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Relationship between spiritual transcendence and competitive anxiety in male athletes

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was the relationship between spiritual transcendence and competitive anxiety in athletes. For this field, 400 of men athletes in Kermanshah city by stratified sampling were selected and completed the spiritual transcendence and competitive anxiety scales. Results of Pierson correlation indicated that was positive correlation between connectedness ($r=0.331$), prayer fulfillment($r=0.411$), universality ($r=0.156$) and spiritual transcendence ($r=0.234$) with sportive self-confidence, and negative correlation between connectedness ($r=-0.124$), prayer fulfillment($r=-0.443$), universality ($r=-0.415$) and spiritual transcendence($r=-0.397$) with sportive self-confidence with somatic anxiety and between prayer fulfillment($r=-0.271$), universality ($r=-0.312$) and spiritual transcendence ($r=-0.221$) with sportive self-confidence with somatic anxiety. Results of multiple regression by inter method showed that connectedness, prayer fulfillment and universality were explained 0.287 variance of competitive anxiety (cognitive-somatic) and this variables were explained 0.319 variance of sportive self-confidence ($p<0/05$).

Keywords: spiritual transcendence, Competitive Anxiety, self-confidence, athletes

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality, religiosity, and their role in human well-being have recently been paid special attention in the psychology literature. As a result, several scales have been developed to measure these variables [14]. Several studies have reported the positive effects of spirituality on self-esteem, sense of belonging, ability to resist stress, responsiveness and adaptation to trauma, ability to escape dangers, life satisfaction and some physiological symptoms including decreased blood pressure, improved performance of immune system, decreased depression symptoms, improved mental and physical health and well-being [2]. Spiritual transcendence refers to the individual's ability to acquire a broad, mental representation of life and to discover a deep understanding of the concept of life. Transcendence is an internal, original motive that is used to satisfy the needs of other people, irrespective of personal needs. It comprises three dimensions including connectedness (a sense of personal responsibility to others), prayer fulfillment (a sense of joy and contentment in prayer) and universality (a sense of unity and goal-orientation in life) [8]. However, such variables as spirituality, spiritual transcendence and their contribution to athletes' mental status have not been investigated in sports and physical education. Nevertheless, these variables appear to contribute to athletes' mental balance effectively. Competitive anxiety is one of the variables that are likely to be influenced by spiritual transcendence in athletes. Competitive anxiety is thus defined as the sense of restlessness and tensions caused by the pressing demands of the environment. It is associated with

arousal and indicates an imbalanced perception between environmental demands and athletes' ability to satisfy the demands [7]. In the literature on sport psychology, there has not yet been investigation on the contribution of spiritual transcendence to athletic performance. Still, existential psychology is a branch of psychology that posits morality, spirituality and religiosity as the core of human existence. In sport psychology, some studies have investigated the role of existential-phenomenological psychology in sports [6], athletic performance [4, 5] and its implications [11]. Murphy and White (1995) reported that sports and physical activity play a significant role in spiritual and transcendental experiences. Watson and Nesti (2005) and Czech *et al.* (2004) showed that existential psychology may be used to investigate the sources of individual morality in sports. For some athletes, existential and phenomenological concepts include aspects of spirituality such as religiosity and the philosophy of life [12]. The present study aims to investigate the relationship between spiritual transcendence and competitive anxiety in male athletes. Since no coherent studies have been conducted on the role of spirituality in sports as well as competitive anxiety, it is necessary to undertake the present study, which may help reinforce the literature on sport psychology.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Considering the aim of the study that is to investigate the relation between spiritual transcendence (connectedness, prayer fulfillment and universality) and competitive anxiety, the method of the study is correlational. The participants of the study consisted of 400 male athletes in Kermanshah city. Accordingly, 200 individual sport athletes and 200 team sport athletes were selected as the participants. The participants were selected from different sports including Karate (10.0%), wrestling (20.0%), Taekwondo (10.0%), Boxing (10.0%), soccer (15.0%), Futsal (10.0%), volleyball (15.0%) and handball (10.0%). The mean and standard deviation of participants' age and sport history were 25.35±3.14 and 5.432±1.87 years, respectively. The instruments used to collect the data are as follows:

Spiritual transcendence scale: the scale was developed by Piedmont (1999) and consists of 18 items. It comprises three subscales including connectedness, prayer fulfillment and universality. The Cronbach alpha formula has shown the reliability of each subscale to be 0.83, 0.87 and 0.64, respectively. Prayer fulfillment bears a good reliability estimate in regard to other measures of spirituality and the scale of religious growth (Benson *et al.*, 1993). In the present study, the reliability of the scale was calculated to be 0.72 using Cronbach alpha formula.

Competitive state anxiety inventory: the scale was developed by Martens *et al.* (1997) and consists of 27 items on a 4-point Likert scale. It comprises three subscales including self-confidence, cognitive anxiety and somatic anxiety. The reliability index of each subscale has been shown to be 0.88 for self-confidence, 0.88 for cognitive anxiety and 0.85 for somatic anxiety. In the present study, the reliability of the scale was calculated to be 0.73 using Cronbach alpha formula.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, there was a significant positive correlation between connectedness and self-confidence ($r=0.34$); a significant correlation between prayer fulfillment and somatic anxiety ($r=-0.44$), cognitive anxiety ($r=-0.27$) and self-confidence ($r=0.41$); and a significant correlation between universality and somatic anxiety ($r=-0.415$), cognitive anxiety ($r=-0.31$) and self-confidence ($r=0.155$) ($P<0.05$). However, there was no significant correlation between connectedness and somatic and cognitive anxieties.

Table 1. The result of correlation between spiritual transcendence and competitive anxiety

Predictor variables	self-confidence	cognitive anxiety	somatic anxiety
connectedness	0.34	0.045	-0.12
	0.000	0.54	0.13
prayer fulfillment	0.41	-0.27	-0.44
	0.000	0.000	0.000
universality	0.155	-0.31	-0.415
	0.033	0.000	0.000

The results of multiple regression analysis with entry method to predict sportive self-confidence through the subscales of spiritual transcendence showed that prayer fulfillment and universality had the strongest predictive power, respectively (adjusted $R=0.306$, $f(3,199)=30.208$, $P>0.000$). Nevertheless, connectedness was unable to predict athletes' self-confidence. The results also revealed that connectedness, prayer fulfillment and universality

were, respectively, the strongest predictors of competitive anxiety (somatic-cognitive) (adjusted $R=0.284$, $f(3,199)=27.25$, $P>0.000$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of Pearson correlation test showed a significant positive correlation between sportive self-confidence and the subscales of spiritual transcendence including connectedness (a sense of personal responsibility to others), prayer fulfillment (a sense of joy and contentment in prayer) and universality (a sense of unity and goal-orientation in life). The results revealed a significant negative correlation between prayer fulfillment and universality with cognitive and somatic anxieties. To account for this finding, it may be that when the athlete has a sense of responsibility to others, enjoys prayer and follows a clear goal in their life, they can take a positive attitude toward sports competitions so that they may maintain their self-confidence and control the symptoms of competitive anxiety such as cognitive and somatic symptoms. In existential terms, athletes consider anxiety as a natural, positive factor [12]. Considering anxiety as natural may play a significant role in reducing the level of anxiety and increasing self-confidence. The results of multiple regression analysis with entry method showed that connectedness, prayer fulfillment and universality were the strongest predictors of sportive self-confidence, respectively. That is, with higher scores in these subscales, the athletes showed higher levels of self-confidence. This is consistent with the findings of Watson and Nesti (2005) and Czech et al. (2004). They have emphasized the importance of spirituality in sports, physical activity and athletic performance. This suggests that spirituality, prayer and concept-oriented life may help individuals have a positive attitude toward their performance in different situations, which significantly increases their self-confidence. Thus, prayer, worship, sense of responsibility and goal-orientation may improve athletes' self-confidence in sports environments.

The results of multiple regression analysis with entry method showed that connectedness, prayer fulfillment and universality were, respectively, the strongest predictors of competitive anxiety (somatic-cognitive). That is, with increased score of spiritual transcendence, athletes had lower levels of competitive anxiety. Since there is no previous study on spiritual transcendence and competitive anxiety, the present findings cannot be compared with similar ones. However, the present findings may be said to correspond to the findings of Watson and Nesti (2005) and Czech and colleagues (2004) who reported that spirituality affects sports and athletic performance. Based on existential psychology, anxiety is associated with such sources as freedom, choice, responsibility and meaning that are experienced throughout the life so that, in passing through freedom and choices, the failures may result in neurotic anxiety [12]. It is likely that competitive anxiety occurs even before the onset of competitions; thus, the athletes may have better performance once they believe in spirituality and existential psychology and have prayers. Considering the present findings, it is recommended that spiritual transcendence be considered as an effective defensive strategy in athletes so that they have better performance in sports competitions. It is also recommended that spirituality-based meditation training be considered in sport environments, which may help athletes have better performance in competitions.

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