



## Comparative analysis of superstitious behaviors among athletes: Clothing, appearance, and fetish

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### Abstract

**Study Aim:** To analyse the prevalence and types of superstitious behaviors, specifically clothing and appearance rituals, and fetish practices, among athletes.

**Materials and Methods:** The study used the Superstitious Behaviour Questionnaire developed by Bleak and Frederick (1998). Participants were selected using a systematic sampling technique, and G\*Power software was utilized to determine an appropriate sample size.

**Statistical Techniques:** Data were analyzed using ANOVA to assess differences between groups. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

**Results:** The study found no significant differences in superstitious behaviors related to clothing, appearance, or fetish among the groups analyzed.

**Conclusions:** Superstitious behaviors are present among athletes but do not significantly differ between groups for the factors analyzed.

**Keywords:** Superstitious behavior, clothing, appearance, fetish, athletes, ANOVA

### Introduction

Superstitious behaviors are prevalent in sports and are often believed to influence performance by providing athletes with a sense of control or comfort under pressure. These behaviors may manifest in various forms, such as rituals related to clothing, grooming, or the use of lucky items or charms (Meyer, 2015) [6]. Previous research has highlighted that athletes across different sports tend to adopt these behaviors as a coping mechanism to manage anxiety or uncertainty (Anderson & Williams, 2018) [1]. The role of superstition in sports psychology has become a significant area of interest, especially in understanding how these beliefs and behaviors impact athletes' mental preparation and performance (Gill & Williams, 2008) [3]. Clothing and appearance rituals are among the most commonly observed superstitions in sports. Athletes often engage in specific grooming habits or dress in particular ways to boost their confidence or to maintain a sense of routine before competitions (Nordin-Bates *et al.*, 2013) [8]. These rituals may include wearing specific outfits, shoes, or accessories deemed to bring good luck or symbolize a certain mindset. Research has suggested that such rituals are often linked to enhanced focus and belief in performance outcomes (Vaughn, 2012) [11]. Similarly, the use of fetish practices, such as carrying lucky charms or engaging in specific pre-performance behaviors, has been widely studied in relation to athletes' performance anxiety and self-efficacy (Taylor & Kavussanu, 2016) [10]. Despite the common occurrence of superstitious behaviors in sports, studies comparing these behaviors across different sports disciplines, such as judo, boxing, and karate, remain limited (Laborde *et al.*, 2016) [5]. Judo, boxing, and karate, though all martial arts, each require distinct psychological and physical skills. It is plausible that the nature of these sports, with their varying

demands for aggression, discipline, and focus, may influence the types and prevalence of superstitious behaviors observed among athletes (Ravizza, 2011). However, the extent to which these behaviors differ or remain consistent across disciplines has not been fully explored. This study aims to investigate and compare superstitious behaviors, focusing on clothing and appearance rituals and fetish practices, among athletes from three sports: judo, boxing, and karate. By using the Superstitious Behaviour Questionnaire (Bleak & Frederick, 1998) [2], the study examines the prevalence of these behaviors and their possible association with sport-specific psychological requirements. The research intends to provide further insight into the role of superstitions in sports and their potential impact on athletic performance.

### Selection of subjects

A total of 150 athletes, evenly distributed across three sports (judo, boxing, and karate), were selected using systematic random sampling techniques.

### Procedures for selecting the sample

The sample size was calculated using G\*Power version 3.1.9.7, ensuring adequate statistical power for the study. Participants were stratified based on relevant criteria to ensure representation.

### Selection of variables

To achieve the research objectives, the following variables were chosen:

- Clothing and Appearance: Rituals related to dressing and grooming.
- Fetish Practices: Use of lucky items or charms.

The variables were chosen based on their prevalence in the literature and input from experts in sports psychology.

**Criterion measures**

The Superstitious Behaviour Questionnaire by Bleak and Frederick (1998) [2] was employed to assess superstitious behaviors.

Variables	Tools	Author's	Year
Superstitious Behaviour	Superstitious Behaviour Questionnaire	Bleak and Frederick	1998 [2]

**Sampling technique**

Participants were selected through systematic random sampling from a larger pool of athletes, ensuring an equal representation of categories.

**Statistical techniques**

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. ANOVA was conducted to compare the variables across groups. A significance level of  $p \leq 0.05$  was considered for all statistical tests.

**Results**

**Table 1:** ANOVA Result Details for Clothing and appearance.

Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	52.4133	2	26.2067	F = 0.60841
Within-treatments	6331.86	147	43.0739	
Total	6384.2733	149		

The *f*-ratio value is 0.60841. The *p*-value is .545579. The result is *not* significant at  $p < .05$ .

**Table 2:** ANOVA Result Details for Fetish

Source	SS	df	MS	
Between-treatments	116.3333	2	58.1667	F = 2.7685
Within-treatments	3088.5	147	21.0102	
Total	3204.8333	149		

The *f*-ratio value is 2.7685. The *p*-value is .066031. The result is *not* significant at  $p < .05$ .

**Conclusions**

The findings reveal that superstitious behaviors, such as clothing rituals and fetish practices, are common among athletes but do not significantly differ across the analyzed sports disciplines (Judo, boxing, and karate). These behaviors may be more reflective of individual psychological needs than sport-specific influences.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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