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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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

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Abstract

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

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Introduction:-

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

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

Methodology:-

To achieve concrete results, a sound methodological study requires the implementation of several tools to ensure the research's effectiveness. Therefore, for this study, we conducted quantitative research (a questionnaire survey).

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Our study included several categories of subjects, among them football participants (referees, club and tournament players) and municipal officials. We used a non-randomized voluntary sampling method.

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

Results:-

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

Discussion:-

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

Furthermore, Fassinou (2018) stated that activities are also sluggish between state and decentralized local institutions, and the few attempts at revitalization have resulted in each entity's inability to fulfill the fundamentals of its prerogatives, leading to a cold war. The second set of realities encompasses financial and material elements (facilities, equipment, and sports gear). Table IV reveals that the municipality of Djougou has sports facilities, including those built by the state, as well as sites for recreational sports. However, the sports facilities are not, in themselves, suitable for sports practice. The municipality does not have sufficient sports facilities to meet the population's sporting needs, despite the existence of two stadiums. Because of this situation, the population uses some public spaces unsuitable for sports, which also explains why young people practice certain disciplines in the streets. Yet, sports infrastructure and equipment play a crucial role in promoting sports participation. This brings us back to the ideas developed by Pociello (1981), when he asserts that the construction of sports infrastructure and facilities promotes increased participation in sports. The question is whether decentralized sports facilities contribute to this effect.

Indeed, the analysis of Table III reveals that competitions are organized in the city of Djougou. Several factors were observed in these competitions, indicating that their organization does not require the approval of decentralized sports institutions, but rather that of a few local elected officials, sometimes for political purposes. It is therefore clear that these sports structures have a limited impact on the practice of football in Djougou. From all the analyses, investment in sports is significantly low. Those responsible for sports are not fulfilling their legal obligations because they lack a sound policy focused on sports development. However, to promote and develop sports, it is necessary to implement development factors. When these factors are combined into a program, they allow for the development of various aspects of the sporting situation and thus improve the existing level of sport. Gouda (1986)

best explains these development factors by summarizing them in four fundamental points: sports policy focused on developing the sporting community, the provision of financial resources, the quality of staff responsible for coaching, supervising, and training athletes, and the quality and quantity of sports facilities and equipment.

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

Conclusion:-

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

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

Indeed, with decentralization, all municipalities have managed to implement planning tools such as the municipal development plan, which includes the municipal master plan for development, allowing for the allocation of spaces for sports facilities and developed sites. Despite the investments made by some municipalities, such as Djougou, in the construction of sports facilities, a critical shortage persists; the existing facilities are unsuitable for the sports activities of the participants.

This mismatch between the supply of sports facilities and the various demands stems from several combined causes:

A slow transfer of responsibilities regarding financial resources;

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

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

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

Compliance with ethical standards:-

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Disclosure of conflict of interest:-

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

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