

# The Power of Superstitions and Rituals: Are College Athletes More Superstitious than Non-Student Athletes?

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## Introduction

- The use of superstitions and rituals by athletes has become a popular phenomenon in the world of sports.



A study found that student athletes who have higher levels of stress from daily life and sports had a reduced sense of athletic performance and more physical exhaustion.<sup>2</sup>

- Prior research suggests that people most likely use superstitions when they feel uncertain about their capability, feel high levels of psychological stress and use superstitions to feel they have control of their performance outcome.<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly enough, superstitious behaviors were found to be directly correlated to church attendance, indicating a positive relation between religion and superstitious behavior.<sup>3</sup>



## Purpose

The purpose of the proposed study is to identify whether college athletes really do engage in superstitious behavior and/or rituals more than non-student athletes. We also hope to further examine the relationship between religiosity and how superstitious a person is.

## References

- <sup>1</sup>Damisch, L., Stoberock, B., & Mussweiler, T. (2009). Keep your fingers crossed! How Superstition improves performance. *Sage Journals*, 21(7).
- <sup>2</sup>Lu, F. J., Hsu, Y., Chan, Y., Cheen, J., & Kao, K. (2012). Assessing college student-athletes' life stress: Initial measurement development and validation. *Measurement In Physical Education And Exercise Science*, 16(4), 254-267. doi:10.1080/1091367X.2012.693371
- <sup>3</sup>Ofori, P. K., Tod, D., & Lavallee, D. (2018). An exploratory investigation of superstitious behaviors, coping, control strategies, and personal control in Ghanaian and British student-athletes. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 16(1), 3-19. doi:10.1080/1612197X.2016.1142460

## Method

### Participants

- 28 athletes and 33 nonathletes completed the questionnaire.

### Materials

- Questionnaire consisted of 25 questions split into two parts. Part one included questions about the participants' demographics (e.g. age, gender, whether they played a sport at SC). Part two included questions on their superstitions and religiosity level. Participants were asked to indicate the level in which they agreed with each statement. Superstition and religiosity questions were determined using a Likert Scale from 1-5.

- Examples of statements used in Part 2 of the questionnaire:

- I consider myself a superstitious person.
- I have engaged in a superstitious behavior or ritual.
- I like to say a prayer before an important event or task.
- I use my religion to make sense of the world.

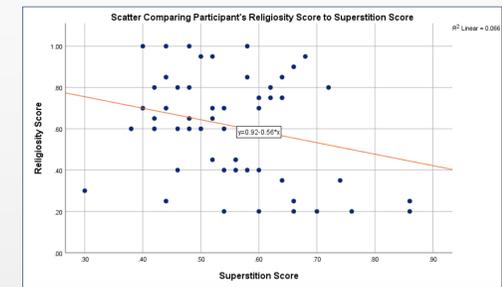
### Procedure

- Division III student athletes at Springfield College recruited through coaching staff after approval from the Athletic director.
- Nonathletes were recruited through email with the help of various professors.
- Participants were informed they will be asked about superstitions and given an informed consent prior to the questionnaire.
- Participants completed the online questionnaire through Google Forms.

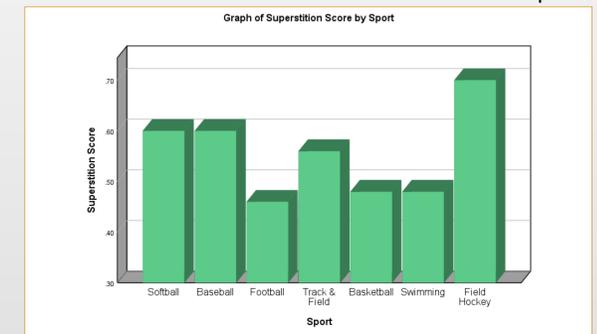
## Hypothesis

Determine whether college athletes engage in superstitious behaviors and/or rituals more than non-student athletes. We expect that results from the survey will show that college athletes are more superstitious than non-student athletes. We also expect to see a positive relationship between religiosity and level of superstitiousness.

## Results

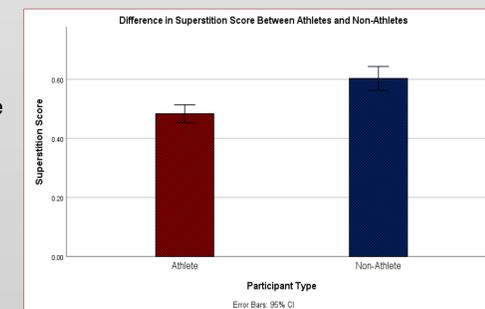


There was a **negative** correlation between religiosity and superstition level. The more superstitious a person was, the less religious they were.  
\*p<.05



Field Hockey held the highest mean superstition score. However, there was **no statistical significance** between sport type and superstitiousness.

Non-athletes were found to be **more** superstitious than athletes.  
\*p<.01



## Conclusion

For our conclusion, we discovered that non-athletes have higher superstition levels than athletes at Springfield College. We initially predicted that athletes were going to have higher superstition levels due to being in a competitive sport. We also discovered if you were more superstitious, you are less likely to be religious. Both of these findings went against our initial hypotheses. Further research would be needed to understand why that was.