



## Analysis of Football Referee Performance in Children's League Competitions

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### Abstract

Referees play a central role in the organization of football matches, especially in children's competitions at the district level, where the quality of referee leadership affects the development of young talents, sportsmanship, and organizational image. The need for educational communication and match management that matches the characteristics of players demands a young evaluation of referee performance that is specific to the local context. This study aims to analyze the performance level of football referees in the 2026 Bekasi Regency Askab Children's League competition and identify the most dominant aspects of performance and aspects that still need to be improved based on indicators of decision accuracy, match control, physical fitness, communication, and teamwork. This study uses a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design to get an overview of the performance conditions of the referee at a certain time without special treatment. The subject in this study is the referee who is responsible for the competition, while the assessment is carried out by observers who have competence in the field of refereeing. The instrument used is a referee performance assessment questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1–5 which includes aspects of decision accuracy, match control, physical fitness, communication, and teamwork. The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of average scores, standard deviations, minimum and maximum scores, with the help of SPSS software. The results of the study showed that the overall performance of referees was in the high category in all aspects measured. The decision accuracy aspect received the highest score of 77.48%, followed by teamwork at 76.68%, physical fitness at 76.58%, match control at 75.56%, and communication at 75.28% as the lowest score, although still in the high category. These findings show that referees have good competence in carrying out their duties during the match. However, the communication aspect still needs to be improved to support the effectiveness of interaction with players and officials and minimize potential conflicts on the field.

### How to Cite

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## INTRODUCTION

Football is a team game played by two teams with 11 players each whose main objective is to score as many goals as possible to the opposing team with a specified time of 2 x 45 minutes. According to (Dantas & Ritt, 2025) He also said that football matches are played by two teams consisting of 11 (eleven) core players and some are reserve players. The sport of football is played using the legs or all the limbs except the hands, but the goalkeeper has special rules that allow the use of all limbs including the hands in the regulated area. The game is governed by a set of rules known as Law of the Game, which is standardized by the Council of International Football Associations and regulated globally by International Federation of Football Associations (FIFA) (Klammer, 2024). Football is a sport that is very popular in various parts of the world, including in Indonesia. Often we also find people playing football on rural and urban fields, this is proof that football has become a fun sport for the community. Football fans are also not only from adult men but also women until an early age.

In early childhood football, football has an important role such as developing physical, mental, and social potential. (Zhou, 2024) It is also said that soccer is not only a recreational activity, soccer also plays an important role in children's physical, mental, and social development. Through this game, children can learn good teamwork, discipline, sportsmanship, and motor skills. In addition, early childhood football not only serves as a means of sport and improves physical fitness, but also as a medium of character formation through instilling the values of sportsmanship, discipline, responsibility, teamwork and learning to respect others or Respectfully. This is in line with the opinion (Sumartiningsih et al., 2022) Who says a child's participation in football improves cardiovascular fitness, strength, and flexibility. Children's soccer also plays an important role in the development of young athletes, providing basic skills and encouraging physical, psychological, and social growth. Therefore, it is crucial for parents or coaches to develop the child's skills in playing soccer in a structured and not forced manner. This method is in line with existing research that children thrive in an environment where they feel supported and unburdened by the results they get (Okliievych & Yatsiv, 2024). A well-organized soccer training environment can increase children's overall enjoyment and mastery of sports, which is important for long-term

engagement and talent development (Esposito et al., 2024). Therefore, the implementation of early football competitions is an important part of a sustainable football athlete development system. Competitions such as the ASKAB Bekasi Children's League are one of the forums in developing the potential of early age players to improve their football playing skills. In its implementation, the success of a competition is not only determined by the technical abilities of the players but also influenced by several supporting factors such as the role of the referee in leading the match.

Referees are leaders on the field who have absolute authority in implementing and enforcing the rules of the game in accordance with the Law of the Game that have been written during the match. According to (Sharpe, 2024) A referee is someone who has the authority to regulate the course of a sporting match, someone who is considered neutral and acts as the person who will solve problems on the field. In addition to being a leader and enforcing the rules in a match, the referee is also authorized to control the whole during the match and cooperate with the match officials. (Campos et al., 2023) He also mentioned that the role of referees is more than just enforcing the rules, they are the guardians of the integrity of the game and mentors in the context of development.

The performance of the referee can be described into several crucial aspects that are interrelated. Decision making (Decision Making) is the core task of the referee emphasizing quick and accurate decisions on events that occur during the match such as fouls, offsides, throw-ins, goal kicks, corners, penalty box incidents and goal validation. The quality of referees' performance not only reflects their objectivity, but also helps instill these values in the players, highlighting the importance of ethics and integrity in the sport, which contributes to a healthy competitive environment (Duvina & Jost, 2019). Failure in one aspect of performance can cause controversy, lower morale, and damage the image of sports. Failure to make decisions is very risky, causes controversy, lowers the spirit of playing, and damages the value of sportsmanship. In addition, the position of the referee is very important because he must be able to move strategically at all times on the field to get a good perspective on every incident that occurs. Therefore, the referee is required to move to increase the possibility of making the right decision and reduce the potential for error, this is in line with the word (Hossner et al., 2019) When referees are in the

right position, they can better assess the feel of the game, which is especially important given the instantaneous nature of soccer action where split-second decisions often determine the outcome of the game. Another aspect that is also important in leading the game is game control (Game Controls) which requires the referee to be able to effectively manage the course of the match, including the application of disciplinary measures (yellow card/red card), careful timing and a firm but fair interaction with the players and the official team. Good match control can prevent the game from becoming rough, unsportsmanlike or even playing with the danger of the opposing player. Physical fitness is also a key asset when the referee is in charge of officiating the match, the referee must be able to maintain his optimal physique within 90 minutes. The referee must be ready for any situation, including sprints and sudden changes of direction to be in the right position to gain perspective for accurate and quick decision-making. Finally, the ability to communicate effectively both verbally and non-verbally as well as consistent knowledge and application of the Laws of the Game. A referee who is communicative and understands the Laws of the Game can explain his decisions clearly, defuse situations that are starting to escalate and gain the trust of players and team officials. Therefore, referees are required to communicate well so that the match runs smoothly without any strong protests from each team competing.

In early childhood football competitions such as the Askab Bekasi Children's League, the role of referees is very important and not only limited to law enforcement. Referees also function as educators who support the player's learning process, especially in skill development, tactical understanding, and character building. Therefore, referees must be able to create an educational, safe, and sporty atmosphere for matches. In addition to enforcing the rules, referees have the responsibility to instill the values of sportsmanship, discipline, and respect for players and other parties on the field. (Zanqueta et al., 2023) states that referees play an important role in teaching fair play and helping players understand the rules of the game correctly. However, referees in early age matches often face challenges, such as pressure from team officials and parents who have high expectations of their children. (Fritsch et al., 2022) explained that this condition can trigger an emotional response that has an impact on the course of the match. Therefore, referees are required to have the ability to manage matches, maintain emotional stability,

and create a conducive environment. In addition, referees must also understand and apply game rules that have been modified according to the age of the players, such as the size of the field, the number of players, and the duration of the match. Flexibility and wisdom in applying rules by prioritizing player safety are the keys to the success of referees in leading early age matches.

Based on previous research, it is known that referees have an integral role in shaping the quality of competitive early childhood football. The performance of referees directly affects the quality of matches and the development experience of young players. By focusing on indicators such as decision-making accuracy, psychological resilience, and educational functions in leading matches, opportunities to improve the quality of referee training and the quality of early age competitions can be identified more comprehensively. Therefore, this study is considered important as an input for referees in Bekasi Regency in an effort to improve performance, professional development, coaching young referees, and consistency in leading matches. In particular, this study aims to analyze the level of application of the Law of the Game by referees in the 2026 Bekasi Regency Askab Children's League competition through the measurement of decision accuracy, match management ability, and consistency in the application of game rules based on the assessment of competent observers. The novelty of this study lies in the focus of referee performance studies in early age competitions which are still limited to empirical research, the use of observer-based assessments to improve data objectivity, and the integration of technical and non-technical aspects in referee performance evaluation which results in a more comprehensive and contextual picture of referee practice at the youth football level.

## METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design, namely data collection carried out at one time to describe the actual performance conditions of football referees in Bekasi Regency without special treatment. This design was chosen because it is in accordance with the purpose of the descriptive research, which is to obtain an overview of the performance level of referees based on the results of the assessment at the time of the research.

The subjects in this study consist of 12 football referees who have official C3 and C2 licenses from the Indonesian Football Association

(PSSI) and actively lead matches in the Bekasi Regency Askab Children's League competition in 2026. The sampling technique uses purposive sampling, with the criteria of referees who actively lead matches in competitions. The respondents in this study are not referees themselves, but assessor referees (assessors/observers) who have competence in evaluating referees' performance during matches.

The research instrument used was in the form of a referee performance assessment questionnaire filled out by observers. The questionnaire was prepared based on referee performance indicators, including decision accuracy, match control, physical fitness, communication, and teamwork. Each statement uses a Likert scale with a score range of 1–5, where score 1 indicates a very poor category and a score of 5 indicates an excellent category. This instrument has undergone validity and reliability tests to ensure its feasibility as a research measuring tool.

The validity test of the instrument in this study was carried out using the Product Moment correlation technique by comparing the calculated  $r$  value with the  $r$  table at a significance level of 0.05. Based on the results of the analysis, the value of the  $r$  table was 0.6021 with a total of 10 respondents. The test results showed that all statement items (30 items) had a calculated  $r$  value greater than the  $r$  table, so that all items were declared valid and suitable for use as research instruments. This shows that each statement item has been able to accurately measure the performance aspects of the referee in accordance with the set indicators.

Furthermore, the reliability test was carried out using the Alpha Cronbach coefficient and a score of 1.043 was obtained. This value shows that the research instrument has a very high level of reliability, because it exceeds the minimum limit of 0.70. Thus, the instrument used in this study can be said to be consistent and reliable as a data collection tool in measuring the performance of Bekasi Regency football referees in the 2026 Bekasi Askab Children's League.

The research procedure begins with the preparation of the assessment instrument, then direct observation is made of the referee when leading the match. The assessor fills out a questionnaire based on the results of observations on the referee's performance on the field. Before it is implemented, the assessor is given an explanation of the research objectives and the procedure for filling in the instrument in order to obtain objective data. Data collection is carried out during the competition until all data is collected, then an

examination is carried out to ensure the completeness and consistency of the data.

The data analysis technique used descriptive statistics with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics software. The data obtained was analyzed to find out the average value, standard deviation, minimum and maximum value. Furthermore, the results of the analysis were categorized into performance levels, namely superior, good, adequate, bad and very poor. The results of the study were presented in the form of tables and descriptive descriptions to provide a clear picture of the performance of football referees in Bekasi Regency.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics

|                   | N  | Min  | Max  | Rcd  | SD   | Category |
|-------------------|----|------|------|------|------|----------|
| Accuracy          | 12 | 2.83 | 4.83 | 3.87 | 0,62 | Good     |
| Cock Compe-tition | 12 | 3.00 | 4.67 | 3.77 | 0.52 | Good     |
| Physical          | 12 | 2.67 | 4.67 | 3.82 | 0.58 | Good     |
| Communica-tion    | 12 | 2.67 | 4.67 | 3.76 | 0.57 | Good     |
| Work Same         | 12 | 2.67 | 4.67 | 3.83 | 0.63 | Good     |

The results of the study show that the performance of Bekasi Regency football referees in the 2026 Bekasi Askab Children's League competition as a whole is in the good category in all aspects measured. These findings show that referees have good competence in carrying out their duties as match referees, both from technical and non-technical aspects. Good referee performance is an important factor in determining the quality of matches, because referees play the role of guardians of the rules as well as controllers of the course of the game (García-Santos et al., 2020).

The aspect of decision accuracy that obtained the highest score indicates that the referee is able to make the right decisions in various match situations. This ability is at the core of the referee's role, considering that every decision taken can affect the course of the match and the perception of fairness from players and officials. (Shui et al., 2025) states that the accuracy of decision-making is a key indicator in assessing the quality of referees, as it is directly related to integrity and objectivity in sports. In addition, the referee's ability to make decisions is also influenced by the position and point of view on the field, the right position allows the referee to assess the game situation more accurately.

In the aspect of match control, the results of the study showed a high category, which shows that the referee is able to manage the course of the match well. Match control includes the ability to regulate the tempo of the game, apply disciplina-

ry measures, and maintain order of players. This ability is especially important in early competitions, where the emotions of players and officials tend to be more difficult to control. (Tingling, 2024) Emphasizing that referees have a strategic role in maintaining match stability through the application of strict but fair rules.

The physical fitness aspect also shows a high category, which means that the referee's physical condition is quite supportive in carrying out his duties during the match. Physical fitness is one of the important components in refereeing, because referees are required to always move according to the flow of the game in order to be in an optimal position. (Castillo-Rodríguez et al., 2023) stated that the level of physical fitness is closely related to the concentration and accuracy of the referee's decision-making, so that the better the physical condition, the higher the quality of the decisions produced.

Furthermore, the communication aspect that obtained a relatively lower score compared to other aspects indicates that the referee's communication skills still need to be improved. Effective communication not only serves to convey decisions, but also to build good relationships with players and officials, as well as to defuse potential conflicts on the field. According to (Burger et al., 2023) Good communication can increase players' acceptance of referees' decisions and help create a more conducive atmosphere to the match. Therefore, improving communication skills is an important aspect in developing referee quality.

In the aspect of teamwork, the results show a high category, which indicates that the coordination between the main referee and the rest of the match equipment is going well. In football matches, teamwork between referee devices is indispensable to ensure that all incidents on the field can be optimally monitored. This is in line with the concept that the success of referees is not only determined by individual ability, but also by the effectiveness of team coordination in making decisions collectively (Samuel et al., 2021)

Overall, the results of this study show that referee performance is at a good level, but there is still a divergence in the communication aspect that obtains the lowest relative score, which indicates that there is an urgency in strengthening interactional competence, both verbally and non-verbally. This problem is crucial considering that the role of referees in early childhood football is not only a law enforcer, but also an educator who shapes the character and sportsmanship value of young players. This shortcoming shows that referees tend to still be trapped in a mechanistic role

as a rule enforcer, but are not optimal in carrying out pedagogical functions that are crucial for the psychology of early childhood players. This risks triggering a distortion of players' perception of the fairness of the match, especially in the face of external pressure from spectators or coaches. Therefore, future coaching strategies should no longer be limited to physical and technical strengthening of the Law of the Game alone. It is necessary to reconstruct the training curriculum that includes persuasive communication management and developmental psychology approaches, to ensure that referees are able to create a competitive atmosphere that is not only technically competitive, but also educational and conducive to the growth of young athletes' character. Through the optimization of these non-technical aspects, it is hoped that a competition ecosystem will be created that is not only physically safe, but also conducive to pedagogical development and sustainable athlete achievement. Thus, improving the quality of referees is expected to support the creation of early childhood football matches that are more sporty, safe, and educational, as well as contributing to optimal player development.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and discussions that have been carried out, it can be concluded that the performance of Bekasi Regency football referees in the 2026 Bekasi Askab Children's League competition is generally in the good category in all aspects measured. Decision accuracy is the highest ranked indicator, which indicates that the referee has been able to make decisions correctly and consistently during the match. This reflects the referee's ability to understand and apply the rules of the game correctly.

Other aspects, such as match control, physical fitness, communication, and teamwork, are also included in the high category, which indicates that the referee has a good enough ability to manage the course of the match, maintain physical condition, interact with players and officials, and cooperate with other match equipment. However, the communication aspect has a relatively lower value than other aspects, so it still needs to be considered and further improved.

In addition, this study has not directly examined external factors such as pressure from players, coaches, and parents that can affect the quality of referee decision-making, especially in early age competitions. Therefore, the results of this study need to be carefully interpreted and form the basis for further research to use a more

comprehensive approach, a larger sample count, and a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of football refereeing performance.

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