***‘VAR complicates things’***

Sigbjørn B. Skirbekk

*Faculty of Social Sciences, Nord University, Bodø, Norway*

**Objective:** This paper aim to investigate how Norwegian elite football referees experiences balancing football refereeing, a civilian job and their private/family life, and how the implementation of VAR will impact this balance.

**Methods:** Data was collected through a 4-day field work observation of the Norwegian Football Federations’ first live VAR-training module. 50 Norwegian elite football referees participated, 5 of whom where women.

**Findings:** The referees experience challenges balancing refereeing with other aspects of their lives, primarily family, and civilian job. There is concern that the implementation of VAR will make this balance even more difficult, as it requires referees to be involved in twice as many games per weekend. Especially the older, male referees, with children were concerned about losing time with them. None of the female referees were explicitly concerned about this, but were speculating about the work load next season.

**Discussion and conclusion:** VAR complicates the work-life balance for referees. Does the implementation of VAR make the elite refereeing role additionally “narrow” in regards to *who* can become elite referees. The situation after VAR implementation may make it impossible to combine refereeing, civilian job and family life. This was a concern for many male referees, but it might be related to age as the female referees were younger. Still, balancing this might be more difficult for female referees considering how they traditionally are given more of the responsibility at home, and have lower salary as referees.