

Abstract

Superstitions associated with sexual activity in sport are a widespread phenomenon, although they have received very little research attention to date. Studies are fairly consistent in concluding that sexual activities do not have a direct impact on physical aspects of athletic performance such as strength or endurance. Most of the significant hormonal and physiological changes occurring during sexual activities that can potentially affect athletic performance stabilize at basal levels within the lower tens of minutes after completion of sexual activity. Thus, these findings suggest an important role for psychological aspects that may influence the perceived association between sexual and physical activity. The aim of this thesis is to explore the superstitions about sexual activity that are perpetuated in sports folklore (despite the findings of empirical studies). A very interesting phenomenon is the rituals and routines that athletes practice to give their best performance. Current evidence shows that athletes are often highly superstitious, and thus rituals can both help and harm their performance. Possible explanations include the placebo effect, self-fulfilling prophecies, or operant conditioning. The main aim of the research design is to explore rituals associated with sexual activity using semi-structured interviews. Thanks to this qualitative research, we can gain valuable information about the rituals of athletes, the importance they attach to them, how much they subjectively influence their sport performance and where these rituals come from. These findings will help sport psychologists in their work with elite athletes and help the athletes themselves in identifying their own rituals and working with them to optimize their performance.