. Also, the educational requirements of those who are interested have been set at least at the end of middle school. After the completion of the course, the 3rd grade referee certificate will be issued after passing the scientific and practical tests with the signature of the head of the board and the judges' committee of the relevant province. Also, in order to receive a 3rd grade referee card, the participants must have 6 months of continuous activity (making 20 referees or assistant referees) and this card will be issued by the province at the appropriate time (Regulations of the Committee of Football Referees, 2014).

In Japan, the minimum age to enter the field of refereeing is 15 years, and having perfect physical health by presenting a health certificate and also participating in training courses are among the necessary conditions to enter the field of refereeing. Registration and submission of application through the system are considered as other requirements for attending the course. Also, a certain amount of education along with the presence of other necessary conditions in order to enter the field of refereeing was not observed in Japan.

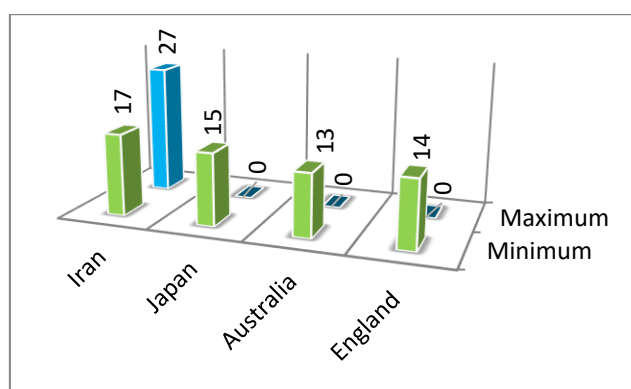
In Australia, the minimum age to enter the field of football refereeing is 13 years and the maximum age is not determined and the criterion of passing the physical test. It is

possible to register and submit an application to participate in the course through the Australian Football Federation (FFA) system, and before attending the class online, applicants must complete all parameters of the rules of the game, which consists of 40 multiple-choice questions. successfully pass the test and after passing the game rules online test, they will be issued a license to attend the course. Therefore, the participants must present their certificate before the implementation of the training program (Australian Officiating Development Schedule, 2018).

In England, the minimum age to enter the field of refereeing is 14 years (No maximum age limit). The presence of perfect physical health and the completion of specialized eye examinations, passing the exam and registration in the Union of the province of residence are considered necessary conditions to enter the field of refereeing, but there is no specific amount of education in this field in England. Among the other necessary conditions, it is possible to mention the completion of the game rules module online before the face-to-face training, participation in the child care training workshop, and receiving a no-criminal background check for applicants aged 18 and older. The course is held in two stages, so that in the first part, the knowledge and understanding of the rules of the game is implemented theoretically (getting at least 80% of the total score) and then participation in the second part, which includes the application and practice of the rules. It emphasizes more on the practical aspects and how to implement the rules on the playing field, and then a physical fitness test is taken (England Football Association, 2023).

Table 1. Adjacency or Juxtaposition conditions for entering the field of football refereeing in selected countries

Entry Requirements Country	Age condition (Year)	physical health	Training course	Passing the test	Register and apply	Level of education	Other conditions
Australia	At least 13 There is no maximum	Health certificate	*	*	Register in the system	---	Completing the rules of the game online and passing the test before participating in the training course
Iran	Minimum 17 Maximum 27	Health certificate	*	*	Application and registration in the committee of referees cities and provinces	At least the end of middle school	People over 27 years of age have the right to participate in the course, provided they are not promoted to higher grades.
Japan	At least 15 There is no maximum	Health certificate	*	*	Register in the system	---	---
England	At least 14 years There is no maximum	complete physical health and specialized eye examinations	* two-stage training	*	* Registration in the union of the province of residence	---	1. Completing or completing the game rules module online before face-to-face training 2. Participation in the childcare workshop 3. Receiving an inquiry about the absence of bad history for applicants under 18 years of age

**Figure 1. The minimum and maximum age to enter the field of football refereeing in selected countries**

Similarities:

A. All the studied countries have set minimum age requirements to enter the field of refereeing.

B. All countries (except Iran) applicants for arbitration must personally submit their application and registration through the federation system and do it virtually.

C. Health certificate, passing the training course along with passing the exam is important for all countries.

D. The countries of Japan, Australia and England have not considered an age limit (maximum age) to enter the field of refereeing.

E. In the countries of Australia and England, it is mandatory to complete the rules of the game online and pass the test before participating in the training course.

Differences:

A. By setting at least 17 years, Iran has set the highest age for entering the field of refereeing among the selected countries.

B. Among the 4 countries under study, only in Iran, application and registration for refereeing must be done through the referees' committees of cities or provinces.

C. Among the selected countries, Australia has the lowest age limit of 13 years and Iran has the highest age limit of 27 years.

D. Only in Iran, in addition to specifying the minimum age, the maximum age to enter the field of refereeing has also been determined.

E. The minimum educational qualification of the refereeing applicant is required only in Iran.

F. Only in England, the absence of a bad background is one of the conditions allowed to enter the field of refereeing.

G. One of the special conditions of England is to participate in a child care workshop, which is

not considered in other countries.

Question 2. How are referees classified in selected countries? What are their similarities and differences?

Investigations showed that football referees in Iran are from the lowest level to the highest in 5 levels and in the form of: 3rd grade referees, 2nd grade, 1st grade referees, national referees and finally international referees and assistant referees they are leveled. 3rd grade referees with the minimum age of 17 and maximum 27 years of age enter the field of refereeing and can judge in city competitions and, if the referees committee deems fit, in the competitions of that province. 2nd grade referees, having a maximum age of 30 years to receive this level, will be able to judge in provincial competitions and, if qualified, in the age group competitions of the Federation. First-class referees, with a maximum age of 33 years to receive this level, can judge in provincial competitions and, if the referees' committee deems fit, in age group competitions and in the country's amateur league. Having a maximum age of 37 to receive this level, national referees will be able to judge in provincial competitions and also with the recognition of the referees' committee in the competitions of the federation or professional league organization (premier league). International referees and assistant referees will be able to judge in provincial competitions and with the recognition of the referee committee in the competitions of the federation or professional league organization, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and also FIFA (Regulations of the Committee of Football Referees, 2014).

Referees in Japan are divided into 5 levels and are classified as 4th class, 3rd class, 2nd class, 1st class and international class. Those who are interested in refereeing football in Japan to participate in class 4 with the age requirement of at least 15 years can enter the field of refereeing and judge in the competitions organized by football associations at the city

and local level. Class 3 referees with at least 18 years of age can judge in competitions organized by provincial football unions. Class 2 referees can judge in the matches organized by the regional football association. Class 1 referees can officiate in competitions organized by the JFA, especially the highest level of competitions, J1 League (Rules for Referees and Coaches of Japan, 2022). Finally, referees of international class or FIFA, having at least 25 years for referees and 23 years for assistant referees, can participate in all competitions organized by JFA (J1 League), the relevant federation, Asian Football Confederation (AFC), and FIFA to judge.

Football referees in Australia are classified in 5 levels as level four, level three, level two, level one and international level (FIFA). Level 4 referees with an age requirement of at least 13 years can enter the field of refereeing and judge in youth and youth competitions. Level 3 referees with an age requirement of at least 16 years can judge in youth competitions up to the lower level of adult competitions. Level 2 referees with an age requirement of at least 18 years can judge in youth to adult competitions. Level 1 referees with a minimum age requirement of 18 years will be able to officiate in A-League matches (Australian Referee Development Program, 2018). At the international level, referees with an age requirement of at least 25 years and assistant referees with at least 23 years of age in all competitions related to the federation, especially the A-League and competitions planned by the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) and FIFA will also judge.

Football referees in England are classified in 11 levels as follows: level 9: trainee referees, At

least 14 years old, they enter the field of refereeing and judge in local and amateur competitions. level 8: youth (referees under 16 years old), With the age requirement of 14 to 16 years old, they can judge in competitions under 16 years old. level 7: teenagers (amateur leagues - class 3 referees of the province), With the condition of being at least 16 years old, they can judge in amateur leagues. level 6: County referees (amateur leagues - class 2 referees of the province), They can judge in provincial leagues. level 5: Senior County referees (provincial leagues - class 1 referees of the province), They can judge in provincial leagues. level 4: referees of the supply league (supply or reserve), They can judge in supply or supply leagues.

level 3 referees: referees of the Contributory league - Auxiliary or cooperative (auxiliary or cooperative leagues), They can judge in auxiliary or partnership leagues. level 2b referees: panel referees (North and South Conference), They can judge in the North and South Conference matches. 2a level referees: selected panel referees (top conference or association), They can judge in the central league of the football conference and the elimination cup and as assistant referees of the national list. level 1: national list referees. They can judge in Premier League and Football League matches. And finally International referees with the age requirement of at least 25 years (for referees) and at least 23 years (for assistant referees) will be able to judge in all the matches planned by the federation, especially in the Premier League competitions, the Football Confederation Europe (UEFA) and also FIFA Overview of English Refereeing (2023).

Table 2. Adjacency or Juxtaposition classification of referees in selected countries

Classification type	Grouping of referees	Age condition (year)	Level of judgment
Australia	Level 4	At least 13	Junior and youth competitions
5 levels	Level 3	At least 16	Junior competitions to the lower level of adult competitions
	Level 2	At least 18	Junior to adult competitions
	Level 1	At least 18	A-League matches
		At least 25 Referees)(
	International level	At least 23 Assistant referees)(A-League and overseas competitions
Iran	3rd grade referees	Minimum 17 maximum 27	County competitions (at the discretion of the referees committee, judging in the competitions of that province)
	2nd grade referees	Maximum 30	Provincial competitions (if qualified to judge in age group competitions of the Federation)
	1 st grade referees	Maximum 33	Provincial competitions (at the discretion of the referees' committee in age group and amateur league competitions)
	National referees	Maximum 37	Provincial competitions (and with the recognition of the referees' committee in the competitions of the federation or professional league organization)
	International referees and assistant referees	At least 25 (Referees) At least 23 (Assistant referees)	Provincial competitions (and with the recognition of the referees' committee in the competitions of the federation or professional league organization) and overseas competitions
Japan	Class 4 referees	At least 15	Competitions organized by football associations at the regional/city/local level
	Class 3 referees	At least 18	Competitions organized by provincial football unions
	Class 2 referees	---	Competitions organized by regional football unions
	1st class referees	---	Tournaments organized by JFA, especially J League 1
	Referees of international class or FIFA	At least 25 (referees)	All competitions organized by JFA (J1 League) and the relevant federation, Asian Referee Committee and FIFA
England	Level 9 (trainee	At least 14 years	Judging in local and amateur competitions

(11 levels)			referees)
Level 8 (Youth)	14-16 years	Competitions under 16 years	
Level 7 (youths - referees of class 3 of the province)	At least 16 years old	Amateur leagues	
Level 6 (referees of the province - referees of class 2 of the province)	---	Provincial leagues	
Level 5 (senior referees of the province - class 1 referees of the province)	---	Provincial leagues	
Level 4 (Supply, Supply or Reserve League Referees)	---	Supply or supply leagues	
Level 3 (contributory, auxiliary or collaborative league referees)	---	Auxiliary or partnership leagues	
2b level (panel referees)	---	North and South Conference	
2a level (selected panel judges - the best of the conference or forum)	---	Central league matches - football conference and elimination cup - assistant referees of the national list	
Level 1 (referees of the national list)	---	Premier league and football league matches	
International level	At least 25 years (referees)	Premier League and international competitions	
	At least 23 years (assistant referees)		

Similarities:

A. Except for England, the rest of the countries in question have placed their referees in 5 levels or grades.

B. In all the selected countries, in order to be placed at the international level in accordance with FIFA, the minimum age requirement for referees is 25 years and for assistant referees at least 23 years.

C. In all the studied countries, it is planned in such a way that the lowest grade or level of refereeing is reserved for judging in the category of infants and teenagers, and the level

of refereeing is also improved in proportion to the improvement of the level of judging.

D. In the 4 selected countries, the highest level of refereeing is reserved for international referees.

E. The countries of Japan and Australia have set the first level of entering refereeing as level or class 4.

F. All selected countries have set a minimum age to enter the field of refereeing.

Differences:

A. The lowest age in the selected countries to

enter the field of refereeing belongs to Australia with 13 years of age and the highest belongs to Iran with 17 years of age.

B. Only in Iran, the first level of entering the field of refereeing is 3rd grade.

C. The highest number of classifications or refereeing levels with 11 levels is related to England.

Question 3: How are the status of wages, possibilities and facilities paid to referees at the highest level of the league in the selected countries? What are their similarities and differences?

In the Premier Football League of Iran, referees are only paid in the form of a fee for judging each game, and there is no fixed monthly salary for them. In fact, there are no full-time referees or assistant referees in the structure of Iran's premier football league. To judge a game, the salary of referees is 99 dollars, and for assistant referees is 72 dollars, as well as 44 dollars for the fourth referee. In terms of insurance, only accident insurance is granted to referees by the federation, and also referees must have sports insurance (sports accidents) in order to participate in sports activities, which is mandatory. There are no other insurances, including pension and other insurances, as well as other facilities such as referees' charity fund, referees' union to deal with their problems etc, in Iran (Abdi et al., 2010).

In Japan, referees are paid 1000 dollars for each game and an assistant referee is paid 500 dollars for judging the highest level of football matches (J1 League). Since out of 22 middle referees present in the league, only 14 referees (middle) along with 4 assistant referees (out of 44 present assistant referees) are full-time (full-time) in the Japanese league and are fixed like a salaried employee. Apart from the remuneration for judging each game, they also receive a monthly salary, so the salaried referees have an average annual fixed income of 80 thousand dollars. The rest of the referees,

including the middle referee and assistant referees, are paid for judging each game and do not have a fixed salary and do not have any employment relationship with the federation. In terms of insurance, referees are covered by accident insurance, so injured referees receive up to two months' salary from the federation. Also, full-time referees have pension insurance, but other insurance services are not considered in Japan. In Japanese football, the referees' union is composed of experienced referees who follow up on referees' problems, whether they deal with financial, family problems, or any other demands they have from the federation and the referees' committee.

In Australia, a referee (middle) to judge at the highest level of football matches (A-League) receives \$1,500 for each game, and an assistant referee receives \$900. In the Australian A-League, out of a total of 14 middle referees and 28 assistant referees, only 4 referees (middle) are fixed as salaried employees and receive a monthly salary, the rest of the referees (both middle referees and all assistant referees) are paid for each game and so they do not have any employment relationship with their place of work. Regarding insurance, referees have accident insurance and they can get health insurance at their own expense and use the benefits of that insurance. Since all referees and assistant referees are not full-time, therefore only 4 full-time middle referees (about 11% of referees) are paid compulsory retirement. But in Australian football, the referees' union has been formed to follow up on their affairs, consisting of retired referees along with all the active referees of the A-League.

In English football, all referees in the Premier League are full-time and are fixed like a salaried employee, and in addition to the fixed annual salary, they also receive a separate salary for refereeing each game. Also, full-time necessary assistant referees have a fixed annual salary just like referees and they also receive the salary of refereeing each game. In the

English Premier League, referees' salaries are different based on their experience and role, so that they are paid in three different parts. A. Rookies: Referees (centre) new to the Premier League receive a base salary of £70,000 (\$88,000) per year, marking their start of refereeing in the Premier League. B. Professionals: Professional referees with a lot of refereeing experience in the Premier League earn more than 100,000 pounds (\$126,000) annually, which shows their high judgment and a lot of experience in the Premier League. In addition to the basic salary, the referees of both groups receive a bonus of 1500 pounds (\$1890) as a refereeing fee for each game. Also, the necessary assistant referees of the matches also receive 30 thousand pounds (\$37,800) per year

as a fixed fee, as well as another 850 pounds (\$1,070) for judging each game. In terms of insurance, referees can use the optional general accident insurance services provided by the provincial football association and the armed forces football association, as well as the mandatory personal accident insurance (supplementary insurance) service provided by the English referees association. benefited but are deprived of pension insurance services. In England, the existence of other facilities such as the judges' charity fund was observed. Regarding the arbitrators' union, it should be mentioned that in England, there is an arbitrators' union called RAE and an arbitration society called FAMOA, which are more than a hundred years old (Abdi et al., 2010).

Table 3. Adjacency or Juxtaposition of salaries, Possibilities and facilities paid to referees at the highest level of the league in selected countries

Type of social welfare	Salaries of referees and assistant referees (Dollars)			The number of full-time referees and assistant referees		Type of insurance		
	Referee	Assistant Referee	Fixed monthly and annual salaries of full-time referees	Middle referees	Assistant referees	Accidents	Other	Retirement
Australia	1500	900	to 78000 65000	4	---	*	Health insurance, at the expense of the referees themselves	Mandatory pension is paid only for full-time referees (11%)
Iran	99	72	---	---	---	*	Insurance	--
Japan	1000	500	80000	14	4	*	---	*
England	1890	1070	Newcomer referee: 88,000 Experienced Referee: 126,000 Assistant referee: 37,800	All	Only necessary	*	At the expense of the referees, insurance is added to accidents	*

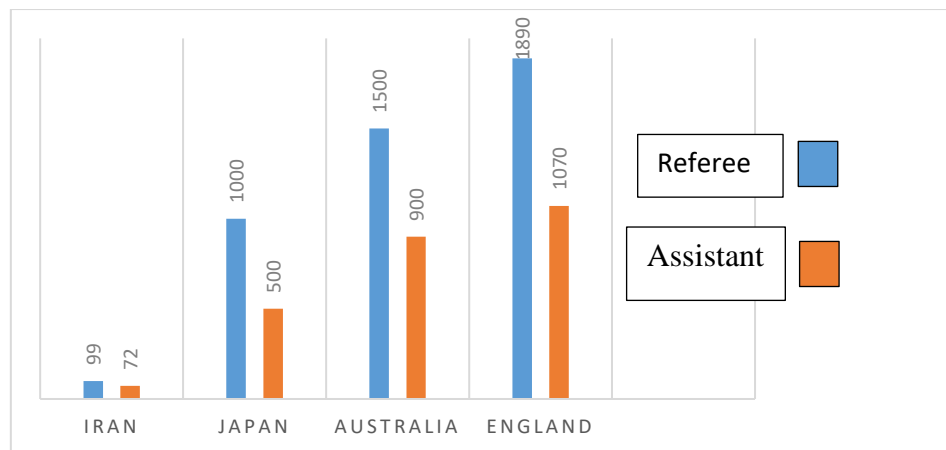


Figure 2. Salary of referees and assistant referees of selected countries to judge a game (dollars)

Similarities:

- A. All countries (except Iran) have fixed annual salaries for all or part of their full-time referees and assistant referees.
- B. Referees of all countries are covered by accident insurance.
- C. Full-time referees in Japan, Australia and England have pension insurance.

Differences:

- A. Australia and England provides them with supplementary insurance or medical treatment at the referees' own expense.
- B. England has the highest number of full-time referees (20 center referee).
- C. Iran is the only country that does not pay fixed annual salaries for its referees and assistant referees.
- D. Among the selected countries, Iran pays the lowest and England the highest wages to their referees and assistant referees.
- E. Only Iran has not been able to make any of its referees (middle referee and assistant referee) full-time.
- F. Among the studied countries, only England considers different salaries for referees according to the levels of refereeing and also their level of experience.

Question 4: How are the status and conditions of the highest level leagues and referees working in them in the selected countries? What are their similarities and differences?

Investigations showed that the Iranian football league has an interconnected league system that operates based on the principle of promotion and relegation. In this system, there is only one professional league called Premier League, which was founded in 2001. The Iranian Premier League has 16 teams (Top 90 website, 2024). The responsibility of judging is assigned to 32 referees and 55 assistant referees, none of whom are full-time referees in this league. The most experienced referee in the league is 44 years old and the youngest is 28 years old, and the average age of the middle referees is 38.21 years (Wordfootball website, 2024). The minimum level of refereeing required to judge in this (superior) league is national and international level. The rank of Iran Premier League is 44th in the world and 2nd in the continent Asia (Teamform ranking website, 2024).

The Japan Association's football league system is organized in the form of a pyramid similar to the football league systems in many other countries around the world, so that the leagues are bound by the principle of promotion and relegation. In this system, there are 3 professional leagues, namely J1 League, J2 League and J3 League. J1 League is the highest

level of the football league in Japan, which was founded in 1992. There are 18 teams in this league (Top 90 website, 2024), And the responsibility of judging it is assigned to 22 middle referees and 44 assistant referees, of which only 14 middle referees and 4 assistant referees work full-time. The rest of the referees and assistant referees are paid for judging each game. The most experienced referee in the league is 51 years old and the youngest one is 33 years old, and the average age of middle referees is 40.81 years (Wordfootball website, 2024). The minimum level of refereeing required to judge in this league is class 1 and international, and the rank of this league is 59 in the world and 3 in the continent Asia (Teamform ranking website, 2024).

In the structure of Australian football at the adult level and in the men's section, other than the A-League, there is no other league, whether it is the second division or so on, at the national level, so the principle of promotion and relegation does not make sense in this structure. In Australian football, there is only one professional league called A-League, which is considered the premier league of that country and has been active since 2004. There are 12 teams in this league (Top 90 website, 2024). The responsibility of judging this league rests with 14 referees and 28 assistant referees, among which only 4 referees have a full-time contract with the federation, and the rest of the referees and assistant referees are paid for judging each game. The most experienced referee present in this league is 45 years old and the youngest is 31 years old, and the average age of middle referees is 35.91 years (Wordfootball website, 2024). The minimum grade or level required to judge in this league (A-League) is level 1 and international, and the

rank of the premier league of Australian football is 56 in the world and 1 in the continent Oceania (Teamform ranking website, 2024).

The English Football League, which was founded in 1888, is considered one of the oldest leagues in the world. The English Football League system, also known as the Football Pyramid, is a series of interconnected leagues for men's association football clubs in England. This system has a hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between leagues at different levels, which allows even the smallest club (theoretically) to finally climb to the top of the system, the Premier League. The country of England has 5 professional leagues, namely Premier League, Championship League, League One, League Two and the National Football League of England, the highest level of which is the Premier League, which has been active since 1992. has done There are 20 teams in this league (Top 90 website, 2023), whose judging responsibility is the responsibility of 23 middle referees and 28 assistant referees, all middle referees of the Premier League and the Championship League are full-time with The federation has a contract, but on the other hand, only the necessary assistant referees of the Premier League work full-time and the rest of them judge in the form of salary. The most experienced referee in the Premier League is 55 years old and the youngest is 32 years old, and the average age of referees is 39/35 years old (Word Football website, 2023). The minimum grade or level required to judge in this league (superior) is level 1 and international, and the rank of the English Premier League in the world and the continent (Europe) is 1 (TeamForm website, 2023).

Table 4. Juxtaposition status and conditions of the highest level of leagues and referees working in them in selected countries

Condition Leagues	League structure	The number of professional	Names of professional	The date of establishment of	The number of the	Number of referees	Average age of Middle	Level of refereeing	of Premier League
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Country	leagues		leagues	premier league	Premier League teams	Middle	Assistant referees	referees	required	ranking	
										World	Continent
Australia	No rise and fall	1	A- League	2004	12	14	28	35.91	Level one and international	56	1
Iran	Rise and fall	1	Premier League	2001	16	32	55	38.21	national and international	42	2
Japan	Rise and fall	3	J1 League						First class		
			J2 League	1992	18	22	44	40.81	and international	59	3
			J3 League								
England	Rise and fall	5	1. Premier League								
			2. Champion Ship						Level one		
			3. League1	1992	20	23	28	39.35	and international	1	1
			4. League2.								
			5. National League								

The number of referees in the middle

Figure 3. The number of teams and referees present in the top leagues of selected countries

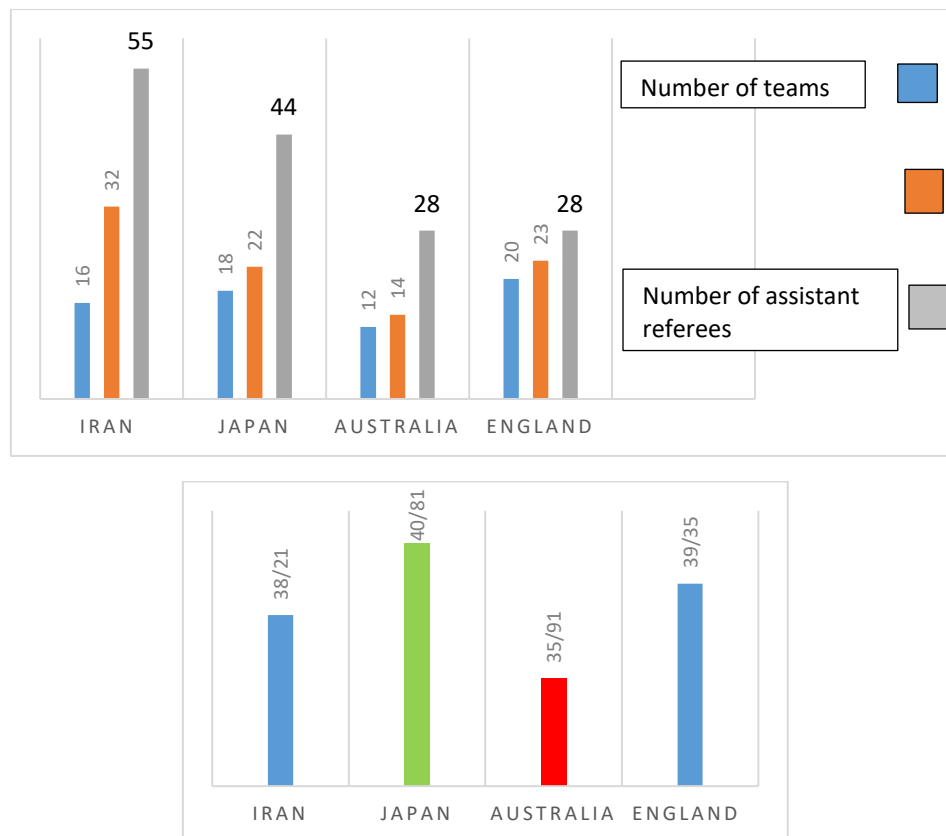


Figure 4. The average age of referees (middle) present in the top leagues of the selected countries

Similarities:

- A. The countries of Iran and Australia have only one professional league in their football structure.
- B. All the investigated countries use their international referees to judge in the highest level of the National League (Premier League) matches.
- C. The countries of Iran, Japan and England follow the system of promotion and relegation of teams in their top leagues.
- D. The league rank of the countries of Australia and England in their respective continents is first.
- E. The Premier League of Japan and England is older (founded in 1992) than other countries.

Differences:

- A. England has the highest number of

professional leagues (5 leagues) among the surveyed countries.

B. ranking of the Australian and England leagues in their respective continent are first.

C. Japan with 40.81 years has the highest (oldest) and Australia with 35.91 has the lowest (youngest) average age of referees among the studied countries.

D. The largest number of teams present in the Premier League among the countries under review is England with 20 teams and the lowest is Australia with 12 teams.

E. Among the investigated countries, the most experienced referee with 55 years of age belongs to England and the youngest of them belongs to Iran with 28 years of age.

F. According to the number of Premier League teams, Iran has the highest number of referees (32) and assistant referees (55).

G. Only the structure of the Australian professional league is not designed according to the principle of relegation and promotion.

Question 5: How is the status, conditions and position of international referees in selected countries? What are their similarities and differences?

The research showed that Iran has a total of 22 active international referees and assistant referees, of which 10 middle referees (7 male and 3 female referees), 12 assistant referees (9 male and 3 female referees) are in the list of international referees in Iran. have; But there is no representative in the assistant referees section of VAR (FIFA, 2024). Referees and assistant referees from Iran invited to the 2022 World Cup, in the men's section: 1 middle referee and 2 assistant referees, and there were no representatives in the female referees and VAR section (the total number of invitees included 3 people). The number of judgments by Iran's international judges in the finals of international competitions, including: the finals of Olympic competitions, 1; Club World Cup final, 1; The final of the Asian Nations Cup, 1, the final of the Asian Champions League, 1 and an assistant referee were also present and refereed in the final of the Senior World Cup (Mobasher, 2022). Also, the Iranian referees and assistant referees who have been able to participate in 3 rounds of the World Cup so far (until the 2022 World Cup) are related to Alireza Faghani (2014-2018-2022) (Mobasher, 2023).

Japan has 28 active international referees and assistant referees, of which 7 men and 4 women are middle referees, 9 men and 4 women are assistant referees and finally 4 men are also his assistant referees VAR is in the list (FIFA, 2024). Only one female referee from Japan was invited to the 2022 World Cup as a referee. The most important international judgments of Japanese referees include: 1 final of the Junior World Cup, 1 final of the World Club Cup and 1 final of the Asian Nations Cup (Mobasher,

2022). Also, among the Japanese referees and assistant referees who have been able to participate in 3 rounds of World Cup competitions until the 2022 World Cup, the assistant referee is Toro Sakaru (2010-2014-2018) (Mobasher, 2023).

There are 34 international referees and assistant referees in Australia, of which 8 male referees and 4 female referees are present as middle referees and 9 male referees and 4 female referees are present as assistant referees. Also, 5 male referees and 4 female referees also serve as assistant VAR referees (FIFA, 2024). The referees and assistant referees invited to the 2022 World Cup from Australia in the men's division: one middle referee, 2 assistant referees and one VAR assistant referee, and there was no representative in the women's division (the total number of invitees included 4 people). The important judgments of Australian international referees in the finals of the competitions include: 1 final of the Junior World Cup, 2 finals of the Olympic competitions, 1 final of the World Club Cup and 1 final of the Asian Nations Cup (Mobasher, 2022). Also, until the 2022 World Cup, no Australian referee or assistant referee has been able to participate in 3 World Cup competitions (Mobasher, 2023).

From a total of 42 active international referees and assistant referees from England, 10 men and 5 women as center referees, 10 men and 6 women as assistant referees and 10 men and 1 woman as assistant referees are present (FIFA, 2024). Referees and assistant referees invited to the 2022 World Cup from England in the men's division: two center referees and 4 assistant referees, and no referees or assistant referees were invited in the women's division (the total number of invitees includes 6 people). The most important judgments of English international referees include: 3 finals of the Senior World Cup, 1 final of the Youth World Cup, one final of the Junior World Cup, 5 finals of the Olympic Games and 3 finals of the

European Nations Cup (Mobasher, 2021). Examining the statistics of World Cup referees shows that only "Arthur Ellis" as a referee (referee and assistant referee) from England was able to referee in 3 rounds of World Cup

competitions, along with Juan Cardzabal from Spain. order to be present Also, the oldest referee in the World Cup so far (2022) is a referee from England named George Reeder who is 53 years old (Mobasher, 2022).

Table 5. Adjacency or Juxtaposition status, conditions and position of international referees in selected countries

Country	The number of international referees and assistant referees								The number of referees invited to the 2022 World Cup								The number of final judgments International competitions
	middle referees				assistant referees				middle referee				assistant referee				
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	VAR	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	VAR		
Australia	8	4	9	4	5	4	34		1	---	2	---	1	---	1. Junior World Cup (1) 2. Olympics (2) 3. World Club Cup (1)		
Iran	7	3	9	3	---	---	22		1	---	2	---	---	---	1. Olympics (1) 2. World Club Cup (1) 3. Asian Nations Cup (1) 4. Asian Champions League (1) 5. Senior World Cup (assistant referee - 1)		
Japan	7	4	9	4	4	---	28		---	1	---	---	---	---	1. Junior World Cup (1) 2. World Club Cup (1) 3. Asian Nations Cup (1)		
England	10	5	10	6	10	1	42		2	---	4	---	---	---	1. Adult World Cup (3) 2. Youth World Cup (1) 3. Junior World Cup (1) 4. Olympics (5) 5. European Nations		

Cup (3)

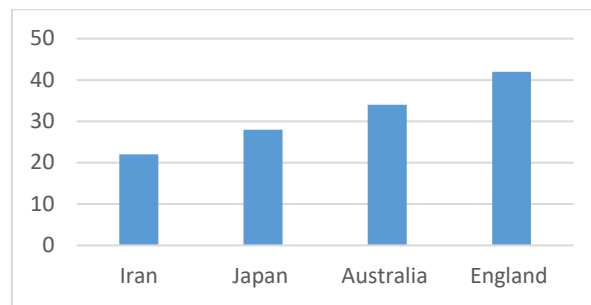


Figure 5. The total number of active international referees and assistant referees of the selected countries

Similarities:

- A. Except for Iran, all countries have VAR international assistant referees.
- B. From all countries, only one referee was invited to the 2022 World Cup.
- C. Iran, Japan and England were the countries from which no VAR assistant referee (male or female) made it to the World Cup.
- D. There were assistant referees from Iran, Australia and England in the 2022 World Cup.
- E. Referees from Japan, Australia and England have succeeded in judging in the Junior World Cup.
- F. The referees of Iran, Australia and England have succeeded in judging in the Olympic category.
- G. Except for England, referees of all selected countries have been able to judge world clubs in the finals.
- H. The referees of all the selected countries have been able to judge in the Cup of Nations related to their continent.
- I. There are male and female VAR international assistant referees in Australia and England

Differences:

- A. Japan was the only country where a female referee (middle) was invited to the 2022 World Cup.

B. Among the studied countries, England has the highest number of referees and assistant referees with 42 and Iran has the lowest number with 22.

C. England has the largest number of referees and assistant referees (2 referees, 4 assistant referees = a total of 6 people) invited to the 2022 World Cup.

D. Among the studied countries, Japan had the least number of referees (total of 1 referee) in the World Cup.

E. England is the only country whose referees have been able to judge the World Cup in all three age categories (youths, teenager and adults).

F. Among the selected countries, Iran is the only country that does not have an international VAR assistant referee (both in the male and female divisions).

G. England is the only country whose referees have been able to judge the most (3 times) in the senior World Cup finals.

H. Only from Japan, there was no assistant referee in the 2022 World Cup.

I. VAR was the only assistant referee from Australia in the World Cup.

J. Only assistant referees from Japan among the selected countries have been able to participate in three World Cup competitions as expert assistant referees.

K. Among the studied countries, only referees from England have been able to be present in three rounds of the World Cup competitions as a complex (referee and assistant referee).

Question 6:

What is the status of the use of new arbitration technologies in the studied countries? What are their differences and similarities?

The findings showed that VAR, goal line system, smart ball and semi-automatic offside have not been observed in Iran so far; But in relation to other technologies refereeing should be said such as the use of electronic flags (vibrators) and radio communication systems (hands-free), even though these types of technologies have been used in Europe for years, but Unfortunately, the referees' committee of the Iranian Football Federation has not yet provided the possibility of using this type of technology for its referees. But there are conditions for its use in Iran. So that some referees or Premier League club teams are specially equipped with these systems and are used by them in some games.

At the highest level of the Australian Football League (A-League) there are no conditions for using the goal line system, smart ball and semi-automatic offside technology, but on the other hand, technologies such as electronic flags, radio communication system and also VAR systems are used has been used for many years, so that in 2017 Australia was the first country that with the permission of FIFA and on a trial basis was able to participate in the highest club league level competitions (A- league) to use the video assistant referee or VAR.

In Japan it is customary to use VAR systems, electronic flags, radio communication system at the highest level of the league (J League 1) and currently the conditions of using smart ball, goal line system and semi-automatic offside technology Does not exist.

In England, the use of VAR system, goal line system, electronic flags, radio communication system has been observed, but the use of smart ball and semi-automatic offside technology is not common.

Table 6. Adjacency or Juxtaposition of the use of new arbitration technologies in the studied countries

Type of technology Country	VAR system	Goal line system	Electronic flags	Intelligent ball	Radio communication system	Semi-automatic offside technology
Iran	---	---	---	---	---	---
Australia	*	---	*	---	*	---
Japan	*	---	*	---	*	---
England	*	*	*	---	*	---

Similarities

A. Except for Iran, all the studied countries have electronic flag technology, radio communication system and VAR system.

Differences

A. England is more advanced than other countries in terms of using modern technology and has also benefited from goal line technology.

B. Among the selected countries, only Iran has

not been able to use any kind of technology in its premier football league.

C. In 2017, Australia was the first country to use Video Assistant Referee (VAR) in the highest club level competitions (A-League) with the permission of FIFA and on a trial basis.

Discussion

For many years, professional football In the world has been able to present itself as a money-making industry as well as a social phenomenon. One of the main manifestations of this issue is the holding of competitions in the form of numerous professional leagues, which are of particular importance in achieving the desired goals. Referees have a key and sensitive position in a popular field such as football and are considered the main pillars of holding an event. In the meantime, the presence of skilled and experienced referees is an undeniable necessity in realizing the above-mentioned matter. Without paying attention to the issue of refereeing and simply through the training and development of the capabilities of players, coaches, managers, etc., one cannot hope for comprehensive progress and development in the football of a country, because each of the mentioned cases is necessary And they are complementary to each other and with one-sided growth, it is out of mind to expect the all-round growth of football. According to the topic of the research, the main question is, what method or methods can be used to develop and improve (quantitatively and qualitatively) referees in terms of "how to become a referee", "ranking of referees", "status of referees and international assistant referees", "payment of salaries and facilities", "status and conditions of professional leagues and referees working in them", "new technologies used in refereeing" and ... Answering these questions without taking into account the existing requirements and necessities, political, social, cultural, economic issues and the change of people's needs and

tastes over time, etc. cannot lead to identifying the problem and providing effective solutions.

This study compared the recruitment, training and employment processes of novice football referees, as well as examining different aspects of the structure of professional football refereeing in Iran and selected countries from the Asian, Oceania and Europe continents. In this regard, the country "Japan" from the continent of Asia the country "Australia" from the continent of Oceania and "England" from the continent of Europe were selected as the target countries due to their geographical location and the researchers were required to examine different angles of the issue with the aim of obtaining the proposed answers. In this research, by collecting data, then classifying them, and then comparing the obtained information to monitor the commonalities and differences of the relevant processes, the comparison of the football and management structure in the selected countries has been done. The responsibility of employing, training and educating referees at all levels in different countries, especially selected countries, is the responsibility of the relevant referees' committee. What is the source of the difference is the difference in strategies, trends, laws and guidelines in the countries under study.

The findings showed that in some countries such as Australia, Japan and England, the relevant officials have not set a maximum age limit (Maximum age) for entering the field of refereeing, which according to the results of Abdi et al (2010), a maximum of 42 years for becoming a referee in England had mentioned, It is in contradiction. On the one hand, this lack of setting an age limit can indicate that the decision-makers pay attention to the interests of people of different ages (even with different and sometimes older ages) just to familiarize themselves with the rules, to gain pleasure and things like that in order to enter the field of football refereeing. On the other, it can also be due to the lack of interest (and maybe the crisis

of the quantity of fans) to enter the field of football refereeing, the reasons for which can be found in the existence of popular fields, such as: "Cricket", "Rugby", "Australian football" and... in Australia, "rugby", "cricket", "horse racing" and ... in England and "sumo wrestling", "baseball", "sports" martial arts" and ... in Japan, which has gathered countless enthusiasts around these disciplines. In all the target countries, due to the importance of the issue of having a physical health certificate and a minimum age limit to enter the field of refereeing, it has been considered. In England, in addition to the condition of physical health, eye health examination and bad background control also have priority, which is completely consistent with the results of Abdi et al (2010). All in all, these issues indicate the authorities' special view on the importance of referees' physical health and the category of football refereeing, that referees must be in perfect physical health in order to judge at all levels so that they can pass the physical tests with Being present in all scenes Judge with the least mistakes. Also, regarding the determination of the minimum age limit for becoming a referee in Iran, it is at least 17 years old, which is not consistent with the research of Abdi et al (2010) that mentions at least 15 years, but it is compatible with the determination of at least 14 years to become a referee in England. It seems that determining the minimum age of the method is quite logical, which can indicate the minimum understanding of the necessary skill levels and intellectual maturity of the applicants in this field, which is needed even for judging at the lowest level. Participation in training courses (theoretical and practical) is necessary in all target countries, which is completely obvious and shows the great importance of the subject, which is a category qualification that must be achieved through attending the courses and their results. obtained through the test. So that the results of Nurcahya et al.'s studies (2022) show the effect of using educational strategies that can improve the quality of

judges, confirming this approach. In fact, the discussion of education in all fields is fundamental and a solution to many problems and inadequacies, especially this issue has a special place in the professional refereeing of English football. But on the other hand, Ivancovich (2001) found in his studies that the training method of Iranian football referees has deficiencies and their training methods should be improved in terms of quantity and quality. The results of the research of Abdi et al, (2010) are the emphatic of the findings of this research. It is customary to register and submit an application through the federation system except Iran (applying and registering in person at the committee of referees of cities and provinces) in all countries which can indicate that indicate how successful the policies of attracting referees in that country have been and also compared to the referees who have remained in this field and have been successful how much growth and difference can be observed (In order to stabilize, modify or change policies, programs and methods). It can also provide information to the authorities about how many active referees they have in order to plan for their training, promotion and other issues in the future. Examining the schooling conditions shows that in some countries such as Iran, the existence of a minimum educational qualification has been one of the basic conditions for entering the field of judging which shows the importance of schooling and its effect on the growth and better progress of those interested in the chosen path and the quality of refereeing. Also, its existence can indicate a better understanding and interpretation of the laws. In countries such as Australia, Japan, and England, the existence of a minimum schooling (educational) qualification is not among the necessary items to enter the field of refereeing, which can indicate the thought that: 1. The existence and widespread culture of education in the society, the availability of the possibility And the conditions of easy education, the emphasis and

supervision of the government on the matter of schooling, etc., have made the decision-makers no longer feel the need to include this condition. 2. refereeing skills cannot (at least at the beginning) have much to do with the level of education and literacy of people; Therefore, the way is open for all levels of schooling in those countries to become referee. In the context of having a minimum age to enter the field of refereeing, entering higher levels and degrees in order to increase the life span of referees, maintain their quality and competitions it is a good thing, but determining and having an maximum age limit for the highest (international) level is a unreasonable thing. It is, because the experience of advanced countries shows that quality should not be sacrificed for quantity and deprive yourself of the existence of ready judges (proper physical fitness, knowledge, experience, etc.). Therefore, the age of entering the field of refereeing should be reduced by a few years, like the countries that own football, and the age maximum for becoming a referee should be removed, as well as the experienced referees who are judging at the highest level of the league so that referees are more present in the judging cycle. Since high-level judges have reached the limit of full maturity after passing numerous trainings and many judgments, therefore, by correcting the process their longevity should be prolonged and their valuable experiences should be used more in the field of judgment. Also, the registration of refereeing applicants should be done in a systematic way to determine through accurate statistics of applicants, active referees and their rank, etc., along with the impact of policies on the quality and quantity of judgments and competitions, etc be made.

The issue of wages, Possibilities and facilities paid to referees is one of the important issues that can improve the quality of refereeing by creating motivation, increasing the level of interest to enter the field of refereeing, remaining in this profession, job satisfaction,

etc be of great importance. In the studied countries, it has been tried that the wages paid (for each game) are proportional to the economic conditions and the average level of income in that country; Even in countries like Australia (4 full-time referees), Japan (14 referees and 4 full-time assistant referees) and in England (all referees and assistant referees essential) referees are full-time and in addition to the salary for refereeing (per game), fixed monthly or annual salaries are also paid to them, and these results are completely consistent with Murphy's report (2021). So that in this study, it was mentioned that the referees of the Premier League of England have a regular and fixed income, and besides that, they are also paid for judging each game. It is also in compatible with the findings of Webb (2022), which introduced England as the first country in the world that managed to make its referees full-time in the Premier League. Having such an approach to pay referees will create more security of mind, increase professional commitment, job satisfaction, and also create more motivation and activity in order to improve performance in referees, and the absence of such an approach will reduce motivation, so that Yong (2007) showed in his study that he attributed the most important reason for the lack of progress of football referees in China to the lack of motivation among them. But on the against, Iranian referees experience a completely different situation, so that in addition to none of them being full-time, they receive the lowest salary for judging a game among the selected countries it could be due to the use of wrong policies by officials cumbersome government laws, mismanagement and lack of familiarity of Iranian sports managers with matters such as marketing and sponsoring. This policy (if it is a policy and did not happen accidentally) will reduce the quantity and quality of talented referees and will overshadow the holding of low-margin competitions and its quality, and in the end, it is the referees' committee and the

football federation that will be the main victims of this incident. In all the studied countries, referees have different types of insurance services. Referees of all selected countries benefit from accident insurance against unexpected events during refereeing activities, traveling between cities for judging, and similar cases. In a country like Australia (at their own expense), referees benefit from health insurance and in England (at their own expense) from supplementary accident insurance. Even in countries like Australia (11%) and Japan, referees have pension insurance, which shows the importance of refereeing and the economic security of referees in these countries.

The results show that in England there are even other facilities such as the referees' charity fund, and this issue is also mentioned in the study of Abdi et al (2010). The existence of this type of support indicates the high importance of the economic issue and the proper job status of referees in that country. So that in his study, Bryan (2004) has described the social well-being of referees in the English Premier League in a favorable condition. But against, unfortunately in Iran, instead of looking at investment and support, the views on such , The idea is to thrift Costs the consequences of which first took the lap of the system itself (reduction those interested in entering the field of arbitration, shortening the life of refereeing, etc) and then active referees in this field. In this context, the Iranian Football Federation can measure its effect on job security, quality of refereeing and matches by paying at least part of the insurance cost of its international referees.

Also the federation should, at least in a pilot form, employ several well-known referees, with experience and with the highest level of refereeing, on a full-time basis, and in this way, the extent of its impact on the number of people interested in entering the field of refereeing, professional commitment, satisfaction Check out a job in this profession. On the other hand,

it can increase the quality of refereeing and therefore measure the quality of matches. In fact, the referees of the Premier League or at least the international referees in Iran must work under a fixed salary payment system (monthly or annually according to the average national salary) and salary (per game), insurance, etc like an employee. Achieving this can play a very important role in attracting enthusiasts, retaining referees and improving their quality level by creating confidence and also spending time to improve the quality of performance and making them responsible in the expected cases (refereeing quality, appropriate physical fitness, attendance at training programs, etc) will have. In addition to the mentioned issues the existence of full-time referees can be very important and effective in preventing the problems of shortage of referees in terms of quantity and quality so that this is the case in countries with the owner of the name football such as Spain, England, Italy, etc it has left very significant results.

The existence of many professional leagues in the countries of England and Japan shows the importance of the quality of football in those countries, it is natural to achieve this goal without the presence of sufficient and quality referees it's impossible. The countries that have different professional leagues, on the one hand, have more referees to judge in those matches, and on the other hand, the referees are more involved in the competitions and remain in the blind of the competitions. But in contrast to the existence of only one professional league (like in Iran and Australia), the opposite of this case can be true. According to the findings it was determined that in relation to the number of teams present in the Premier League iran compared to the world's prestigious leagues, the highest number of middle referees (32) and assistant referees (55) are engaged in refereeing, which is with the results of the findings. Abdi et al (2010) reported the number of middle referees to be 23 and assistant referees to be 50 which is inconsistent. This

finding shows that in the Iranian Premier League, referees (both referees and assistant referees) judge more than the international standards at the highest level of football, which has caused less judgment to referees during a season so this issue It leads to a decrease in quality and an increase in their mistakes in future judgments becomes. In contrast, high-quality referees in other selected leagues in the world are more limited and perform better. So that the English Premier League with 20 teams has 23 referees and 28 assistant referees, which of course does not match the findings of Abdi et al (2010) who mentioned 26 referees and 48 assistant referees. Perhaps one of the main reasons for the large number of referees in the Iranian Football Premier League is that the Football Federation and its referees' committee gave points to the heads of different provincial boards so that the desired candidate would vote in the election assembly of the Football Federation and be able to get a position in the board. Therefore, unlike other selected countries, the number of referees and assistant referees in Iran changes every year due to political pressures from parliament members, governors and other legal entities as well as the heads of provincial delegations, and a fixed number cannot be imagined for it. The results show that the average age of the referees (average) of the top league levels was different in all the investigated countries, so that the referees of Japan with an average age of nearly 41 years have the highest average age among the selected countries, which can firstly indicate The importance of experienced referees for the Japan Football Federation so that Weston's study (2008) also mentions the role of experienced referees who can help them when needed. Secondly, there is a lack of quality referees in that country. With an average age of nearly 36 years, Australia has the lowest average age of referees among the studied countries. In this regard, Zeon (2003) showed in his research that trusting and giving opportunities to younger referees in

professional football matches, provided that they have the necessary conditions, reduces gross refereeing errors to some extent. This issue can be attributed to the Australian Football Federation's policy of reducing the average age of referees (but maintaining the quality of refereeing) or the lack of experienced referees in Australia (for reasons such as the lack of longevity of referees). A clear example of this can be the full-time recruitment of Iranian international referee Alireza Faghani who is now 46 years-old at the highest level of the Australian league, and with this age, he is on the international list of that country and he also refereed in the 2023 Asian Nations Cup. The findings showed that the average age of middle referees in Iran Premier League is 38.21. This figure does not correspond to the average age of 35.71 reported by Abdi et al (2010). Also, the average age of middle referees in the English Premier League was found to be 39.35, which is not consistent with the study of Abdi et al (2010). All the selected countries, without exception, have used the best referees with the first, national, professional and international (FIFA) grades to judge at the highest level of their league, which shows the importance of the quality of judging in those countries. It seems that in Iran, increasing the number of professional leagues to two leagues (at least possible), in addition to improving the quality of the country's football, will lead to an increase in the quantity and quality of referees, and of course This issue depends a lot on the economic conditions, the entry of the private sector into football, the increase in hardware facilities, etc. Of course, the current situation that shows the impossibility of increasing the number of professional leagues in the country due to economic, infrastructure and other factors. In return it is possible to reduce the total number of referees (referees and assistant referees) at the level of the Premier League. This itself can increase the competitiveness between referees, the number of judgments made by each referee, and reduce the

possibility of refereeing mistakes, along with the increase in wages leading to an increase in the quality of referees' judgments and competitions. Also, increasing the number of Premier League teams in the current situation and considering all the factors (economic, management, infrastructure, etc) may not seem very wise; But increasing the number of teams will help to improve the quality of judgments if there are favorable conditions and through the continuous activity of judges. In the age section, it is expected that the referees' committee and the football federation at the head of it will follow FIFA and the law on the maximum age allowed to be introduced to FIFA will also cancel judging in the Premier League and allow any referee of any age to play with The condition of passing the physical, health and technical tests should be judged, so that in this way it is possible to make the most of the valuable experiences they have accumulated over the years.

In all the studied countries, referees are divided into different Classification and grades, which include from low levels (basic) to high levels (professional and international). referees in these countries should be transferred to higher levels after meeting the necessary conditions for promotion (examination and performance), which seems to be a completely logical method. But the type of surface is different in every country. So that in a country like Iran, referees are classified in 5 levels, which is in line with the findings of Abdi et al (2010) that judges were placed in 5 levels.

But in England's refereeing system, these levels are completely different and have more levels than other countries, so that referees are placed in 11 levels. These findings are based on the study of Abdi et al (2010) reported 9 categories and pointed out a significant difference in the classification levels of Iranian and British football referees it is completely contradictory. In this type of classification, each level of referees has been tried to judge for a particular

level of competitions, and in this way the referees judge at higher levels in accordance with the promotion of their rank, and in this way, between the rank (referees) and Appropriate level (competitions) have been created and finally those who have merit and continuity in their work will reach the highest levels.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this issue is that policies and strategies should be appropriate and consistent with the conditions and requirements of that country from various dimensions and with attention to them in order to lead to desirable results. Certainly, other countries, including Iran, have also thought about matching their grading system with the style of advanced countries and following them; But according to the conditions and requirements of those countries, the grading policy is implemented there as a rule. According to the surveys conducted and according to the results obtained in all the studied countries, a significant fit can be seen between the leveling of the judges and the different categories of the competitions during which the categories of the competitions had more variety according to it the leveling of judges is also very extensive. Iran is not an exception to this rule, and according to different categories of competitions, we see the leveling of judges in order to judge the respective competitions. Paying attention to the mentioned point as well as the success of Iranian referees in international competitions in different categories and levels, it is noted that at least for today's conditions the current model is responsive and there is no need to change the leveling of referees.

The position of the international referees of the studied countries at the world level shows that to some extent there seems to be little connection between the total number of international referees of a country and the referees invited to the important World Cup competitions and also judging in the final

competitions (continental, global and Olympics) does not exist. For example, Japan, with 28 active international referees and assistant referees, only one female referee was invited to the World Cup which is based on the results of Skirbekk (2024) which shows the lack of gender equality in football refereeing, especially in men's football had reported does not match. While there were with existence 22 referees and international assistant referees, 3 referees from Iran in the World Cup. This statistic clearly shows that the quality of referees is more important than their quantity, especially the invitation of a female referee from among all the male international referees of a country (Japan) speaks for itself. Therefore, the policies and strategies of the federation of countries should be based on increasing the quality of their referees' judgment and not the quantity of their own referees. Also, perhaps one of the main reasons is the high number of international referees in England (the total number of international referees and assistant referees in both men's and women's divisions: 42 people) compared to other selected countries and the presence of their referees in overseas competitions especially In the World Cup competitions, influence is the result of the permanent membership of the English Football Association in international football associations such as the International Football Association Board (IFAB). On the other hand, the formations and presence of capable and well-known referees of that country at different times have caused the referees of this country to be continuously present in international competitions and the World Cup. England's membership in the executive board of UEFA, FIFA as well as specialized committees has made England's influence and power in the referees' committee of UEFA and FIFA thereby allowing them to enjoy the high position of referees at the international level and the rights of referees defend themselves. So that Abdi et al (2010) reported that the number of

international referees in England in 2007 in the men's division was 17 (7 referees and 10 assistant referees), which is inconsistent with the results of the present study. This statistic has been changed in 2024 and has reached 20 people (10 referees and 10 assistant referees). Also, in that study, the number of Iranian international referees in the men's division was 16 (7 referees and 9 assistant referees), which is completely consistent with the results of the present study. Apart from being the leader of football in the green continent and the quality of their referees, England's statistics are to some extent indicative of England's influence in international football forums. Therefore, it seems quite natural that British referees have a higher position than other referees and are more present in international arenas in terms of quantity and quality. Also, in recent years, perhaps one of the main reasons for the lack of presence of Japanese referees in overseas competitions, especially in the World Cup matches is their lack of influence and membership in international football associations such as AFC and FIFA so that they cannot take a high position as referees in To gain the international level and defend the rights of their referees. Therefore, from this point of view, it may seem natural that Iranian referees, in addition to having the necessary capabilities due to having the vice president seat of the Asian Football Federation have a higher position than other referees in Asian countries, and in terms of quantity and quality, they are more in the fields between international attend. The Iranian Football Federation should, in various ways, in order to improve the level of football refereeing and support its referees, make every effort to become a member of the high decision-making levels in international football related forums including FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation. If this happens you can benefit from its blessings such as hosting important competitions and increasing the quota of international referees.

One of the important topics in the field of increasing the quality of referees in a country is the use of new technologies in refereeing. The use of systems such as VAR system, goal line system, electronic flags, smart ball, radio communication system and semi-automatic offside technology is very important in increasing the quality of performance and judges' judgment. So that Lain (2007) showed in his study that the use of new technologies greatly reduces the wrong decisions of football referees. In fact, technology leads to facilitation, speed, accuracy and increasing the referee's efficiency in the field. In this regard, Pashaie et al. (2023) concluded in their research that VAR has the potential to increase the quality of football matches. Also, Skirbekk (2024) found in their research that elite referees are greatly affected by VAR and VAR has currently been implemented almost exclusively in the men's game. The results show that except for Iran, electronic flags, radio communication system and VAR system are used in all the studied countries. Also, the findings showed that England has the most refereeing technology among the selected countries, So that in addition to the three mentioned technologies, it has also been able to use the goal line system. These findings are in line with the results of Webb (2022) and with the results of Abdi et al (2010) is inconsistent. The use of smart ball and semi-automatic offside technology was not observed in any of the studied countries. On the one hand, these issues can indicate the existence of suitable economic conditions and the possibility of using these facilities and technologies in the countries in question; And on the other hand, it can indicate the importance of the quality of arbitration and help to improve it through the use of available and possible facilities in those countries. The result is that in order to increase the judges' performance and reduce their possible errors, it is necessary to use all the available facilities and provide the conditions for their use. The rapid expansion of these technologies,

equipment and facilities all over the world and FIFA's emphasis on their use in official matches and equipping football stadiums and member federations with these facilities are among the main and important reasons for improving the quality of refereeing. and through that improving the quality of games and reducing existing doubts about unfair and directional judgments, which confirms the importance of using, growing and developing this issue. The forcing of the federation to equip the sports stadiums with new technologies by the sports clubs in improving the quality level of the matches, referees and also making the referees adapt to these conditions that they will definitely have to deal with in the international arena. It will lead to the growth of football refereeing and more colorful presence in international forums. The referees' committee and the football federation at the head of it should equip all their referees with new technologies (at least in a phased manner) in order to increase productivity reduce the possible errors of referees and improve the quality of judgments, and football clubs also oblige them to equip their dedicated stadiums with VAR facilities (at least in a step-by-step manner).

Conclusion

Considering the importance and the great role of referees, which are considered as one of the most important and effective elements of football competitions, paying attention to the following points in this field can be a solution:

1. Examining and studying important and influential factors such as: economic, cultural, political and social factors is necessary in improving and promoting the performance of referees.
2. It is necessary to study the problems of referees in the field of factors: economic and financial, cultural, political and social and to examine the contribution of each one in the progress and improvement of the level of

football refereeing in the country.

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