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# Anxiety Disorders Linked to Superstitious Beliefs in Festish-Motivated Footballers

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**Abstract:** The objective of our study was to examine the development of superstitious beliefs in footballers in relation to their emotional instability. This was a descriptive study based on the clinical research interview conducted with a sample of university footballers. Sixteen semi-structured interviews made it possible to collect information on present and past fetishist practices, attitudes and emotions. The participants were recruited by snowball sampling among students enrolled in the 3rd year of a sports license, football option at the Higher Institute of Physical and Sports Education. The average age of the subjects was 21.76±1.95 years. The average duration of football practice in the community was 4.37 years. Cultural expectations related to the obsession with sports victory demonstrated the traditional use of fetishes such as *Nkama* (22.22%), *Mokoyi* (42.85%), *Ndami* (22.22%), *Mutoyo* (22.22%), *Pimba* (44.44%), *Soukaka* (11.11%). For 39.17% of respondents, the emotion of folk music exerts a repulsive force on the adversary. This is intended for the personification of the spirit tamed by the witch doctor by 34.82% of footballers. It is an exhibition of the drive body for 12.31% of footballers in order to limit the opponent's attentional resources. And, 13.7% consider it as the cause of the opponent's falls on the field. The permanent immersion of footballers in superstitious rituals almost explains their adherence to ancestral beliefs in relation to pseudoscientific ideas of the environment. On the one hand, the results consider that the perpetuation of these beliefs leads to abnormal behaviors, which interfere with cognitions prone to anxious emotions. But the level of environmental alienation constitutes a brake against the importance of a psychological consultation, which is almost absent or almost unthought. On the other hand, fetishistic consultations are the consequence of the ignorance of the appropriate techniques of mental preparation by the sportsmen. Beyond that, the results show how the psychopathologist can seize this object by managing to overcome these irrational and paralyzing beliefs through cognitive and behavioral techniques.

**Keywords:** Superstition, Anxiety, Emotion, Sportsman, Psychopathology, Alcohol, Fetish

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## 1. Introduction

“Are not the superstitious beliefs developed by footballers at the origin of the anxiety disorders which seem to be frequent in the sports population during competition”? This is, in fact, the question to be asked in order to understand the orientation given to this problem, which is rarely discussed in sports psychology. The concerns that inspire this research are, on the other hand, both theoretical and observational. On the one hand, they are theoretical with regard to our questioning

of two concepts most often studied, in connection with the phenomena of sports performance, in particular – “anxiety and sport” [32, 37, 20] then “superstition and sport” [18, 23]. On the other hand, they were born from our observation of the alcoholic behaviors that university footballers quite often experience in the final of inter-promotional sports days. These are the days symbolically marking the departure of students at the end of their training. These are traditionally organized at the University Sports Center, located in “Makélékélé”, the first district of Brazzaville. On the

occasion of the last sports days of December 2021, the competitors did not hesitate to measure themselves openly by horribly exhibited objects in view of all the spectators, entrusted to some of them and which would come from witch doctors unknown to the public. Looking at a similar aspect more recently in the African region, how about the water bottle left on the pitch by the Egypt goalkeeper after the penalty shootout in the final against Senegal in the Africa Cup of Nations 2021?

### ***1.1. Onset of the Emotional Episode***

Despite the incitement to beliefs of personal control and commitment through the expressiveness of fan folk music [8, 38], athletes give the impression of being under the influence of anxious emotions such as disappointment, fear or regret [40]. One of the approaches is to show that these emotions are triggered when sporting expectations do not appear as we would have liked. Under these conditions, athletes can generally feel anticipations of failure and hopelessness. If these two cognitive phenomena are triggered simultaneously, their emotional episode undoubtedly becomes a close ally of depression and anxiety. As a result, the different reactions of athletes remain centered on intense emotional disturbances to the point that they are assimilated to anxiety disorders. This behavior could then be explained by a self-vulnerability stemming from both distressing social interactions and cultural contexts fueled by irrational beliefs leading to errors of judgment [13]. The other of the approaches would ensure that subjects who do have the same goal can nevertheless have a different state of mind that would push them to pursue this goal in different ways. Since the state of mind functions as a cognitive motivational system that produces a large number of downstream consequences at the level of thought, feeling and behavior [40].

### ***1.2. Triggers of Anxiety Disorders***

By "Anxiety Disorders", we mean here countless Congolese sportsmen who suffer from excessive emotional reactions, who to some degree decide in advance to consume alcohol excessively [47], in an attempt to inhibit their level of discomfort. This consumption of alcohol is considered as a "self-treatment" of anxiety making it possible to bear, forget or fight against a psychic conflict [30]. But, following a fetishist consultation on the challenges of the expected competition, athletes naively appreciate the "ritual" by which they disorient their self-confidence towards confidence in an "ephemeral object" by immediately wearing the illusion of victory without real effort. This is how they are led to motivate themselves more serenely by taking into account irrational mechanisms or even factors that further establish the tendency to panic, to be tense, nervous and then anxious [10]. It should be noted, however, that however mentally prepared the athletes may be despite the physical efforts made in training, it has been observed that Congolese coaches suffer severely from depressive symptoms [46]

requiring therapy. It would seem that due to the combination of cultural and social factors, other, purely psychic factors would act as triggers for various psychopathological disorders [6]. As such, many authors have been able to observe the most marked predispositions to emotional avoidance, to the feeling of operational helplessness followed by a weak feeling of inefficiency, to dysfunctional metacognitive beliefs, to mental ruminations or emotional reactions such as panic attacks [6].

Moreover, panic disorder is quite common in the general population with 2.7% of subjects meeting the criteria for this pathology over a period of one year. The median age of onset is between 20 and 24 years. However, the cultural disapproval of fear among men is so strong that most simply endure the panic. Thus, the culturally accepted way to manage anxiety is endorsed by drinking large amounts of alcohol. According to these authors, black and white patients with panic disorder do not differ significantly from each other in terms of symptoms [6].

### ***1.3. Athlete Behavior Under Emotional Anxiety***

The control of emotional states is one of the central concerns of sports psychologists with regard to the importance of its activation rate necessary for the achievement of a good performance [17]. Moreover, competitive emotions appear, in the eyes of coaches and athletes, as one of the main factors likely to influence performance [15]. However, the literature is rich in models specifying the processes underlying either disorders or psychological problems with the complexity of the phenomenon of anxiety. Admittedly, the anxiety disorder hypothesis stems from the phobic model inspired by behavioral theories of conditioned anxiety or situational anxiety in a sports context, insofar as it is described by an immediate emotional state which is characterized by apprehension, fear, tension and increased physiological arousal [14]. Because, according to the cognitivist approach, anxiety is based on perceptions of uncertainty as well as the importance of control techniques that depend on the subject's faculties to modify their perceptions [17].

By definition, anxiety is a mood characterized by negative affect, somatic symptoms of tension, and apprehension about the future [5]. In the athlete, it can relate to a subjective feeling of unease, to various attitudes such as a preoccupied or agitated air or even to a cerebral reaction expressed by an increase in heart rate and muscle tension [6]. Moods can be highlighted by sports psychologists who see the lasting aspect in them because they are diffuse to the point of extending over several weeks or even months [27, 48].

### ***1.4. Mental Processes Escorted by Superstitious Beliefs***

Significant episodes of negative emotions such as distress, hesitation, sadness, worry or fear lamentably weaken an athlete's mind [25, 6]. They then generate the possibility of an uncertainty reaction that may be triggered by the combination of these emotions, which seems to immediately

interrupt mental processes such as motivation, concentration and self-confidence [43]. Experiencing fear of the opponent or fear of being defeated in athletic competition, many athletes from different cultures or backgrounds direct their self-confidence to superstitious beliefs or paranormal beliefs [39], rather than to their ordinary mental abilities [14]. However, these beliefs develop precisely in the absence of appropriate techniques of mental preparation. The fact that paralyzing emotions are more frequent in athletes who express feelings of inferiority, self-esteem and panic increases their level of uncertainty in the face of competitive challenges. This phenomenon increases, in fact, the propensity to adhere to thought systems under alternative explanations [9].

#### **1.4.1. Psychopathological Aspects of Mixed Beliefs**

This behavior is most often noticed during the pre-competitive period during which elite athletes often experience significant emotional traffic, sometimes disabling, followed by body alterations and psychosomatic disorders [45, 33]. They end up being overcome by the fear of success. The literature in sports psychopathology believes that fear of success arises preferentially in athletes who are prematurely emotionally destabilized and lack confidence. However, the object of a meticulous work of inventory and description linked to fetishistic practices in sports training remains difficult to achieve, due to the secret celebration of rituals which are nevertheless poorly appreciated by certain believers in Western religion. The latter do not question the superstition fueled by any form of rapprochement with those they consider to be the soothsayers or the holders of the power of witchcraft, despite their eccentric adherence to the Christian religion [7]. Religion being a shared system of beliefs and actions concerning a superhuman agent [49]. The observation of the ritual, most often carried out discreetly by the athletes, contributes to diffuse the presence of a conditioned motivation and to familiarize the athletes with superstition, obscure beliefs or fetishism [28, 44]. And yet, the opinion of some authors seems to show that individuals with a lot of superstitious and magical beliefs also have a lot of religious beliefs [1].

#### **1.4.2. Systemic Views of Abnormal Uses as an Object of Study**

This research aimed to know the evidence of fetishistic practices that translate the celebration of superstitious rituals in the shadows. It proceeds through a diversified investigation of ancestral practices at the heart of some Congolese traditions whose manipulations of objects reflect the presence of occult powers in certain humans. Subsequently, she tries to understand the conscious experience of the power of black magic when she tries to install a form of truncated mental preparation in footballers who find it difficult to shake off fear and panic. And yet, they appear to the public through the observation of abnormal behavior in a situation of sports competition. Through this diversification of cultural origin of the respondents, this study tries to obtain a bridge which translates the meaning of

black magic when it claims to constitute a reassuring form of self-confidence among footballers.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Participants and Procedure**

The research involved 16 university athletes. The participants were male volunteers recruited at the Higher Institute of Physical Education and Sports (Marien Ngouabi University) by snowball sampling [26]. They were between 19 and 24 years old ( $M=21.76$  years;  $S.D = 1.95$ ). The sample was mainly composed of young people who had practiced amateur football before their status as a student in the Sport option. They have all just prepared their baccalaureate diploma in a public high school located in a semi-urban community. The average duration of football practice is 4.37 years. This sample was obtained according to a selection method aimed at diversifying individual profiles according to certain criteria such as age (9 participants from 19 to 20 years old; 5 participants from 21 to 22 years old and 2 participants from 23 to 24 years old), ethnic diversity (7 ethnic groups were represented out of 9 ethnic groups listed at the national level).

This study is based on the realization of 16 semi-structured interviews with students in the 2nd and 3rd year of sports license. The recruitment of interviewees was carried out by the Sport Psychology Laboratory, under the authorization of the research center at the deputy director of the Higher Institute of Physical and Sports Education. These interviews were conducted individually by the principal researcher and lasted approximately two hours. The interview focused on themes such as: the fetish practice linked to sports competition, the celebration of the ritual and its essential characteristics, the active principle of the fetish by associating the related prohibitions and the attitudes to be observed, specific to each custom.

### **2.2. Measures**

For the purposes of this study, we used a socio-demographic questionnaire and the clinical research interview method. The questionnaire required information on age, gender, level of education, location of baccalaureate exams, number of years of football practice, ethnic origin, experience of fetish practices.

The clinical interview for research purposes is opposed to the experimental method and refers to almost all the situations envisaged, to the singularity of the individuals, to the concrete aspect of the situations, to their dynamics, to their genesis and to their meaning [19]. Not being devoid of purpose, it corresponds to a work plan of the researcher [11]. This research method, also called interview, favors the interpersonal relationship in the sense that the conduct of the interview is determined by the interviewer/interviewee interaction [21]. During this step, we considered the degree of freedom for which the interview questions should allow a free response from the interviewee. In order not to have

biased answers, we avoided reducing the degree of freedom, and this, by favoring the principle stipulating that the greater the level of freedom, the richer and more complex the expected answers will be [12].

### 2.3. Content Analytics

Content analysis was used for this research after verbatim transcription of the recorded interviews. As the most widespread method for studying interviews or qualitative observations [22], it allowed a systematized description and analysis of verbal data characterizing the social representations of the participants in this study [41]. These representations are, in fact, relatively organized cognitions around an object that the actors of a homogeneous population distribute around this object of common interest [34].

## 3. Results

In order to present the results of this study, interviews were first transcribed entirely by hand pending the second stage, that of interpretation [42]. This first step allowed the written form of the verbatim and to organize the information collected by audio recording in order to facilitate reading and above all to have it exactly [3]. It was a transcription, essentially characterized by the elimination of repetitions, language errors, hesitations and related remarks. Psychological analysis units were used for verbatim coding operations [2]. These are used to encode sensations, emotions, mental images, deep memories, missing ideas.

Thus, 56.25% of participants affirm the hypothesis that, in most localities in the south of the Republic of Congo, inter-village sports competitions are played urgently under the impulse of mysterious practices to hope for victory. Then, 43.75% of them affirm the presence of a similar behavior in the sports population in the North of the same country. An essential range of fetishes, called the "*Nkama*" (acknowledged by 22.22% of respondents) whose meaning is close to the concept "Trembling" is in vogue. Some countries use the "*Pimba*" (by 44.44% respondents) meaning the "fog or black of the day", others manipulate the "*Mutoyo*" (by 22.22% respondent) or simply "domination".

Taking into account their function, the "*Nkama*" is intended to trap the best shooters of the opposing team. The expected behavior consists in observing the presence of tremors as soon as the player comes into possession of the ball, of which he ends up losing directional control. The "*Pimba*" ensures the disruption of the shooter's visual attentional functions in the sense that he will no longer have the momentary presence of the ball and the goals on his visual field at the right moment when he will have to execute an oriented shot. The "*Mutoyo*" is the immediate trigger of the fear of the nearby opponent, that is to say the player of the opposing team installed at the same position as the possessor of the fetishes.

The ritual to be respected to ensure the active principle of these fetishes takes place in the cemetery. All team players are invited to spend the last night before the competition,

around the grave of a deceased player or a tribal leader. This delegation is absolutely accompanied by the accomplice village chief. On the other hand, the non-observance of the inhuman principles imposed, by one of the participants in the ritual, strictly weakens the whole team. This means, for example, avoiding any sexual relationship or not greeting an individual, not even a villager, until the competition is over.

The "*Soukaka*" fetish (11.11% of respondents) is exclusive to young athletes from one of the southern regions of the Republic of Congo. This amounts to consuming a wild fruit then the player having accepted this action is obliged to pour his urine in the morning on the area where the opposing team will be installed or squarely behind their goals. The intention being to weaken and destroy the physical strength of the adversaries, whatever their profile and their degree of pseudoscientific preparation alongside the witch.

In other localities in the North of the Republic of Congo, young footballers have learned to confide in a fetish called "*Mokoyi*" (42.85% of respondents). This is used by the footballers of a village who will have to play at home. This name designates a guardian spirit of the village whose refuge is in a small house erected for this purpose, outside the dwellings of the villagers, and strictly speaking about 3 km away in the heart of a forest where it is strictly forbidden for any anarchic visit by third parties, except insiders at a specified time. On the eve of the competition, players are asked to spend their last night there in the company of the "*Ndami*" (that is to say, the initiate who knows how to communicate with the guardian spirit). After a ritual in the middle of the forest and in the presence of the selected players, the "*Ndami*" (22.22% of respondents) must call the "*Mokoyi*" in an audible voice with a sacred recital "*Yaka eh! yaka eh! iya fila boka eh!*". Suddenly, characteristics of an alien presence from the unseen visitor manifest through a strong wind. The height is that the uncontrolled movement of the trees gives the image of a storm, until stripping the branches of trees and mobilizing the flight of dead leaves. This is tangible proof that the "*Mokoyi*" is sufficiently stimulated.

It is at this moment that the ritual begins where the recommendation of what we would like for the team is made. Immediately, the "*Ndami*" takes the palm wine provided for the occasion that he must spill on the feet of all the players, like a cleaning of the feet initiated by Jesus Christ on his disciples before Easter. After this act, it is up to the "*Ndami*" to choose two players who will bear the responsibility of scoring the goals. This designation is done symbolically by putting back the pieces of cola nuts. The number of pieces is not determined at random but according to the guardian spirit reveals it in the "*Ndami*". Thus, 3 pieces of cola received would mean 3 goals pending achievement. On the other hand, the goalkeeper is the only one to receive a red powder, instead of palm wine at the feet of the players. Called "*Botola*", this powder is intended for body use as if it were a beauty milk. All these operations are carried out at night, and the next day, all the players remain frozen there until it is time to go directly to the sports field for the start of the match.

While the players go to the venue of the competition, the “*Ndami*” is bound to spend his time in the house of “*Mokoyi*” to further activate the guardian spirit. He is then condemned to drink palm wine until the end of the competition.

An emotional induction linked to folk music [8, 38] in sports competition sites has been identified in the opinion of the interviewees. For 39.17%, it makes it possible to control the environment by exerting a repulsive force on the opponents' fetishes. For 34.82% of the subjects, folk music is intended for the personification of the spirit tamed by the witch doctor whose role is to ensure the predefined score. However, 12.31% admit that the folkloric experience is only a theatrical exhibition of the instinctual body [33] to subject the opponents to a form of myopia (or attentional blindness). And, 13.7% link this music to the factors favoring the rain in order to witness the loss of balance of the opponents on the ground.

#### 4. Discussion

This study aimed to study the phenomena of superstitious beliefs of footballers under the influence of the traditions of different Congolese ethnic groups. The approach led to questioning the reality of ancestral practices, as experienced by the footballers themselves, which made it possible to interpret the representation of the supernatural forces used to attract sporting success.

The use of fetishistic practices, a prelude to sports competitions, constitutes one of the specific characteristics of Congolese sport and manifests itself, in its very functioning, as a form of pseudoscientific mental preparation. Indeed, among the sports elite, irrational beliefs do not appear at random. They seem to come from historical causes specific to the community affected by the principle of closure in the perceptual illusion. According to the indirect approach to perception, this illusion shows that footballers apply prior knowledge to perceived objects, especially when it comes to filling an empty element [31] such as working memory. Irrational beliefs come either from the personal history of each, with regard to the maneuvers previously carried out and which would have led to the expected results. And this often, to the detriment of the experiences of others, that is to say other people who have tried to adopt this behavior; or verbal persuasion from others [40]. The extent to which an athlete is convinced that he can seriously adopt a particular sequence of actions comes from his personal history, during which he tried to adopt this course of action in the past [4]. Footballers convince themselves of their superstitious belief from the behaviors imitated in the local social environment through the consequences of operant conditioning. Previously successful attempts judged satisfactory would have reinforced the irrational beliefs, while earlier doomed attempts judged unsatisfactory would have led to a gradual regression of these beliefs.

One of the important interpretations on our results is that many footballers who participate in rituals related to fetishistic practices, under the pretext of performing

consistently, are actually harboring false cognitive information. We therefore assume the presence of an effect of erroneous information, since their mental performance, however, raises significant concerns in terms of the referee's sanctions. As well as behaviors that arouse alarming controversy in terms of aggressive behavior that nevertheless escapes the referee on the grounds of imposing an undeserved advantage against the opponent on the sports field.

We believe that if an unsuitable emotional mental state is identified, the athlete could benefit from special attention through the psychological signals attesting to anxious emotions. These should first be defused. Because this feeling of unease of varying intensity quite often generates boredom, irritation and disorientation. On the contrary, if the athlete undergoes anxiety-like states on a daily basis when the internal discourse is already affected, letting go is immediately necessary to help him regain control of his emotions. And if the indices do not show any positive change, it is very likely that the mental states defined by Target [43] - calm, energy, esteem-confidence, motivation, communication, concentration - will start to take on a negative version. This implies that calm would give way to panic; energy to weakness; self-confidence to the entrenchment of doubt; the motivation for the loss of psychic self-activation or the athymhormic syndrome; communication to negative inner dialogue, concentration to dispersion leading to learned helplessness.

Learned helplessness is the psychological state that occurs when the sportsman expects that the actions, despite the promise of the witch doctor, that occur in competition are uncontrollable, sometimes leading to misunderstood and difficult to tolerate final results. In this case, the learned helplessness can be apprehended under the strength of the perceived relationship between the fetishist practice and its destiny, or as a consequence of having confided in what is uncertain. On the other hand, the relationship between wish and reality may or may not exist as the great wizard would have indicated. With learned helplessness, the fetish exerts little or no influence on premature perceptions of success on the adversary. On the other hand, factors beyond the control of the person determine the consequences. For example, an athlete in fetish consultation in a situation of acquired power, could have the impression that if his actions during the match have nothing to do with his skills (fetishist's instructions), factors beyond his control determine whether it is congruent. Because they are controlled by uncontrollable external influences, the sportsman assumes that he is powerless to influence the decision of the witch doctor or the witch.

Following the configuration of Congolese social life, we are prepared to infer that the phenomenon of witchcraft is proven in that it inevitably governs the expectations, the mind and the action of the populations. Since, depending on the sphere of activity, individuals are perpetually in search of gain, influence or hegemony through fetishistic consultations, and the sports sphere occupies a significant place in this form of cognitive pollution which inexorably triggers the poor

attentional flexibility [29] regarding the faces of the players present on the playing field. And yet, these beliefs lead for the most part to hasty generalized deductions about what would be the "African mentality" presented as "uniform", despite the diversity of African societies. Admitting this state of affairs gives us the right to presume some thought patterns that can be generalized to all cases as the expression of the same way of thinking or a unique mentality specific to African athletes [35].

It is inconceivable that, despite the advanced level of sports psychology, the athlete could ignore self-confidence in order to orient himself towards others or towards an object through rituals, which are at best only the concrete reflections of mistaken beliefs. Otherwise, the rite is distinguished from other practices only because it is linked to a belief from which it can therefore be deciphered. This is why Victor Turner, recognizing that there is a "specificity of the ritual", refuses to consider it as a production of meaning. This thinker believes that rituals are concrete reflections of beliefs, but the coherence and structuring statements are purely myths [24]. To this end, another technique, the switch, which is an exercise in mental flexibility, seems essential. The specificity would be the applicability of the switch ensuring the passage from the negative mental state to the positive state. It allows you to let go and regain control of your emotions. The switch technique is the unrivaled emotional control and cognitive control tool for effective mental preparation of the athlete.

For athletes prone to alcohol, it is necessary to resort to the application of cognitive and behavioral therapies which are codified psychotherapeutic techniques [13, 36]. They would allow athletes to develop and use strategies to impose the presence of a healthy personality. Thus, the clinical psychologist can use abstinence-oriented programs through controlled clinical assessments such as motivational interviewing [40]. To achieve this, exposure to the stimulus with or without training in the management of the urge to consume alcohol is an excellent choice. Failing this, the alternative remains drug therapy aimed at reducing the craving for alcohol. The prescription of Acamprosate, for a period of one month can be one of the solutions or even Naltrexone, for an optimal duration of three months would be life-saving.

We note that folk music, because of its strong operative character, is one of the main instruments of negotiation used by ancestral cultures capable of offering sports performances that live up to expectations, with some symbolic variations depending on customs. This is one of the reasons why folk groups are said to be increasingly popular in sports venues as they ensure the evocation of spirits. Isn't this specialty the prerogative of mediums who claim to have the virtue of making the dead speak? This soundscape therefore defines African psychology for sport, which is summed up in an intense experience of evoking spirits, stimulating emotional and bodily feelings in various behavioral forms.

The behavioral forms of emotional arousal identified in footballers do not really mark a means of stimulating player

motivation. Rather, they express the operationalization of a mystery through traditional music. It is a way of imploring the action of supernatural forces by means of linguistic labels whose folkloric signifiers translate paranormal phenomena. Because, once the athletes are reassured by the messages charged with power, they must then tackle the evidence of the reality of this power through the psycho-acoustic parameters in relation to the active principle of the fetish. Obviously, this substrate has an almost immediate impact on the emotional valence carried by the invisible [8]. Followers of this superstitious practice cling to the emotional impact of folklore on attitudes to adopt in competitive situations. These induce spectacular benefits to athletes thanks to the miraculous intervention of the invited "spiritual beings". In reality, it is only a means of ensuring the solidity of the bonds of the witch doctor, in his activity which consists in conversing with the spirits of the deceased. This proves that folk practices are not simply invested to play the role of motivational awakening. They are an integral part of the paranormal operations by which the superstitious beliefs are reinforced, which should be experienced as a program of mental preparation for the sportsman with the certainty that the "spiritual Beings" invoked are both felt and visualized on a sensational dimension [16]. This attitude illustrates the manifestations of self-handicap, which consists in proclaiming the presence of obstacles, such as a weakness or a deficit, supposed to affect sports performance. The adoption of behaviors tending to reduce the probability of failure and increase that of success seems to us to be significantly close to schizotypal personality traits [40]. Because behavioral self-handicapping, on the other hand, involves behaviors that can impair cognitive performance.

The permanent immersion of footballers in superstitious rituals almost explains their adherence to the development of ancestral beliefs and pseudoscientific ideas. On the one hand, the results consider that the perpetuation of these beliefs leads to abnormal behaviors, which interfere with their cognitions prone to anxious emotions. But the level of environmental alienation constitutes a brake against the importance of a psychological consultation, which is almost absent or almost unthought. On the other hand, fetishistic consultations are the consequence of the ignorance of the appropriate techniques of mental preparation by the sportsmen. Beyond that, our analyzes predict how the psychopathologist can seize this object by managing to overcome these irrational and paralyzing beliefs through cognitive and behavioral techniques.

## 5. Conclusion

The context in which this study was conducted allowed us to identify a particular form of African sports psychology. This is radically opposed to the psychology of sport of Western origin. Because, the African athletes work first of all to raise the old buried metaphysical building, before getting bogged down in the traditional beliefs of the environment to which each one is attached. In the end, by examining the

functions of fetishes, we can safely say that they do not produce the optimization of athletic performance. Faced with the perpetual pessimism of footballers, regarding their lack of self-confidence and their inability to take pleasure in the effort provided in training, they become discouraged prematurely in the pre-competitive period. This is how they envision a fetishistic consultation which in fact limits their cognitive resources. These invalidating beliefs clutter all their thoughts to the point that the psychologically weakest athletes tend to develop depression in the event of failure. Since they would have no tolerance for results that would be the opposite of what was miraculously intended. For perspectives of this study, researchers should question the importance of the role played by social, cultural and psychopathological aspects on the addiction to fetishes. With regard to the instinctual emotions linked to folk practices, an exploration of personality traits could help to find a key to explaining the extreme version of a behavioral variation in trained athletes.

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