

## The Role of Spiritual Transcendence on Predictive of Competitive Anxiety and Self-Confidence in Athletes

<sup>1</sup>M. Narimani, <sup>1</sup>A. Zahede Babolan and <sup>2</sup>S. Ariapooran

<sup>1</sup>University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, literature and humanities Science, Ardabil, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Psychology, University of Malayer, Iran

---

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was the role of spiritual transcendence on predictive of competitive anxiety and self-confidence in athletes. For this field, 200 individual and team athletes in Kermanshah city by clustered sampling were selected and completed the spiritual transcendence and competitive anxiety scales. Results of Pierson correlation indicated that was positive correlation between connectedness, prayer fulfillment and universality with sportive self-confidence and negative correlation between prayer fulfillment and universality with somatic and cognitive anxiety. Results of multivariate correlation by inter method showed that connectedness, prayer fulfillment and universality were predicted the competitive anxiety (cognitive-somatic) and prayer fulfillment and universality were predicted the sportive self-confidence ( $p < 0/05$ ).

**Key words:** Spiritual transcendence • Competitive Anxiety • Self-confidence • Athletes

---

### INTRODUCTION

Spirituality and religiosity have recently emerged in psychological literature as theorists are beginning to understand their importance and impact on subjective well-being. This interest is evident in the proliferation of measures currently available to assess these variables [1] and the number of studies devoted to their exploration [2]. Spirituality has been defined as “the personal quest for understanding life’s ultimate questions and the meaning and purpose of living” [3-4]. It has proven to be a difficult entity to measure [5-6] and ultimately people themselves must define what spirituality means to them [7]. While acknowledging the absence of agreement in defining religiosity and spirituality, Mattis and Jagers (2001) maintain that they are related but distinct domains [8]. Pate and Bondi (1992) described spirituality as the sense of one’s place in the universe [9] and Gilchrist (1992) identified spirituality as that which individuals deem sacred and central in their lives [10]. One of variables that related to spirituality is spiritual transcendence. Spiritual transcendence refers to the ability of individuals to view life from a larger, more objective perspective and find a deeper sense of meaning. Furthermore, transcendence is a fundamental, intrinsic motivation that involves suppressing an individual’s own need for those of the larger group. The spiritual transcendence consists of

three dimensions: connectedness (sense of personal responsibility to others), prayer fulfillment (joy and contentment from prayer/meditation) and universality (sense of unity and purpose in life) [11]. Aldridge (1991) suggests that spirituality is a potential and in his perspective, essential coping mechanism in dealing with the specific stressors of significant illness [12]. Many investigations referred to positive effect of spirituality on self-esteem, belonging sensation, ability to coping with stress, responding and adjustment to trauma, ability to escape of danger, life satisfaction and some physiological signs such as low of blood pressure, increasing in performance of immune system, decreasing in depression signs, increasing in psychological, physical and well-being health [13-17]. However, studies designed to statistically control for such factors also report positive associations between spirituality and health in individuals with unhealthy behaviors. But the impact of spirituality on health and healing is a topic that has been virtually ignored in the disciplines of athletic training and sports medicine [18]. But this problem can be interpretable in existential psychology. Existential psychology is the clearest example of an approach that welcomes meaning, spirituality and religion as central to human being. In sport psychology there have been a number of researchers and writers who have drawn on existential-phenomenological psychology in their work in exercise

settings [19] sport performance [20-21] and applied contexts [22]. Watson and Nesti [23] and Czech *et al.* [24] have highlighted that existential psychology can be used to examine sources of personal meaning in sport. For many athletes these include religious belief and life philosophies that encompass spiritual dimensions. Spirituality has often been seen in terms of energy and power [25-26]. This be might in terms of a transcendent model, with external power being given to the sports person [27]. Or it may be seen as energy that comes from holism and from positive relationships [28]. Either way this is relevant to the spirituality of sport, bringing us back for a moment to that painful experience of the last marathon mile and that search for 'something extra' and to the way in which the marathon, in all its relationships, empowered the participants [29]. Competitive anxiety is been one of the most thoroughly examined topics in sport psychology literature. This is mainly due to the perceived detrimental effects anxiety has on performance, creating the negative view most individuals hold of this concept. Anxiety is defined as feelings of nervousness and tension resulting from environmental demands that are associated with arousal. According to Jones (1995) this refers to the feelings of apprehension and nervousness felt by performers before sport competition [30]. competitive anxiety has long held a paradoxical fascination for sport psychologist, coaches and athletes with whom they work [31-32].

Because no other single psychological attribute can have such a debilitating effect on performance, research on causes and consequences of competitive anxiety as well as how practitioners can reduce anxiety or more effectively cope with its effect has been one of the most heavily researched topics in sport psychology [32-33]. In competitive sport it has been noted that those athletes with excellent self-awareness [34] and deep self-knowledge [35] are best able to successfully confront the stresses, challenges and demands of sport. Anxiety then is seen here as related to spiritual strength and growth of a person. The link to performance should be clear from this in that the greater the level of self-knowledge and the stronger the person, the more likely he or she will be able to fully utilise his or her physical and mental attributes. This is one of the reasons why experienced applied sport psychologists like Salter [36] Ravizza [34] and Nesti [22] advocate the enhancement of performance through encouraging spiritual growth in the athletes they work with. The spiritually aware athlete possesses a framework of meaning that allows him or her to at least see that sport does not make complete sense when it is conceived in material and physical terms only. This spirituality may or

may not be grounded in formal religious belief. What is becoming clear is that for an increasing number of sport performers and sport psychologists [22, 37] there is a recognition that sport and spiritual awareness are intimately related. Flowing from this it follows that courage, character and personality formation can be enhanced through repeated encounters with the anxiety, mental trials and sacrifices woven into the fabric of sport [29]. Therefore, the purpose of this study was The role of spiritual transcendence on predictive of competitive anxiety and self-confidence in athletes and because of not investigation about role of spirituality on sport, specially Competitive Anxiety, in sport psychology, performing of this study is necessary and will supported the literature of sport psychology.

## MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

**Participants:** Participants of this study were 200 athletes that they were selected by categorical sampling method in individual (100 athletes) and group athletes in Kermanshah city of Iran. These Participants were selected in Karate (8/0), wrestle (25/0), Taekwondo (7/0), Box (10/0), football (25/0), footstall (10/0), volleyball (10/0) and basketball (5/0). Mean and standard deviation of age and history of sport activity orderly were (M= 25/10, SD= 3/18) and (M= 5/375, SD= 1/51).

### Instrument

**Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS; [38]):** This is a 24-item measure that regards spirituality as a potential sixth factor of personality. Spiritual transcendence refers to the ability of individuals to view life from a larger, more objective perspective and find a deeper sense of meaning. Furthermore, transcendence is a fundamental, intrinsic motivation that involves suppressing an individual's own need for those of the larger group. The STS consists of three subscales: connectedness (sense of personal responsibility to others), prayer fulfillment (joy and contentment from prayer/meditation) and universality (sense of unity and purpose in life). Cronbach's alpha for the subscales are .83, .87 and .64, respectively. For the purpose of this study, the connectedness subscale was not used because the focus was not on one's relationship to other people. The prayer fulfillment subscale shows good validity with another measure of spirituality, the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS; [39]). In addition, prayer fulfillment and universality are moderately correlated ( $r = .64, .49$ , respectively) with the subscale of the FMS that measures closeness to God [37].

**Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2; [32]):**

The CSAI-2 is a multidimensional inventory which measures somatic state anxiety, cognitive state anxiety and state self-confidence. Each subscale contains nine items adding to a total of 27 items for the entire scale. The self-confidence subscale was disregarded as it did not pertain to the present study. Athletes respond to items on a 4-point likert scale. Participants indicate how they feel at the current moment using the following descriptors: 1 (Not at all), 2 (Somewhat), 3 (Moderately so) and 4 (Very Much So). With the exception of one reversed item in the somatic subscale, the score of each subscale is determined by the summation of each subscale response set. Scores range from 9-36 for each subscale. The CSAI-2 shows high internal consistency, with coefficients ranging from .79-.90. Support for construct validity is available in a study conducted on collegiate intramural sport athletes which indicated that the CSAI-2 outcomes were related to Anxiety Rating Scale-2 scores [40].

Furthermore, concurrent validity was demonstrated by showing correlations in the hypothesized direction between the CSAI-2 and the Sport Competitive Anxiety Test, general state and trait anxiety scales, Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale and the Zuckerman Affect Adjective Checklist [32].

**RESULTS**

Table 1 described the descriptive statistical data of variables in this research. Results of correlation indicated that it was negative correlation between connectedness and self-confidence, prayer fulfillment and universality with Cognitive anxiety, Somatic anxiety and Self-confidence in athletes (Table 1).

Results of multivariate regression (Inter) table indicated that the two dimensions of spiritual transcendence (prayer fulfillment and universality) were positively predictive of self-confidence in athletes (p<0.001) (Table 2).

Tabl 1: descriptive analysis of variables (mean, standard deviation of variables and correlation analysis)

| Variables                   | N   | Mean  | S.D     | Correlation Analysis |         |         |         |        |        |       |   |
|-----------------------------|-----|-------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|---|
|                             |     |       |         | 1                    | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5      | 6      | 7     | 8 |
| 1.connectedness             | 200 | 17.95 | 3.12993 | 1                    | -       | -       | -       | -      | -      | -     | - |
| 2.prayer fulfillment        | 200 | 18.30 | 3.47424 | .713**               | 1       | -       | -       | -      | -      | -     | - |
| 3.universality              | 200 | 19.50 | 3.45102 | .351**               | .469**  | 1       | -       | -      | -      | -     | - |
| 4. spiritual transcendence  | 200 | 55.75 | 8.25398 | .826**               | .888**  | .749**  | 1       | -      | -      | -     | - |
| 5.Cognitive anxiety         | 200 | 14.45 | 3.14595 | -.110                | -.435** | -.410** | -.396** | 1      | -      | -     | - |
| 6.Somatic anxiety           | 200 | 15.40 | 3.78306 | .040                 | -.262** | -.300** | -.220** | .762** | 1      | -     | - |
| 7.Self-confidence           | 200 | 23.45 | 4.30583 | .319**               | .405**  | .150*   | .229**  | -.111  | -.159* | 1     | - |
| 8.Somatic-cognitive anxiety | 200 | 29.85 | 6.50686 | -.030                | -.363** | -.373** | -.320** | .926** | .950** | -.039 | 1 |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 and \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05

Table 2: multiple regression (Inter) for predictive of self-confidence by dimensions of spiritual transcendence

| Model |            | ANOVA          |     |             |        |      |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
|       |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
| 1     | Regression | 1166.525       | 3   | 388.842     | 30.208 | .000 |
|       | Residual   | 2522.975       | 196 | 12.872      |        |      |
|       | Total      | 3689.500       | 199 |             |        |      |

  

| Model |                      | Unstandardized Coefficients |            |      | Standardized Coefficients |      |
|-------|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|------|---------------------------|------|
|       |                      | B                           | Std. Error | Beta | t                         | Sig. |
| 1     | (Constant)           | 27.286                      | 1.783      |      | 15.306                    | .000 |
|       | 1.connectedness      | .104                        | .116       | .076 | .896                      | .371 |
|       | 2.prayer fulfillment | .691                        | .111       | .558 | 6.239                     | .000 |
|       | 3.universality       | .547                        | .083       | .439 | 6.556                     | .000 |

dependent variable= self-confidence and R=. 562, RS=. 316 and Adj.R=. 306

Table 3: multiple regression (inter) for predictive of somatic-cognitive anxiety by dimensions of spiritual transcendence

|       |                      | ANOVA                       |            |                           |        |       |
|-------|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| Model |                      | Sum of Squares              | df         | Mean Square               | F      | Sig.  |
| 1     | Regression           | 2480.057                    | 3          | 826.686                   | 27.253 | .000a |
|       | Residual             | 5945.443                    | 196        | 30.334                    |        |       |
|       | Total                | 8425.500                    | 199        |                           |        |       |
|       |                      | Coefficients                |            |                           |        |       |
|       |                      | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |        |       |
| Model |                      | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      | t      | Sig.  |
| 1     | (Constant)           | 41.749                      | 2.737      |                           | 15.255 | .000  |
|       | 1.connectedness      | -.985                       | .178       | -.474                     | -5.536 | .000  |
|       | 2.prayer fulfillment | -1.075                      | .170       | -.574                     | -6.322 | .000  |
|       | 3.universality       | -.508                       | .128       | -.270                     | -3.967 | .000  |

dependent variable= somatic-cognitive anxiety and R=. 543, RS=. 294 and Adj.R=. 284

Results of multivariate regression (Inter) table indicated that the three dimensions of spiritual transcendence (connectedness, prayer fulfillment and universality) were negatively predictive of somatic-cognitive anxiety in athletes ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 3).

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results indicated that there was a negative correlation between connectedness and self-confidence, prayer fulfillment and universality with Cognitive anxiety, Somatic anxiety and these factors were positively correlated to self-confidence in athletes. This finding confirms the results of studies by Watson and Nesti [23] and Czech *et al.* [24]. Existential psychology in which spirituality or religion is one of key concept and some researches such as Dale [20-21] and Fahlberg *et al.* [19] on the positive role of spirituality in sports support the results. To justify this result it can be said that if athletes feel responsibility toward others, enjoy prayers and worship and follow suitable purpose, he or she can have positive views on sport/athletic competition and, as a result, keep up his self-confidence and reduce computational anxieties such as cognitive as well as somatic symptoms. This is because from an existentialist point of view; athletes regard anxiety as a natural sensation which should exist [29]. Regarding anxiety as a natural psychological state can have significant role in its reduction, resulting in an increase in athlete's self-confidence.

Results of multiple regression indicated that the two dimensions of spiritual transcendence (prayer fulfillment and universality) were positively predictive of self-confidence in athletes. But another dimension (connectedness) did not predict the self-confidence in athletes. This means that an increase in these

variables results in an increase in the athlete's self-confidence. This finding in line with the findings of studies by Watson and Nesti [23] and Czech *et al.* [24]. They unanimously refer to the role and significance of spirituality in sports and sportive performance. To justify this finding it may be said that spirituality, prayer fulfillment and having meaning in life results in having a positive thinking about their performance in different environments. This affects positively their self-confidence. Athletes therefore are not exceptions to this principle and prayer fulfillment, accountability and following a goal in life increases their self-confidence in athletic competitions.

Also, results of multiple regression indicated that the three dimensions of spiritual transcendence (connectedness, prayer fulfillment and universality) were negatively predictive of somatic-cognitive anxiety in athletes. This means that by an increase in spiritual transcendence the amount of competitive anxiety decreases. Since the studies have disregarded to the role of spirituality transcendence and anxiety, this results cannot be confirmed, however, it can be said that this finding can confirm the findings of studies by Watson and Nesti [23] and Czech *et al.* [24]. The findings of both researches confirm the role and significance of spirituality in sports. To justify this finding, it may be said that since according to existential psychology, anxiety is influenced by factors such as freedom, choice, accountability and meaning which are experienced throughout the life and these choices and freedoms with repetition of failures in achieving goals in life result in neurotic anxiety [29], so it can be said anxiety before competition takes shape and if the athletes believe in spirituality and existential psychology and use existential encounters such as prayers, they will achieve better performance and their competitive anxiety will reduce.

Based on the findings of the present research it is suggested that spirituality and spiritual transcendence as an effective preventive strategy to be considered by athletes so that they would achieve better performance in athletes competitions. It is also suggested that in sport environment possibilities for spiritual learning be provided so that the athletes would have fruitful performance in dealing with anxiety provoking atmospheres.

### REFERENCES

1. Seybold, K.S. and P.C. Hill, 2001. The role of religion and spirituality in mental and physical health. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10: 21-24.
2. Cecile Betton, A., 2004. Psychological Well-being and Spirituality Among African American and European American College Students. A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctorate of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University. The Ohio State University.
3. Koenig, H.G., L.K. George and P. Titus, 2004. Religion, spirituality and health in medically ill hospitalized older patients. *J. Am. Geriatr. Soc.*, 52: 554-562.
4. Moreira-Almeida, A. And H.G. Koenig, 2006. Retaining the meaning of the words religiousness and spirituality: a commentary on the WHOQOL SRPB group's a cross cultural study of spirituality, religion and personal beliefs as components of quality of life. *Soc. Sci. Med.*, 62(6): 1486-1497.
5. Garsen, B. And E. de Jager Meezenbroek, 2007. Response to letter from P. Salander. *Psychooncology*, 16: 93-94.
6. Salander, P., 2006. Who needs the concept of spirituality. *Psychooncology*, 15: 647-649.
7. Koenig, H.G., 2007. Religion, spirituality and medicine in Australia: research and clinical practice. *Med. J. Aust.*, 186: S45-46.
8. Mattis, J.S. and R.J. Jagers, 2001. A relational framework for the study of religiosity and spirituality in the lives of African Americans. *Journal of Community*.
9. Pate, R.H., Jr. and A.M. Bondi, 1992. Religious beliefs and practice: An integral aspect of multicultural awareness. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 32: 108-115.
10. Gilchrist, R., 1992. The need for holistic counseling. *American Counselor*, 1: 10-13.
11. Piedmont, R.L., 1999. Does spirituality represent the sixth factor of personality? Spiritual transcendence and the Five-Factor Model. *Journal of Personality*, 67: 985-1013.
12. Aldridge, D., 1991. Spirituality, healing and medicine. *British Journal of General Practice*, 41: 425-427.
13. Constantine, M.G., L. Wilton, K.A. Gainor and E.L. Lewis, 2002. Religious participation, spirituality and coping among African American college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43: 605-613.
14. Graham, S., S. Furr, C. Flowers and M.T. Burke, 2001. Religion and spirituality incoping with stress. *Counseling and Values*, 46(1): 2-13.
15. Musgrave, C.F., C.E. Allen and G.J. Allen, 2002. Spirituality and health for women of color. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92: 557-560.
16. Ryan, P.L., 1998. An exploration of the spirituality of women who survived childhood violence. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 30(2): 87-102.
17. Williams, L., S. Reed, C. Nelson and A. Brose, 2002. Relations of intrinsic spirituality with health status and symptom interference. *Psychological Reports*, 91: 618-626.
18. Udermann, B.E., 2000. The Effect of Spirituality on Health and Healing: A Critical Review for Athletic Trainers. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 35(2): 194-197.
19. Fahlberg, L.L., L.A. Fahlberg and K.W. Gates, 1992. 'Exercise and Existence: Exercise Behaviour from an Existential-Phenomenological Perspective, *The Sport Psychologist*, 6: 172-191.
20. Dale, G., 1996. Existential-Phenomenology: Emphasizing the Experience of the Athlete in Sport Psychology Research, *The Sport Psychologist*, 10: 158-171.
21. Dale, G., 2000. Distractions and Coping Strategies of Elite Decathletes during their Most Memorable Performance, *The Sport Psychologist*, 10: 17-41.
22. Nesti, M., 2004. *Existential Psychology and Sport: Theory and Application*, London: Routledge.
23. Watson, N.J. and M. Nesti, 2005. The Role of Spirituality in Sport Psychology Consulting: An Analysis and Integrative Review of Literature, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 17: 228-239.
24. Czech, D.R., C. Wisberg, L. Fisher, C. Thompson and G. Hayes, 2004. The Experience of Christian Prayer in Sport-An Existential-Phenomenological Investigation, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 2: 1-19.
25. Aldridge, D., 2000. *Spirituality, Healing and Medicine*, London: Jessica Kingsley.

26. Goddard, N., 1995. Spirituality as Integrative Energy, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 22: 808-815.
27. Boyd, J., 1995. The Soul as Seen through Evangelical Eyes, Part 1: Mental Health Professionals and the Soul, *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 25(3): 151-160.
28. King, M. and S. Dean, 1998. The Spiritual Variable in Psychiatric Research, *Psychological Medicine*, 28: 1259-1262.
29. Parry, J., S. Robinson, N.J. Watson and M. Nesti, 2007. Spirituality and Sport, A Introduction. New York, NY 10016: First published 2007.
30. Jones, G., 1995. More than Just a Game: Research Developments and Issues in Competitive Anxiety in Sport, *British Journal of Psychology*, 86: 449-478.
31. Martens, R., 1997. Sport competition anxiety test. Human kinetics, Champaign, IL.
32. Martens, R., D. Burton, R. Vealey, L. Bump and D. Smith, 1999. The development of the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2). In: R. Martens, R.S. Vealey and D. Burton, Editors, *Competitive anxiety in sport*, Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL, pp: 117-190.
33. Smith, R.E., F.L. Smoll and R.W. Schutz, 1990. Measurement correlates of sport specific cognition and somatic anxiety: the sport anxiety scale. *Anxiety research*, 2: 263-280.
34. Ravizza, K., 2002. A Philosophical Construct: A Framework for Performance Enhancement, *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 33: 4-18.
35. Corlett, J., 1996a. Sophistry, Socrates and Sport Psychology, *The Sport Psychologist*, 10: 84-94.
36. Salter, D., 1997. Measure, Analyse and Stagnate: Towards a Radical Psychology of Sport, in R.J. Butler (ed.), *Sports Psychology in Performance*, Oxford: Reed Educational and Professional Publishing, pp: 248-260.
37. Ravizza, K. and J. Fazio, 2002. Consulting with Confidence: Using Who You Are to Evoke Excellence in Others, workshop conducted at the Annual Conference of the American Association of Applied Sport Psychology, Tucson, Arizona.
38. Piedmont, R.L., 2001. Spiritual transcendence and the scientific study of spirituality. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 67: 4-14.
39. Benson, P.L., M.J. Donahue and J.A. Erickson, 1993. The faith maturity scale: Conceptualization, measurement and empirical validation. *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, 5: 1-26.
40. Cox, R.H., W.D. Russell and M. Robb, 1998. Development of a CSAI-2 short-form for assessing competitive state anxiety during and immediately prior to competition. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 21: 30-40.