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## Relationship of personality characteristics and superstitious behaviour of women athletes

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### Abstract

The current study focuses on how women athletes who compete in both individual and team sports behave superstitiously and how those traits relate to their personalities. The All India Inter-University Tournaments produced 138 female athletes in a number of sports. The Locus of Control scale created by Whitehead and Corbin was utilised instead of the superstitious behaviour Questionnaire created by Buhrmann, Brown, and Zaugg. For the purposes of the current investigation, the physical state anxiety and cognitive state anxiety were measured using the short version of the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory (CSAI-2), which was created by Cox, Russell, and Robb. The Indian sportswomen's traditions were changed for this superstitious behaviour questionnaire. The information was gathered using a survey approach. Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate the data, and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was then used to determine the association. The findings showed that the most frequent rituals followed by different female athletes in a variety of games and sports included employing their maximum potential, dressing nicely to feel more prepared, needing solitude or seclusion before a game, and scoring the game's first point or goal. The findings also showed a substantial positive association between all rituals practised and the significance of success for female football players. Additionally, there was a strong positive correlation between the overall number of rituals practised and the female gymnasts' somatic state anxiety.

**Keywords:** Rituals, superstitions, somatic state anxiety, cognitive state anxiety, locus of control, religiosity

### Introduction

People frequently say things like, "The match was won by luck," or "The work was successfully finished due of the faith and belief." Do we actually think it's true? The question of whether the act that gives the good news is pure performance or based on superstition, religion, belief, ritual, or fetish comes up frequently. In sports, these types of actions and statements frequently occur either intentionally or unknowingly, although the pre-action of any task is frequently assumed to be based on something heard or referred to as superstition.

We see athletes employing one or the other on-field behavior to win games on a regular basis. The execution of such activity may be motivated by routine, team procedures, or superior directives. wearing the same jersey throughout the competition, using a specific kit color, doing a religious act after reaching a certain mark, murmuring predetermined, known words, getting audience participation to improve performance, etc. These are some customs that most sportsmen engage in at some point or another throughout a match.

Numerous TV and newspaper articles covering sports make it clear that superstitious conduct is used in sport, from professional athletic organisations to the neighbourhood little league team. Athletes who engage in superstitious behaviour in sports think their actions have the capacity to influence luck or other external causes. Such actions are repeated, formal, sequential, and distinct from technical performance. The term "ritual" might be used to describe these superstitious behaviours because such events are recurrent.

Superstitious rituals have long played a part in sports. Superstitious ritual use has frequently been associated with high-risk occupations (Womack, 1992) <sup>[10]</sup>, where either physical danger to the individual or the chance of failure is at stake, according to Gardiner (1925) <sup>[11]</sup>, who first noticed superstitious conduct in athletes. Womack examined numerous professional sports organisations and observed a range of rituals utilised to react to diverse circumstances.

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In their study, Kelley and Joseph (1983)<sup>[12]</sup> found that women were much more religious than men on practically all scales. More pious were the better students than the less talented ones. Significantly more pupils who thought their parents were more religious than those who thought they were less religious were religious. When the mother had some college or technical school training, the level of religion was at its highest. In his investigation, Reeds (1985)<sup>[8]</sup> reached the following conclusions:

- i) Over 51% of the variance in the criterion could be explained by the personality anxiety model.
- ii) Precompetitive anxiety did not predict gymnastic performance statistically significantly.
- iii) Since the model only described 38.1 percent of the total variability in gymnastics performance, the hypothesis concerning the relationship between personality and performance was not supported. According to Petric (1978)<sup>[7]</sup>, human conduct exhibits magical energies in reaction to unpredictable ability and uncertainty. One can hypothesize that superstitious behavior is more likely to occur in situations where there is greater competitiveness and player participation.

Given the alleged ubiquity of superstitious conduct, there hasn't been much scientific study done in this field. The superstitious rituals that players perform before games and how they relate to their personality traits have been investigated in recent studies. Female athletes are more likely than male athletes to utilize superstitious practices in sports, according to research on the topic.

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard deviation Total Rituals used and Related Personality characteristics of Female players of Selected Sports.

Characteristics	Football		Hockey		Volleyball		Gymnastics		Swimming		Athletics	
	M	±SD	M	±SD	M	±SD	M	±SD	M	±SD	M	±SD
Total Rituals Used: Related Personality Characteristics:	23.86	6.21	25.33	4.66	22.16	6.89	26.40	6.26	22.53	6.65	25.26	6.37
Age	20.37	1.97	20.93	1.61	21.03	2.07	20.93	1.66	20.90	1.37	20.73	1.70
Years on Team	1.77	0.85	1.80	0.96	1.67	0.88	1.83	0.69	1.67	0.54	1.83	0.79
Religiosity	0.43	1.10	1.67	2.12	0.83	1.17	1.03	1.37	0.43	1.07	0.87	1.47
Importance of success	4.37	0.85	3.57	1.43	3.77	1.50	3.50	1.50	3.27	1.57	3.63	1.21
Locus of Control	3.10	0.54	2.16	0.67	3.11	0.59	2.97	1.13	2.91	0.43	2.64	0.80
Somatic State Anxiety	2.84	1.14	3.15	1.24	2.45	1.12	2.88	1.21	2.77	0.78	2.80	0.99
Cognitive State Anxiety	2.71	1.12	3.05	1.22	3.40	0.83	2.96	1.17	3.28	0.93	2.79	1.14

Table 1 shows the total number of rituals utilised and corresponding personality traits of female athletes from different sports. Gymnasts used the most rituals (26.406.26), while volleyball players used the least (22.166.89). Between these two bounds, the remaining athletes in the other sports used rituals. The maximum age of a player is 21.03 for volleyball players, while the average number of years a player has been on the team is the highest for gymnasts and track and field athletes (1.83), with volleyball players and swimmers having the lowest average (1.67).

Table -1 also shows that football players had the lowest religiosity score (0.43), while hockey players had the greatest

## Methods and Materials

One hundred and eighty female athletes who competed in the 2021-2022 All India Inter-University Tournaments for the chosen sports football, volleyball, gymnastics, swimming, and athletics were chosen as the study's subjects. Each team and individual game/sport was represented by thirty female athletes. The subjects were all chosen at random while taking into account their playing abilities. The subjects were between the ages of 18 and 25. The Locus of Control scale, created by Whitehead and Corbin, was used instead of the superstitious behaviour questionnaire created by Buhrmann, Brown, and Zaugg. For the aim of this study, the physical state anxiety and cognitive state anxiety were measured using the short version of the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory (CSAI-2) created by Cox, Russell, and Robb. Experts adapted the superstitious behavior questionnaire in accordance with the ritual frequently employed by Indian sportsmen. There were 52 questions total on the survey, each with a Likert scale score of 5 points. Superstitious behavior, importance success, locus of control, religiosity, somatic state anxiety, and cognitive state anxiety were all covered by the questionnaire. The data were statistically processed using Person's Product Moment Correlations and Descriptive Statistics.

## Result and Discussion

Table 1 displays descriptive information like mean and standard deviation for superstitious rituals practiced and associated personality traits of Female participants in six chosen sports.

score (1.67). Football players (4.37), as opposed to swimmers, placed higher value on winning the competition (3.27). Additionally, it was noted from table 1 that volleyball players' locus of control was higher (3.11), whereas hockey players' locus of control was lower (2.16). Hockey players had the most somatic state anxiety (3.15), while volleyball players had the lowest (2.45). Additionally, volleyball players had a greater cognitive state anxiety score (3.40), whereas football players had the lowest score (2.71).

Table 2 presents the data in relation to the most popular rituals (only the top five are employed and the efficacy of female athletes representing in certain sports).

**Table 2:** The Frequencies, Percentages and Effectiveness of Top Five Rituals used by Female players.

S. No.	Rituals	No.	Percentage	Effectiveness (out of 5 points)
<b>A)</b>	<b>Football Players</b>			
	Dressing well to feel better prepared.	30	100.00	1.56
	Wear warm up bottom/top the same way.	30	100.00	1.16
	Warm up using same routine.	30	100.00	2.00
	Scoring first point/goal.	30	100.00	1.93
	Pray for success before each game.	30	100.00	1.96
<b>B)</b>	<b>Hockey Players</b>			
	Wear warm up bottom/top the same way	30	100.00	1.70
	Warm up using same routine	30	100.00	1.73
	Stacking hands.	30	100.00	1.76
	Good Luck mark on shoes.	29	100.00	1.65
	Kiss/touch lucky charms before game/meet	29	100.00	1.82
<b>C)</b>	<b>Volleyball Players</b>			
	Cheer leading	30	100.00	1.93
	Scoring first point/goal	29	96.66	2.13
	Kiss/touch lucky charms before game/meet	28	93.33	1.46
	Need silence/seclusion before game	28	93.33	1.78
	Warm up using same routine	28	93.33	1.50
<b>D)</b>	<b>Gymnasts</b>			
	Dressing well to feel better prepared.	30	100.00	2.10
	Wear warm up bottom/top the same way.	30	100.00	2.06
	Kiss/touch lucky charms before game/meet	30	100.00	2.03
	Need silences/seclusion before game	30	100.00	1.96
	Same trainer does taping job.	30	100.00	1.93
<b>E)</b>	<b>Swimmers</b>			
	Dressing well to feel better prepared	25	83.33	2.32
	Need silence/seclusion before game	25	83.33	2.48
	Team Cheer	24	80.00	1.33
	Pray for success before each game	29	76.66	2.08
	Coach encourages prayer/meditation	21	70.00	2.66
<b>F)</b>	<b>Athletes</b>			
	Wearing lucky charms on game/meet day	30	100.00	1.36
	Wearing lucky charms so that it can be seen	30	100.00	1.70
	Warm up using same routine	30	100.00	2.10
	Cheer Leading	30	100.00	1.93
	Dressing well to feel better prepared	29	96.66	1.68

In order to further examine the connection between overall superstitious behaviour and the chosen personality traits, the Product Moment Correlation between overall ritual usage and each personality trait for chosen female athletes was calculated and is shown in table 3.

**Table 3:** Relationship between total Rituals used and Related Personality Characteristics of Female Players

Total Rituals Used by	RELI	IOS	LOC	SSA	CSA
Football Players	0.240	0.458*	0.080	0.167	-0.110
Volleyball Players	0.139	0.058	0.094	0.116	0.087
Hockey Players	0.204	0.060	0.139	-0.060	-0.385*
Gymnastic Players	-0.082	0.049	0.238	0.386*	-0.066
Swimming Players	0.273	-0.180	0.073	-0.161	0.053
Athletes	0.153	0.134	-0.259	-0.109	-0.142

Significant,  $r_{.05(28)} = 0.361$ : - RELI - Religiosity, IOS - Importance of Success, LOC - Locus of Control, SSA - Somatic State Anxiety, CSA - Cognitive State Anxiety.

Table 3 shows the numerous connections between superstitious conduct and associated personality traits of female athletes in several sports. Women football players had a significant relationship with the importance of success ( $r=0.458$ ), women gymnasts had a relationship with somatic state anxiety ( $r=0.386$ ), and women volleyball players had a relationship with cognitive state anxiety ( $r=0.385$ ), where the obtained value was higher than the required value ( $r_{.05}=0.361$ ). It should be highlighted that none of the chosen

group of female athletes show much evidence of religiosity, locus of control, or anxiety in relation to overall superstitious conduct.

Only a trend can be seen in the figures due to the inconsistent responses of athletes from different sports. The association between religion and superstitious behavior received minimal support from the locus of control for religion.

### Conclusion

On the basis of findings, with in the limitations of the present study the following conclusions were drawn.

1. Female gymnasts engaged in more superstitious practices than athletes from other chosen sports.
2. Female hockey players placed a larger priority on religion than athletes in other sports.
3. Female football players placed a higher value on achievement than female gymnasts, who placed a lower value on it.
4. Female who played football experienced less concern about their cognitive states than women who played volleyball.
5. Warming up using the same pattern and scoring the first point or goal were the two rituals that female athletes in team sports most frequently followed.
6. The two rituals that women athletes in individual sports employed most frequently were "Need silence/seclusion before game" and "Dress nicely to feel better prepared."
7. Female swimmers received the greatest effectiveness

ratings for the ritual "Coach encourages prayer/meditation."

8. There was a strong correlation between the overall amount of ritual practiced and the significance of achievement for female football players.
9. In addition, there was a strong positive correlation between the total ritual practiced by female gymnasts and the somatic state anxiety.

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