

# Psychogenic Pain in the Mind of Gymnasts Caught Between Glory and Frustration

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## Abstract

This study analyzes the lack of psychological support and follow-up for gymnasts motivated to compete in the Congolese championship. On the one hand, it calls into question the extent of social difficulties in light of current psychological suffering. On the other hand, it questions the fact that the athletes are dependent on their parents, who have no stable employment or have lost it with the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic. Despite this disastrous social situation, the sports system itself offers no guarantees in the face of athletes' growing uncertainty. The analysis of this phenomenon on gymnasts revealed worrying psychological profiles in the Congolese sporting population, with mental pathologies emerging and developing insidiously. To enable a proper assessment of athletes' mental strengths and weaknesses, our understanding shows that Target models of mental preparation would be more effective if psychopathologies were diagnosed first. We point to managerial irresponsibility in failing to take the psychosocial aspect seriously at a time when competitors are under pressure to achieve glory at all costs. Through observation of complaints against frustrations and, taking into account our conception of the structural model of the psyche, we found that athletes express themselves through a sad expression, both facial and verbal, to signal the emotional value of their agony. However, the desire to overcome this despair is marked by a costly defense that translates into a commitment to superstitious practices.

**Keywords:** psychic suffering, psychotrauma, social condition, psychotherapy, craving clinic, gymnastics coach

## 1. Introduction

In Congo-Brazzaville, sports training achieves glory at the price of athletes' perseverance, under the indifference of the sports authorities. We can legitimately say that for a young Congolese athlete, regular participation in sports training is just a risk. It requires determination and a personal investment of time, energy, and money. For the gymnasts of the Congolese championship, the reward in terms of money is only a chimera in a register established on the ethnic and tribal chessboard. This truncated perseverance hides sorrow, sadness, and whining, expressed in a plaintive voice among peers. Trips abroad appear to be assets that support their motivation, on the grounds that they have a positive influence on social life, as well as on school and university curricula. While the present is already saddened by the fact that, in return for their efforts and brilliant performances, athletes are unable to live up to their prestige. In social life, everyone settles into a makeshift room and naturally turns to their parents for basic necessities, such as decent medical care in the event of illness. In other words, none of the sporting authorities are aware of the weariness that creeps in over time. This would spread over time to the point where indifference on the part of sports administration authorities would undoubtedly trigger a loss of interest or pleasure among the national gymnastics elite, marking the start of a deterioration in their mental potential, with a remarkable loss of reactivity. And yet, several recent study results have demonstrated the positive role of the coach-trainee relationship in fostering athletes' mental strength (Guszkowska & Wojcik, 2021; Caruzzo *et al.*, 2021).

The rare occasions when athletes achieve glory, or rather, are satisfied with their talents, would correspond to certain periods during which they manage to overcome the emotional shock. A glorious circumstance that really

only comes about through a surreptitiously prepared mental disposition. This provides them with a mental ease that gives them access to perseverance for future accomplishment of complex sporting tasks. It would seem, therefore, that a mental equilibrium defined by short duration and low frequency, marred by psychic disturbances and hampered by emotional weakness on the part of the subject, is in order.

What, then, are the expectations of conditioned mental preparation, i.e. preparation that fails to take into account the various facets of the athlete's social life, relying instead on fictitious parameters? However, failure to consider all facets of the athlete's social life is simply truncated mental preparation. In other words, mental preparation fails to anticipate psychological reversibility. That's because we'd have to deal with both the endogenous and exogenous dimensions of the athlete. The fact remains, however, that in such a case, it is supposedly possible to clinically forget a psychic experience of a gymnast with whom we fail to deduce the need for help, even though he or she carries a deep sense of discomfort and discontent around with them. Under these conditions, isn't mental inhibition evident in the blind application of the Target method?

### *1.1 Limits of the Target Method in the Mental Case*

In the Target method, mental preparation consists of aiming for the fluidity of mental states, based on three pillars: energy, emotions, and self-esteem. However, emotions are evoked from a positive perspective, in line with Jim Taylor's performance model, for whom they are essential to concentration and decision-making, while they are also conducive to the creation of mental images (Target, 2016). These allude to the imagery of the future, which paradoxically becomes a contrast between a wounded internal reality and a contemptuous external one. In the image of a gymnast left to his sad fate with disharmonious social relations in the club. Given this kind of enduring sporting social reality, we seem to be witnessing forms of mental preparation that are simply experienced through psychological techniques (Hagyard *et al.*, 2020) and mental training strategies (Cox, 2013) disconnected from the social component. These strategies are essentially oriented towards the notion of imagery, which covers mental rehearsal, visualization, and mental practice. While it is possible that this is a form of mental preparation, we refrain from assuming that this process consists of helping the athlete to see the paralyzing thoughts inside his or her own brain. However, these strategies are limited to developing the ability to mentally see images, but do not address the social variables that need to be interpreted in terms of the psychological meanings they provoke in the subjects concerned, nor do they lead to the healing of athletes' narcissistic wounds. These incomplete mental preparation techniques hardly aim at a psychological reversal of suffering, beyond the fact that many athletes live threatening and frustrating lives. They do not aim to overcome the mental suffering mediated by a desperate social experience. They pursue the same fundamental objectives as goal-setting mechanisms, which cannot lead to any improvement in the state of flow when the athlete lacks cognitive resources.

Such models, initiated by the Anglo-Saxons, are a very pronounced source of inspiration in the sports training of advanced countries and, less in force in countries with low-performance sports training, in the image of the Congolese reality. Following the expenditure of physiological energy and muscular exhaustion, the musculoskeletal system of some gymnasts is exposed to physical pain (Wan *et al.*, 2017; Tornero-Aguilera, 2022). However, before any practical test and outside all training and competition sessions, other gymnasts subjectively testify to a feeling of non-physical pain assimilated to a malaise. They give the illusion of being exhausted athletes pathologically lacking in motivation, with the appearance of a drop in auditory (Tsiama *et al.*, 2021) and visual attention (Tsiama and Moukala, 2022). There is probably another form of pain that does not focus on the somatic dimension, one that is apprehended cognitively, perceptually, and emotionally (Berna & Desmeules, 2009; Grégoire *et al.*, 2010; Pageaux & Lepers, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2020). Such pain is a direct reflection of potentially explosive problems that a gymnast carries with him or her for a long time, which would be difficult to grasp but would cause significant psychological damage to the subject harboring them. In the literature, this configuration is referred to as psychogenic pain, mental pain, psychic pain, psychological difficulties, emotional pain, internal disturbance, emptiness, or psychache (Tyrer, 2006; Tossani, 2013; Lo Curto *et al.*, 2019).

### *1.2 Conception of Psychogenic Pain for Clinical Intervention*

Psychogenic or mental pain cannot be understood from an organic cause but from a psychiatric diagnosis. Since they are listed in the Mental Health Diagnostic Manual (DSM) with cognitive, behavioral, or affective-emotional components (Barlow & Durand, 2016). Otherwise, psychogenic pain is not related to tissue damage because of its assimilation into imaginary pain (Arnodo, 2021). Moreover, there is evidence that environmental and social factors affect pain exposure to psychic and social pain (Meints & Edwards, 2018; Nguyen & Mertens, 2021). This is why, in the sporting context, a clinical psychologist would in most cases be consulted when athletes are

facing a recurrence of psychic suffering. To ensure harmonious mind-body links for the gymnast, a clinical psychotherapeutic intervention appropriate to the social context should be considered to boost mental performance.

Basically, any psychotherapeutic intervention requires a clinical approach, which in turn opens with an anamnesis. This remains an essential part of the first interview, as it enables the psychologist to orientate himself towards a diagnosis and treatment (Salmi *et al.*, 2010). It provides the basic information needed to give meaning, history, and explanation to the patient's verbal complaint. During a history-taking session, the clinician gives priority to the substantial facts reported and escorted by the patient, with all his or her determination to respond to requests made by the latter, about difficulties that concern him or her directly. In his practice, the clinician needs to be able to address the complex situations that have punctuated the patient's history, and he is often tempted to be able to delve into the origins of the psychic disorders (Roussillon, 2016). Indeed, a wave of psychic disorders has a greater impact on young gymnasts with complaints of sadness, in view of the frustrations they experience in the sporting landscape. These frustrations emerge from the trials and tribulations of life, where social problems arise, which belong to the realm of icy human relations in the most widespread estimation. In the club, the status of social problem refers to the question of weak relations between athletes experiencing psychological difficulties and those who hold the power to implement social policies to alleviate the needs of gymnasts. Or those in charge of translating these policies into the alleviation of psychological pain through rewarding actions in favor of young gymnasts. The coach's observation of such a perspective could reinforce the team's dynamism with a degree of collaboration and satisfaction of all gymnasts to evolve together (Cox, 2013), which would decrease sensitivity to potentially frustrating information.

### *1.3 Emotional Pain Due to Lack of Athlete Support Strategies*

Furthermore, the development of an athlete's talent succeeds thanks to the coach's advice and instructions (Cushion, 2007). This involves a complex, interdependent process that takes place mainly during training and competition. Indeed, the way in which coaches and athletes interact can have a profound impact on the athlete's success (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). But, in the absence of strategies to support injured or tired Congolese gymnasts, no one is aware of the emergence of a range of problems that are becoming the fate of their destiny. These problems form the thread of their psychological imbalance and social dissatisfaction, to the point where the youngsters are seriously gnawed by a strong dyscrasia. This inevitability comes as no surprise, given their cyclical mobility from the oldest to the most recent generations in the various national gymnastics leagues. Despite the talent they display on the sporting field, gymnasts are virtually abandoned the fate of their destiny uncertain. In contrast to previous decades, it would appear that this situation is now much more serious than in the past, with recurrent underperformance in various competitions, both at home and abroad, for all clubs.

The aim here is to examine the content of the complaints and sources of psychogenic pain expressed by the gymnasts of the Congolese championship, as well as the psychopathological effects on their mental state. Although these gymnasts sporadically achieve appreciable scores at certain sporting events, it's true that the psychic reality of each competitor is highly deceptive. The choice of this aspect obliges us to overlook sporting representations that are based on elements of socialization that can account for the constitution of an unacknowledged feeling of psychic suffering. This can be done either through projective identification based on non-verbal communication between the gymnast and the psychologist or in the pathological form of penetrating the gymnast and helping him or her to rid themselves of disturbing mental content (Roussillon, 2018). In this respect, we recommend that athletes take part in neuropsychological assessments so that they can gain mental ascendancy over the opponent. Next, an anamnesis would be imperative before anything else. Most risk situations can be detected by means of a medical history since it contains specific information relating to the sporting activity in question (Corr à & Giannuzzi, 2006).

### *1.4 The Need for Anamnesis in the Face of Emotional Distress*

A gymnast is characterized by the specific physical and aesthetic qualities to be exercised on a regular basis (Bernard *et al.*, 2002), systematically in training, with a commitment to the various competitions through a club. The latter is committed to achieving records and surpassing oneself, through a high-intensity training load that invariably places him/her under intense physical and psychological stress, with often dangerous consequences. For this reason, however, it would be useful to carry out a detailed general anamnesis (Alexescu *et al.*, 2014). For gymnasts as a whole, the anamnesis can be seen as a strategic pre-selection assessment pending intervention in a team rich in social diversity. The psycho-medical approach deserves special attention to prevent irreparable damage. In this context, a correct history and physical examination are essential. It's worth noting that medical history can contribute to the correct interpretation of toxic psychological aspects. These aspects show that

athletes practicing the same sporting discipline have different somatic and psychological characteristics. Within a group, there are variations that depend on the sporting option and also on the characteristics of each individual. It should be noted that the variations that produce psychopathological disorders in gymnasts must be considered socially agonistic and without a positive expectation of mental health. Thus, data from the socially targeted anamnesis would be essential for a psychopathological assessment. In this sense, they can help to stratify athletes when implementing mental preparation projects and be able to plan adequate psychotherapy with the aim of treating emotional injuries.

### *1.5 Mental Vulnerability Tending Towards Emotional Injury*

Achieving sporting victories, glory, and fortune from the point of view of one's club and neutral individuals, however that may be achieved, is laudable. However, expressing one's emotions and moods as an athlete, and moving in the direction of seeking psychological momentum, is no mean feat (Décamps, 2012). Particularly at the start of their careers, enough athletes don't have a firm grasp of the real needs that serve to optimize their sporting performance. And, when they are unaware of the social conditions to be demanded at all costs, from the moment one ceases to be dependent on one's parents, is often fraught with consequences. This sad reality is very much in evidence among many Congolese gymnasts, who dare not speak out for fear of not being selected or of having all the advantages associated with their rank undermined. By behaving in this way, gymnasts pave the way for a personal condition likely to lead to frustration to become a major emotional wound, with all the consequences associated with anxious and depressive vulnerability. Yet nothing can hold them back against the self-sacrifice and perseverance they demonstrate, despite the indifference of the club's administrative authorities.

### *1.6 Lack of Psychological Resources in the Club*

Many authors believe that the use of mental models for successful mental preparation is essential to observe a state of flow with athletes (Target, 2016). This practice certainly involves the ultimate importance of coach-trained communication. However, the majority of Congolese coaches refuse to listen to an athlete with whom they simply have a conflictual relationship, at the cost of blame and angry words (Tsiamia *et al.*, 2019). Perhaps we should be asking ourselves whether the latter have received consistent psychological baggage during their coaching training. One cause would certainly be that coaches and other sports players live with an absence of empathy, neither cognitive nor emotional. Cognitive empathy involves the ability to accurately engage in perspective-taking, while emotional empathy is the ability to feel compassion toward others. Emphasizing empathy would enable all gymnastics coaches to feel and react to an athlete's pain, fatigue, and emotional distress without any verbal communication (Behm & Carter, 2021). According to the findings of recent studies carried out among Congolese athletes, there is a worrying attitude whereby athletes do not dare to express themselves openly and do not accept to confide in their coaches by virtue of negative feedback. In an attempt to conceal their inner pain, they opt for superstitious practices (Tsiamia & Bakembo, 2022) or simply drink large quantities of alcohol (Tsiamia *et al.*, 2021; Tsiamia & Moukala, 2022).

### *1.7 Scope of This Study*

Recent studies, quoted above, describe the mechanisms of the onset of major psychogenic pain in athletes, which expresses itself due to the potential cognitive effects of harmful situations. And they report on the avenues to be explored, notably psychological interventions, in an attempt to alleviate almost all emotional suffering. Since the problem at the heart of this research raises complaints about. This is a daily reality, suggesting that athletes are desperate to work with a professional who can deal with the stress, anxiety, and depression they are struggling to sublimate. The aim was to demonstrate the reasons why gymnasts would be skeptical about collaborating with a coach and to identify the mental preparation strategies by which they achieve glory. We hypothesized that, apart from their frustrations, athlete's social lives are plagued by thorny social problems of an intimate nature, which they are unwilling to confide in someone who has no psychologist's profile.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Participants*

The sample for the present study consisted of 25 Congolese championship gymnasts aged between eighteen and twenty-three years (Mage = 17.42; SD = 0.56). Of these athletes, 11 were professionals and 14 were amateurs, attending a public high school or a higher institute for sports professions (16 girls and 09 boys). All participants took part voluntarily at the Maxime Matsima gymnasium, located in arrondissement 1 "Makébé", Brazzaville, in the presence of a federal coach and a researcher. Thirteen (13) girls who had experienced frustration during their sporting careers took part in the study. The girls were aged between 18 and 20 at the time of the incident. Overall, ten (10) girls in this study identified themselves as fatherless, and four (06) as having an

unemployed father. And seven (07) boys came from single-parent families, while two (02) others were estranged from their parents for various reasons. In addition, 24 participants in this study had experienced emotional distress linked to a social problem of their parents (late payment of rent, suspension of food supplies, travel difficulties, unpaid prescriptions).

## 2.2 Psychological Investigations

### 2.2.1 Neurocognitive Testing

We chose to use the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) as a test of overall cognitive functioning. The cognitive function of all athletes in the present research was assessed using the French MMSE, adapted from the original English MMSE (Folstein, 1975). This test helps to systematically screen for the presence of psychogenic amnesia. Amnesia is a disorder that primarily affects cognitive abilities, particularly MLT and MDT. The MMSE covers a range of cognitive functions, including orientation, attention concentration, memory, language, and construction ability. The MMSE scale ranges from 0 to 30, with higher scores indicating better cognitive function. The maximum score is 30. A score below 24 indicates cognitive impairment (Su, 2021; O'Donnell, 2012). Administration of the MMSE requires just 5-10 minutes and can be applied as early as age 4, extending to integration into routine neurological examination in children (Ouvrier *et al.*, 1993) and adolescents (Savvidou *et al.*, 2016).

### 2.2.2 POMS Scale

In sports psychology, research into emotional states is based on the use of the POMS, a self-assessment tool for mood and affective states. The positive well-being of athletes was measured using the Profile of Mood States (POMS) translated by Cayrou and al, (2003), the original version being by McNair and al., (1971). The POMS offers sixty-five adjectives for which the subject must quantify the intensity of his or her feelings over the past week on a 5-point scale ranging from not at all (0) to extremely (4). It assesses eight (8) dimensions including several items: anxiety, anger, confusion, depression, fatigue, stamina, and interpersonal relations. The overall mood score was not calculated in this study. Each scale is measured using 5 to 8 items on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The sum of Likert-type scores was used as the outcome variable in the statistical analysis; the higher the scores, the better the mood.

### 2.2.3 Problem-solving Activity

We designed a cognitive activity inspired by a Gestalt view of problem-solving (Lemaire, 2006), with modifications. It consisted in asking the gymnasts to choose, by marking a cross on two of 20 sentences written on an A4 sheet. This choice reflected the ability to solve a problem in the event of an unusual event in the life of the club, such as "receiving funding from all national companies". All participants were given 20 minutes to concentrate and submit their proposals anonymously. For 5 minutes during the process, professional gymnasts received pleasant information, while amateurs received unpleasant information. No gymnast was informed in advance about the emotional injunctions. Participants' mental fluency was analyzed by category of sentences chosen according to emotional valence (Table 2).

## 2.3 Procedure

Gathered in a gymnasium room, participants first completed a form providing socio-demographic data. Following instructions, volunteers were informed of the scope of the task they were accepting. We then collected impressions from each respondent, encouraging them to limit themselves to the allotted time. Once the MMSE had quantitatively assessed the subject's cognitive performance, they were then invited to manipulate the POMS to provide us with a profile of their moods. Then, participants were instructed to solve an unusual problem by choice of the existing one. As soon as they were busy reading preconceived sentences on A4 paper, for which a cross indicated the choice, the principal investigator immediately started a stopwatch. Thus, at the fifth minute, it was necessary to introduce emotional interference (truncated information) which could stimulate or inhibit the participants' cognitive resources. However, the questionnaire was resubmitted every 5 minutes until the time limit was reached.

## 2.4 Statistical Analysis

The data collected was processed in the form of descriptive statistics, summarizing the numerical scores as mean and standard deviation. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS for Windows (version 12.0). Values of  $p < .05$  were considered statistically significant. Student's t-test was used to explore intergroup significance on all dependent variables (MMSE, POMS, word recognition). In addition, analyses were conducted to detect the effects of lexical constraints in relation to subjects' moods.

### 3. Results

Table 1. POMS emotional symptom score between professionals and amateurs

Emotional symptoms	Professional gymnasts (n=11)			Amateur gymnasts (n=14)			Significativities	
	Min.	Max.	M±SD	Min.	Max.	M±SD	t	P
ANX	08	23	14.55±2.87	08	28	20.01±2.1	-2.45	< .05
ANG	04	25	12.91±3.19	07	24	15.21±2.34	-0.96	N.S
CONF	06	21	11.18±1.93	11	28	21.79±1.52	-5.71	< .05
DEP	20	52	35.64±6.74	05	31	15.5±5.29	5.81	< .05
FAT	04	15	7.82±2.23	07	24	13.29±1.75	-2.74	< .05
VIG	05	14	7.73±2.15	08	24	14.21±1.69	-3.31	< .05
INT	04	24	8.82±4.22	06	27	17.36±3.32	-3.11	< .05

ANX: Anxiety-tension; ANG: Anger-hostility; CONF: Confusion-perplexité DEP: Depression – discouragement; FAT: Fatigue- inertia; VIG: Vigor-activity; INT: Interpersonal relationships.

Anxiety-tension levels showed significant differences before the problem-solving activity between professionals and amateurs [ $t(23) = -2.45, p = .1105$ ]. In contrast, anger-hostility scores showed no significant differences between professional and amateur gymnasts [ $t(23) = -0.83, p = .207$ ]. Although these are the unpleasant, dysfunctional emotions displayed by the symptoms expressed through the gymnasts' anger and hostility, in Table 1, the scores are much less intense between the two groups even though those of the amateurs appear low. On average, the study participants showed a significant increase in confusion-perplexity in favor of amateur gymnasts, and this was before the start of the cognitive activity tending to check mental problem-solving strategies [ $t(23) = -5.71, p < .00001$ ]. Similarly, a significant increase was noted for depression-discouragement prior to problem-solving in professional gymnasts whose scores showed significant differences between the two groups [ $t(23) = 5.81, p < .00001$ ].

Moreover, the intensity of fatigue-inertia was not as high in professional gymnasts compared to amateurs. But, it differed significantly before mental activity between the two groups ( $t(23) = -2.74, p = .006$ ). The finding was repeated in favor of the professionals with regard to the stamina-activity score which also showed significant differences between the two groups, as became evident by an interaction of time per group [ $t(23) = -3.31, p = .001$ ]. Interpersonal relationship scores were lowest among professional gymnasts compared to amateur gymnasts. But, the means between participants were significantly different [ $t(23) = -3.11, p = .002$ ].

Table 2. Problem-solving as a function of concentration time and participants' emotional valence.

Concentration time (in minutes)	Phrases provided by Professional gymnasts		Phrases provided by Amateur Gymnasts	
	(n=11)	%	(n=14)	%
Less than 5	Increase premium	81.82	Moving around	64.28
	Worrying about the meal	63.64	Support without discrimination	85.71
	Fulfilling every need	90.09	Honouring the bonus	71.43
From 5 to 10	Good news		Bad news	
From 10 to 15	Buying a bus	27.72	Paying the rent	64.28
	Making everyone travel	54.54	Worrying about the meal	42.85
	Offering internships	63.64		
From 15 to 20	Support without discrimination	90.09	Hiring a fetishist	85.71

Hiring a dietician	27.27	Buy trimmings	64.28
Recruiting a fetishist	72.73	Recruiting a medium	78.57
Encouraging the athlete	90.09	Recruiting a psychologist	57.14
Assisting the bereaved athlete	81.82	Ensuring care	78.57
Recruitment of a psychologist	63.64	Hiring a traditherapist	71.43
Recruiting a physical trainer	27.72	Filling needs	92.85
		Recruiting a doctor	35.71

There is a large percentage (90.09%) in the professional gymnast group who would like leaders to first "fulfill all athletes' needs", "support athletes without discrimination" and "encourage every athlete after an effort on the field". While age in the student group is at its highest percentage (58%) at 24. In terms of place of residence, there was also a statistically significant difference between the groups, with the majority (75%) of active athletes living in the city, while this percentage was lower in the student group (52%). There was a large statistically significant difference in the frequency of exercise, where in the active athlete group, the highest percentage (100%) said they exercise often (almost every day), whereas in the student group, this percentage was significantly lower (20%). There was also a statistically significant difference in smoking between the groups, where a small percentage of respondents in the active athlete group (7%) answered positively, while in the student group, this percentage was significantly higher (42%) (Table 1).

#### 4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to analyze the emotional effects associated with the absence of psychological support and follow-up in high-performance Congolese athletes, with regard to social difficulties as a source of psychological suffering. Given that no participant was accused of cognitive impairment, all information provided by participants was accepted. So, in an attempt to find a convergence of all the information, we grouped together the items that came closest to each other, and that could lead to the same predictions. This led us to consider the combination of phonologically similar statements in order to understand their meaning. Our analyses thus opened up the possibility of considering the word recognition and syntactic comprehension of respondents. The approach made it possible to conceive that several effects of lexical characteristics are implemented to solve a problem. Finally, the results showed the mobilization of mental recombination strategies through problem hypotheses, which seemed more active after emotional induction. It is possible to believe that successful ideas would be better generated when subjects are under emotional shock. On the whole, we found considerable inter-individual variability in thinking between respondents who were surprised by the onset of pleasant or unpleasant emotions at the time of solution-finding, and those who could not believe it was possible. However, the gymnasts recognized that a problem existed, but not all exploited the data in the same way. Within the first five minutes, some had already come up with constructive ideas, while others had made futile attempts to solve the problem. Of course, no respondent came up with a magic solution, but it is possible to find hints of productive thinking after a negative emotion of varying duration. However, these negative emotions had a significant impact on the amateur gymnasts' ability to tap deeper into their intuition. Giving the impression that intuition performs better when the mind is less disturbed.

This shows that athletes are worried and emotionally destabilized. This evidence was used to test the inductive reasoning that governed the representations of gymnasts frustrated by the lack of support or empathy from club officials. Basically, the announcement of bad news stimulated emotions that could have a facilitating effect on word recognition. We find the reason for this effect again, for example, when athletes suggest recruiting a fetishist. This compelling need to consult a fetishist or a marabout should raise the awareness of sports managers to be more concerned with the worries of athletes' social lives. Respondents are then confused by the coverage of emotional distress, which is said to be the consequence of the intensity of the gymnasts' social distress. The latter is expressed by a strong flame of sadness, which clearly reflects the subjective suffering experienced by athletes on a daily basis. Indeed, the high frequency with which certain phrases were chosen led us to speculate that what interests them is having a fulfilling social life. The most important of all their intentions is that they are passionate about pushing back psychological pain by stimulating positive emotions as a result of improving club conditions with corporate funding.

Reading the above, we can see that the emotional mentalization of the two groups is similar. It would seem that the respondents are sufficiently coherent to mentalize better since no one is cognitively pathological (MMSE

>24). We sought to understand why gymnasts frequently used phrases that called for multidimensional assistance - a question that fitted in with the study's problem. First of all, the subjects recognized that a problem exists in itself, in the sense that there is a difference between the current state of the social situation and the desired state. This concern covered both situations emanating from the sporting environment (lack of provision of social support by the club, resolving a conflict with the coach) and more everyday, personal situations (coping with health, rent, or studies).

The results show that the cognitive activity consisted of eliciting emotional processes in the form of worries about problems related to the respondent's quality of life, but which not everyone perceives. This was also followed by the search for strategies as the product of an individual predisposition to solve social problems. In this approach, worrying about one's social difficulties was part of a natural help-seeking strategy. Indeed, participants were invited to produce mental efforts to imagine a preferred problem-solving strategy, even in the absence of any belief that a solution existed. These problem-solving efforts were inevitably based on strategies aimed at reducing psychological pain through judicious use of available resources. Except that social situations unresolved by lack of clinical listening demonstrate the absence of empathy among sports players. Indeed, gymnastics trainers are the rare professionals who try to defend the verbal complaints voiced by athletes with an optimistic and not very naïve view, proposing few avenues to satisfy their basic needs (Wekesser *et al.*, 2021). However, they have no ambition to value what an overwhelmed young gymnast says, and, find no viable proposition about their emotional distress. What matters is whether the athlete, despite his or her complaints, shows himself or herself to be physically up to scratch, and can make it to the next competition at the cost of his or her physical qualities. One wonders whether coaches are trained in the clinical listening skills that would enable them to focus on the systemic meaning of what is said or not said. It's at this point that the need for attentive listening, or the urgency of having a clinical psychologist at the service of athletes, comes to the fore. The value of a clinician is presumed because he or she has the ability to appropriate the psychic reality of others.

Faced with the horrors of social life that some gymnasts try to conceal, others manage to consent to telling someone close to them. In so doing, the young gymnast believes he or she is confiding in someone to alleviate the pain and self-destructive feelings. Such a commitment is seen as a positive tendency to share one's sadness and fears with a loved one, who unfortunately is not the right person for a psychological difficulty. Indeed, the need to unburden oneself of one's paralyzing tendencies could motivate the gymnast to progress toward the search for existential therapy. And this can only happen if the therapist is convinced that the athlete accepts himself while acknowledging the real existence of these tendencies within himself. However, in terms of the sports psychology literature, psychogenic pain seems to be the least studied of all psychopathological issues. While it has been shown that the sporting population would present depressive symptoms, with a non-negligible percentage vulnerable to anxiety disorders (Amorosi, 2014; Lange *et al.*, 2023).

Under the social conditions of the present study's context, we have no doubt that athletes would have an average degree of mental self-destruction through their obsession with dark forces. This is only to the extent that athletes are not endowed with the signals that would enable them to modify their limiting beliefs, which would in turn enable the development of mental power. And, to help them overcome the obstacles contained in the bundle of frustrations, phobias, confusions, worries, and anxiety disorders. Since, on the basis of verbal complaints, we discover antisocial behavior at the pole of managers whose bonuses for taking part in competitions, even the best-negotiated ones, are not paid out to sportsmen and women with dignity or fairness, that fans rebel against the lambda public authority. An obsessed fan knows that the selected player has the talent to satisfy the public. But why so much effort and patience without reward? In our view, these trends coincide with the conclusions of several previous studies. Notably, those conducted by Hotopf *et al.* (1999) and Raphael *et al.* (2001), whose findings stipulate that non-organic pain has its psychogenic basis in a previously experienced psychological trauma. We feel cognitively empty that Congolese athletes cannot, taken individually, compose a mental code on the field to try to act optimally in the face of an improbable situation.

## 5. Conclusion

Finally, wouldn't a clinician in psychological intervention suspect a pathological personality in the bosom of Congolese sport? But on which side should the diagnosis begin? Between those with broken hearts, dashed hopes, and empty wallets and, those devoid of conscience and empathy, who selfishly appropriate what they want and do what they please, violating social norms and expectations without a shred of guilt or regret (Barlow and Durand, 2016)? Thus, the aim of this study is to inspire clinical work.

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