

Motivations and sports practice in the commune of Saint-Louis: the case of young footballers from soccer training centers

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ABSTRACT

The commune of Saint-Louis stands out in the Senegalese soccer landscape for the titles won by its clubs, but above all for its strong propensity to supply the Senegal national team with internationally competitive players. The social and professional success of these footballers has led to the creation and proliferation of training centers in the commune. Despite the difficulties faced by soccer training centers, more and more young people are seeking to improve their social conditions through soccer, by becoming professional footballers.

Our research aims to collect and analyze the motivations that drive young footballers to attend training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis. To carry out this study, we adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and processing. This research reveals that young people enter the training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis to become professional footballers, to benefit from quality coaching, to evolve in an environment conducive to their success, to earn money to help their parents and the needy, but also to have a great career. The status of professional player enables them to indulge in their passion, but also to have a better image of themselves in the eyes of society.

KEYWORDS

Motivation, self-determination, professional soccer, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Résumé :

La commune de Saint-Louis se distingue dans le paysage footballistique sénégalais par les titres gagnés par les clubs mais surtout par sa forte propension à fournir des internationaux à l'équipe nationale du Sénégal. La réussite sociale et professionnelle de ces footballeurs a engendré la création et la prolifération de centres de formation dans la commune. Malgré les difficultés auxquelles sont confrontés les centres de formation de football, ces derniers accueillent de plus en plus de jeunes qui cherchent à améliorer leurs conditions sociales par le football, en devenant footballeurs professionnels.

Notre recherche vise à recueillir et analyser les motivations qui poussent les jeunes footballeurs à fréquenter les centres de formation de la commune de Saint-Louis. La réalisation de cette étude, nous a conduit à adopter l'approche mixte qui combine les méthodes de collecte et de traitement de données qualitatives et quantitatives. Cette recherche révèle que les jeunes intègrent les centres de formation de la commune de Saint-Louis pour devenir des footballeurs professionnels, avoir un encadrement de qualité, évoluer dans un environnement favorable à leur réussite, gagner de l'argent pour aider leurs parents et les nécessiteux mais aussi faire une grande carrière. Le statut de joueur professionnel leur permet de s'adonner à leur passion mais aussi d'avoir une meilleure image d'eux-mêmes vis-à-vis de la société.

Mots clés : Motivation, Autodétermination, football professionnel, Motivation intrinsèque et extrinsèque.

INTRODUCTION

Soccer is a total social reality, mobilizing millions of practitioners, managers and viewers, and exerting a powerful influence on individuals, groups and societies. It has conquered a central place in the lives of all countries, contributing to their expression and image. Its professional side covers several types of recognized and valued professions, and has a strong impact on societies given its media coverage and globalization. It remains at the heart of daily debates thanks to its contribution to social and economic development in certain localities and its capacity to participate in wealth creation. Its importance in the economic sector is becoming comparable in some countries to that of the textile or leather and footwear industries. With the economic globalization of the 1980s-1990s, the sports sector contributes between 1.5% and 2% of GDP in North America and Europe (Andreff, 2012).

Soccer raises a lot of expectations and hopes among young Senegalese and their entourage. This is because soccer has become a means of insertion and integration into social life. It's practically the most profitable and coveted business for young people. This is largely due to professional soccer's ability to change the social status and standard of living of the agents who operate in this sphere. It also has an indirect impact on their parents and immediate entourage, as well as on their locality of origin. Thus, faced with the difficulties of traditional promotion frameworks in society, young people find in soccer a means of building their socio-professional trajectory and integrating into society. Often reduced to dependence due to endemic unemployment, young people see training centers as a means of actively participating in social life.

Training centers are not only a place to learn about sports, they are also a place to build talent that can operate in a globalized world. The aim of this study is to collect and analyze the motivations of young footballers who are residents of professional training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis. To carry out this research, a mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. To this end, we will first present the problem and the questions that arose from it. Next, we will explain the concepts of professional soccer and motivation, and set out the context of the study. Finally, following a review of the methodology used, we will present, analyze and discuss the results of the research.

1. BACKGROUND

Since the end of the 1980s, the social, political and economic stakes associated with soccer in Senegal have increased. Soccer fulfils social, symbolic and political functions, and has become a consensual asset of the utmost importance. Its impact on society gives it a special status at a time when the social state is coming to an end. Soccer succeeds in changing social destinies and functions as an integrating machine. It gives structure to almost all young people, who find in it a powerful means of upward social mobility.

This status of soccer in Senegalese society has led to a flourishing of training centers and academies, which are responsible for training players. These training centers and academies have been set up in all parts of the country. The city of Saint-Louis, and in particular the commune, is no exception in the flowering of these structures, with six in total. The academies and training centers have offered and continue to offer young players the opportunity to develop their skills and acquire playing experience at a high level. Thus, the programs set up by academies and training centers have enabled young Senegalese to progress and play at a higher level through a professional contract with a club (Edwards, 2019).

Academies and training centers have played a crucial role in the success of young Senegalese footballers. This success is due to their great responsibility for training and career management. In 2019, Senegal was one of the countries supplying the most footballers in the world (Sadio, 2021). Brazil topped the list with 1,600 players, 74% of whom were active in a first-division league, ahead of France with 1,027 expatriates, 74.0% of them (Sadio, 2019). These statistics put Senegal (59.6%) as the second most active African exporter of footballers in the world, behind Nigeria (73.2%) (Report, CIES, 2020).

Young players from training centers or soccer academies have been able to receive high-quality sports training, and have signed professional contracts with foreign clubs, particularly in Europe. As a result, Senegal has become a coveted geographical area, scouted and used as a recruiting ground by French and European professional clubs alike, with ambitions to find future nuggets such as Ousseynou DIOUF, Kalidou FADIGA, Salif DIAO, Sadio MANE and Gana GUEYE.

Saliou Ciss, Bamba DIENG, Idrissa Gana GUEYE, Joseph LOPY Adama MBENGUE, Amadou Kara MBODJI, Badou NDIAYE, Pape SQUARE from the Diambar academy have all obtained professional contracts and played for the Senegalese national soccer team (Ndiaye, 2019). Dakar Sacré Cœur¹, whose most famous successful graduates are Ousseynou Ndiaye of Dijon and Idrissa Camara of Olympique Lyonnais, and the Association Sportive Génération Foot²

¹ Association Sportive Dakar Sacré-Cœur is a Senegalese soccer club founded in 2005 and based in the city of Dakar more precisely in the commune of SICAP-Mermoz. Since 2015, the club has signed a partnership with Olympique Lyonnais.

² The Association sportive Génération Foot is a Senegalese soccer club founded in 2000 by Mady Touré, a branch of FC Metz in Senegal,

, which trained Sadio MANE and Ismaila SARR, among others, play the same role and aim to develop top-level soccer players using a holistic approach that includes teaching, training and coaching.

Sadio MANE, Senegal's most celebrated footballer, has won over fans worldwide with his talent on the pitch. The young man from his remote village in the south of the country is now one of soccer's finest players. In ten years, thanks to hard work and self-sacrifice, he has climbed the ladder to become the most successful Senegalese footballer since independence (Koumé, 2023). He has made Senegalese history through soccer. Sadio MANE is an example of success through and by soccer.

A resident of the Génération Foot academy, he won his first professional contract with French club Metz in 2012. After a short stay in Austria (2012-2014), he moved to the English Premier League, where he played for Southampton between (2014-2016). Between 2016-2022, he joined the legendary Liverpool club, with whom he won the English championship (2020 and 2022), the UEFA Champions League (2019) and the African Cup of Nations with Senegal in 2022 (Koumé, 2023). Crowned African player of the year in 2019 and 2022 and third in the European Golden Ball, he has a strong influence on Senegalese youth through the humanitarian actions he carries out in his village, building a modern hospital and a high school.

The purpose of training centers is to offer young people the opportunity to receive sports training in their chosen field, but also to prepare them for the high-level soccer symbolized by professionalism. Indeed, apart from being passionate about soccer, this motivation seems to be the force that drives more and more young people to pursue their dream of one day becoming a professional player like their idols, and playing for the biggest clubs in the world. Added to this is the desire to earn a lot of money, so as to be able to support themselves and their families. To this end, young players enter training centers with specific motivations and expectations. As a result, these training centers play an important role in the socio-professional future of their boarders, who aspire to change their status through soccer by becoming professional footballers.

Alongside this aspiration to change their status by becoming a professional footballer, there are other motivations such as acquiring the financial resources to be independent, help their families and relatives and contribute to the development of their locality, like Sadio MANE. All these ambitions contribute to raising, nurturing and maintaining very high expectations and motivations among young footballers attending soccer training centers. They often hope to benefit from a very good sporting training, and with the help of their environment (managers and parents), they will be able to make their dream come true.

However, the task is as complicated as it is difficult, given the demands of professional soccer. Talent alone is no longer enough to succeed in professional soccer. It's clear that the soccer centers in the commune of Saint-lois are experiencing infrastructural, logistical and financial difficulties. As a result, there is a gap between the hopes of youngsters and the realities of professional soccer, as a number of boarders at training centers fail to reach the goal of signing a contract with a professional club.

It is in this context that we examine the problem of the motivational drive of young footballers attending training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis. What are the motivations and expectations of young footballers attending training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis? The following hypotheses can be put forward:

- Young footballers who attend training centers are motivated by a desire to satisfy their passion, to improve their self-image in society and to achieve social integration;
- The motivations of young people who attend soccer training centers are fueled by a favorable environment that offers adequate sentimental, academic and sporting support. This leads us to believe that the nature of motivation is essentially dominated by intrinsic factors.

The main objective of this study is to understand the motivations of young footballers attending training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis. Mainly motivated by the prospect of a professional career, young footballers at the centers also seem to be driven by the desire to pursue their passion, to have a better image of themselves towards society, and to obtain secure social integration.

Our research focuses on young footballers at training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis, to better understand their motivations and expectations. With this in mind, further investigation could enable us to distinguish the motivations of young footballers in training centers and provide solutions to better ensure the progression and success of center residents. Having set out the problem and the research question, the following section is devoted to presenting the theoretical and methodological framework.

2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The aim of this study is to understand the motivations of players attending soccer training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis. Using both a quantitative and qualitative approach, we will question the residents of the training centers. To achieve this, we will define the main concepts used and specify the data collection and analysis tools. These steps will be followed by a description of the study variables.

2.1 Conceptual definition

For a better understanding of our study, we believe it is necessary to define certain concepts. These include the concepts of professional soccer and motivation.

2.1.1 Professional soccer

Professional soccer originated in England in the 19th century, where it was formalized and legalized in July 1855 in the north of the country (Marczewski, 2017). The establishment of this professional soccer league led to the emergence of salaried professional footballers and the transfer of players between clubs participating in the said league (Grun, 2004 cited by Marczewski, 2017.p.17). Professional soccer then spread to the rest of England, first to Europe from 1926 and later to Africa from 1955 (Lanfranchi, 1999; CAF, 2023).

Today's professional soccer is a globalized business, generating ever-increasing financial flows. Indeed, professional sport is no exception to the trend towards globalization that is affecting the economic world. Players have gradually become commodities, luxury sports products courted by international clubs. The market for top-level footballers, characterized by the law of supply and demand of professional clubs, translates into periods of transfer.

2.1.2 The notion of motivation

In this work, we'll be looking at the concept of motivation as it relates to sport. In this sense, motivation appears as "the dynamic and directional (selective or preferential) aspect of behavior" (Nuttin, 1985 cited by Gernigon, 1998., p.1). In practice, these aspects are reflected in the subject's "*direction of attention and activity, persistence in the latter (especially in the face of obstacles), intensity of activity (effort), continuity of activity in the absence of any external constraint, and performance*" (Maehr, 1984 cited by Gernigon, 1998., p.1).

In the world of sport, the concept of motivation is underpinned by the theory of self-determination (Deci and Ryan, 1985). This theory has been progressively built up on the basis of criteria, and today represents a major theoretical paradigm in the field of motivation. Indeed, over the past thirty years, numerous studies have shown this theoretical paradigm to be particularly useful and interesting for analyzing individual motivation in many contexts, such as education, work and sport (Deci and Ryan, 2008; Standage, 2012; Vallerand, 2007).

As a result, (Vallerand, Pelletier and Koestner 2008) now consider self-determination theory to be a theory of motivation with very good internal, external and ecological validity. However, Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2008; Ryan and Deci, 2000) of motivation is a social-cognitive theory of motivation that is "*built around four 'sub-theories': cognitive appraisal theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985a), causal orientations theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985b), organismic integration theory (Ryan and Deci, 2002), and basic needs theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000)*" (Gillet et al, 2009., p.174).

So, whatever the theory of self-determination, the study of individual motivation, human behavior, suggests two forms of self-determined motivation: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation is characterized by an individual who freely invests in an activity for the pleasure, interest and satisfaction it brings. This is the type of psychological behavior that develops an internal locus attitude in subjects with this motivational profile (Lomoriello et al, 2009).

Extrinsic motivation, in which the subject's motivation is linked to elements external to him or her, such as gains and profits, status and notoriety, and so on. This type of motivation sometimes develops a personality with an external locus of causality. We should also note the existence of four forms of extrinsic motivation that we may encounter in the study of motivational profiles. These include integrated regulation, identified regulation, introjected regulation and external regulation (Lomoriello et al, 2009; Gillet et al, 2009).

2.2 Research methodology

Our research is set in the commune of Saint-Louis, and the methodology adopted involves a quantitative and qualitative study to gather and analyze the motivations of young footballers attending training centers. The methodology used, which combines qualitative and quantitative methods, enabled us to exploit the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative modes.

2.2.1 Data collection and analysis

The survey was based on the administration of a questionnaire distributed to 125 young residents of soccer training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis, and structured around points relating to motivation. The questionnaire was accompanied by interviews with 15 young people. To this end, an interview guide was drawn up to gather the detailed information required for the study.

The interview guide comprises two (2) themes, the first focusing on intrinsic motivations and the second on extrinsic motivations. The interview grid takes into account the indicators defined for collecting motivations in this study. The choice of the interview survey as a research technique is in line with the logic of understanding the meaning and nature of motivations, making them valuable sources of information.

First, the questionnaires were distributed to the residents of the training centers prior to the interview phase. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 volunteers who had already completed the questionnaire.

To process the quantitative data, we used the “Kobo toolbox” software and Excel for data analysis and interpretation. To process and analyze the interview data, we first transcribed the interview recordings. They were then transcribed, summarized and analyzed from a thematic perspective using cross-referencing and coding (Moliner, Rateau and Cohen-Scali, 2002).

2.2.2 Variables and indicators

The variables we have used are linked to extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Classification enables us both to make an imputation and to see the character of the motivation of the young boarders at the training centers. In effect, we can see whether the motivations are their own, i.e. emanating from their passion for soccer and their comfort; or whether the motivations of young people attending training centers are stimulated by elements or aspects that are external to them. Understanding the origin and nature of these motivations could prove decisive in their stay at these training centers.

The following table presents the variables and indicators used in this study.

Table 1: Presentation of variables and indicators

Variables	Indicators
Intrinsic motivations	Love of the sport ; Pleasure and satisfaction ; Expression of talent and competence ; Well-being ;
External motivations	Becoming a professional footballer ; Support from coaches and friends ; Personal idol ; For wealth and glory ; Social recognition

Source : Authors

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Having outlined the methodology used to carry out this research, the following section presents an analysis and discussion of the results gathered.

3.1 Presentation of study results

The results of our study are of two types. The first group is quantitative, obtained from quantitative data. The second group of results is qualitative, based on data obtained from our interviews.

The figure below gives a quantitative description of the reasons for and nature of the motivation of youngsters at training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis.

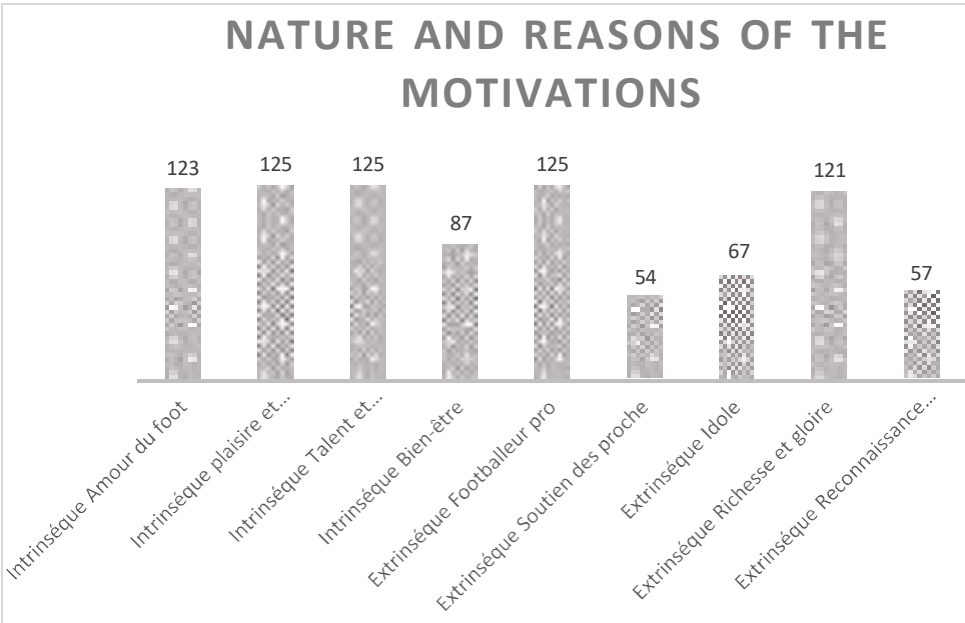


Figure 1: Nature and reasons for motivation. Source : Authors

Analysis of this figure shows that the motivations of young footballers attending training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis are both intrinsic and extrinsic. This is reflected in the fact that, of all those questioned about the reasons for their motivation, all mentioned reasons of an intrinsic nature such as love, pleasure and satisfaction, talent and behavior. Extrinsic factors such as wealth, fame and the ambition to become a professional footballer also featured in almost all our survey responses. This shows the co-presence of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for the motivation of young footballers attending these training centers.

Analysis of the qualitative information obtained from the interviews corroborates that provided by the quantitative study (Figure 1). Through the latter, terms alluding to intrinsic motivation dominate in the text contents after transcription of the voice recordings obtained. Terms such as the love of soccer; the joy they give off; the satisfaction of the youngsters; the well-being of the youngsters; the talent they show; represent over 67% of the terms referring to the reasons motivating the young boarders of these training centers.

However, if we analyze the frequency of terms, we find that the terms becoming rich; ambition to become a professional footballer and encouragement from family and friends, with the exception of the term youth satisfaction, have the highest percentages of appearance in the texts. For example, becoming rich (16%); ambition to become a professional footballer (20%), encouragement from family and friends (12%) and youth satisfaction (24%). One resident, for example, clearly states:

"I want to succeed professionally, and I expect the center to help me progress and provide me with the support I need to achieve my goals, which are to earn a lot of money through soccer, but also to have a great career like Sadio Mané and help the most needy".

When asked about the nature of their motivation, the most representative statement was "the nature of the motivations of young footballers at training centers in the Saint-Louis commune of Senegal are personal motivations that come from the players' own will". Another player clearly states: "I want to make a living from soccer. It's been my dream since I was very young, and I hope that one day it will come true. Above all, I want to succeed to help my family, my loved ones and my country. Soccer has been my passion since I was a child, I started playing soccer and I've practically been through every category. I hope one day to play for our national team. Answers that are closer to intrinsic motivation.

The desire to become a professional footballer and get rich" was another expression that came up several times in our interviewees' speeches. The words of one resident are revealing of the nature of motivations and expectations: "My mother often tells me that she wants me to be like Ibrahima Ndiaye Messi, i.e. that I succeed in becoming a great soccer player so that I can help her and support the neighborhood like Ibrahima Ndiaye Messi does". It's clear that young footballers are mainly motivated by their close family members.

This is a very important aspect of their training process, as it provides them with a sort of shield against demotivation and provides them with the psychological support they need for their mental well-being. This also shows the importance of family relationships in the development and maintenance of young players' motivation.

We also note that younger players may be motivated by enjoyment and discovery of the game, while older players may be more focused on competition and developing their technical skills. Indeed, the motivations of young footballers in training centers can vary according to their age or skill level, as this resident confirms:

"I know players who were in the training center and have become professional players. I think it's thanks to the center that they became professional players, and that's exactly my dream too. I feel well looked after at the center, I train, I progress and sometimes we're brought along to take part in competitions or scouts supervise us. Sometimes, too, we take tests at Génération Foot, one of the country's professional clubs."

At the same time, there has been a significant increase in the number of players at training centers. This can be attributed to a number of factors, such as the growing enthusiasm of young people for soccer, the search for precocious talent in training centers, and the notable success of players from training centers.

3.2 Discussion of results

The main objective of our study is to analyze the reasons for and nature of the motivation of young academy boarders. Our investigations revealed a predominance of intrinsic motivations in the form of love, pleasure, satisfaction, talent and skill. These results invalidate our initial hypothesis, which gave an intrinsic nature to the reasons motivating young footballers at these training centers. What's more, these results corroborate those of other studies that have attempted to analyze the motivational profile of athletes.

In studies by Brière et al, 1995; Gillet et al, 2009; Gillet et al, 2013, the motivational profiles of residents that emerge are motivational profile groups combining intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. However, they can vary from strongly intrinsic to weakly intrinsic or extrinsic, as was the case with our results.

It is these strongly intrinsic and extrinsic motivations identified and integrated (Lomoriello, al, 2009) that go some way to explaining the reasons that keep young people in these training centers despite precarious resources and difficult performance conditions.

Skill levels can also influence motivation. Some seek to reach professional levels, while others may simply want to improve for the pleasure of the game. In this respect, we can say that training centers can meet certain expectations of young footballers. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement to better meet the expectations of young footballers in the municipality. In fact, academic training and the possibility of reorientation in the event of failure at school and in soccer are virtually non-existent in the training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis.

Training centers can also recruit communication officers to promote their young players, creating greater visibility for them and attracting the interest of recruiters and professional clubs from home and abroad, with the aim of facilitating the integration of young footballers into the professional world. It would also enable the center to better manage relationships with partners or future associates, ensuring transparent and positive communication to foster collaboration and support. The results enabled us to identify and understand the motivations of young footballers attending soccer training centers. It enabled us to identify the negative aspects that could act as a brake, and the positive aspects, a lever for stimulating the motivations and expectations of young footballers. Young footballers are mainly motivated by their close family members. We cannot fail to emphasize the need for holistic approaches, integrating sporting, educational and psychological development. For us, soccer today is an industry where soccer training centers must invest in personalized programs, mentoring opportunities and initiatives to support the diverse aspirations of young footballers, helping to create an environment conducive to their overall success.

Finally, this study has enabled us to highlight the importance of taking into account the motivational aspects of young people to improve the effectiveness of training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis. It has enabled us to learn about the positive impact that well-organized training centers can have on the careers and well-being of young footballers. In doing so, the commune's training centers must also ensure that they provide the psychological support that is essential for motivating young footballers, by carefully identifying their individual aspirations and goals.

This means providing personalized training programs that take into account specific objectives, whether sporting, academic or personal. We cannot conclude without stressing the need to create inclusive environments that recognize the diversity of young footballers' motivations and expectations.

Our interviews also revealed that the training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis do not fully train young footballers. In fact, the retraining aspect is unsatisfactory due to the lack of dedicated schooling for young footballers. However, school education is very important in the training process for young footballers, as it guarantees a solid alternative in the event that professional aspirations do not materialize, thus providing an educational foundation for future opportunities. The combination of academic and sports education strengthens the overall development of young footballers in training centers, and enhances opportunities for social integration.

Conclusion

In summary, our study focused on the motivation of young footballers in vocational training centers in the commune of Saint-Louis in Senegal. Its aim was to understand the reasons for and nature of the motivation of these young people in these soccer training centers. In carrying out this study, we opted for the mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and processing methods in this study.

After collecting and processing the data, we came to the conclusion that the motivations of the young people at these training centers in the commune are strongly supported by their passion and love of soccer; by their talent and competence in soccer; by their desire to become professional footballers; by their wealth and, in a way, by their well-being.

The overall analysis of the results showed that the majority of young people want to become professional footballers, to have quality coaching, to evolve in an environment conducive to their success, to earn money to help their parents and the needy, and to have a great career. All these reasons lead us to two motivational natures: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

However, the strong presence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, materialized by identified and integrated regulations (wealth and glory; ambition to become a professional footballer), keeps young footballers in these professional training centers in the commune, despite the difficult conditions for sports performance.

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