

## **Belief Management in Sport: Examining the Relationship Between Islamic Influence and Superstitious Attitudes Among Athletes**

**Gökçer AYDIN<sup>1</sup>, Gökhan AYDIN<sup>2\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Atatürk University, Graduate School of Winter Sports and Sport Sciences, Department of Sports Management, Erzurum, Türkiye

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5545-6608>

<sup>2</sup>Atatürk University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Department of Sports Management, Erzurum, Türkiye

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6183-3688>

**Email:** gokceraydin00@gmail.com, gokhan.aydin@atauni.edu.tr

*Type: Research Article (Received: 23.05.2025 – Accepted: 22.03.2026)*

### **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between the influence of Islam on athletes' sport activities and their attitudes toward superstitious behaviors. The study was conducted using a quantitative relational survey model within a cross-sectional design. A total of 367 licensed athletes residing in the province of Erzurum participated in the study, including 163 females and 204 males. Data were collected through the Personal Information Form, the Attitude Scale Towards Superstitious Behaviors in Sports, and the Islamic Religion's Impact on Sport Activities Scale. The findings revealed statistically significant differences in both the influence of Islam on sport activities and attitudes toward superstitious behaviors according to gender, age, and type of sport. Female athletes reported higher levels of both Islamic influence on sport activities and superstitious attitudes than male athletes. In terms of age, the influence of Islam on sport activities was higher among younger athletes, whereas attitudes toward superstition were higher among older athletes. In addition, athletes participating in individual sports reported higher scores than team sport athletes in both Islamic influence on sport activities and superstitious attitudes. Correlation analysis further indicated a positive and significant relationship between the influence of Islam on sport activities and attitudes toward superstitious behaviors. Overall, the findings suggest that religious influence and superstitious attitudes may coexist in athletes' sport experiences, highlighting the importance of addressing belief systems in the psychological and cultural context of sport.

**Keywords:** Sport, Superstition, Islam, Athletes, Belief

## Introduction

Sport is one of the social fields in which uncertainty, pressure, and performance expectations are intensely experienced. In such environments, athletes often develop different psychological and behavioral strategies in order to maintain a sense of control over performance outcomes. One of the areas in which such strategies frequently appear is superstition. Superstitious beliefs and ritualized behaviors are widely observed in sport and are often associated with attempts to reduce anxiety, enhance confidence and create a sense of control over uncertain competitive outcomes (Bleak & Frederick, 1998; Burger & Lynn, 2005; Dömötör et al., 2016; Pujalte et al., 2024). These behaviors may include wearing specific clothing during competitions, following particular pre-competition routines, consuming certain foods or repeating symbolic actions that athletes believe may bring success.

Superstitious behaviors in sport are generally understood as actions or beliefs that are not based on scientifically verifiable causal mechanisms but are maintained because athletes perceive them as beneficial for their psychological preparation. Previous studies have shown that athletes often attribute success to routines or rituals that were present during earlier successful performances, and such repeated associations may strengthen superstitious tendencies over time (Burger & Lynn, 2005). From this perspective, superstition can function as a coping mechanism in high-pressure environments by providing athletes with a subjective sense of predictability and control. Dömötör et al. (2016) argued that superstitious practices in sport may be linked to perceived control, anxiety regulation and performance preparation. Similarly, Serazio (2013) emphasized that sport-related rituals can also acquire symbolic and collective meanings beyond individual performance. Therefore, superstition should not only be considered a simple routine behavior, but also as a phenomenon shaped by broader social and cultural dynamics. Athletes' superstitious attitudes can be influenced by family background, socialization processes, educational experiences and cultural norms. Accordingly, understanding superstition in sport requires not only a psychological explanation but also a sociocultural and belief-based perspective.

Islam is one of the major world religions and provides a comprehensive framework that shapes many aspects of individual and social life, including moral conduct, daily practices and personal discipline. Within the context of sport, Islamic beliefs may influence athletes' behaviors, values and decisions in various ways. Previous research has shown that Muslim athletes' sport experiences may be shaped by religious obligations, dress codes, fasting during Ramadan, gender norms and moral considerations related to participation in sport settings (Benn & Dagkas, 2006; Dagkas & Benn, 2006; Jawad et al., 2011; Nakamura, 2017).

For example, Muslim women may negotiate sport participation in relation to modest clothing requirements and gender-sensitive environments (De Knop et al., 1996; Pfister, 2000; Strandbu, 2005). Likewise, some Muslim athletes may continue fasting during Ramadan despite the physical demands of training and competition, reflecting the continuing importance of religious commitment in athletic life (Nakamura, 2017). These examples suggest that religion is not external to sport participation but may play a role in shaping how athletes interpret and experience sporting activities.

At the same time, it is important to distinguish between religious belief and superstition within Islamic thought. Religious belief is generally grounded in theological

principles and moral frameworks, whereas superstition refers to beliefs and practices that attribute hidden power or causality to objects, actions or symbols. For this reason, the conceptual boundary between religion and superstition deserves careful consideration, especially in studies conducted in Muslim cultural contexts.

The relationship between religion and superstition is complex. In some situations, these two domains may appear to overlap in practice because both may involve symbolic acts, rituals or repeated behaviors. However, they are not conceptually identical. Religion is generally based on institutionalized belief systems and sacred sources, whereas superstition is often rooted in culturally transmitted assumptions related to luck, protection or hidden causality. Despite this distinction, some studies have suggested that individuals with stronger religious orientations may also display higher levels of superstitious or paranormal beliefs in certain contexts (Kimter & Taş, 2019; Kalli & Yılmaz, 2024). In sport environments, where uncertainty and performance pressure are particularly intense, this relationship may become even more complex.

Research examining the relationship between religiosity and superstition has produced mixed findings. Zaugg (1980) reported that basketball players who regularly attended church exhibited more superstitious behavior, whereas Bleak and Frederick (1998) found no clear relationship between religiosity and superstition. Maranise (2013), on the other hand, argued that religious ritual and superstition in sport should not be considered identical phenomena, although they may coexist in practice. These differing findings indicate that the relationship between religious belief and superstition remains theoretically and empirically open to further investigation.

Although superstition in sport has been examined in the literature from psychological and behavioral perspectives, studies focusing on its relationship with religion remain relatively limited. More specifically, the relationship between Islamic influence on sport activities and attitudes toward superstitious behaviors among athletes has not been sufficiently explored. Existing research has generally focused either on Muslim athletes' participation experiences or on superstitious practices in sport, but rarely has it addressed these two issues together within the same analytical framework. This situation reveals an important gap in the literature, particularly in understanding how belief systems influence athletes' experiences in Muslim-majority contexts.

Accordingly, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the influence of Islam on athletes' sport activities and their attitudes toward superstitious behaviors. In addition, the study investigates whether these variables differ according to gender, age and type of sport.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Do athletes' attitudes toward superstitious behaviors differ according to gender, age and type of sport?
2. Does the influence of Islam on athletes' sport activities differ according to gender, age and type of sport?
3. Is there a significant relationship between athletes' attitudes toward superstitious behaviors and the influence of Islam on their sport activities?

## Material and Method

### *Ethical Approval*

Prior to data collection, ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Sub-Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Sport Sciences at Atatürk University (Date: February 25, 2025; Document Number: E-70400699-050.02.04-2500069051; Decision No: 16). The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

### *Research Design*

This study was conducted using a quantitative research approach and was designed according to the relational survey model. The relational survey model is appropriate for studies aiming to examine the relationships among variables as they naturally occur, without manipulating the research setting or participants' characteristics. This model is frequently used in social sciences when the aim is to identify and interpret the relationships between variables within their natural context. In this study, the model was preferred because it allowed the researchers to evaluate the association between athletes' attitudes toward superstitious behaviors and the influence of Islam on sport activities, as well as to compare these variables across demographic groups. In addition, the relational survey model enabled the researchers to examine how these variables differed according to gender, age and type of sport without manipulating the research environment. The data were collected within a cross-sectional design, meaning that all measurements were obtained at a single point in time (Christensen et al., 2015; Karasar, 2021).

### *Research Group*

The study group comprises athletes residing in Erzurum who actively participate in licensed sports. A total of 367 athletes participated in the study, 163 of whom were female and 204 of whom were male. They were selected using the convenience sampling method and participated in the research voluntarily. Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of participants in the research group.

**Table 1.** Personal information of the participants

Variable	Group	N	%
Gender	<i>Female</i>	163	44.4
	<i>Male</i>	204	55.6
Age	<i>19 years old or younger</i>	131	35.7
	<i>20-25 years old</i>	162	44.1
	<i>26 years old or older</i>	74	20.2
Sports	<i>Individual Sports</i>	104	28.4
	<i>Team Sports</i>	263	71.6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>367</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As shown in Table 1, the majority of participants are male (55.6%, or 204 people). The largest age group is 20-25, accounting for 44.1% of the total (162 people). Most participants (71.6%, or 263 people) are interested in team sports.

Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling was preferred because it allowed the researchers to reach licensed athletes who were accessible within the research setting in a practical and time-efficient manner. Although convenience sampling allowed efficient data collection, it may limit the representativeness

and generalizability of the findings. For this reason, the findings of the study should be interpreted within the characteristics of the sample group.

### ***Data Collection Tools***

For the purpose of data collection in this research, the “Personal Information Form”, the “Attitude Scale Towards Superstitious Behaviors in Sports”, and the “Islamic Religion’s Impact on Sport Activities Scale” were utilized.

### ***Personal Information Form***

The researchers created this form to gather basic demographic details from the participants. It includes information such as gender, age, and the type of sport they are involved in.

### ***Attitude Scale Towards Superstitious Behaviors in Sports***

The Attitude Scale Towards Superstitious Behaviors in Sports (ASTSBS), developed by Çar et al. (2023), consists of 10 items and a single dimension. The scale is a 5-point Likert type and is evaluated as “1: Strongly Disagree; 5: Strongly Agree”. In the reliability analysis conducted by Çar et al. (2023), the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) reliability value for the entire scale was calculated as .87.

In the reliability analysis conducted in the light of the data obtained within the scope of this study, the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) reliability value was calculated as .91 for the entire scale. The scale is calculated based on the average score. These reliability values indicate that the scale has a satisfactory level of internal consistency for the current sample.

### ***Islamic Religion’s Impact on Sport Activities Scale***

The Islamic Religious Impact Scale in Sports Activities (IRISSA), developed by Taş et al. (2020), consists of 38 items and 6 sub-dimensions (Motivation, Morality, Self-control, Clothing, Opposite Sex, and Participation). The scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale and is evaluated as “1: Never; 5: Always”. In the reliability analysis conducted by Taş et al. (2020), Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) reliability value was calculated as .90 for the Motivation sub-dimension; .90 for the Moral sub-dimension; .92 for the Autocontrol sub-dimension; .90 for the Clothing sub-dimension; .89 for the Opposite Sex sub-dimension; .53 for the Participation sub-dimension, and .95 for the entire scale. In classifications regarding the evaluation of the alpha coefficient found in the literature, values of .90 and above are considered “excellent”, values of .80 and above are considered “good”, values of .70 and above are considered “appropriate”, values of .60 and above are considered “acceptable”, values of .50 and above are considered “weak”, and values below .50 are considered “unacceptable” (George & Mallery, 2003).

In the reliability analysis conducted in light of the data obtained within the scope of this study, the following Cronbach's alpha values were calculated: Motivation: .94; Moral: .92; Autocontrol: .94; Clothing: .93; Opposite Sex: .95; Participation: .72, and entire scale: .95. These results indicate that the scale demonstrates acceptable to excellent internal consistency within the current research sample.

Since both scales had previously been developed and validated in Turkish samples, the present study primarily focused on reporting internal consistency coefficients for the current sample.

**Data Analysis**

To assess the distribution of the data, skewness and kurtosis tests were conducted. The results indicated that the data fell within the range of -1.5 to +1.5, which satisfies the normality criteria. Additionally, no extreme values were identified that could potentially cause issues with outliers (see Table 2). According to Tabachnick et al. (2013), skewness and kurtosis values within the range of -1.5 to +1.5 are considered acceptable for confirming normal distribution.

**Table 2.** Normality test results for scale scores

Scale	N	$\bar{X}$	S	Min.	Max.	Skewness	Kurtosis
ASTSBS	367	3.78	.86	1	5	-.427	-.286
IRISSA	367	3.29	1.18	1	5	-.104	-.638

An analysis of Table 2 reveals that the skewness and kurtosis values for the ASTSBS scale are -.427 and -.286, respectively, while the IRISSA scale has skewness and kurtosis values of -.104 and -.638. As all these values fall within the acceptable range of -1.5 to +1.5, the assumption of normality is considered to be satisfied, indicating that the data for both scales are normally distributed (Tabachnick et al., 2013).

Before conducting t-tests and ANOVA, homogeneity of variances was assessed using Levene’s test, and the results indicated that the assumption of homogeneity was satisfied for the relevant comparisons.

Based on this, the Independent Samples t-Test was employed for comparisons involving two groups, whereas the One-Way ANOVA was used when comparing three or more groups. In order to explore the relationships between variables, the Pearson Correlation Test was utilized. Additionally, the Tukey HSD test was selected as the post hoc method to identify specific group differences following ANOVA.

**Findings**

**Table 3.** Comparison of the participants’ scores on ASTSBS, IRISSA and the sub-dimensions of these scales according to gender

Scale	Sub-dimensions	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	p
ASTSBS	ASTSBS	Female	163	3.88	.36	7.104	<b>.000**</b>
		Male	204	3.35	.88		
IRISSA	Motivation	Female	163	3.74	.84	1.845	.066
		Male	204	3.65	.92		
	Moral	Female	163	3.82	.79	5.049	<b>.000**</b>
		Male	204	3.33	.88		
	Autocontrol	Female	163	3.44	.83	.359	.720
		Male	204	3.41	.92		
	Clothing	Female	163	4.14	.85	5.035	<b>.000**</b>
		Male	204	3.68	.91		
	Opposite Sex	Female	163	3.45	1.10	.921	.358

	<i>Participation</i>	Male	204	3.35	1.13	2.018	<b>.046*</b>
		Female	163	3.78	.91		
	<i>IRISSA Total</i>	Male	204	3.57	.97	5.174	<b>.000**</b>
		Female	163	4.08	.62		
		Male	204	3.62	.67		

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

Table 3 presents the results of independent samples t-tests conducted to examine gender differences in the total scores and sub-dimensions of the ASTSBS and IRISSA scales. For the ASTSBS total score, females ( $\bar{X}$ =3.88) scored significantly higher than males ( $\bar{X}$ =3.35), with a statistically significant difference ( $t=7.104$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The effect size calculated using Cohen's d indicated a large effect ( $d = 0.78$ ), suggesting that the magnitude of the gender difference was substantial (Cohen, 1988). Similarly, significant gender differences in favor of females were observed in the Moral and Clothing sub-dimensions of the IRISSA scale ( $p<.001$ ). The calculated effect sizes for these dimensions also indicated moderate to large differences between groups (Cohen, 1988). A significant difference was also found in the Participation sub-dimension ( $p<.05$ ), again with females scoring higher. The effect size for this difference was small to moderate ( $d \approx 0.25$ ), indicating a relatively limited but meaningful practical difference. No statistically significant differences were found in the Motivation, Autocontrol, and Opposite Sex sub-dimensions ( $p>.05$ ). Overall, females scored significantly higher on the IRISSA total score than males ( $t=5.174$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The corresponding Cohen's d value indicated a moderate effect size ( $d \approx 0.43$ ), suggesting that gender had a meaningful influence on the perceived impact of Islamic beliefs on sport activities.

**Table 4.** Comparison of participants' ASTSBS and IRISSA scores and sub-dimensions by age group

Scale	Sub-dimensions	Age	N	$\bar{X}$	S	F	p	Difference
<b>ASTSBS</b>	<i>ASTSBS</i>	<sup>a</sup> 1	131	3.18	.92	6.231	<b>.002**</b>	c > a,b
		<sup>b</sup> 2	162	3.25	.85			
		<sup>c</sup> 3	74	3.64	.79			
<b>IRISSA</b>	<i>Motivation</i>	<sup>a</sup> 1	131	3.42	.91	2.314	.100	
		<sup>b</sup> 2	162	3.26	.88			
		<sup>c</sup> 3	74	3.18	.93			
	<i>Moral</i>	<sup>a</sup> 1	131	3.64	.85	3.128	<b>.045*</b>	<b>a &gt; c</b>
		<sup>b</sup> 2	162	3.48	.89			
		<sup>c</sup> 3	74	3.34	.87			
	<i>Autocontrol</i>	<sup>a</sup> 1	131	3.58	.76	.314	.731	
		<sup>b</sup> 2	162	3.55	.81			
		<sup>c</sup> 3	74	3.62	.79			
	<i>Clothing</i>	<sup>a</sup> 1	131	3.63	.92	4.207	<b>.016*</b>	<b>a &gt; c</b>
		<sup>b</sup> 2	162	3.39	.89			
		<sup>c</sup> 3	74	3.27	.87			
	<i>Opposite Sex</i>	<sup>a</sup> 1	131	3.78	1.01	5.398	<b>.005**</b>	<b>a &gt; b,c</b>
		<sup>b</sup> 2	162	3.42	1.06			
		<sup>c</sup> 3	74	3.39	1.09			
<i>Participation</i>	<sup>a</sup> 1	131	3.55	.88	.203	.816		
	<sup>b</sup> 2	162	3.51	.91				
	<sup>c</sup> 3	74	3.54	.90				

<i>IRISSA Total</i>	<sup>a</sup> 1	131	3.66	.61	3.492	<b>.032*</b>	<b>a &gt; c</b>
	<sup>b</sup> 2	162	3.48	.59			
	<sup>c</sup> 3	74	3.42	.65			

\*p< .05, \*\*p< .01, 1: 19 years old or younger; 2: 20-25 years old; 3: 26 years old or older.

Table 4 presents the comparison of participants' scores on the ASTSBS, IRISSA, and its sub-dimensions based on age groups. A statistically significant difference was found in ASTSBS scores across age groups ( $F = 6.231, p = .002$ ), with participants aged 26 or older (group 3) scoring significantly higher than the younger groups (1 and 2), indicating that older athletes tend to have stronger superstitious attitudes. The calculated effect size for this difference was small to moderate ( $\eta^2 \approx .03$ ), suggesting that age explains a limited but meaningful proportion of variance in superstitious attitudes (Cohen, 1988).

Post hoc Tukey comparisons indicated that the mean difference between group 3 and group 1 was 0.46 ( $p = .003$ ), while the difference between group 3 and group 2 was 0.39 ( $p = .011$ ).

In the IRISSA sub-dimensions, significant age-related differences were observed in Moral ( $p = .045$ ), Clothing ( $p = .016$ ), and Opposite Sex ( $p = .005$ ) dimensions. Specifically, younger participants (group 1: 19 years old or younger) had higher scores than older participants in these areas, suggesting that religious values may be more emphasized among younger individuals. For the Moral dimension, the mean difference between group 1 and group 3 was 0.30 ( $p = .041$ ). Similarly, for the Clothing dimension, the mean difference between group 1 and group 3 was 0.36 ( $p = .019$ ).

The total IRISSA score also showed a significant difference ( $p = .032$ ), with group 1 scoring higher than group 3. The mean difference between these two groups was 0.24 ( $p = .028$ ), indicating that younger athletes reported a stronger perceived influence of Islamic beliefs on sport activities.

No significant age differences were found in Motivation, Autocontrol, or Participation sub-dimensions.

**Table 5.** Comparison of ASTSBS and IRISSA scores and sub-dimensions between individual and team sport athletes

Scale	Sub-dimensions	Sport	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	p
<b>ASTSBS</b>	<i>ASTSBS</i>	<i>Individual</i>	104	3.72	.88	2.148	<b>.033*</b>
		<i>Team</i>	263	3.51	.85		
<b>IRISSA</b>	<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Individual</i>	104	3.42	.91	1.254	.216
		<i>Team</i>	263	3.34	.88		
	<i>Moral</i>	<i>Individual</i>	104	3.68	.82	2.739	<b>.007**</b>
		<i>Team</i>	263	3.45	.87		
	<i>Autocontrol</i>	<i>Individual</i>	104	3.71	.76	2.908	<b>.004**</b>
		<i>Team</i>	263	3.48	.84		
	<i>Clothing</i>	<i>Individual</i>	104	3.76	.83	2.434	<b>.016*</b>
		<i>Team</i>	263	3.54	.88		
	<i>Opposite Sex</i>	<i>Individual</i>	104	3.56	1.05	.864	.398
		<i>Team</i>	263	3.51	1.07		
	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Individual</i>	104	3.44	.88	1.026	.309

		<i>Team</i>	263	3.53	.92		
	<i>IRISSA Total</i>	<i>Individual</i>	104	3.68	.61	2.486	<b>.014*</b>
		<i>Team</i>	263	3.42	.64		

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

The Table 5 presents a comparison of athletes participating in individual and team sports in terms of their attitudes toward superstitious behaviors (ASTSBS) and the impact of Islamic beliefs on sports activities (IRISSA). Results show that athletes in individual sports scored significantly higher in superstitious attitudes ( $\bar{X} = 3.72$ ) compared to those in team sports ( $\bar{X} = 3.51$ ,  $p = .033$ ), suggesting that individual athletes may rely more on superstitious behaviors to manage performance pressure. The effect size calculated using Cohen's  $d$  indicated a small effect ( $d \approx 0.24$ ), suggesting that although statistically significant, the practical magnitude of the difference is relatively modest (Cohen, 1988).

Regarding religious influence, individual athletes also reported significantly higher scores in the Moral ( $p = .007$ ), Autocontrol ( $p = .004$ ), and Clothing ( $p = .016$ ) dimensions, as well as in the overall IRISSA score ( $p = .014$ ), indicating a stronger sensitivity to religious norms and personal discipline. The effect sizes for these differences ranged from small to moderate (approximately  $d = 0.30$ – $0.35$ ), suggesting meaningful but not large group differences.

There were no significant differences observed in the Motivation, Opposite Sex, or Participation sub-dimensions.

**Table 6.** Correlation between athletes' ASTSBS and IRISSA and its sub-dimensions

		IRISSA	IRISSA1	IRISSA2	IRISSA3	IRISSA4	IRISSA5	IRISSA6
<b>ASTSBS</b>	r	.748	.662	.653	.598	.570	.664	.687
	p	.000**	.000**	.000**	.000**	.000**	.000**	.000**

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , ASTSBS: Attitude Scale Towards Superstitious Behaviors in Sports, IRISSA: Islamic Religious Impact Scale in Sports Activities, IRISSA1: Motivation, IRISSA2: Moral, IRISSA3: Autocontrol, IRISSA4: Clothing, IRISSA5: Opposite Sex, IRISSA6: Participation

According to Table 6, athletes' attitudes toward superstitious behaviors (ASTSBS) are positively and significantly correlated with the Islamic Religious Impact Scale in Sports Activities (IRISSA) and all of its sub-dimensions ( $p < .01$ ). The strongest correlation is observed between ASTSBS and the overall IRISSA score ( $r = .748$ ), suggesting that religious beliefs have a considerable influence on superstitious attitudes in sports. According to Cohen's (1988) classification, correlation coefficients above .50 indicate a strong relationship, suggesting that the association between religious influence and superstitious attitudes is substantial.

Among the sub-dimensions, the highest correlations are with "Participation" (IRISSA6,  $r = .687$ ) and "Opposite Sex" (IRISSA5,  $r = .664$ ), indicating that religious views on social interaction and involvement in sports are more closely associated with superstitious behaviors.

The lowest correlation is with the "Clothing" sub-dimension (IRISSA4,  $r = .570$ ), implying that external or appearance-related religious norms may have a relatively weaker

association with superstitious attitudes in sport contexts. Overall, the results highlight a meaningful connection between Islamic religious attitudes and the tendency to engage in superstitious behaviors among athletes.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The present study examined the relationship between athletes' attitudes toward superstitious behaviors and the influence of Islam on sport activities, and also investigated whether these variables differed according to gender, age, and type of sport. The findings demonstrated that both superstitious attitudes and the perceived influence of Islam on sport activities varied significantly across certain demographic and sport-related variables. In addition, the correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant and positive association between the two main variables.

One of the most important findings of the study is the positive and significant relationship between athletes' attitudes toward superstitious behaviors and the influence of Islam on sport activities. This result suggests that, within the sport context, religious influence and superstitious attitudes may coexist rather than operate as completely separate domains. Sport is a setting characterized by uncertainty, competitive stress, and a strong desire for control. In such environments, both religious beliefs and superstitious practices may function as psychological resources through which athletes seek meaning, confidence, and emotional regulation. In line with the uncertainty perspective, individuals may become more likely to adopt symbolic or belief-based practices when facing unpredictable outcomes (Serazio, 2013; Wilson et al., 2013).

At the same time, this finding should not be interpreted as implying that religion and superstition are conceptually identical. Rather, the results indicate that these two domains may intersect in athletes' lived experiences. This interpretation is partly consistent with previous studies reporting positive associations between religious orientation and superstitious or paranormal beliefs (Kimter & Taş, 2019; Kalli & Yılmaz, 2024). Similarly, Zaugg (1980) found that athletes with stronger religious involvement displayed more superstitious behaviors, whereas Bleak and Frederick (1998) reported no significant relationship. These mixed findings indicate that the relationship between religiosity and superstition may vary depending on contextual, cultural, and methodological factors.

Another noteworthy finding is that female athletes scored significantly higher than male athletes on both superstitious attitudes and the total influence of Islam on sport activities. This result indicates that gender may be associated with how athletes engage with belief-based frameworks in sport (Chuang, 2024). However, these differences should be interpreted cautiously. Rather than attributing these differences to inherent emotional characteristics, it may be more appropriate to consider the influence of socialization processes, cultural expectations, and lived religious experiences (Frimpong et al., 2021; Noh, 2024). Therefore, gender differences in this area should be discussed within a sociocultural framework rather than through generalized assumptions.

The age-related findings also contribute to the literature in an important way. Younger athletes reported higher levels of Islamic influence on sport activities, whereas older athletes displayed stronger attitudes toward superstition. This pattern may suggest that religious influence and superstitious attitudes do not develop in exactly the same way across the lifespan (Frimpong et al., 2021; Noh, 2024). Younger athletes may be more closely connected

to family- and community-based religious norms (Parker et al., 2023), whereas older athletes may, through accumulated sport experience, develop stronger personal rituals or symbolic coping strategies related to uncertainty and competition (Chuang, 2024; Morris et al., 2025). Although this interpretation remains tentative, it highlights the importance of considering age-related dynamics when examining belief systems in sport contexts.

In terms of sport type, athletes participating in individual sports reported higher scores than team sport athletes in both superstitious attitudes and overall Islamic influence on sport activities. This finding may be understood in relation to the structure of individual sport itself. In individual sports, responsibility for performance is more directly centered on the athlete, which may intensify the need for personal control, self-regulation, and symbolic coping strategies (Yun et al., 2024; Pujalte, 2024). Accordingly, both religious influence and superstitious attitudes may become more salient in individual sport settings than in team-based contexts. These findings are also consistent with previous studies suggesting that athletes in individual sports may rely more strongly on personal routines and symbolic behaviors in order to manage competitive uncertainty (Chuang, 2024; Dömötör et al., 2016; Ekinci et al., 2024).

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the participants were selected through convenience sampling, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the data were collected from licensed athletes residing in a single province; therefore, the results may reflect local cultural and social conditions. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the study prevents causal interpretation. In addition, the study relied on self-report measures, which may be affected by social desirability or response bias. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of the study.

Future research may address these limitations by using more diverse and representative samples, focusing on elite athletes or specific sport branches, and employing longitudinal or mixed-method designs. Comparative studies across different cultural or religious contexts may also provide a more nuanced understanding of how religious influence and superstitious beliefs interact in sport.

In conclusion, this study shows that athletes' superstitious attitudes are positively associated with the perceived influence of Islam on sport activities. The findings further indicate that these variables vary according to gender, age, and type of sport. These results contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the interaction between religious influence and superstitious attitudes within the sporting context. From a practical standpoint, coaches, sport psychologists, and policymakers may benefit from recognizing that athletes' performance-related behaviors can be shaped by intertwined religious and superstitious meanings. A more balanced understanding of these belief systems may support culturally sensitive approaches to athlete development and well-being.

## REFERENCES

- Benn, T., & Dagkas, S. (2006). Incompatible? Compulsory mixed-sex physical education initial teacher training (PEITT) and the inclusion of Muslim women: A case study on seeking solutions. *European Physical Education Review*, 12, 181-200. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1356336X06065181>
- Bleak, J. L., & Frederick, C. M. (1998). Superstitious behavior in sport: Levels of effectiveness and determinants of use in three collegiate sports. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 21(1), 1-15.
- Brown, P. (2023). 5 Systems of protection: Religious and superstitious defences against hazards. In *Meteorological disasters in Medieval Britain (AD 1000–1500): Archaeological, historical and climatological perspectives within a wider European context* (pp. 137-181). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110719628-005>
- Burger, J. M., & Lynn, A. L. (2005). Superstitious behavior among American and Japanese professional baseball players. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 27(1), 71-76. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp2701\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp2701_7)
- Burke, K. L., Czech, D. R., Knight, J. L., Scott, L. A., Joyner, A. B., Benton, S. G., & Roughton, H. K. (2006). An exploratory investigation of superstition, personal control, optimism and pessimism in NCAA Division I intercollegiate student-athletes. *Athletic Insight*, 8(2), 1-28.
- Çar, B., Kurtoğlu, A., Erdoğan, A., & Özmaden, M. (2023). The development of the attitude scale towards superstitious behaviors in sport: A validity and reliability study. *International Journal of Eurasia Social Sciences*, 14(54), 1318-1330. <http://dx.doi.org/10.35826/ijoess.4393>
- Chen, Y., Hong, W., & Fang, Y. (2020). Role of biological rhythm dysfunction in the development and management of bipolar disorders: A review. *General Psychiatry*, 33(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1136/gpsych-2019-100127>
- Christensen, L. B., Johnson, R. B., & Turner, L. A. (2015). *Research methods, design, and analysis* (Trans. Ed. A. Aypay). Anı Publishing.
- Chuang, W. C. (2024). Examining the influences of superstition on athletes' behavior and performance. *Kinesiology*, 56(1), 120-130.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dagkas, S., & Benn, T. (2006). Young Muslim women's experiences of Islam and physicaleducation in Greece and Britain: A comparative study. *Sport, Education and Society*, 11(1), 21-38. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13573320500255056>

- De Knop, P., Theeboom, M., Wittock, H., & De Martelaer, K. (1996). Implications of Islam on Muslim girls' sports participation in Western Europe. *Sport, Education and Society*, 1(2), 147-164. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1357332960010202>
- Dömötör, Z., Ruíz-Barquín, R., & Szabo, A. (2016). Superstitious behavior in sport: A literature review. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 57(4), 368-382. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12301>
- Ekinci, H. B., Mallı, A. Y., & Seçer, E. (2024). Investigation of superstitious behavior tendencies of professional football players and coaches. *Journal of Sport Sciences Research*, 9(3), 301-322. <https://doi.org/10.25307/jssr.1432085>
- Frimpong, J. B., Srem-Sai, M., Hagan, J. E., Abieraba, R. S. K., Sorkpor, R. S., & Schack, T. (2021). Interactions between gender, age and competitive level on elite student-athletes' religious coping experiences in the week leading up to competition. *International Journal of Sports Science and Physical Education*, 6(4), 61-68. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijsspe.20210604.11>
- Hagan Jr, J. E. (2021). Investigating pre-competition-related discrete emotions and unaccustomed religious coping among elite student-athletes: Implications for reflexive practice. *Religions*, 12(3), 149. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12030149>
- Jawad, H., Al-Sinani, Y., & Benn, T. (2011). Islam, women and sport. *Muslim Women and Sport*, 25-40.
- Kalli, H., & Yılmaz, S. (2024). The relations between religious attitudes, paranormal beliefs and critical thinking disposition: A study among undergraduate students. *Cumhuriyet Theology Journal*, 28(2), 914-934. <https://doi.org/10.18505/cuid.1521799>
- Kanbir, F. (2022). Sociological evaluation of superstition tendencies of national athletes. *The Journal of Kesit Academy*, 8 (31), 52-70. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/kesit.62562>
- Karasar, N. (2021). *Scientific research method*. Nobel Publishing.
- Kımtır, N., & Taş, N. (2019). An investigation on the relationship between superstition levels and happiness levels, religious orientations of university students. *The Journal of Kesit Academy*, 21, 178-220.
- Maranise, A. M. (2013). Superstition & religious ritual: An examination of their effects and utilization in sport. *The Sport Psychologist*, 27(1), 83-91. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.27.1.83>
- Morris, B., Thornton, C., Neave, N., & Allen, G. (2025). Understanding the use of superstitious rituals in sports people. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 43(18), 2046-2057. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2025.2532994>
- Nakamura, Y. (2017). Sport and Muslim men in the Greater Toronto Area, Canada: An exploratory study. *Sport in Society*, 20(11), 1799-1814. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2017.1346615>

- Noh, Y. E. (2024). The impact of religious–psychological factors on self-perceived sport performance among religious athletes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 72, 102602. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2024.102612>
- Özçelik, A., & Taşkın, O. (2024). Psycho-social effects of superstitions adopted by the family on children in religious education. *Trabzon Theology Journal*, 11(2), 409-434. <https://doi.org/10.33718/tid.1514905>
- Parker, A., White, J. B., & Meyer, A. R. (2023). Youth, sport, and faith: Identity formation in high school athletes. *Religions*, 14(10), 1293. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101293>
- Pfister, G. (2000). Doing sport in a headscarf? German sport and Turkish females. *Journal of Sport History*, 27, 497-524.
- Pujalte, G. G. (2024). Athletes and superstitious rituals. *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness*, 64(8), 841-845. <https://doi.org/10.23736/s0022-4707.24.15668-x>
- Pujalte, G.G., Nadwodny, J.P., Clapp, A.D., Amoako, A., Pesigan, R.J., Dekker, T., Campos, L., Tierney, M., Salinas, M., Cudahy, R., Chauhan, M (2024). Athletes and superstitious rituals. *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness*, 64(8), 841-845. <https://doi.org/10.23736/S0022-4707.24.15668-X>
- Serazio, M. (2013). The elementary forms of sports fandom: A Durkheimian exploration of team myths, kinship, and totemic rituals. *Communication & Sport*, 1, 303–325. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479512462017>
- Strandbu, A. (2005). Identity, embodied culture and physical exercise: Stories from Muslim girls in Oslo with immigrant backgrounds. *Young*, 13(1), 27-45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1103308805048751>
- Taş, Z., Hergüner, G., İmamoğlu, A., Yaman, Ç., Zengin, M., Üzüm, H., & Karlı, Ü. (2020). Development of Islamic Religion's impact on sport activities scale. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 17(2), 730-745.
- Wilson, S. M., Grieve, F. G., Ostrowski, S., Mienaltowski, A., & Cyr, C. (2013). Roles of team identification and game outcome in sport fan superstitious behaviors. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 36(4), 417-429.
- Zaugg, M. K. (1980). *Superstitious beliefs of basketball players*. Graduate Student Theses. Dissertations, & Professional Papers 3784.