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### **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

#### **FUNDING AND PERFORMANCE OF HIGH-LEVEL INDIVIDUAL SPORT IN BENIN**

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#### **Abstract**

This research work entitled "Financing of high performance individual sport in Benin" aims to analyze on the one hand, the effects of insufficient funding of high performance athletes in Benin on the development of individual sport and support of their elites and, on the other hand, the type of funding that would be best suited to this situation in Benin. It focuses on three sources of funding for sport: public funding, self-funding and other sources of funding. The results of the study show that, on the one hand, the insufficiency of the budgets allocated to high-performance individual sports constitutes in part an obstacle to the development of this type of sport, and on the other hand, that public funding does not favor not the improvement of the performance of high performance individual athletes, compared to other sources of sport funding.

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#### **Introduction:-**

Sport occupies a prominent place in the social, cultural and economic life of all countries of the world. It is an activity in its own right, which employs millions of people and contributes to the economic development of countries, thanks to the externalities of international sports events, such as the World or Continental Cups, the Olympic Games, etc. For professional athletes in the sports sector, it is an activity that allows its practitioners to support themselves and improve their living conditions. In Benin, like everywhere and elsewhere, sporting events are important occasions for entertainment, far from political debates and work stress. They bring together professionals, amateurs and spectators, united around a common objective: to develop performance sport.

In French-speaking countries, and more specifically in Benin, the current administration of sport depends mainly on the supervision of the Ministry of Sport and the National Olympic Committees (Bouchet and Kaach, 2004). The transposition of a "westernized" performance-oriented sports model is not suited to the economic, cultural and social characteristics of developing countries. This orientation led to the establishment of structures but empty of means which do not allow the development of the sport as a whole (Chifflet and Gouda, 1992). However, in the quest for better performance by top athletes, the Beninese State has invested relatively large financial resources. According to Gouda and Kpazaï (2012), Benin's participation in the Junior African Cup of Nations (CAN) and the Junior World Cup cost 8 billion CFA francs. The construction of the Kouhounou Friendship stadium cost 17 billion in 1982 and

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that of the Charles de Gaulle Stadium, more than 15 billion CFA francs before its delivery and its opening to the Beninese public. Similarly, the budget allocated to the Ministry in charge of Sport in Benin is clearly increasing. From 2013 to 2018, the budget forecasts of this Ministry increased from 5,084,679,000 to 18,864,361,000 (confer general state budget), representing a growth rate of 271%. These various statistics show the importance which the Beninese state attaches to the practice of high performance sport. However, this effort is more geared towards team sports than individual ones and the expected results are never or rarely achieved. This also does not allow sports practitioners (individual sports professionals) to fully benefit from the advantages of their profession and supporters to be satisfied with their leisure but also the State to make profitable its sports investments. Benin has participated in several Olympic Games, African, World and sub-regional championships, but has never regularly raised its colors to the forefront after these competitions. Similarly, a good number of sports federations and individual sports clubs in Benin cannot present athletes today in all age categories, and in all the specifics of their disciplines. For Hounkpè (2008), the insufficiency of the results obtained is explained either by economic causes, or by the responsibility of the State which arrogates itself by a restrictive legislation, the monopoly of the organization of sport, without putting in place a coherent policy of funding, supervision and construction of infrastructures integrated into a national sports policy. Faced with this multitude of factors that can influence the performance level of the top individual athlete, what about the lack of funding? In other words, what is the influence of funding on the development of high performance individual sport in Benin? The inadequacy of the budgets allocated to high-level individual sport is an obstacle to the development of this type of sport in Benin.

The foundations of achieving any sports performance oblige sports actors to seek other transversal sources of funding (Abalot et al., 2017). Thus, the second question raised by this study is to know if the various modes of financing sport (self-financing, public financing and other financing) favor or not individual high-level athletes in Benin? The main objective of this research was to identify the different methods of funding high-level individual athletes and to show that this funding, whatever its methods, is insufficient and does not promote the development of high-level individual sport in Benin.

### **Methodology:-**

We are interested in the financing of high level individual sport in Benin, our mother population is therefore all the sportsmen practicing high level individual sports and who constitute the sporting elite of Benin. The mother population is therefore made up of all Beninese athletes practicing individual sports, still in exercise at the time of the study and having won at least one medal (gold, silver or bronze) in an international competition.

To obtain statistics on these sportsmen, we approached the Beninese National Olympic and Sports Committee (BNOSC) and the Elite Sports Department (ESD) of the Ministry of Sports (MS) which hold data on all of the Beninese professional sportsmen. As of the date of the study, the workforce of this mother population was 760 sportsmen and women, all disciplines combined. The study sample was drawn from this pool of athletes. It is made up of 100 athletes practicing an individual sport, which corresponds to a rate of 13.16% of the total of professional athletes.

In order to extrapolate the results of this research to all professional athletes practicing an individual sport, we have used existing data on these professionals. As we have information on all of the athletes involved in this research, we assign each of them a number (serial number). The 100 athletes who make up our sample are selected by means of a simple random draw without replacement, using a table of random numbers. In our case, this probability is equal to 100/760.

The information collected during the survey is processed with the Stata 12 software. First, we perform a descriptive analysis of all the variables and information contained in the questionnaire using tables. Then, statistical indicators (average and cumulative workforce) are calculated to refine the analysis.

### **Results:-**

#### **Uneven distribution of public subsidies to athletes:**

The following table presents the distribution of athletes according to the rate of funding of sports expenses by state subsidy.

**Table 1:-** Distribution of sportspeople in the sample according to the rate of funding of sports expenses by State subsidy.

Percentage of state subsidy in total sports expenditure	Effective	Frequency	Cumulative workforce increasing
0	48	48%	48
] 0 ; 25% [	21	21%	69
[25 ; 50% [	21	21%	90
[50 ; 75% [	3	3%	93
[75 ; 100%]	7	7%	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Source:** survey data.

Analysis of table 1 shows that 48% of the sportspeople in the sample do not receive a State subsidy for their sports activities. This poses the problem of the accessibility of sportspeople to this financial support from the State, knowing that sports federations benefit from this subsidy, which has increased significantly over the years. Only 52% of athletes have access to a state subsidy in various forms. Among athletes who have access to public funding for sport, only 7% depend on this subsidy, which covers 75% to 100% of their sports expenses. For 21% of them, it covers only 0 to 50% of their expenses. This shows the difficulty of athletes to access public funding for sport. This situation may partly result from the insufficiency of the State subsidy granted to individual sports federations, notwithstanding the increasing effort made by the State over the years, and from the inaccessibility of athletes to the subsidy granted to sports federations. In addition, according to Akouété et al (2014), the few funds from local authorities are not attributed to high-level sport but rather to the animation of the sports life of the commune, most often for political purposes.

Starting from the perception of the challenge represented by the development of professional sport, the Beninese State has not spared any resources to support this sector. Subsidies to federations, the launch of activities in sports classes and the establishment of municipal sports associations, including the construction of municipal stadiums, the State is making great efforts to achieve its "sporting objectives" set out in the Government Action Plan (PAG). In two years (2017 and 2018), more than one billion CFA francs in subsidies have been allocated to sports federations other than that of football. All of these actions have started to bear fruit, as some Beninese athletes are now asserting themselves and occupying the top ranks in international competitions. This confirms the work of Akouété (2012) which reveals that the Beninese State allocates more financial means to performance or high level sport (especially football) to the detriment of health sport and for all.

However, despite the growth in the budget allocated to the sport sector, individual sports professionals lack the means to prepare for competitions. The state subsidy allocated to sports federations is used, generally by the leaders of these federations, to implement the annual work plan of the federation, which is why these subsidies do not go entirely to athletes. Thus, at the individual and institutional level, the criteria governing decision-making too often boil down to profitability concerns and reduce the notion of federal responsibility to a strictly legal dimension (Dembinski, 1998). Almost all of these federations are only waiting for state subsidies to keep their associative life going. Therefore, it is urgent that a "global management of the organization be set up through a set of policies for the production of goods and services, communication, marketing, human resources, financing policy, budgetary control" (Bayle, 2007). Likewise, "sport king" (football) claims the highest proportion of the state subsidy dedicated to sport. In addition to the state subsidy allocated to sports federations, football clubs each receive a subsidy from the state, unlike other sports. Thus, some individual sports professionals are left to their own devices, in terms of funding their preparation, which forces them to exercise parallel activities with a view to self-financing, or to seek funding from sponsors and other partners, almost non-existent in Benin. However, these sponsors do not only seek to make their brand visible on the sportsman's jersey and screens during television transmissions, they also aim to have their products or services used in the context (Bordes, 1992). It is also noted that the sports equipment necessary for the practice of individual sports is often expensive and is not within the reach of the purchasing power of athletes. According to Akouété and Haschar-Noé (2013), the State, but also the sports federations of collective sports, while maintaining a centralized sports organization, favor sports equipment intended for collective performance sports and national representation to the detriment of equipment for individual sports and for everyone.

There is thus a deficit in sports equipment and an inequality of their distribution according to the type of sport and the territory. Faced with this diversity of sport funding sources, we propose to identify which one has more influence on the performance of high performance individual athletes.

**Self-financing: a majority solution:**

Table 2 presents the distribution of athletes according to the rate of funding of their sports expenses by self-funding.

**Table n ° 2:-** Distribution of athletes in the sample according to the rate of funding of sports expenses by self-funding.

Self-financing rate	Effective	Frequency	Cumulative workforceincreasing
0	6	6%	6
] 0 ; 25% [	10	10%	16
[25 ; 50% [	9	9%	25
[50 ; 75% [	51	51%	76
[75 ; 100%]	24	24%	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Source:** survey data

Analysis of this table shows that only 6% of the athletes in the sample do not self-finance their expenses, while the majority (94%) use them. Similarly, self-financing occupies an important place (greater than 50% but less than 75%) in the sports expenditure of the majority of the athletes in the sample (51%). This shows the interest that these athletes take in their sport, to the point of investing their own resources.

**Proportion of the various sources of sport funding in the sample sports expenditure: case of other sources of sport funding:**

The following table presents the distribution of athletes according to the rate of funding of sports expenses by other sources of funding.

**Table n ° 3:-** Distribution of athletes in the sample according to the rate of funding of sports expenses by other sources of funding.

Percentage of other sources of funding in total sports expenditure	Effective	Frequency	Cumulative workforceincreasing
0	43	43%	43
] 0 ; 25% [	27	27%	70
[25 ; 50% [	24	24%	94
[50 ; 75% [	6	6%	100
[75 ; 100%]	0	0%	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Source:** survey data

The analysis in Table 3 shows that 43% of the athletes in the sample do not finance their sports activities from other sources of funding, and that no athlete in the sample uses most (from 75% to 100%) this source of funding for their sports expenses. This shows how difficult it is for athletes to access other sources of funding such as sponsorship, patronage, bank loans, donations from third parties, support from non-governmental organizations and supporters' associations. This situation may result from the low level of banking in Benin, the low importance attached by the population to individual sports, poverty and the absence of a law on the financing of sport.

From all of the above, we note that the various subsidies allocated to high performance individual athletes are insufficient and do not allow them to be able to finance the various activities likely to improve their performance. As a result, they are then forced to self-finance. What then are the probable causes of this financial insufficiency?

**Absence of legal, economic and political provisions governing the financing of sport in general:**

Benin has no legal framework for funding sport. In addition, national sports policy does not pay attention. Nor is there a key to distributing the subsidies granted to the various sports federations. According to Akouété (2012), the

sports equipment of certain individual sports such as athletics is annexed to football equipment and is more often poorly maintained or even impassable. Sometimes these equipments are nonexistent. The Beninese State has not built sports facilities or even sports equipment for individual sports. If we consider that the supply of sports equipment is decisive for the level and development of sport, this very insufficient public offer does not promote the development of all sports for the greatest number. Despite the absence of reliable quantitative data from the Ministry or federations on Beninese sportsmen and women, our results show that the growing demand for sports activities is proven, but it has little effect on construction and supply sports equipment (Akouété and Haschar-Noé, 2013). In Benin, for example, the idea that "the development of sports and the increase in demand for sports equipment are closely linked" (Rollan, 1993) has not been verified. The situation observed in Benin could be explained by demographic, socio-cultural, socio-economic data but also the value placed on the type of sports disciplines, individual or collective, and on sports policies carried out by the authorities. Benin's situation is undeniably very different in terms of the country's level of economic and social development, on the one hand, and the spread of sport in the population, on the other. Benin's sports policies therefore necessarily have specific features. In this vein, Lacassagne, Bouchet, Weiss and Jebrane (2005) consider that "without stable economic, social and political conditions conducive to growth, the leaders of developing countries cannot envisage a sports diffusion to the image of that accomplished in Western countries". They also assert that "rich countries with a high rate of urbanization are those where competitive and leisure sports are the most developed, while in poor countries, particularly the most landlocked with a dominant rural population, this activity has little penetrated society as a whole. Only football and athletics are the exception, playing a key role, especially in South America and Africa". Sporting realities are therefore not the same depending on national contexts and the levels of economic development of countries. Benin is no exception to the assertions of these authors. The results of this study will help guide policy makers when developing and adopting a law on the funding of sport.

#### **Economic policy implications:**

In Benin, the state subsidy for sport gives priority to a certain extent to collective sports, especially football. But athletics is an exception. However, Benin has an easier time obtaining a medal in an individual sport on a global scale. From 2016, the State understood that the subsidies granted to sports federations are very insufficient. Thus, the total subsidy for the 31 sports federations, which was 313 million CFA francs in 2015 increased to 795 million CFA francs in 2016, 502 million CFA francs in 2017, 553 million CFA francs in 2018 and 655 million CHF. CFA in 2019. But we note that a large part of this subsidy is used for the administrative activities of sports federations and the organization of the national championship. What is used in the training of athletes is derisory. In order for athletes to really benefit from this state subsidy, it must be granted taking into account the program plan of each sports federation. The establishment of the legal framework necessary for the financing of sport in Benin would be essential. In addition, the creation of a tax called "Sports Tax" to finance sport could be created. This tax, the rate of which is to be studied, may be levied on any external financial transaction of sports clubs and federations, on income from player transfers, on sports betting and on the income of companies operating in the sports sector (sale of sports articles, construction of sports facilities, etc.). These tax revenues collected will then be entirely transferred to sports clubs and federations according to well-defined quotas.

In the future, it would be very appropriate to check whether the performance of high performance individual athletes can improve when the State increases its financial contribution?

#### **Conclusion:-**

From the above, we can say in general that the development of individual sport suffers from insufficient funding due in part to an absence of the legal and economic provisions governing the funding of sport in general. In addition, there is little political and economic involvement of the state. All of this leads high-level individual sports practitioners to resort to self-financing, patronage and sponsorship. In addition, the results show that these athletes do not have the necessary and sufficient financial means to finance themselves, and therefore impact their performance, hence the need to support them. Despite these results and related interpretations, some recommendations are made. These include the establishment of the legal framework necessary for the financing of sport, the mobilization of tax revenue for the benefit of sport, the increase in the State subsidy and the opening of club capital athletes to the public for their transformation into sports companies.

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