

Problems of amateur football: A qualitative methodological review¹

Mert Kerem Zelyurt²

Muazzez Şaşmaz Ataçoçuşu³

Received Date: 01 / 09 / 2016

Accepted Date: 05 / 11 / 2016

Abstract

Amateur football, generates "under stairs sector of football". The elements of amateur football that evoke professionalism in working, make it mandatory to study the unique problems of this category. The purpose of this study is to reveal its own internal social and economic dynamics of amateur football and to discuss problematics identified in this context. The study was conducted using "Qualitative Method". The reason why the editing built with qualitative method is, to show a "descriptive" approach in the topic which doesn't have sufficient literature and scientific reference, moreover even beyond that is to expose an "exploratory" research model in relation to the research topic. It is thought that, in a research which is to be performed in original topic, this method offers opportunity to exceed the limitation of subjects by question options which are defined by questionnaire e.t.c data collection tools in the scope of quantitative method. In study "Semi-Structured in-depth interview" which is a research technique peculiar to qualitative method has been done with 6 football players, 2 trainers and 2 managers in total of 10 people who are active in amateur category. Interview data collected with voice recorder subjected to content analysis and converted to Word texts, as a result of this process by taking identified problems regard to topic in consideration, they were demonstrated in findings section with various "Theme" titles. Identified theme titles are listed as follows: 1. Precarious Oral Agreements 2. Lack of legal inspection 3. Quota Implementation 4. Economic issues and facility problems. Problems that we have set related to amateur football need to be analysed. Of amateur football to come to a more functional state first people of our country, athletes, trainers, managers, clubs and in the sense of totally for Turkish sport, a review of these problems is seen to be mandatory. In considering amateur football with its current operating mechanism both health, physical activity and dissemination of "mass sport" that focuses on using leisure time and it is the infrastructure and kitchen of raising Professional football player, the sociological underpinnings of this necessity also inevitably emerge with clarity. We believe that this study will encourage people that the concept of "amateurism" to be subjected to a theoretical analysis in football and besides this it will lead to be topic of current scientific studies in the light of concepts of sports sociology, labour economics of sports and sports philosophy disciplines.

Keywords: *Amateurism, Amateur Football, The Social Security Problem, Precarious Agreement, Quota, Facility Problem*

1. Introduction and objectives

The word "Amateur" conceptually means "a person who does something (such as a sport or hobby) for pleasure and not as a job; one who is enthusiastic and curious" or the word means the opposite of someone who is a professional. Another definition for the word is: "One who engages in a pursuit, study, science, or sport as a pastime rather than as a profession" (http://tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_bts&arama=kelime&guid=TDK.GTS.580dd7b0c6b245.44597914). As understood from the definitions, amateurship means being engaged in something without payment

¹ This study was presented in ICSER 2nd International Conference on Social Sciences and Education Research in November 04-06, 2016.

² Responsible Author: Mert Kerem Zelyurt, Marmara University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Department of Sports Management, Turkey, e-mail: k.zelyurt@gmail.com

³ Marmara University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Department of Sports Management, Turkey, e-mail: m.sasmazatacoçuşu@gmail.com

(<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/amateur>). In short it can be expressed as “non-professional”.

The concept of amateurship is used to express the activities which are performed freely just for pleasure. If sports activities or hobbies such as music are performed just for passing time, as a hobby or on health purposes then they can be called amateur activities. Taking guitar classes after work, playing football on astro pitches or in the streets can be given as examples for daily amateur activities. Sports branches except for particularly football and basketball are categorised as amateur branches in Turkey. However, defining all sports branches which are accepted to be performed amateurishly as “unprofessional” would not reflect the reality. Athletes who involve in amateur sports branches are alleged to gain more income even than people being employed in most highly paid professions (Doğan 2007:48).

Amateur football, which is categorised apart from Professional football, stands for sports activities performed unprofessionally, with the purpose of hobby and fun as well. However, in parallel with the process of commercialization of football, the concept “amateurship” seems to wither away. It is observed that the players of amateur football clubs and the coaches gain income and similarly the club managers get social income and symbolic capital within this process. The mentioned income is in such an extent that the upper divisions of amateur football are stated to become a serious economic sector all around the world (Wahl, 2005:105). Amateurship in sports branches, which has turned into a kind of hidden professionalism, refers that especially amateur football can likely reflect the elements of a professional activity (Erkal, Güven, Ayan, 1998:205).

It is pointed out that there is a kind of artificial discrimination that holds professionalism separate from amateurship in football. For instance Fişek (2003:61-62), considers amateur leagues as a preparation step for the Professional leagues and moreover, he asserts amateur leagues be like lobbies for professional leagues. Professionalization signs in amateur football makes it necessary to investigate the problems peculiar to this field.

The main objective of the study is to reveal the problems related to working conditions of players and coaches who make their living through these amateur leagues. Although the study focuses mainly on the working process related problems of the players, important problems such as economic issues and facility problems related to amateur football have been aimed to be analysed as well.

2. Materials and methods

The method “Semi-structured in-depth interviews” has been used as a means of data gathering. Interview method is considered to be an efficient way in revealing the experiences and feelings of the individuals (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008:127). 10 interview subjects, 6 of which are football players, 2 are coaches and 2 are club managers, were interviewed in 2016 between the months June and October. The leagues that include the team which the subjects play for are; Regional Amateur League (RAL), Super Amateur League and 1st Amateur League. The distribution of the subjects in the study is as follows: 4 players in RAL, 2 players in Super Amateur League; 1 coach in Super Amateur League, 1 coach in RAL, 1 manager in RAL and 1 manager in 1st Amateur League. The football players in samples of the study are in A teams level of İstanbul amateur clubs in which they earn income. The main purpose of picking the subjects among the players, coaches and managers all of whom refer the main actors in football is that the study aims to figure

out the problems of amateur football through different actors' perceptions and experiences. It is considered that by analysing the narratives by those bearing different status and roles within the same social context, it would be possible to integrate the problems related to the field in a contextual framework. The recorded interviews with the subjects have been transferred into word document files. The sample group of the study has been determined according to "theoretical sampling" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In other words, the sufficiency criterion for the number of subjects have been the point where the data starts to repeat themselves. Text transferred data have been subjected to categorisation through content analysis conducted in accordance with the research question and have been classified under several topics. These topics are as follows: 1. *Precarious Oral Agreements* 2. *Lack of Legal Inspection* 3. *Quota Implementation* 4. *Economic Issues and Facility Problems*.

The subjects who have been interviewed with are stated as INT (interviewee) under "findings".

3. Findings

The characteristics of the research group

Precarious oral agreements

INT 1 who is a club manager in an amateur league states that the players and coaches do not sign any kind of written agreements with the amateur clubs and these arrangements are always oral instead:

(...) It is not common to sign any agreements with the players in amateur leagues. But we have to sign with the coaches. It is also definite in the booklet by the football federation. If we fail to fulfil it we are not allowed to play in the league. (...) as for the footballers, the transfers are carried out within the federation's knowledge but there's no written agreement on the payment rate or method to the player. It is based on the oral agreement between the player and the club manager or the administration. If we happen to break our promise, the player naturally does not play anymore. (...) There's no binding agreement with the coach. For instance, we decided to work with the coach x. The agreement does not include any terms that clarify the number of trainings to be fulfilled by the coach in a season or the payment rate. An agreement showing that the club and the coach has come to terms is signed but the rate is always negotiated between the club and the coach. (INT 1, Manager in 1st Amateur League)

INT 2 who works as a coach in RAL asserts the agreements to be different in amateur league when compared with those in professional ones. He emphasises that sometimes it is possible for the agreements between the player and the club to be practised via bills of debt:

There's no such an agreement similar to those signed in professional leagues. The player just signs a document drawn up by the federation but this is invalid. The club makes the player sign a bill of debt in return for the amount paid. For instance, the club pays 20 thousand liras to the player. Then the player is made to sign a bill of debt with the amount of 20 thousand liras just for ensuring that the player shall not quit right in the middle of the season. (INT 2, coach in RAL)

INT 2 and INT 5 allege that sometimes it is possible to state the players and coaches as legal contract labours on pay roll if the club managers are businessmen or of the city councillors but generally the players in amateur leagues are lack of social security:

(...)If the club manager is a businessman or of the city councillors, they can state the player as an employee or a contract labour on pay roll for the sake of social security. It is applicable for the coach as well. However this is not practised for all the players at all with the exception of some clubs, of course. There's no social security actually. But I know that the federation helps the player in amateur league financially if he gets injured. (INT 2, coach in RAL)

On the other hand, I witnessed some managers stating the coach as their own employees. Not as a coach of course, but under different titles in their own business and pay his insurance premiums. The coach of course fulfils his own duty anyway. (INT 5, Player in Super Amateur League)

INT 3, exemplifies the amounts paid which are based on oral agreements:

(...) the agreement depends on the economic status of the club. However, it is not valid in no way. I mean there's no written document. Club asks the player how much he demands. For instance, he demands 15 liras as an advance payment for the whole season. They pay some of the amount. Let's say 2 liras or 5 liras for example. (INT 3, coach in Super Amateur League)

INT 6 states that notarising partially provides assurance. INT 7, on the other hand, emphasises that the players and coaches in amateur leagues have no social security and these mentioned oral agreements strengthen club's hand against the players and coaches:

One can have the agreement approved before a notary public. This is the only way to be on the safe side. Otherwise, he will have no chance. That's why the agreements are generally oral. One can demand the advance payment if a written document exists. Not every club signs documents unfortunately. (INT 6, player in RAL)

The agreements between the footballers and the clubs are generally oral. In this case, club's terms are valid. The player has to believe what is stated by the club. Neither players nor the coaches have social security. Since it is called "amateur" it is not considered as a kind of profession. It is not considered as a profession and has no social security before the government either. (INT 7, player in RAL)

Lack of legal inspection

INT 1, asserts that the agreements in amateur leagues are not subject to legal inspection:

They have no legal basis. In amateur leagues the player participates in trainings and the coach decides on the player, than you negotiate with the player. That's how it works. You ask what he demands for a season. He tells what he wants, you know, 3 liras or 5 liras etc. He states what he expects and you state what you can afford but until now there hasn't been a signed legal agreement. But we try to sign agreements with the coaches within the bounds of possibilities. (INT 1, Manager in the first amateur league)

INT 1, alleges that in case of a conflict between the club and the footballer or the coach, the players have no chance to apply to legal authorities and also states that if the player does not participate in a training the club has no power of sanction either:

When compared with the players, coaches have a chance but the players do not. In fact, the club has no legal grounds either. For instance, the player quits participating in training sessions and the club has paid him 2000 liras but the player quits. The club has no power of sanction then. (INT 1, Manager in the first amateur league)

INT 3, emphasises the unrecorded aspect of the amateur football:

Since it is unprofessional, there exist no records and therefore there's no liability to tax. There is no respondent to indemnify either, in case of a mutual breach of the contract. Sometimes agreements are made orally and sometimes on invalid documents.(INT 3, coach in super amateur league)

INT 3, draws attention on the issue of displacement trips in the regional amateur league. He emphasises that the trips are unsecured and in case of an accident it is impossible to find a legally responsible authority. INT 3, asserts that the clubs are held responsible:

There aren't any legal inspections at all. Let me give you an example from Turkish football. (...)In regional amateur league, a team sets off from Edirne for the game in Zonguldak and here the federation is not hold responsible for anything. I mean, what if the team has an accident? Keşanspor experienced it indeed and lost two players. Another thing is that, social security exists in 3rd league as it is considered professional but in regional league, there's no income and moreover, the federation leaves its responsibilities over the clubs. (INT 3, coach in super amateur league)

INT 3, also states that the clubs make the players sign a bill of debt in order to guarantee themselves. In the event that the player leaves the club, those bills signed in return for the paid amounts have power of sanction. Nevertheless, there exists no legal authority for the players and coaches who are in demander position to apply:

The player agrees on 25 thousand liras for example. He is paid 10 or 15 thousand liras or if he is paid the whole amount he is made sign a 25 thousand–lira-bill of debt because, since it is an amateur league, the club will not be able to demand a refunding from the player. Thus, they guarantee themselves through this way. However, in a contrary situation, there isn't any authority to apply neither for the players nor the coaches. (INT 3, coach in super amateur league)

INT 6, focuses on the difficulties (by amateur football's nature) in bringing an issue in the amateur league before the legal inspection mechanisms:

Amateur, as befits the name, is a sports branch without any expectations. That's why it is not legally defensible. I mean in terms of players. They compulsorily put up with it. (INT 6, player in RAL)

INT 7 states that there's no legal sanction in amateur leagues due to oral agreements and emphasises the importance of the advance payments at the beginning of the season under existing conditions:

Except for those making the agreements before a notary public, the players have no right to demand anything since the agreement is an oral one. He cannot demand anything legally. The only guarantee for the employees and the players is the amount they are paid as advance at the beginning of the season. (INT 7, player in RAL)

INT 8 states that managers hold the initiative in agreements not grounding on legal documents in the amateur league and the player is unable to claim the receivable from the club legally:

(...)It is the same for the coaches. We might be fired and we don't have any chance to claim the receivables such as wages per game, bonuses or advances even after the season ends. The only

thing we can do is to negotiate with the club. Then you are at the mercy of the club chairman or the manager. (INT 8, player in RAL)

INT 9 considers not being able to get the amount agreed on as an important problem in amateur football. INT 5 states not being able to collect his receivables from many clubs as due to lack of legal inspection mechanisms:

Some goals are set and when these goals are not achieved, the manager might fire the player prematurely. He might not pay the player's money (...) In this case, the player goes broke normally, as he plans his expenses considering the money he is to be paid. He is unable to find another club because he plans his work assuming that he would play in the club. (INT 9, player in RAL)

There's no inspection body. I wish there were. The number of clubs that I have been able to receive my money is so few. That's what most of my friends experienced as well. If only there were such a mechanism. (INT 5, player in super amateur league)

INT 10 states that health insurances of the footballers are not inspected either and emphasises that in case of an injury the player is at the mercy of the club:

Unfortunately, health insurance is not checked. The situation is completely at the clubs' mercy. Nowhere in Turkey has an amateur league player any kind of insurance. When a player gets injured the club has him cured at its own will. Otherwise the player is left one to his own fate. (INT 10, manager in RAL)

Quota Implementation¹

INT 1 states the quota implementation be an inappropriate application and states that the application stops the experienced players from youth setup from playing in the team:

Those players are left in a difficult situation and they are stopped from playing football. On the other hand, as a club we are obliged to choose up maximum 6 players but we have 8 or 10 players from youth setup who have been playing football for years but unfortunately we are not allowed to choose them up. That's just because of the age limit. We can choose up maximum 5 players. (...) 28 as an age is too inappropriate according to me. They are the most productive years in football. We can't choose up the players who are at the most efficient age. (INT 1, manager in first amateur league)

INT 2 and INT 5 emphasise the word amateurship and state that quota implementation conflicts with amateur football:

The club is called amateur but there's an age limit which is nonsense. It should be a league where any player from any age can play. This situation puts the coach in trouble. On the other hand, if the club has money, then transfer options broaden. (INT 2, coach in RAL)

¹ Those who were born in 1987 and earlier shall be counted as senior whereas those who were born in 1998 and later as junior for the season 2016-2017. Those who were born in 1988 and later shall play in Super Amateur and 1st Amateur Leagues, which are local leagues for senior category, and in Regional Amateur League. The teams involved in the mentioned category are allowed to obtain license for as much amateur players who were born in 1987 or earlier as they wish. However, 18-player fixture list of the teams shall include maximum 5 (five) senior players and minimum 2 (two) players born in 1998 and later (Turkish Football Federation, Principles To Be Applied In Amateur Football League During The Season 2016-2017, p.6).

It is not necessary to implement such a rule in amateur league. As the name implies, it is amateur league. It shouldn't be obligatory to choose up an 18 year-old player as youngster. This quota implementation should completely be abolished. The rule is like just for making it difficult to play for those older than 27. According to me it is wrong. (INT 5, player in super amateur)

INT 3 states that quota should be converted into an incentive practice rather than a prohibitive one:

The implementation allows us to choose up maximum 5 players. Well then, assume that I prefer choosing up 3 players or only 1 player. What kind of a reward do I get then? The practise should be incentive. The system should be set up in an incentive way rather than prohibitive. (INT 3, coach in super amateur league)

INT 4 on the other hand, asserts that the quota implementation clears the way for younger players:

The players who are not able to play in upper leagues either because of their poor performance or some other situations return to play in lower leagues in order to earn money. However, there is a quota. Although this is unfavourable for them, it clears the way for young players. Therefore, I consider this quota implementation quite logical. (INT 4, player in super amateur league)

Stating that this quota shall be applied for him after a year INT 6 considers this practise which aims to rejuvenate football, to be the greatest problem in amateur football. He says that the application causes problems in being chosen up, reduces the wages and even brings the risk of not being able to "earn a living for the family" together :

Let's think that the squad consists of 20-23 players. I am not fighting for being included in this 20-player squad. I am just struggling to be of the 5, determined as per the quota in every team. I mean I have to be one of the 5 players in every team. This means that I have to either renounce my receivables or discount the wage I demand since I have to earn for a living or the situation goes to the extent of not being able to find a team to play(...) This makes you return to a lower league. In any case, it affects us adversely. Perhaps it causes the married ones not be able to earn a living for the family.(INT 6, player in RAL)

INT 7 tells that the quota causes decrease in football quality and adds that the experienced talented players are not able to play since they exceed the age limits:

I am not involved in this quota issue at the moment but there are players who are not able to play since *they exceed the age limits no matter how talented or efficient they are*. As such, the quality of the league, quality of the game and the quality of the work you perform fall. (...)According to me it affects adversely the whole atmosphere. (INT 7, player in RAL)

INT 7 focuses on the negative effects of the quota which is directed to the quality of amateur football on coaches while setting the game:

In our league, one player born in 1998 or later is obliged to be chosen up. If that mentioned 18-year old player is not efficient, thenheclips the coach's wings which affects the game adversely. You have to include him in the squad constantly. (INT 7, player in RAL)

INT 8 states that there is a conflict between the quota and the social insecurity in amateur leagues:

Zelyurt, M.K., Şaşmaz Ataçocuğu, M. (2016). Problems of amateur football: A qualitative methodological review. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 2 (4), 1148-1160.

It doesn't make any sense to apply quota unless you provide social security in amateur leagues. If you apply quota and if you attach importance to these leagues then you have to provide social security(...) (*INT 8, player in RAL*)

INT 8 also states that the quota makes it easy for the club managements to reduce the player wages:

I mean, you are included in the quota after all. The club offers you an amount. It is up to you to accept or not, but if not the club will find another player for sure. Necessarily, the demanded amount decreases. (*INT 8, player in RAL*)

INT 9 emphasises the constraint by the managers caused due to quota over the players older than 25:

You are allowed to choose up 4 players at the age of 25. However, the players have to play even after 25. Then the club may use this situation as trump against you and might pay you less and you have to accept it. (*INT 9, player in RAL*)

Economic issues and facility problems

INT 1 states the greatest problem in amateur leagues to be insufficient funds:

Lack of money. The lack of support to the amateur clubs by the federation. In fact, I don't expect support from the federation. It would be okay if they just stop charging us fees for the transfers. If I were able to pay that amount to the players instead of the federation, everything would be better. We pay transfer fee to the federation for each transfer. (*INT 1, manager in first amateur league*)

INT 10 says that amateur clubs have income problems. Those which are able to partially gain income should be inspected:

Lack of facility brings financial difficulties together. A wealthy person from the neighbourhood or from the club often provides financial support. When he leaves the club, the club closes down. I can count you 12 or 13 clubs with constant income, they have immovables. Inadequate persons managing the clubs often spend this income for their own sake instead of the club's. I mean, the government or the federation should strictly check these clubs. (*INT 10, manager in RAL*)

INT 2 states the most important problem in amateur leagues to be financial problems and emphasises that insufficient funds of the clubs cause facility difficulties. Within this context, he mentions about the problems occur while playing away:

If the club has a wealthy chairman, it is a great advantage for the club. Otherwise, amateur clubs have no income and if they don't have a wealthy chairman, they don't have any chance(...) Facility problems go parallel with the financial problems. It causes accommodation problems for the players and training field difficulties. For instance, the team is going to play away but has no money to afford the expenses. Therefore, the team undertakes a day-trip no matter how far it is. This of course affects the success adversely. (*INT 2, coach in RAL*)

INT 3 mentions about insufficient training grounds and the adverse outcomes related to fixture conditions:

(...) I worked for ... team in Fatih district, for instance. There isn't sufficient amount of training facilities. 2 or 3 teams train at a time on the same field in the evenings. It is the same for changing rooms. Let me give you another example: I took the field(...), right behind the Florya metrobus stop. Field markings such as side lines and goal lines were wriggling like a worm. We played on such a field.(INT 3, coach in super amateur league)

INT 4 considers the most important working problem as transportation. He talks about lack of rest areas and poor nutrition besides transportation:

The biggest problem I have as someone who is involved in this profession is transportation. I want to give some details here. The problem is not the way you go itself but it is transportation based. The problem is the lack of rest areas and restaurants inside the club facilities. Because in amateur clubs the players come to the trainings from a distance. They participate in the training and go all the way back and eat whatever they can find at home. They are athletes and they have to eat well. Lack of these two opportunities are the greatest problems. Facility problem is the most serious one for me.(INT 4, player in super amateur league)

INT 5 mentions about hot water lack after the trainings and hygiene problems with the sports equipment:

Not being able to get hot water after trainings is possible. You often face this problem in many clubs although it is very important to take a hot shower. But they don't care it too much. Hygiene of the equipment that the players use, how they are washed and kept... It is possible to encounter all of these problems in many of the clubs. (INT 5, player in super amateur league)

INT 6 mentions about the adverse outcomes of the excessive number of amateur clubs in İstanbul and funding difficulties of these clubs:

(...)As for facilities, ground conditions are poor, clubs already do not have their own buildings. They do not have places to accommodate the players. Imagine these kind of things in such a big city as İstanbul... In Anatolia it is a little bit different. Because, everybody tries to support his/her team. But in this great city there's plenty of similar problems. Because there are plenty of teams. When you consider the clubs, you cannot blame them. Because when you listen to them, they would say they do not have funds or space to build facilities; there is not any establishment to support them. I know 10 teams working out on the same field. I witnessed teams warming up on the field while the other team still goes on training. I also witnessed two teams training on the same field at a time. (INT 6, player in RAL, 28 years old)

INT 7, INT 8 and INT 9 emphasise the excessive number of amateur clubs and state that when combined with insufficient number of facilities this excessive number creates inefficient training and working conditions:

I mean there are plenty of amateur clubs. I don't think that enough number of facilities exist to provide necessary opportunities for the players. I know that in some cases 2 or 3 clubs conduct their training at the same time on the same field. Since the required opportunities are not provided the training becomes inefficient.

(INT 7, player in RAL)

Zelyurt, M.K., Şaşmaz Ataçoçu, M. (2016). Problems of amateur football: A qualitative methodological review. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 2 (4), 1148-1160.

Sometimes you have to look for even the stadium to play the games at weekends or on week-days. You even don't know where you are going to play the game or where you are going to carry out the trainings. (INT 8, player in RAL)

Maximum 50 or 60 clubs out of hundreds might have their own facilities. (...)For instance, the club doesn't have its own facility and hires from other clubs. Therefore it is possible to carry out the trainings on different fields every day. (INT 9, player in RAL)

INT 10, considers insufficient number of facilities to be the most important problem of the amateur football and gives an example from Üsküdar County:

Facility is the most serious problem in amateur football. Clubs are not able to find fields for training. (...) There are 27 amateur clubs 2 professional clubs and a RAL team in Üsküdar. Currently, none of these teams are able to play or work out within the borders of Üsküdar County. They take the field outside the county borders. (INT 10, manager in RAL)

4. Discussion and conclusions

Under the title "Precarious Oral Agreements" it is concluded that the players and coaches earn income from the clubs which have been categorised as amateur. However, there does not exist any kind of written agreement and the parties come to a mutual agreement orally which is based on promises and individual relationships between the club managers and the players. While the clubs make the players sign bills of debt in return for the advance payments they make, just for ensuring the player not leave the club; the players unfortunately, do not have any warranty to demand their receivables from the clubs. This situation victimises the footballers. A significant part of the interview subjects state that they hadn't been able to get their receivables from the clubs, which is a strong evidence for being victimised. This kind of oral agreements and the written ones on invalid documents cause the players face financial difficulties and they strengthen the clubs' hands. (INT 1, INT 2, INT 7, INT 3). In some cases, especially when the club chairmen are businessmen, the players and the coaches might be shown as insured workers on the pay roll in their business (INT 2, INT 5). It is also asserted that a player should have a written agreement approved before notary public in order to secure himself (INT 6). To sum up, these agreements in amateur leagues appear to be unofficial. It is understood that there is not an authority to be applied for the players who face loss of a right and those who still have receivables from the clubs. Besides, lack of social security and the difficulty of income generation in amateur leagues were derived from a study carried out by Zelyurt and Şaşmaz Ataçoçu (2014).

As for lack of legal inspection, it has been discovered that the agreements made in amateur leagues are not subject to legal inspection. Since the agreements are often made orally, this situation brings lack of inspection (INT 1, INT 6, and INT 7). It has been emphasised that the absence of legal inspection creates various risks during the fixture. It is obvious that amateur football is off the books and is untaxed. It has been emphasised that the trips for away games in amateur leagues are unsecured and all the responsibility is left over the club itself (INT 3). One of the most commonly complained issue is the receivables that hadn't been collected by the players from the clubs especially due to lack of legal inspection (INT 8, INT 9, and INT 5). Moreover, this inspection lack and the problem of claiming one's right have been identified by a player with the expression "on the club's own mercy" (INT 8). Besides, when a player is not able to get any part of the orally agreed amount of payment, unfortunately has no legal right to claim. Even if he claims his right, he is not able to find any legal authority to settle the conflict. Another problem stated

during interviews is that, the players in amateur leagues are unsecured and not inspected legally in terms of health coverage and the issue is left up to the clubs (INT 10).

Under the title “Quota Implementation” the common opinion among the interview subjects about the practise appears to be negative. The practice reduces the chance of the players coming through the youth setup and having played for the mentioned team for years to play after the age 25 no matter how experienced they are. It is complained that the footballers who are assumed to be at the most effective age are not able to be included in the squad (INT 1). Applying this quota in an incentive way rather than imposing a ban is thought to bring out positive results (INT 3). Although it has been stated that there is a conflict between quota implementation and the characteristics of unsecured amateur football (INT 2, INT 5, INT 8), it has also been emphasised that the quota clears the way for younger players against the older ones who return to amateur leagues to earn money (INT 4). It has been also concluded that the older players feel stressed since they have to be included in a certain amount of players due to the quota and the quota causes the players lose their jobs, as well (INT 6). It has been asserted during the interviews that the quota application makes it easy for the club managers to decrease the player wages which means that when a player finds what he is paid insufficient, the quota rule is used against him as a threat (INT 8, INT 9). Finally, one of the most important effects of the quota has been commented to be causing decrease in football quality. It is asserted during the interviews that when an experienced player is not allowed to play due to the quota rule, the quality of the game is adversely affected (INT 7). The coach who has to set the game on young players then, encounters difficulties in playmaking. Such a situation, without any doubt, shall result in negative outcomes in terms of both team play and game experience since the older players do not have the chance to transfer their experiences to the youngsters.

As for Economic Issues and Facility Problems it has been discovered that amateur clubs experience financial difficulties and as a result of these difficulties, they do not have proper training and camping facilities which indicates another adverse situation. Federation’s not supporting amateur clubs financially is considered as one of the problems. It can clearly be observed that long distance trips within the same day for away matches and similar problems are being encountered because of insufficient funds (INT 1, INT 2). It has been emphasised during the interviews that the amateur clubs that have slight income should be checked by the federation (INT 10). This study also reveals that even basic needs such as hot water after training, equipment hygiene, poor nutrition opportunities at current facilities and transportation become a kind of problem in amateur football (INT 4, INT 5). Financial difficulties of amateur clubs unfortunately lead to insufficient facilities with poor economic and social opportunities to be provided to the players. The excessive number of amateur teams in İstanbul amplifies the mentioned problems (INT 6, INT 9). The problem is amplified to such an extent that more than one team works out on the same field at the same time; teams encounter poor field markings even on the field where the game is to be played and the clubs face the stress of finding a stadium to play in (INT 3, INT 6, INT 7, INT 8). Lack of facilities is rightfully considered to be the most important problem of amateur football. (INT 10).

As it can be clearly understood from the conclusion of the study, amateur football is not played unprofessionally or just for fun. On the contrary it has professional characteristics. It can also be concluded that earning money in amateur leagues leads unrecorded practices. It has also been discovered that players considering this field a profession and earn his living, make unsecured

agreements which do not include any insurance or health coverage and even the most necessary issues in amateur football are not being legally inspected by related mechanisms. It is surely beyond doubt that not being subject to any legal inspections in spite of being a field of income will aggrieve the footballers and affect the clubs adversely. Subjecting amateur football clubs, which have an important function of providing the youngsters with sports opportunities and spreading sports from the districts where the clubs exist to the provinces and then to the whole country, to legal inspection is considered to be inevitable. Amateur football, which evokes for the football sector the perception of being a kind of under the counter sector, might cause some troubles for club managers just like it causes problems for footballers with its unsecured agreement relations. At this point the first thing to be emphasised is the necessity of obligatory health insurances for the players. Legal inspection is considered to be an obligation so that the amateur clubs shall be managed within the context of sports management based on expertise. In other words, amateur football should be managed by Professional managers.

Quota practise in amateur leagues creates a kind of contradiction to the mottos of amateur clubs which aim to spread sports culture among the masses. This situation also brings forward the question of government-sports and sports-democracy relation within the context of using one's right of doing sports. As Erdemli states, sports are of the basic needs and rights lack of which can give harm to people. It is a kind of right which is untransferable and which should not be delayed (Erdemli, 2006:93-94). Sports is stated as a right in Turkish Constitution. Article 59 referring mass sports is as follows: "The state takes precautions to promote the physical and mental health situation of the Turkish citizens of all ages and encourages spread of sports among masses." (www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa.htm) Here, the conflict between the amateur sports spreading policy of the state and the quota implementation in amateur football can clearly be seen. Another problem is that limiting the chance of being chosen up of the players with a certain experience who are older than 25 shall potentially hinder the quality and progress in amateur football. This application not only possibly affect the quality of the game but also might prevent younger players from benefiting from older players' sportive experiences sufficiently. On the other hand, basic problems related to training facilities and hot water opportunities after training are waiting to be solved so that they can motivate the children and the youngsters to participate in amateur football when solved. In conclusion, with its current situation, amateur football is carried out neither completely professionally nor completely amateurishly. It has a significant function of spreading mass sports and giving sports opportunities to a wide age range and meanwhile it is a field where unrecorded financial income can be gained.

References

- Doğan, B. (2007). *Spor Sosyolojisi ve Uygulamalı Spor Sosyolojisine Giriş* (1st Edition). [Sport Sociology and Introduction to Applied Sport Sociology]. Nobel Publications.
- Erdemli, A. (2006). *Temel Sorunlarıyla Spor Felsefesi* (2nd Edition). [The Basic Issues of the Philosophy of Sport]. E Publications
- Erkal, M., Ayan, D., Güven, Ö. (1998). *Sosyolojik Açıdan Spor* (Extended 3rd Edition). [Sports From a Sociological Perspective]. İstanbul: Der Publications.
- Fişek, K. (2003). *Sporun Anatomisi*. [Anatomy of Sport]. İstanbul: YGS Publications.
- Glaser, B., Strauss A.L. (1967). *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies For Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Zelyurt, M.K., Şaşmaz Ataçoçuğu, M. (2016). Problems of amateur football: A qualitative methodological review. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 2 (4), 1148-1160.

Wahl, A. (2005). *Ayaktopu&Futbolun Öyküsü* (1stEdition). [Football&History of Football]. Translated by Cem İleri, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Publications.

Yıldırım, A., Şimşek, H. (2008). *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (7 th ed.). [Qualitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences]. Ankara: Seçkin Publications.

Zelyurt, M.K., Şaşmaz Ataçoçuğu, M. (2014). Bir Çalışma Alanı Olarak Amatör Futbol: Amatör Futbolcuların Çalışma Süreçleri Üstüne Bir Alan Araştırması. [Amateur Football As A Working Area: A Field Study On The Working Processes Of Amateur Football Players]. *International Journal Of Human Sciences*, Vol:11, Issue:1, 338-356.