

1 **ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS OF SPORT IN DECENTRALIZED**
2 **COMMUNITIES: CASE OF FOOTBALL IN THE CITY OF DJOUGOU.**

3
4 **ABSTRACT**

5 This article examines the organization of football in decentralized communities in
6 Djougou. It analyzes how decentralization has altered football governance, the roles of
7 different stakeholders (communities, leagues, clubs), and the impact of these changes on the
8 development of the sport, access to participation, and the performance of local clubs. The
9 study employs a mixed-methods approach combining document analysis, interviews with key
10 stakeholders, and statistical data to assess the effectiveness of local sports policies.

11 **Keywords:** Football, Decentralization, Decentralized Communities, Sports Policies, Sports
12 Organization, Governance

13 **INTRODUCTION**

14 Sport is a set of codified, regulated, and institutionalized physical exercises presented
15 in the form of individual or team games. It occupies a prominent place in human life. Clément
16 (1994) defines sport as "the set of specific forms of regulated and institutionalized physical
17 activity from which national and international sporting movements are organized; it can be
18 assumed that it appeared and evolved in parallel with the industrialization process that began
19 at the end of the 18th century in England." Later, the author also analyzes the origin of sport
20 as follows: "Modern sport can be considered the actualization, in an unprecedented economic
21 and political context, of a permanent and common element in all human societies, whether
22 rather archaic or rather complex: creating more or less formalized practices designed to
23 reinforce the values and representations of each of these societies or groups that compose
24 them." It thus concerns a majority of the population, and especially young people. Therefore,
25 among the many purposes of sport, those that interest us are educational, competitive,
26 recreational, and health/fitness purposes. Thus, sport can be defined as the set of physical and
27 sporting activities (Bonnenfant, 2008).

28 In Benin in general, and in the city of Djougou in particular, numerous sporting
29 events, especially football, take place without the active participation of the legally
30 responsible stakeholders. These events sometimes attract a significant audience, which, given
31 the number of years and the growing size of the community, cannot be ignored. Despite the
32 relatively favorable institutional environment in Djougou for sports in general, and football in
33 particular, the sport remains underdeveloped in terms of the conditions under which it is
34 practiced. Are local authorities truly involved in the organization, promotion, and
35 development of sports within their municipalities? Our study aims to measure the impact of
36 the functioning of decentralized local authorities on the practice of football in the city of
37 Djougou.

38
39 **METHODOLOGY**

40 To achieve concrete results, a sound methodological study requires the implementation
41 of several tools to ensure the research's effectiveness. Therefore, for this study, we conducted
42 quantitative research (a questionnaire survey). Our study included several categories of
43 subjects, among them football participants (referees, club and tournament players) and
44 municipal officials. We used a non-randomized voluntary sampling method.

45 Table 1 : Distribution of subjects according to their numbers

Subject categories	Numbers
Participants (Club or tournament players, referees, organizers)	47
Municipal authorities	03
Total	50

46

47 RESULTS

48 The results of our investigations showed that the level of football participation is
49 unsatisfactory both nationally and within the city of Djougou. Furthermore, according to the
50 vast majority of respondents, the State is the most competent institution regarding the
51 construction of sports infrastructure in general, and for football in particular. However, it is
52 local authorities that should organize sports in their communities in order to promote and
53 develop the sport. It should also be noted that, firstly, the respondents stated that the
54 infrastructure is inadequate in both quantity and quality in Djougou, but they acknowledge the
55 existence of football competitions. For these competitions, several factors were observed to
56 indicate that their organization does not require the approval of sports institutions, but only
57 that of a few local elected officials.

58 DISCUSSION

59 The city of Djougou has a large number of sports enthusiasts in general, and football
60 enthusiasts in particular. These athletes benefit from a specific status: regular coaching,
61 training, and competitions, and they are generally in good physical condition and excellent
62 health. However, although the level of participation is relatively high, the overall level of
63 sports in the city is not satisfactory. This situation stems from a lack of quality sports
64 infrastructure and equipment that could facilitate participation. This confirms the findings of
65 Hountondji (2014) and Dagniho (2016), who explained that the absence of competitive sports
66 has led to a proliferation of private initiatives, especially street football. As regards the
67 sporting situation, it is equivalent on the one hand to the result of the given sporting level, and
68 on the other hand to the basis on which the sporting policy must be based to improve the
69 sporting level (corresponding to two series of realities) by implementing the development
70 factors: The first series of realities includes the purely sporting elements, namely human
71 resources, that is to say the officials in charge of the management and promotion of sport and
72 football in the municipality.

73 Furthermore, Fassinou (2018) stated that activities are also sluggish between state and
74 decentralized local institutions, and the few attempts at revitalization have resulted in each
75 entity's inability to fulfill the fundamentals of its prerogatives, leading to a cold war.

76 The second set of realities encompasses financial and material elements (facilities,
77 equipment, and sports gear). Table IV reveals that the municipality of Djougou has sports
78 facilities, including those built by the state, as well as sites for recreational sports.

79 However, the sports facilities are not, in themselves, suitable for sports practice. The
80 municipality does not have sufficient sports facilities to meet the population's sporting needs,
81 despite the existence of two stadiums.

82 Because of this situation, the population uses some public spaces unsuitable for sports,
83 which also explains why young people practice certain disciplines in the streets. Yet, sports
84 infrastructure and equipment play a crucial role in promoting sports participation. This brings
85 us back to the ideas developed by Pociello (1981), when he asserts that the construction of
86 sports infrastructure and facilities promotes increased participation in sports. The question is
87 whether decentralized sports facilities contribute to this effect.

88 Indeed, the analysis of Table III reveals that competitions are organized in the city of
89 Djougou. Several factors were observed in these competitions, indicating that their
90 organization does not require the approval of decentralized sports institutions, but rather that
91 of a few local elected officials, sometimes for political purposes. It is therefore clear that these
92 sports structures have a limited impact on the practice of football in Djougou.

93 From all the analyses, investment in sports is significantly low. Those responsible for
94 sports are not fulfilling their legal obligations because they lack a sound policy focused on
95 sports development. However, to promote and develop sports, it is necessary to implement
96 development factors. When these factors are combined into a program, they allow for the
97 development of various aspects of the sporting situation and thus improve the existing level of
98 sport. Gouda (1986) best explains these development factors by summarizing them in four
99 fundamental points: sports policy focused on developing the sporting community, the
100 provision of financial resources, the quality of staff responsible for coaching, supervising, and
101 training athletes, and the quality and quantity of sports facilities and equipment.

102 In the case of our study, the stakeholders involved in sports management in the
103 municipality of Djougou do not operate within this framework. All these elements confirm
104 our initial hypothesis, which states that the lack of involvement of decentralized structures in
105 sports management is the root cause of the low level of football participation in the city of
106 Djougou.

107 **CONCLUSION**

108 This article focused on the organization of sport by decentralized structures in the
109 municipality of Djougou. The objective of our study was to analyze the involvement of the
110 local administration in the management of football in the city of Djougou. To achieve this
111 goal, we hypothesized that the local administration is minimally involved in the organization
112 of football. To this end, we adopted a methodology that led us to administer a questionnaire to
113 various stakeholders involved in sports within the municipality.

114 At the conclusion of our research, football in the city of Djougou reflects the state of
115 the sport nationally, characterized by a lack of competitions and insufficient infrastructure or
116 sports facilities, both in terms of quality and quantity, to facilitate participation. All these
117 factors also contribute to the poor performance of national football teams at the continental
118 and even international levels. The strategies implemented are often indexed. In the case of our
119 study, we can therefore better understand the low level of involvement of local authorities or
120 decentralized structures in the organization of sport, the absence of a real sports policy in the
121 Djougou region, and specifically for a very popular sport like football. This study also
122 informs us about a crucial aspect: the decentralization process.

123 Indeed, with decentralization, all municipalities have managed to implement planning
124 tools such as the municipal development plan, which includes the municipal master plan for
125 development, allowing for the allocation of spaces for sports facilities and developed sites.
126 Despite the investments made by some municipalities, such as Djougou, in the construction of
127 sports facilities, a critical shortage persists; the existing facilities are unsuitable for the sports
128 activities of the participants. This mismatch between the supply of sports facilities and the
129 various demands stems from several combined causes:

130 A slow transfer of responsibilities regarding financial resources;

131 An incomplete transfer of skills and the failure to transfer the necessary resources in
132 the area of sports and leisure activities, as stipulated in Article 100 of Law No. 97-029 of
133 January 15, 1999, concerning the organization of municipalities in the Republic of Benin;

- 134 • weak socioeconomic development in the municipalities;
- 135 • a lack of independent financial resources at the municipal level.

136 However, a glimmer of hope remains thanks to the new momentum and vision of the
137 current leaders, who foresee a brighter future for football throughout Benin in general, and in
138 the municipality of Djougou in particular.

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141 **Compliance with ethical standards**

142 *Acknowledgments*

143 The authors are deeply grateful to all respondents who participated in this study.

144 *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

145 All the authors acknowledge that there is no conflict of interest. They all agree with what is
146 written in this article. In accordance with the requirements of transparency and scientific
147 integrity, we, the authors of this study, declare that we have no conflict of interest, whether
148 financial, commercial or otherwise, that could influence the results or interpretations of our
149 research on initiation rites in Benin, thus guaranteeing the independence and objectivity of
150 our work and ensuring the credibility of our conclusions

151 **Funding**

152 This research received no financial support.

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