

**INVESTIGATION OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS BELIEF, SUPERSTITION  
AND DIFFERENT BEHAVIOR TENDENCIES**

Rafet Fatih Çakmak<sup>1</sup>, Yücel Ocak<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT**

Today, it has been observed that athletes in many sports branches show different behaviors. These behaviors increase the mental motivation of the athletes and provide positive contributions to their performance. We aimed to determine the shape and frequency of beliefs, superstitions and different behavioral tendencies of football players before and during training, competition. 60 professional football players in TFF leagues participated in the research. Superstitious Belief and Behavior Inventory in Sports which was developed by Buhramn et al (1982), originally named "Superstitious Ritual Questionnaire" and adapted into Turkish by Barut (2008) was used to measure superstitious behaviour. SPSS package program was used for the statistical evaluation of the obtained data. Comparisons between groups were made and the relationships between some variables and behavior patterns were examined. Significance levels were determined as 0.05 and 0.01. As a result, professional football players have religious behaviors, superstitions and different behavioral tendencies before and during training, competition.

**Key words:** Sports. Football. Superstition in Sports. Competition. Sports Psychology. Training. Superstitious Behavior.

**RESUMO**

Investigação das crenças, superstições e diferentes tendências de comportamento dos jogadores de futebol

Atualmente, tem-se observado que os atletas de vários ramos esportivos apresentam comportamentos diferentes. Esses comportamentos aumentam a motivação mental dos atletas e contribuem positivamente para seu desempenho. Nosso objetivo foi determinar a forma e a frequência das crenças, superstições e diferentes tendências comportamentais dos jogadores de futebol antes e durante o treinamento e a competição. 60 jogadores de futebol profissional das ligas TFF participaram da pesquisa. O Inventário de Crenças e Comportamentos Supersticiosos em Esportes, desenvolvido por Buhramn et al (1982), originalmente denominado "Superstitious Ritual Questionnaire" e adaptado para o turco por Barut (2008), foi usado para medir o comportamento supersticioso. O programa SPSS foi usado para a avaliação estatística dos dados obtidos. Foram feitas comparações entre grupos e examinadas as relações entre algumas variáveis e padrões de comportamento. Os níveis de significância foram determinados como 0,05 e 0,01. Como resultado, os jogadores profissionais de futebol têm comportamentos religiosos, superstições e diferentes tendências comportamentais antes e durante o treinamento e a competição.

**Palavras-chave:** Futebol. Superstição nos esportes. Competição. Psicologia do esporte. Comportamento supersticioso.

E-mail dos autores:  
rfcakmak03@gmail.com  
ocak03@gmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

Superstitions have been seen in almost every society since ancient times. In order to turn the events that they cannot control in their lives in their favor, individuals in the society have exhibited behaviours that are not related to the truth but believed, together with their social and cultural infrastructure.

In fact, superstitions and behaviours are forms of behaviour that make the world more liveable for us, that we attribute events that we cannot explain with the mind to supernatural powers, and we attribute some responsibility to some kind of divine control mechanisms.

Burger and Lynn (2005) superstitious behaviour, defines it as the effort of individuals in the society to try to turn some of the uncontrollable forces into controllable ones, and accordingly calls the uncontrollable forces as an effort to dominate us to a certain extent.

One of the most easily and frequently observed areas of religious behaviours, superstitions and different behavioural tendencies is sportive competitions. We see a lot of belief, superstition and different behaviour tendencies in competitions where the luck factor is important.

In sports life, just like in current life, we can observe that the behaviours that some of us call absurd or unusual occur as the unique attitudes of the athletes before or during a match that we watch on the screens or live.

In football, one of the most popular sports in the world (Ocak at al., 2021), we often see football players praying according to their religious beliefs before the match, after a goal scored or a penalty saved. Sports injury is one of the events that football players frequently encounter and fear the most (Ocak at al., 2019).

Many football players display different behaviour patterns to avoid injury. Superstitions such as travelling in the same seat of the car, always on the field in the same order, stepping onto the field with your right or left foot, tying the same colour anklet, jumping three times on the grass, kissing the goalposts or the ball, and believing in some good luck, and making holes in your socks, in addition to lots of different behaviours such as cutting backs or fronts of shoes, oiling bodies are small examples of these.

## Superstitions in Football

One of the first athletes to be recorded with his belief in hidden powers is Uruguay national team star Adhemar Canavessi. He is a player who did not play in the final match against Argentina thinking that his presence in the team in the 1928 Olympic Games final would harm them.

Because the star of his team, Adhemar Canavessi, was playing every Argentina-Uruguay match with Uruguay losing. This time, Uruguay won the Argentina-Uruguay match which it did not play in Amsterdam (Galeano, 1997).

Another mysterious event is what happened to Vasco Da Gama Team, the legendary football club of Brazil, in 1937. Evil spirits began to dominate football when Arubinha, one of the fanatical spectators of a team that Vasco defeated with a different sport like 12-0 buried a frog with its mouth sewn onto the field with his curse saying, "If there is a god in the sky" Vasco team cannot be champion for 12 years". Vasco administrators who knew about this incident dug into the ground to find where the frog was buried.

However, they cannot change the result. Vasco Da Gama football team will not be able to win the championship for 11 years, even if they agree with which popular and career football player in the market and include them in the club. After winning the trophy one year before the end of the spell, the club president stated how grave the incident was by saying, 'God has forgiven our punishment for one year' (Galeano, 1997).

In 2002, the voodoo magic that shook the sports media especially the French media, is experienced in the first match. The French National Team and its former colony Senegal National team will play the first match of the championship which is the opening match. Senegalese magicians are brought to Korea by their federation.

A Senegalese magician breaks a chicken's left leg in televised footage. Then he recites some prayers. One day before the match, French star football player Zinedine Zidane injured his left leg and Senegal Football National Team won the match. Many French football players began to believe in the effect of black magic after this match.

They were affected so much that French footballers have made it a habit to never take pictures with Indian players because they think that they 'make magic out of the picture'. (<https://spor.haber7.com/spor/haber/9268-kalede-buyu-var-yandan-gec>).

The luck of Senegal National Football Team went very well throughout the tournament, until the match against Turkey. At that time, all the headlines in our country were directed at the black magicians of Senegal. Mobilization was declared even by the Diyanet. Sermons were read in mosques. Football fans in front of the TV watched the match with their rosaries by saying 'Subhanallah' during the match. The magic of Senegal didn't not work and became disabled (Barut, 2008).

During the 2018 World Cup, having only one point after the first two games, Argentina's star player Messi, wore a special red ribbon on his sock, sent to him by an Argentine woman, the mother of a journalist he knew very well, in a match against Nigeria on Tuesday. He used the red ribbon as a kind of amulet. Argentina won the match. (<https://www.fotmob.com/news/lxq94rmlwqyk1e4s6wdmekvks-lucky-red%3F-messi-wears-ribbon-sent-to-him-by-reporter-s-mum-at-world-cup>).

### Belief Behaviours in Footballers

Liverpool's stars Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane, Mesut Özil, who plays football for teams such as Werder Bremen, Real Madrid and Arsenal, Edin Dzeko, who plays for Serie A clubs in Rome, Karim Benzema, who plays for Real Madrid, plays for Juventus Many Muslim football players such as Sami Khedira, Manchester United football player Paul Pogba, Interde player Samir Handanovic, Demba Ba, Franck Ribery, Emmanuel Adebayor pray and prostrate before the match or after scoring a goal, according to their beliefs. Christian football players such as world stars Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Robert Lewandowski, Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior, Alisson Ramses Becker, Sergio Ramos, Romelu Lukaku, Wayne Rooney, Samuel Eto, Radamel Falcao and James Rodriguez pray before or after a goal. They make the sign of the cross with their hands.

### Good faith beliefs

Although Zidane was shown as the architect of victory for France, which won the World Cup at home in 1998 in fact, all this success was due to defender Laurent Blanc, who did not neglect to kiss the bald head of goalkeeper Berthéz before every match.

Superstition got Kolo Toure in trouble with a referee in 2009. The former Ivory Coast defender did not feel comfortable unless he was the last player to enter the field, so he would wait until all his teammates were on the field. However, Toure's defensive partner, William Gallas, was undergoing treatment for a blow to the locker room at halftime, so he did not return to the field. While Toure waited for Gallas, Arsenal started the second half with nine players.

However, Toure was shown a yellow card for entering the field without the referee's permission. Cryff slapped his teammate goalkeeper Gert Bals before the match and threw gum on the opponent's pitch. (<https://www.goal.com/en/lists/footballs-famous-superstitions-terrys-toilet-trick-kissing-barthezs-head-weirdest-rituals/srzewxt4svm313jlvsgwgw561#cs7925ad4c12317c>)

Among the beliefs of Cristiano Ronaldo is to be the last to exit the tunnel when entering a game, to step onto the field with his right foot and to have a haircut before every match. Jermain Defoe says that "I have to cut my hair short before every match. I only get injured when I have longer hair." (<https://www.thesun.co.uk/sport/5064689/football-all-superstitions-messi-ronaldo>)

Argentinian star Messi always puts the ball on the ground with both hands and takes the same number of back steps before hitting the ball. Mesut Özil puts on his right shoe first and repeatedly knots his laces as a way to influence his performance on the court. Mesut Özil steps onto the field with his right foot and prays. (<https://turkish-football.com/the-value-of-superstitions-and-beliefs-in-mesut-ozils-game/>).

Griezmann said "David Beckham was my idol. That is why I am wearing the long sleeve and number 7." (<https://www.sportbible.com/football/news-weird-theres-a-reason-why-antoine-griezmann-wears-long-sleeve-shirts-20160823>).

Jack Grealish has long worn the boots he believed in. Although he signed a boots deal with Nike, he continued to wear the same boots due to superstition, despite of the fact that the boots were in a poor condition and ripped all over. Jude Bellingham, Gareth Bale, Danny Rose, Kyle Walker, and many other football players punch holes in their socks and boots.

Examples like this could be multiplied. Football players participate in a very intense training program to stay in shape. With this intense pace, they can reach high performance levels. However, many football players still need a little luck to show high performance. In this context, they may exhibit behaviours that are not considered logical. These behaviours can be in the form of belief, superstition and different behavioural tendencies.

We aimed to determine the shape and frequency of beliefs, superstitions and different behavioural tendencies of football players before and during training and competition.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Model of the Research

The research is a study in which the scanning model is used.

### Data Collection

The data were collected with a demographic information form and a questionnaire consisting of the Superstitious Belief and Behaviour Inventory in Sports. Sixty people who play football professionally in Turkish Football Federation (TFF) 1st league and 2nd league participated in the study.

### Demographic Information Form

The form developed by the researcher gives preliminary information about the nature and purpose of the study and includes questions about the participants' age,

education, gender, branch, last year in active sports, and the importance of sportive success.

### Superstition and Behaviour Inventory in Sports

The superstition and behavior inventory in sports was published in 1981 by Buhrmann, Maxwell, (1981). It is a scale originally named "Supersstitiuos Ritual Questionnaire" developed by Zaugg. The inventory originally consisted of 40-item Likert-type questions and seven different sections (Buhrmann and Zaugg, 1981).

In the process of adapting the scale to Turkish, all questions and answers in the inventory were reviewed for cultural specificity and universality (Merenda, 2005). After the studies on the intelligibility of the inventory, the implementation phase was started, and the scale was reduced to 37 questions (Barut, 2008).

### Analysis of Data

The SPSS package program was used for the statistical evaluation of the obtained data. The normal distribution suitability of the data was examined with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Data were analysed with parametric and non-parametric tests. In the analysis of the data, percentage and frequency values were examined. Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests were used for comparisons between groups. Post Hoc test was used to determine the significance of the groups. Significance levels were determined as 0.05 and 0.01.

## RESULTS

In this section, the superstitious characteristics of professional football players participating in the research were examined in terms of various demographic variables.

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**Table 1 - Examination of the Participants' Superstitions and Behaviours.**

Superstitious Behaviour Inventory in Sports	Not Effective at All	Less Effective	Occasionally Effective	Effective	Very Effective	Total
	n -%	n -%	n -%	n -%	n -%	n -%
<b>Putting lucky signs on shoes</b>	<b><u>32-53,3</u></b>	<b><u>7-11,7</u></b>	<b><u>8-13,3</u></b>	<b><u>7-11,7</u></b>	<b><u>6-10,0</u></b>	<b><u>60-100,0</u></b>
Wearing the top and bottom of the warming suit in the same style	23-38,3	14-23,3	1-1,7	12-20,0	10-16,7	60-100,0
Dressing sloppy/casual to feel better prepared for the game	33-55,0	8-13,3	6-10,0	5-8,3	8-13,3	60-100,0
Wearing socks inside out for luck	37-61,7	8-13,3	3-5,00	5-8,3	7-11,7	60-100,0
<b>Getting a haircut on game/match day</b>	<b><u>18-30,0</u></b>	<b><u>10-16,7</u></b>	<b><u>8-13,3</u></b>	<b><u>17-28,3</u></b>	<b><u>7-11,7</u></b>	<b><u>60-100,0</u></b>
Not showering on game/match day	34-56,7	13-21,7	4-6,7	7-11,7	2-3,3	60-100,0
Face painting (black paint under eye bag)	34-56,7	12-20,0	7-11,7	5-8,3	2-3,3	60-100,0
Getting a tattoo before the season	40-66,7	10-16,7	5-8,3	4-6,7	1-1,7	60-100,0
Write the jersey number on your body	34-56,7	11-18,3	3-5,0	8-13,3	4-6,7	60-100,0
Not wearing socks inside shoes	40-66,7	7-11,7	3-5,0	6-10,0	4-6,7	60-100,0
Wearing an amulet/necklace on game days	25-41,7	6-10,0	4-6,7	16-26,7	9-15,0	60-100,0
Kissing, touching the auspicious object before the game	18-30,0	15-25,0	3-5,0	14-23,3	10-16,7	60-100,0
Wearing evil eye beads on shoes	28-46,7	15-25,0	4-6,7	10-16,7	3-5,0	60-100,0
Wearing a lucky bracelet	20-33,3	12-20,0	10-16,7	12-20,0	6-10,0	60-100,0
Using the shoe lace with which he first started sports	37-61,7	14-23,3	7-11,7	1-1,7	1-1,7	60-100,0
Tying his hair with his first medal	39-65,0	10-16,7	5-8,3	1-1,7	5-8,3	60-100,0
Taping the body or part of it, even if there is no injury	29-48,3	6-10,0	6-10,0	7-11,7	12-20,0	60-100,0
<b>Needing pre-game silence/becoming distant</b>	<b><u>11-18,3</u></b>	<b><u>15-25,0</u></b>	<b><u>7-11,7</u></b>	<b><u>11-18,3</u></b>	<b><u>16-26,7</u></b>	<b><u>60-100,0</u></b>
Always asking for help from the same person	19-31,7	14-23,3	9-15,0	11-18,3	7-11,7	60-100,0
Kissing the ball before the game	23-38,3	18-30,0	7-11,7	6-10,0	6-10,0	60-100,0
<b>Shower/bath before play</b>	<b><u>14-23,3</u></b>	<b><u>12-20,0</u></b>	<b><u>9-15,0</u></b>	<b><u>11-18,3</u></b>	<b><u>14-23,3</u></b>	<b><u>60-100,0</u></b>
Selecting the same goal or playing field	21-35,0	10-16,7	5-8,3	10-16,7	14-23,3	60-100,0

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<b>Ablution before the game</b>	<b>12-20,0</b>	<b>10-16,7</b>	<b><u>7-11,7</u></b>	<b><u>11-18,3</u></b>	<b><u>20-33,3</u></b>	<b>60-100,0</b>
Stepping on the lines of the field before the game	21-35,0	10-16,7	12-20,0	8-13,3	9-15,0	60-100,0
Entering the field from the same place before the game	22-36,7	11-18,3	5-8,3	9-15,0	13-21,7	60-100,0
Going onto the field with the right foot	9-15,0	11-18,3	<u>8-13,3</u>	<u>9-15,0</u>	<u>23-38,3</u>	60-100,0
<b>Touching the pitch/grass</b>	<b>16-26,7</b>	<b>13-21,7</b>	<b><u>6-10,0</u></b>	<b><u>14-23,3</u></b>	<b><u>11-18,3</u></b>	<b>60-100,0</b>
Casting lead before the game (a superstitious tradition in anatolia)	45-75,0	5-8,3	7-11,7	0-0,0	3-5,0	60-100,0
Sleeping in a match jersey the night before the game	47-78,3	7-11,7	4-6,7	1-1,7	1-1,7	60-100,0
Sitting at the head of the bench	36-60,0	9-15,0	9-15,0	5-8,3	1-1,7	60-100,0
Always sitting in the same place on the bench/bench	23-38,3	13-21,7	3-5,0	9-15,5	12-20,0	60-100,0
Making the same lucky move before the shot	21-35,0	10-16,7	3-5,0	9-15,0	17-28,3	60-100,0
Casting lead as a team (a superstitious tradition in Anatolia)	47-78,3	3-5,0	1-1,7	6-10,0	3-5,0	60-100,0
<b>Believing in the luck of some fields</b>	<b>16-26,7</b>	<b>9-15,0</b>	<b><u>9-15,0</u></b>	<b><u>10-16,7</u></b>	<b><u>16-26,7</u></b>	<b>60-100,0</b>
<b>Praying for success before every game</b>	<b>4-6,7</b>	<b>2-3,3</b>	<b><u>2-3,3</u></b>	<b><u>14-23,3</u></b>	<b><u>38-63,3</u></b>	<b>60-100,0</b>
<b>The team has a constant prayer person</b>	<b>17-28,3</b>	<b>9-15,0</b>	<b><u>11-18,3</u></b>	<b><u>10-16,7</u></b>	<b><u>13-21,7</u></b>	<b>60-100,0</b>
<b>Not going out the field without reciting bismillah</b>	<b>6-10,0</b>	<b>1-1,7</b>	<b><u>4-6,7</u></b>	<b><u>14-23,3</u></b>	<b><u>35-58,3</u></b>	<b>60-100,0</b>

**Table 2 - Examination of Participants' Superstitions and Behaviours by Position.**

Superstitions and Behaviours	Position	n	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	p
<b>Needing pre-game silence/to become distant</b>	Goalkeeper	7	39,14	9,150	.027*
	Defense	17	30,56		
	Midfielder	23	34,43		
	Forward	13	18,81		
Always asking for help from the same person	Goalkeeper	7	40,64	7,862	.049*
	Defense	17	27,91		
	Midfielder	23	34,46		
	Forward	13	21,42		
Kissing the ball before the game	Goalkeeper	7	43,00	10,605	.014*
	Defense	17	23,85		
	Midfielder	23	35,35		
	Forward	13	23,88		
Stepping on the lines of the field before the game	Goalkeeper	7	35,07	8,269	.041*
	Defense	17	29,21		
	Midfielder	23	36,09		
	Forward	13	19,85		
Going onto the field with the right foot	Goalkeeper	7	37,00	8,321	.040*
	Defense	17	33,24		
	Midfielder	23	33,11		
	Forward	13	18,81		

\*p<0,05 \*\*p<0,01

As a result of the evaluation made in Table 1, the football players showed belief, superstition and behavioural tendencies before the match and after the match. Showering/bathing before the game is the most preferred and marked trend with 56.6%. Stepping onto the playing field with the right foot and touching the field/grass were determined as the movements used by the players before the game and the match with 66.6% and 54.6%.

According to this; In Table 2; According to the items such as needing silence/distance before the game, always asking for help from the same person, kissing the ball before the game, stepping on the lines of the field before

the game, and stepping on the playing field with the right foot, the superstitions shown by the participants according to their "Goalkeeper, Defender, Midfielder, Striker" positions. The difference in the answers given to the questions in beliefs and behaviours is statistically significant.

It is seen Table 3 that, the answers given to the questions "Getting a Tattoo before the Season, Going Out on the Playing Field with the Right Foot, and Sleeping in the Matching Uniform the Night before the Match" for the 18-20 and 21-23 age groups are statistically significant compared to the answers given by the other age groups.

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**Table 3 - Examining the Superstitious Beliefs and Behaviours of the Participants by Age Groups.**

Superstitions and Behaviours	Age Group	n	Mean Rank	Chi- Square	p
Getting a tattoo before the season	18-20	8	24,56	11,949	.018*
	21-23	16	22,06		
	24-26	14	35,43		
	27-29	10	38,95		
	30 and above	12	32,92		
Going onto the field with the right foot	18-20	8	38,50	11,276	.024*
	21-23	16	39,72		
	24-26	14	25,46		
	27-29	10	25,95		
	30 and above	12	22,54		
Sleeping in a match jersey the night before the game	18-20	8	24,00	15,571	.004*
	21-23	16	24,00		
	24-26	14	33,14		
	27-29	10	42,10		
	30 and above	12	30,75		

\*p<0,05 \*\*p<0,01.

**Table 4 - Examining Participants' Superstitions and Behaviors by League Status.**

Superstitions and Behaviors	League	n	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	Z	p
Selecting the same goal or playing field	1. League	40	26,48	239,000	-2,611	.009**
	2. League	20	33,55			
Touching the pitch/grass	1. League	40	26,70	248,00	-2,444	.015*
	2. League	20	38,10			
Making the same lucky move before the shot	1. League	40	26,41	236,500	-2,664	.008**
	2. League	20	38,67			
Taping the body or part of it, even if there is no injury	1. League	40	26,49	239,500	-2,696	.007**
	2. League	20	38,53			
Needing pre-game silence/to become distant	1. League	40	25,39	195,500	-3,287	.001**
	2. League	20	40,73			
Wearing an amulet/necklace on game days	1. League	40	25,80	212,000	-3,100	.002**
	2. League	20	39,90			
Kissing, touching the auspicious object before the game	1. League	40	26,91	256,500	-2,321	.020*
	2. League	20	37,67			
Putting lucky signs on shoes	1. League	40	27,28	271,000	-2,205	.027**
	2. League	20	36,95			

\*p<0,05 \*\*p<0,01

It is seen in Table 4, that there is a significant difference in the superstitious beliefs and behaviours of professional football players in the 1st and 2nd League teams of the Turkish Football Federation in all the above parameters.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The answers given by the football players participating in the research to the superstition inventory were analysed in terms of age, position and league status.

It has been observed in Table 1 that there are differences in items such as taking a shower/bath before the game, performing

ablution before the game, stepping on the playing field with the right foot, and touching the field/grass. Showering/bathing before the game is the most preferred and marked trend with 56.6%.

Again, in this behaviour, the athletes see it as a motivating personal reason to prepare themselves before the competition. performing ablution before the game is the most marked belief, superstition and different behaviour with 63.3%.

The biggest reason for this is that we are in a Muslim country, and we motivate ourselves spiritually by performing ablution before starting a job due to our religious beliefs. When the connection between superstitions and religion was examined, it was seen in a study that as the level of religiosity increased, the level of use of superstitions also increased (Arslan, 2004).

Many Muslim football players such as Mohamed Salah, Sadio Mane, Mesut Özil, Edin Dzeko, Karim Benzema, Sami Khedira, Paul Pogba, Samir Handanovic, Demba Ba, Franck Ribery and Emmanuel Adebayor pray and prostrate before or after a goal according to their beliefs.

Similarly, Christian football players such as Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Robert Lewandowski, Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior, Alisson Ramses Becker, Sergio Ramos, Romelu Lukaku, Wayne Rooney, Samuel Eto, Radamel Falcao and James Rodriguez believe in their beliefs before they compete or after scoring goals. They pray and make the sign of the cross with their hands.

Here it is necessary to distinguish between superstitions and religious beliefs. Belief is very effective in our individual and social lives and has a very important function in establishing the balance in the inner world and social life of individuals.

Houxley (1996) says that "belief" is the prerequisite for all purposeful actions and decent lives (Houxley, 1996). On the other hand religious belief is defined as "beliefs related to a super sensory, supreme, powerful being that man accepts to dominate over himself and the whole universe, and some principles regulating the relations between this being and man" (Peker, 2003).

In this context, it should not be strange for a person to ask for help from Allah who created himself and whose dominion he

accepts over the entire universe while going out for a competition.

This makes the athlete feel better mentally. In fact, knowing that a divine power will help him in very difficult situations and conditions may cause the athlete to take more responsibility and try the difficult, maybe the impossible. Sometimes this can bring great success.

Going out on the playing field with the right foot and touching the field/grass with 66.6% and 54.6% were determined as the most superstitious behaviour tendencies used by the footballers before the game and the match.

Burger and Lynn (2005) superstitious behaviour; the effort of individuals in the society to try to turn some of the uncontrollable forces into controllable ones, and it as an effort to take the uncontrollable forces under our sovereignty to a certain extent.

Superstitions are behaviours that athletes frequently resort to, such as religious behaviours. One of the biggest reasons for this is the athletes' desire to be successful before the competition.

In a study conducted in Russia, it was revealed that 88% of the individuals studying at the university had a desire to achieve success and be confident on the basis of their superstitious beliefs and behaviours (Saenko, 2005).

Cristiano Ronaldo steps onto the field with his right foot, and Mesut Özil puts on his right shoe first and steps onto the field with his right foot (<https://turkish-football.com/the-value-of-superstitions-and-beliefs-in-mesut-ozils-game/>)

It is seen in Table 2, that there is a significant difference in the beliefs, superstitions and different behavioural tendencies of the professional football players in the 1st and 2nd League teams of the Turkish Football Federation between their positions. According to the items of needing silence/distance before the game, always asking for help from the same person, kissing the ball before the game, stepping on the lines of the field before the game, and stepping on the playing field with the right foot, the superstitions shown by the participants according to their "Goalkeeper, Defender, Midfielder, Striker" positions. significant differences were observed in beliefs and behaviours. It was observed that

goalkeepers showed more superstitions and strikers showed less superstition.

It is a well-known fact that in football, which is a team sport, the goalkeepers, who are part of the team are alone especially during or before the match, and often remain alone in a positive or negative behaviour even during the game. In this sense, when we look at the distribution according to the positions, it is seen that the goalkeepers mostly resort to superstitious beliefs and behaviours. Barut stated that those who do team sports tend to be more superstitious than those who do individual sports in terms of superstitious behaviour (Barut et al., 2016).

It is seen in Table 3, that there is a difference in the beliefs, superstitions and behaviours of the professional football players in the 1st and 2nd League teams of the Turkish Football Federation between the age ranges.

A significant difference was observed in the superstitious beliefs and behaviours of the participants according to age groups, the items of getting a tattoo before the season, going out on the playing field with the right foot, and sleeping in the match uniform the night before the game ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Considering the studies, Neil et al. (1981) found that as the time spent by ice hockey athletes increased, the rate of superstitious behaviour decreased. In another study, Köktaş (1993), showed an increase in superstitious beliefs with increasing age, and presented an opinion against our study. Another view is that people's practice of superstitious behaviour does not differ according to their age. Superstitions continue to exist in all age groups. In other studies, Karaca (2001) and Peltzer (2003) concluded that there is no relationship between being prone to superstitions and the age status of individuals.

It is seen Table 4, that there is a difference in superstitions and behaviors of professional football players in the 1st and 2nd League teams of the Turkish Football Federation, according to their league status. Kissing the auspicious object before the game, touching it, touching the field/grass, making the same auspicious gesture before the shot, taping the body or a part of it even if there is no injury, wearing an amulet/necklace on game days, putting lucky signs on shoes, needing to get away from the silence before the game There is a difference in superstitions and behaviours

between the 1st and 2nd League teams in the items of hearing and kissing the lucky object before the game and touching it ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Jermain Defoe says that "I have to cut my hair short before every match. I only get injured when I have longer hair." John Terry would tie three tapes around his socks and always sit in the same seat on the team bus on his way to away games (<https://www.thesun.co.uk/sport/5064689/football-superstitions-messi-ronaldo>).

Lionel Messi wore a special red ribbon on his sock while playing in Argentina at the 2018 World Cup. He used the red ribbon as a kind of amulet. Messi always puts the ball on the ground with both hands and takes the same number of back steps before hitting the ball. (<https://www.fotmob.com/news/lxq94rmlwqyk1e4s6wdmekvks-lucky-red%3F-messi-wears-ribbon-sent-to-him-by-reporter's-mum-at-world-cup>)

Jack Grealish wore the boots he believed in for a very long time. Jude Bellingham, Gareth Bale, Danny Rose, and Kyle Walker poke big holes in their socks. Phil Jones wears his left sock in the home match, and his right sock in the away match (<https://www.sportbible.com/football/jude-bellingham-socks-borussia-dortmund-20220906>).

While Bleak and Frederich (1998) stated in their research and study that superstitious beliefs and behaviours increase sportive success, Todd and Brow (2003) stated that this finding was not supported in their studies.

As a result, even many football players and world stars have their own beliefs, superstitions and different ways of behaving. In this study, Turkish Football Federation 1.Lig and TFF.2. It has been observed that professional football players in the league teams have religious behaviours, superstitions and different behavioural tendencies before and during training, competition. These differences differed according to the age of the football players, the leagues they played and their positions.

In the literature, there are generally different findings in terms of the effects of superstitions and different behaviour patterns on performance, there are also findings that they have no positive effects as well as positive effects.

Religious beliefs, superstitions and different behaviour patterns are seen as a method used by football players to minimize the level of anxiety that arises or increases while performing. Being mentally prepared plays an important role in increasing performance. Religious beliefs and superstitions are the need to take refuge in a divine power when the athletes themselves are not enough. Such behaviours contribute to the physical and mental well-being of the athletes.

After this study, it is necessary to open a different paragraph especially on religious behaviours. Religious beliefs lead athletes to believe that they can achieve many things that are not possible with divine power.

In other words, they think that they cannot reveal their skills and abilities without a divine power. The belief that a divine power and luck factors will be with them has an important place. In this context, in order to reduce the anxiety of the athletes and increase their efficiency; Before the competition and training, it is important to prepare the environments where they can easily realize their religious beliefs, to give them time to stay silent and to be motivated, and to allow different behaviours and forms. If these behaviour patterns, which are important for the football player, do not harm the athlete himself and the team, it should not be interfered with.

#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

#### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

#### Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated during and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

#### Ethics Committee Permission

For this study, permission was obtained from Afyon Kocatepe University Health

Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee.

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