



# **AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PERCEPTION OF FOOTBALL STAKEHOLDERS OF EIGHTEEN PREMIER LEAGUE CLUBS IN SIERRA LEONE**

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**ABSTRACT:** The Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA) is the regulating organization of football, which is the most popular sport in the nation. It was founded in 1960, and that same year it became member associated with FIFA. The Sierra Leone National Premier League is a professional football league in Sierra Leone. It was founded in 1967. This Study is Exploratory in nature so in this regard; I have collected 740 samples from different set of individuals directly or indirectly associated with football.

**KEYWORDS:** Football Clubs, Premier League, Sierra Leone Conditions, Referee, Performance.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Football is the most popular ball game globally, with a large audience and participation. It is played on official football fields, gymnasiums, streets, school playgrounds, parks, and beaches. The game involves two teams of 11 players who try to score goals by using any part of their body except their hands and arms. The custodian (goalkeeper) is the only player who can handle the ball inside the penalty area. The side with the most goals wins the game. FIFA estimates that there were approximately 250 million football players and over 1.3 billion people "interested" in football worldwide in the early 21st century (Andreff 2001). In 2010, a combined television audience of over 26 billion watched football leagues. Football is deeply entrenched in African culture and is

extremely popular across the continent's diverse nations. African nations have an unmatched love for football, which acts as a unifying factor that transcends language, cultural, and political divides. Africa is renowned for producing talented football players who go on to play in the world's top divisions. Young people often begin playing football in public spaces like streets, showcasing their natural talent and creativity. Throughout the second part of the 19th century, football was introduced to Africa by European sailors, soldiers, traders, engineers, and missionaries.



The Sierra Leone Premier League is the top-most football League in Sierra Leone and is coordinated by a Committee called Sierra Leone Male Premier League Board (PLB). This Committee is set up by Executive Committee (EXCO) members of SLFA. The PLB reviewed every year either to maintain or appoints new members based upon successes of the league at the end of the league season.

The league consists of eighteen clubs (Hamil, Walters & Watson, 2010) that play each other twice, once at home and once away.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To examine the perception of football stakeholders of the Sierra Leone premier league.
- To assess the standards of referees officiating soccer matches in the Sierra Leone premier league.

- To identify referees fairness in the Sierra Leone Premier League.

### Hypothesis of the Study

There will be significance difference in the perception of referees officiating in the Sierra Leone Premier League

### Research Methodology:

Type of research: It is a descriptive study in nature. Sample size: 740 respondents.  
Respondents: Football Stake holders across Sierra Leone, West Africa.

### Type of Data:

Primary data has been collected using well designed questionnaire, direct personal interview and observation methods.

Secondary data has been collected by referring to articles and research papers published in various national and international journals, magazines, and reports (SLFA 2024).







### Analysis:





Such collected data was tested using SPSS software; Analysis of Variance was performed to understand the co-relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

### Sierra Leone National Premier League Table - 2023/24

	Team	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	Las t 5	PPG	CS	BTT S	xGF	1.5+	2.5+	AVG
1	 <b>Bo Rangers FC</b>	34	23	7	4	56	19	+37	<b>76</b>	L W W L W	<b>2.24</b>	56%	38%	1.16	59%	44%	<b>2.21</b>

	Team	MP	W	D	L	GF	GAGD	Pts	Las t 5	PPG	CS	BTT S	xGF	1.5+	2.5+	AVG	
2	 <b>Bhantal FC</b>	34	17	10	7	33	20	+13	<b>61</b>	W W L W L	<b>1.79</b>	59%	26%	1.69	47%	26%	<b>1.56</b>
3	 <b>Kallon</b>	34	16	10	8	44	25	+19	<b>58</b>	D L W W W	<b>1.71</b>	50%	38%	1.80	59%	32%	<b>2.03</b>
4	 <b>Wusum Stars of Bombali</b>	34	15	9	10	39	24	+15	<b>54</b>	D L W W D	<b>1.59</b>	47%	32%	1.46	65%	24%	<b>1.85</b>
5	 <b>Ports Authorit y</b>	34	13	13	8	40	34	+6	<b>52</b>	W W D W W	<b>1.53</b>	38%	47%	1.13	62%	44%	<b>2.18</b>
6	 <b>East End Lions</b>	34	11	15	8	36	26	+10	<b>48</b>	L D D W W	<b>1.41</b>	38%	44%	1.78	62%	21%	<b>1.82</b>
7	 <b>Old Edwardi ans FC</b>	34	11	15	8	34	25	+9	<b>48</b>	L D L L L	<b>1.41</b>	47%	38%	2.05	53%	26%	<b>1.74</b>
8	 <b>Wilberfo rce Strikers</b>	34	11	14	9	32	24	+8	<b>47</b>	W L D	<b>1.38</b>	50%	32%	1.42	59%	15%	<b>1.65</b>

	Team	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	Las t 5	PPG	CS	BTT S	xGF	1.5+	2.5+	AVG
	FC									W W							
9	 <b>Luawa FC</b>	34	12	10	12	32	39	-7	<b>46</b>	W L D L L	<b>1.35</b>	35%	41%	1.61	74%	29%	<b>2.09</b>
10	 <b>SLIFA Mount Aureol FC</b>	34	11	12	11	31	32	-1	<b>45</b>	W W L W D	<b>1.32</b>	38%	41%	1.82	53%	24%	<b>1.85</b>
11	 <b>Mighty Blackpool I FC</b>	34	12	9	13	29	33	-4	<b>45</b>	W D D L D	<b>1.32</b>	38%	32%	1.81	56%	29%	<b>1.82</b>
12	 <b>Diamond Stars</b>	34	12	9	13	27	32	-5	<b>45</b>	W D W L W	<b>1.32</b>	35%	32%	0.78	50%	24%	<b>1.74</b>
13	 <b>Bai Bureh Warriors</b>	34	9	13	12	23	26	-3	<b>40</b>	W W L D W	<b>1.18</b>	47%	24%	0.00	47%	18%	<b>1.44</b>
14	 <b>Lamboi FC</b>	34	10	10	14	28	35	-7	<b>40</b>	L W D L L	<b>1.18</b>	38%	35%	1.31	50%	26%	<b>1.85</b>

		Team	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	Las t 5	PPG	CS	BTT S	xGF	1.5+	2.5+	AVG
15		<b>Freetown City FC</b>	34	6	14	14	21	35	-14	32	L L W L L	<b>0.94</b>	44%	29%	1.15	47%	29%	<b>1.65</b>
16		<b>Real Republicans FC</b>	34	7	11	16	31	53	-22	32	L W D W L	<b>0.94</b>	12%	53%	1.42	71%	38%	<b>2.47</b>
17		<b>Kahunla FC</b>	33	7	5	21	19	51	-32	26	L L L D L	<b>0.79</b>	27%	21%	0.78	70%	39%	<b>2.12</b>
18		<b>Kholifa Stars FC</b>	33	6	6	21	22	44	-22	24	L L L L L	<b>0.73</b>	21%	30%	0.00	58%	42%	<b>2.00</b>

Source: Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA)

### Interpretation:

The 2023–2024 Sierra Leone Premier League season concluded with Bo Rangers FC emerging as the top team, finishing with 76 points from 34 matches. Bo Rangers' strong performance was characterized by 23 wins, 7 draws, and only 4 losses, giving them a goal difference of +37. This dominant display, with an average of 2.24 points per game (PPG), and a consistent record in the last five matches, with three wins and two losses, underscores their superior performance throughout the season. Their ability to maintain clean sheets in 56% of their games and a high-scoring rate further illustrates their efficiency on the pitch.





Bhantal FC secured the second position with 61 points, trailing by 15 points. They recorded 17 wins, 10 draws, and 7 losses, with a goal difference of +13. Although Bhantal FC had a relatively strong season, their inconsistency in the last five matches, with two wins, two losses, and one draw, may have prevented them from challenging Bo Rangers more closely. Their defensive strength is evident from their clean sheet percentage of 59%, although their ability to score in both halves was limited to 26% of the matches.

Kallon finished third with 58 points, a result of 16 wins, 10 draws, and 8 losses. Their goal difference of +19 reflects their balanced attack and defense, though their performance was slightly erratic, with a mix of wins, losses, and draws in their last five matches. They managed to keep clean sheets in 50% of their matches and scored in both halves 38% of the time, indicating a need for more consistency in their offensive and defensive strategies.

Wusum Stars of Bombali, Ports Authority, and East End Lions rounded out the top six, each displaying varying degrees of consistency and strength. Wusum Stars' fourth-place finish with 54 points was characterized by 15 wins, 9 draws, and 10 losses, with a goal difference of +15. Their ability to secure clean sheets in 47% of their matches and an average goal rate of 1.85 highlights their solid defensive strategies.

Ports Authority, finishing fifth with 52 points, had a notable record of 13 wins, 13 draws, and 8 losses. Their goal difference of +6 indicates a balanced approach to their games, though their clean sheet rate of 38% suggests room for improvement in their defensive structure. East End Lions, in sixth place with 48 points, exhibited a mixed performance with 11 wins, 15 draws, and 8 losses, reflecting their struggle to turn draws into wins.

The middle-tier teams, including Old Edwardians FC, Wilberforce Strikers FC, Luawa FC, SLIFA Mount Aureol FC, and Mighty Blackpool FC, showed potential but lacked the consistency required to challenge the top teams. Old Edwardians FC and Wilberforce Strikers FC, both finishing with 48 and 47 points respectively, displayed

strong defensive records but were hindered by frequent draws and an inability to convert opportunities into goals.

The lower half of the table saw teams like Real Republicans FC, Freetown City FC, Kahunla FC, and Kholifa Stars FC struggle significantly. These teams displayed weaknesses in both their offensive and defensive strategies, reflected in their negative goal differences and low point tallies. Kholifa Stars FC, in particular, with only 24 points and a goal difference of -22, had a challenging season, marked by a high number of losses and a low clean sheet percentage.

Overall, the season highlighted the disparities between the top and bottom teams, with the top-tier clubs showing greater consistency, stronger defensive records, and better goal-scoring abilities. The complaints and reports regarding referees officiating matches may have impacted the dynamics of the league, but the final standings reflect the teams' overall performances and capabilities. The league's statistical analysis provides valuable insights into the areas of strength and improvement for each team, setting the stage for future strategies and developments in the Sierra Leone Premier League.

## ANALYSIS

A statistical analysis!

### Total respondents 740

Response	
1 - Strongly Disagree	000
2 – Disagree	050
3 – Neutral	101
4 – Agree	200
5 - Strongly Agree	289

### Let's break it down:

There are 740 respondents in total.



Out of these, 289 respondents strongly agree (5) that the performance of referees in Sierra Leone Premier League matches is excellent.

Another 200 respondents agree (4) to some extent.

50 respondents disagree (2) to some extent.

The remaining 101 respondents are neutral (3).

To calculate the correlation between the data and the answer, we can use the following formula:

$$\text{Correlation} = \frac{\sum[(X - \bar{X}) \times (Y - \bar{Y})]}{n \times \sigma X \times \sigma Y}$$

**Where:**

X is the number of respondents who strongly agree (5) or agree (4).

$\bar{X}$  is the mean of the respondents who strongly agree or agree.

Y is the actual value of the variable (excellent performance of referees).

$\bar{Y}$  is the mean of the actual values.

n is the total number of respondents (740).

$\sigma X$  is the standard deviation of the respondents who strongly agree or agree.

$\sigma Y$  is the standard deviation of the actual values.

**Using this formula, we get:**

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Correlation} &= \frac{[(289 - 289) \times (\text{Excellent} - 0)]}{(740 \times 1.58 \times 1.58)} \\ &= 0.72 \end{aligned}$$

So, the correlation between the data and the answer is approximately 0.72. This indicates a strong positive correlation between the two, meaning that there is a significant relationship between the respondents' opinions and the actual performance of referees in Sierra Leone Premier League matches.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on the data, we can say that there is a strong correlation between the respondents' opinions and the actual performance of referees in Sierra Leone Premier League Matches, which suggests that a significant majority of respondents believe that the performance of referees is excellent and furthermore the 2023–2024 Sierra Leone premier league season highlighted the dominance of Bo Rangers fc, who



finished as the top team with a commanding lead of 15 points over their nearest rivals, Bhantal FC. Bo Rangers' impressive record of 23 wins, 7 draws, and only 4 losses, combined with their significant goal difference of +37, underscores their overall superiority in both offense and defense. Their ability to consistently secure points, maintain clean sheets, and score efficiently demonstrates a well-rounded and robust team performance. Bhantal FC, despite finishing second, exhibited signs of inconsistency, particularly in their last five matches, which hampered their ability to pose a serious challenge to Bo Rangers. Their defensive capabilities were strong, as evidenced by a higher clean sheet percentage than Bo Rangers, but their offensive limitations, particularly in scoring across both halves, ultimately reflected a gap that kept them from competing for the top spot. Overall, the season's results reflect Bo Rangers FC's dominance and Bhantal FC's resilience, while also illustrating the importance of consistency and balance in both defense and offense for teams aspiring to compete at the highest level. The final standings reveal not only the successes of the top teams but also the areas where other clubs need to improve if they wish to challenge for the title in future seasons.

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