



## RESEARCH OF AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS' SUPERSTITIOUS BEHAVIOR

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### **Abstract:**

Athletes have superstitious beliefs and behaviors to improve performance levels, deal with stress, turn the chance factor into their own advantage, control behaviors, maintain traditional characteristics and achieve a psychologically specific saturation. As in the past, superstitions remain present, due to the emergence of modern life and spiritual personal emptiness. The aim of this research is to uncover superstition and behavior of players actively playing in professional and amateur football clubs. For this reason, 50 amateur male football players who actively competing in the Regional Amateur League and 50 professional male footballers who are professionally competing in the 3rd League in Ankara participate to our research. We use the inventory that "Sports superstition and behavior Inventory" which adapted by Barut (2008) to determine superstition and behavior. The data was analyzed in the SPSS 26.00 package program, and analysis was revealed, and average, standard deviation and percentages were determined. The study examined the skew and offset values before taking the tests and found that the distribution was normal. Independent sample T test, One Way Anova test is used for multiple variables. Analysis was interpreted by acknowledging that the statistical level of meaningful is 0.05. In the case of the superstition and Behaviors of football players, the research also shows that in the league variance played by the players, professional footballers prefers lucky objects, games and encounters, team behaviors, prayers and total scores, and players who consider success in the sport success choice very important to the players, pre-game and match, statistically different in the order of play and match and the total scores of scale, and statistically no difference was found in the lower dimensions of the scale and the total score according to the learning status, age, position and active year of sport. As a result, professional and amateur footballers' superstition and behavior in sports were examined, and professional footballers' scores were found to be higher.

**Keywords:** amateur league, football, sports superstition, professional league

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## 1. Introduction

When looking at superstitions, they are behaviors that are not defined in certain patterns but are often tolerated and subjective by individuals. It is a set of behaviors that do not mean anything to some, and are essential for others, which relaxes the person as mental and also creates changes in their performance (Kyendyebai, 2016). Although superstition has appeared in different forms, it is individual behaviors that relieve oneself psychologically before certain situations, verbally or practically (Damisch et al., 2010). It is a collection of behaviors that occur outside the control mechanism, which allows the person to behave in certain movements at certain times continuously, which provides negative motivation by leaving question marks in the mind of the individual when not done, and therefore generally exhibited (Burger and Lynn, 2005).

Superstitious thinking and sports competitions, training and constant behaviors are always separated because one is always done and the other is a habit. Athletes engage in various behaviors in order to keep their performance at a high level and increase their success (Cohn, 1990). Sociologically, superstitions that reduce anxiety levels or increase motivation levels still exist despite the passage of time and the increase in technology. Even though people become lonely with the increase of digital opportunities and become lonely intellectually, their superstition levels are not affected much because of their routine habits (Bailey, 2007).

The fact that the concept of superstition is strong in our daily life has not prevented these behaviors from being seen in sports, which is a big part of our lives. The fact that the athletes want to behave in their own way, motivate themselves to the competition and, when viewed, repeat some behaviors that are seen negatively by most people as superstitious. Considering the superstitious behaviors exhibited by the athletes, they unconsciously use a wide variety of behavioral rituals consisting of belief, lifestyle and moral values (Ofori et al., 2012).

The tradition of believing from the past to the present and considering some behaviors auspicious comes across as the most basic needs. In addition to basic belief religions, mystical values and auspicious behaviors are integrated into religion (Arslan, 2011). Superstition behaviors beautify the environment in which we live, automate behaviors and impose religiously specific ideas (Swedo, 2006). It is defined as a whole of behaviors adopted by societies and whose ties to religion are not very strict, but which are passed down from generation to generation by societies and have continued to this day (Karaođlan, 2000). When superstition behaviors are examined, there are individual important phenomena such as childbirth, auspicious behaviors in routine tasks, loading meanings on certain objects or living things, and religious characteristics integrated with religious issues (Ayten and Köse, 2012). When viewed, people have behaved superstitiously by generating certain ideas about the future, because of their fears and in an effort to sanctify certain objects.

In general, it is observed that people exhibit superstitious beliefs and behaviors when they cannot control their personal behaviors and when they want to control

themselves (Burger & Lynn, 2005). When superstitious behaviors in sports are examined, it is seen as controlling anxiety, motivating the athlete spiritually, relieving the usual behaviors psychologically, and strengthening oneself mentally in situations when one feels empty (Kahnemann & Trevisky, 1984). Considering that individuals' own feelings, desires and passions are under divine control and what kind of behavior will result in what kind of behavior strengthens superstitious beliefs and behaviors (Napier, 2008). When viewed, the divine thought dimension of people provides the connection between the world and his own body (Yapıcı, 2011).

When athletes play successful matches, they think that their success will continue when they exhibit the routine behaviors they have exhibited until that moment (Womack, 1992). It has been concluded that the focus of the athletes is the rituals of superstition before, during or after the competition (Eklund et al., 1993). It was noticed that they exhibited behaviors that focus on victory before the stress-oriented competition, emphasize the control mechanism, stay calm and get away from anxiety (Womack, 1992). It is seen that superstitious behaviors come to the fore in the football. It has been observed that when football players apply certain behaviors sequentially in order to perform at a high level, they feel that they are getting away from stress and fear (Womack, 1992).

They exhibit behaviors such as wearing the same materials, wearing the same wristbands, and tying the laces of the boots before, after and during the match, which they see as lucky (Swedo, 2006). They used some behaviors to encourage the football players to be under pressure and to display controlled movements (Womack, 1992). In Eduardo Galeano's book "Football in the Shadow and the Sun", he stated that superstitious behaviors in sports are practiced at the center of football (Galeano, 1997).

Adhemar Canavessi, who believed in secret thoughts, did not go to the final match because of the thought that he was harming his team and his team was victorious (Galeano, 1997). Feddy Rincon, thinking that he was prophesied, dreams that he will get injured in his leg and get a card. He performed very badly that year, but the injury did not occur (Galeano, 1997). Galatasaray football player Mondragon, who plays football in our country, had himself cast a spell (Galeano, 1997). It is seen that the behaviors that are considered auspicious in sports include doing the same hairstyles, stepping on the field with the same foot all the time, wearing the same uniform all the time (Barut, 2008). Famous footballer Roberto Carlos cut off a portion of his shirt before playing (Gunpowder, 2008). Alex de Souza touching the grass before taking the field and leaping one leg. Frank Lampard always comes into the competition with his right foot and throws his cleats off the field when he performs. Judging by the superstition studies, Breves et al. (2011) for amateur athletes, Hanks et al., (2016) to associate the behavior of fans with superstition, Foster et al. (2006) for athletes in basketball, Wakefield and (2017) for athletes in swimming, Schippers and Van Lange (2006) for athletes in ice hockey and volleyball, Burger v Lynn (2005) for baseball athletes, Lighter (2019) for professional footballers.

The aim of this research is to examine the superstitions and behaviors of professional and amateur league players in sports according to league, educational

status, preference for success in sports, age, position and active sports year variables and to make statistical inferences.

## 2. Material Method

### 2.1. Model of the Research

In this research, the screening model, which is a quantitative research method, was used. When looking at the scanning model, relational method was used to reveal the relationships between variables and scale.

### 2.2. Workgroup

The study group was ranked in the 2021-2022 football season, it consists of 100 athletes who compete in football teams 3. in the league and in the Regional Amateur League. In the study, the demographic characteristics of the participants are seen in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Demographics of the Working Group

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
League	Professional	50	50
	Amateur	50	50
Education Status	High School	70	70
	License	30	30
Sporting Success	Important	26	26
	Very Important	74	74
Age	18-20 age	15	15
	21-23 age	25	25
	24-26 age	20	20
	27-29 age	13	13
	30 age and more	27	27
Position	Goalkeeper	15	15
	Defence	27	27
	Midfielder	40	40
	Forward	18	18
Active Sports Year	1-3 year	2	2
	4-7 year	4	4
	8-10 year	16	16
	11 year and more	78	78
	Total	100	100

### 2.3. Data Collection

Data was collected through forms created from the personal information form and the superstition and behavior inventory scale in sports.

#### 2.3.1. Superstition and Behavior Inventory in Sports

The "Superstition and Behaviors Inventory" developed by H. H. Buhrmann and M. K. Zaugg (1981) and translated into Turkish by Barut (2008) was used to collect data. As a

result of the analysis of the reliability of the scale, Cronbach alpha .98 and its subdivisions are all in the range of .82 and .89; In this study, internal consistency varies between .98 and lower necks range from .87 to .95, so the scale is reliable.

## 2.4. Analysis of Data

The information obtained by applying the scale of superstition and behavior to footballers is recorded in the database. Percentage, frequency, average and standard deviation values of each subdivision of the scale of the players participating in the study were examined. When the distortion and pressure levels of the scale are examined, it is seen that it shows normal distribution. Therefore, the use of parametric tests was deemed appropriate. T test for binary groups and One Way Anova test for groups with more than two were used. The level of statistical significance is considered to be 0.05.

## 3. Findings

**Table 2:** Superstition and Behavior Analysis in Sport by League

Sub-dimension	Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	p
Clothing and Appearance	Professional	50	2.08	.71	3.73	.105
	Amateur	50	1.60	.57		
Lucky Objects	Professional	50	2.24	.98	4.16	.009*
	Amateur	50	1.50	.77		
Before the Games and Encounters	Professional	50	2.62	1.05	3.42	.004*
	Amateur	50	1.99	.79		
During Play and Encounter	Professional	50	2.43	1.22	3.51	.005*
	Amateur	50	1.66	.94		
Team Behaviors	Professional	50	2.33	1.02	2.93	.004*
	Amateur	50	1.78	.84		
Praying	Professional	50	3.78	1.06	2.08	.040*
	Amateur	50	3.30	1.24		
Total	Professional	50	2.47	.79	4.16	.041*
	Amateur	50	1.87	.65		

When looking at Table 2 and looking at football players' superstition behavior in sports based on the league variable, it is statistically determined that there is a difference in their lower size and total score. Auspicious objects ( $t = 4.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), game and pregame ( $t = 3.42$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), play and match during ( $t = 3.51$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), team behaviors ( $t = 2.93$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), praying ( $t = 2.08$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and total score ( $t=4.16$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) have been found to have analysis scores. According to statistical analysis, the lower dimensions of the scale appear to be examined in professional leagues where active football players have high scores compared to active football players in amateur leagues.

**Table 3:** Superstition and Behavior Analysis in Sport by Educational Background

Sub-dimension	Educational Status	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	p
Clothing and Appearance	High school	70	1.87	.68	.765	.444
	University	30	1.76	.69		
Lucky Objects	High school	70	1.92	.98	.718	.207
	University	30	1.77	.91		
Before the Games and Encounters	High school	70	2.37	1.02	.987	.153
	University	30	2.16	.86		
During Play and Encounter	High school	70	2.06	1.20	.182	.203
	University	30	2.01	1.06		
Team Behaviors	High school	70	2.10	1.00	.704	.794
	University	30	1.95	.91		
Praying	High school	70	3.48	1.22	.828	.148
	University	30	3.69	1.05		
Total	High school	70	2.12	.81	.724	.207
	University	30	2.09	.71		

When looking at Table 3 and looking at superstition behaviors in sports based on football players' educational status variability, it is statistically determined that there is no difference in the lower dimensions of the scale and total scores of high school and undergraduate football players.

**Table 4:** Superstition and Behavior Analysis in Sport Based on Sport Achievement

Sub-dimension	Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	p
Clothing and Appearance	Important	26	1.68	.61	-1.42	.304
	Very Important	74	1.90	.70		
Lucky Objects	Important	26	1.65	.82	-1.35	.094
	Very Important	74	1.95	.99		
Before the Games and Encounters	Important	26	1.99	.72	-1.93	.009*
	Very Important	74	2.42	1.03		
During Play and Encounter	Important	26	1.90	.87	-.748	.005*
	Very Important	74	2.09	1.24		
Team Behaviors	Important	26	1.98	.85	-.450	.545
	Very Important	74	2.08	1.02		
Praying	Important	26	3.39	1.28	-.718	.718
	Very Important	74	3.59	1.14		
Total	Important	26	1.95	.63	-1.667	.047*
	Very Important	74	2.25	.82		

When looking at Table 3, we have statistically estimated that the sub-dimensions and total scores of the soccer players differ according to their superstition behavior based on the athletic variable. Examination of the sub-dimensions showed that they had analysis scores for the sum of game and game ( $t=-1.93$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), game and game order ( $t=-7.48$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and scale ( $t=-1.667$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Statistical analyzes on the effect of athletic success on

soccer players show that players who prefer sports to be very important have high scores compared to those who prefer sports.

**Table 5:** Superstitious Belief and Behavior Analysis in Sport by Role

Sub-dimension	Position	N	$\bar{X}$	S	f	p
Clothing and Appearance	Goalkeeper	15	1.91	.85	.351	.789
	Defense	27	1.73	.70		
	Midfield	40	1.90	.68		
	Forward	18	1.82	.54		
Lucky Objects	Goalkeeper	15	1.97	1.07	.894	.447
	Defense	27	1.70	.83		
	Midfield	40	2.02	.99		
	Forward	18	1.69	.95		
Before the Games and Encounters	Goalkeeper	15	2.63	1.21	2.635	.054
	Defense	27	2.23	.87		
	Midfield	40	2.46	1.04		
	Forward	18	1.81	.55		
During Play and Encounter	Goalkeeper	15	2.16	1.37	1.561	.204
	Defense	27	1.98	1.14		
	Midfield	40	2.26	1.17		
	Forward	18	1.57	.85		
Team Behaviors	Goalkeeper	15	2.07	1.08	1.298	.280
	Defense	27	1.98	.99		
	Midfield	40	2.25	.99		
	Forward	18	1.72	.77		
Praying	Goalkeeper	15	3.33	1.47	1.539	.209
	Defense	27	3.49	1.13		
	Midfield	40	3.82	1.11		
	Forward	18	3.17	1.04		
Total	Goalkeeper	15	2.32	.97	1.652	.182
	Defense	27	2.07	.72		
	Midfield	40	2.32	.82		
	Forward	18	1.88	.53		

When looking at Table 5, superstition behavior in sports based on the position variable of the players is as follows: statistically, there were no differences in the total scores and lower dimensions of the players in the goalkeeper, defenders, midfield and striker positions.

**Table 6:** Superstition and Behavior Analysis in Sport by Age

Sub-dimension	Age	N	$\bar{X}$	S	F	p
Clothing and Appearance	18-20 Age	15	1.89	.60	.240	.915
	21-23 Age	25	1.84	.52		
	24-26 Age	20	1.94	.73		
	27-29 Age	13	1.75	.84		
	30 Age and More	27	1.76	.77		
Lucky Objects	18-20 Age	15	2.00	1.08	.289	.884
	21-23 Age	25	1.95	.87		
	24-26 Age	20	1.92	.92		
	27-29 Age	13	1.71	.92		
	30 Age and More	27	1.77	1.05		
Before the Games and Encounters	18-20 Age	15	2.45	.98	1.208	.313
	21-23 Age	25	2.61	.88		
	24-26 Age	20	2.27	1.04		
	27-29 Age	13	2.07	1.05		
	30 Age and More	27	2.09	.96		
During Play and Encounter	18-20 Age	15	2.02	1.25	.230	.921
	21-23 Age	25	2.23	1.16		
	24-26 Age	20	1.93	1.02		
	27-29 Age	13	2.05	1.41		
	30 Age and More	27	1.96	1.11		
Team Behaviors	18-20 Age	15	2.00	1.11	.247	.911
	21-23 Age	25	2.18	.83		
	24-26 Age	20	1.95	.76		
	27-29 Age	13	1.92	1.33		
	30 Age and More	27	2.11	1.02		
Praying	18-20 Age	15	3.47	1.29	.333	.855
	21-23 Age	25	3.68	1.08		
	24-26 Age	20	3.30	1.37		
	27-29 Age	13	3.56	1.21		
	30 Age and More	27	3.62	1.08		
Total	18-20 Age	15	2.25	.73	.494	.740
	21-23 Age	25	2.33	.69		
	24-26 Age	20	2.16	.80		
	27-29 Age	13	2.03	.95		
	30 Age and More	27	2.07	.82		

When looking at Table 6, superstition behavior in sports by age variable of players comprises the following: statistically determined that there is no difference in the sub-dimensions and total scores of the footballers, aged 18-20 age, 21-23 age, 24-26 age, 27-29 age and 30 age and over.

**Table 7:** Superstition and Behavior Analysis in Sport by Active Sports Year

Sub-dimension	Active Sports Year	N	$\bar{X}$	S	F	p
Clothing and Appearance	1-3 Year	2	1.80	.28	.290	.832
	4-7 Year	4	2.10	.42		
	8-10 Year	16	1.91	.55		
	11 Year and More	78	1.81	.73		
Lucky Objects	1-3 Year	2	2.00	.47	.021	.996
	4-7 Year	4	1.79	.95		
	8-10 Year	16	1.86	1.09		
	11 Year and More	78	1.87	.95		
Before the Games and Encounters	1-3 Year	2	2.42	.16	.746	.527
	4-7 Year	4	2.98	1.21		
	8-10 Year	16	2.38	1.01		
	11 Year and More	78	2.25	.97		
During Play and Encounter	1-3 Year	2	2.67	1.95	.447	.720
	4-7 Year	4	2.50	1.69		
	8-10 Year	16	1.94	1.02		
	11 Year and More	78	2.03	1.17		
Team Behaviors	1-3 Year	2	2.50	.71	.221	.882
	4-7 Year	4	2.12	1.03		
	8-10 Year	16	1.94	.91		
	11 Year and More	78	2.06	1.00		
Praying	1-3 Year	2	4.00	1.41	.680	.566
	4-7 Year	4	4.08	1.17		
	8-10 Year	16	3.75	1.04		
	11 Year and More	78	3.46	1.20		
Total	1-3 Year	2	2.34	.21	.402	.752
	4-7 Year	4	2.55	.88		
	8-10 Year	16	2.22	.79		
	11 Year and More	78	2.14	.79		

When looking at Table 7, we can see the superstition behavior of the soccer players according to the active sports playing variable: Statistically determined that there are no differences in the overall scores and lower dimensions of the scales of players who have actively competed for 1-3 years, 4-7 years, 8-10 years and 11 years and more.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This research, Ankara In the 3. League and Regional Amatör leagues, the players playing football have statistically varied in the league and sporty success preference variables played when examined the superstitious beliefs and Behaviors, and there were no statistical differences in the learning situation, age, position and active sports year variability.

Superstition and behavioral scores vary statistically depending on the variant in the league played by the players. Kavi and Karagün (2020) in their research on superstition of footballers in Istanbul, Çakmak (2019) revealed that objects in the study

investigating superstition of professional players in the second league are statistically different from those in the lower neck than those in the first league. Cirit (2021) states that individuals and team players differed statistically from individual athletes in the sub-dimension of objects that are considered lucky.

Superstition and behavior scores do not differ statistically depending on the level of education played by the players. Kavi and Karagün (2020) investigating superstitions of footballers in Istanbul, reveals that super league players with appearance, team behavior and praying sub-dimensions are in the higher score range compared to third league players. Peltzer (2003) found that superstition scores are high and have more trend in the relationship between the inclination and tendency of superstition.

Superstition and behavioral scores vary statistically depending on the athletic success preferences of the players. Çakmak (2019) conducted a study on the superstition behavior of professional players on superstition, and determined that among the athletes who perceive athletic success as undersignificant, there is a diversity compared to those who perceive it as crucial. Barut (2008) study of superstition and self-sufficiency in sport concluded that there were no differences. Todd and Brown (2003) noted that there was no difference when he examined the relationship between athletes' success in sport and their superstition behavior.

Superstition and behavior scores do not differ statistically depending on the players' positions. Çakmak (2019) in its study on superstition behavior by professional players, we observed that goalkeepers (kissing the ball) score higher in pre-game superstition behavior than other athletes.

Superstition and behavioral scores do not differ statistically based on the age of players. Kavi and Karagün (2020) showed no difference in their research on superstition of footballers in Istanbul, and in the Cirit (2021) research on superstition levels of team and individual athletes, Öztürk (2020) research revealed that there are differences between amateur footballers based on age variability. Çakmak (2019) stated in a study on the superstition behavior of professional players on superstition that statistically there is a difference in the lower dimension of the game scale among players aged 27-29 compared to other age categories. Kurudirek (2018) determined that the superstition behavior research of ice hockey athletes statistically scores the athletes between the ages of 18 and 20 for the sub-dimensions of praying to athletes between the ages of 21 and 23. Özgüven (2012) concluded that there was an inverse ratio between superstition and age in the study of individuals regarding their perceptions of superstition among life satisfaction. Studies show that people who are under age value superstition and behavior more. (Torgler, 2003)

Superstition and behavior scores do not differ statistically based on the active sports year of the players. In a 2020 survey of superstitions by Istanbul, Kavi and Karagün (2020) reported that the prayer subdimension was higher for footballers, from 1-4 years, than those footballers, who were actively competing for 5-9 years. Kurudirek (2018), in a superstition behavior study by ice hockey athletes, athletes playing active ice hockey for

more than nine years differentiated significantly compared to those who played ice hockey for 3-5 years.

As a result, our study did not show any differences when the statistical tests based on the educational status, age, position and active sports year variables were analyzed. However, success preference variables in league and sports reveal that there are differences.

## 5. Recommendations

From the perspective of the study, it was applied to the soccer players competing in the 3. League and the Regional Amateur League. Considering gender roles, women's football is a developing sport that is also on the agenda. Female soccer players can also be studied. Also, amateur league groups can be sampled from all regions in order to conduct research specific to amateurs. These activities are usually aimed at soccer players; referees, trainers, and club employees may also examine superstition behavior in sports.

## Comments

The author owes thanks to all the groups participating in the study.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

In our published article, there is no personal or financial conflicts of interest for the authors.

## About the Authors

The authors work as a faculty member at Bandırma Onyediy Eylöl University Faculty of Sport Sciences in Turkey. The main author is an expert in football, educational technologies, classroom management and pedagogical formation studies, the second author is an expert in studies related to disabled students, amputee football and children with special needs.

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