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A Study on the Importance of Spiritual Capacity in Sports Context

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Abstract

Sports do not have any of the drivers, professional or legal, that motivate the integration of spirituality into education or healthcare. Nonetheless, in several contexts there are real overlaps. The concern for personal development is traditionally linked with the idea that practice of sports can enable transformation, liberation and character development (Cooper, 1998). By extension, the stress on educational development that is holistic increasingly takes in sports. The idea of health, well-being and human activity are intimately connected to spirituality that stresses a holistic perspective (Miller and Thoresen, 2003). This concern for holism in sports can be seen as both means and end. Sing (2004), for instance, stresses the balance of mind, body and spirit and how important this is in enabling the person to develop the best performance.

Meditation in this context aims to create mindfulness, an awareness and centeredness (Marlatt and Kristeller 2003). However, the technique aspect of spirituality is only one aspect of a broader reflection on meaning. Positive psychology looks to deeper developments, such as resolutions and forgiveness (Worthington, 1989), and this include how to handle failure.

Keywords: Spiritual Capacity, Sports Context, character development, healthcare

1. Introduction

Sports also act as a center of meaning and purpose. For the sportsperson this is about the development of individual purpose. This is not necessarily simple. Many sportsperson see their identity as connected to successful practice, with their deep sense of pride which goes with that. Others see their identity in the way that sports and community intersect, Lucas Radabe, for instance, sees his identity as football player (Leeds United) as tied in with he can affect underprivileged communities both in Britain and in South Africa (Parry *et al.*, 2007). At the level of the wider community a sense of shared meaning emerges. There are different ways in which this might be expressed in sporting terms. For some the meaning is about acceptance, the sense of community. For others it is conditional, i.e. support and sense of identity with the clubs depends upon the continued success of the clubs. For others there is something of the 'worship' of heroes. As Grimghaw (2000) notes, this can easily be seen in terms of fallible heroes, enabling the fan to focus more on reality, and to accept the less than perfect. This ties in closely with idea of spirituality seen as awareness of the self and others, and thus an awareness and acceptance of the limitations of the self as well as potential.

In all these ways of sports can represent and embody meaning, and act as the ground of significant meaning. Such meaning can extend from personal fulfillment to the more complex community meaning, including the idea of serving the society. Sports itself can act as the basis of value systems. In an earlier day for local school children, organized by the Leeds Metropolitan University, none boy suggested that he found his values and sense of ethics through golf clubs (Parry *et al.*, 2007). There he found rules of behavior and a strong sense of respect and fairness communicated by those rule. Hence, sports as a social organization communicate significant meaning. It is not surprising that Grimghaw (2000) can write of different kinds of epiphanies (revelations) that can be communicated in experience of different aspects of sports.

Meaning and purpose and personal and educational development come together in the development of virtues, and so to the identity of the sportsperson, organization or community. The virtues of the individual sportsperson are strengths of character that enable excellence (Sing, 2004). The virtues of sports in community might involve, for instance collaboration and

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empathy. This suggests a possible tension between self and other centered spirituality in sports.

The connection between sports and spirituality might seem hard to see at first. Spirituality is a difficult term to operationally define (Heaton *et al.*, 2004; Miller, 2004). Maher and Hunt (1993) broach: "What has made the process of definition of spirituality so elusive as a matter of cognitive discourse is the nature of the term itself. It is value laden, and seemingly so cultural, religiously, and ethnically bound, that any meaningful definition appears to be an exercise in futility". Spirituality is a term whose meaning everyone appears to know until they come to define it (Meehan, 2002).

Spirituality arises to have religious connotations, and genuinely the first two thematic categories cogitate this point. Lines (2002), proposes that the concept of spirituality makes little sense without defining the spirit, and considers the spirit as a bridge between the human and the divine. However, it is vague whether or not spirituality can be dichotomized from religious belief. Roberts (2004) appears to suggest that it can by proposing that many people reject the idea of religion, but believe they are spiritual. However, Udermann (2000) uses the terms interchangeably although acknowledges that the meaning of spirituality and religion for an individual are idiosyncratic. Unruh *et al.* (2002) propose that it is the religious dimension of spirituality that is most troublesome for occupational therapists; and it is likely to be so in sports. While some definitions of spirituality take a secular view, many definitions of spirituality include explicit reference to religion and higher beings (Unruh *et al.*, 2002). Clearly, unless researchers are ready to clarify the connection between religious belief and spirituality, then fluster will continue.

As athletes integrate their spirituality into their involvement in sports, they become more likely to access sacred resources, experience sacred emotions, and create meaning in unique ways (Quinten, 2008). For example, "I use spirituality or religiosity as a way to help me with the emotional roller coaster of winning and losing (Dillon and Tait, 2000)." Coaches and sports psychology consultants can also create environments that are sensitive to and respectful of athletes' integration of spirituality and sports by giving them space to draw upon their spirituality. For example, coaches might give their teams several minutes before competitions to meditate, pray, and/or reflect on important issues. By being sensitive to athletes' spirituality, coaches and consultants are more likely to gain athletes' trust and create a supportive and affirming environment. It also allows for better understanding of the whole person and what resources might, or might not be, available to work with.

Spirituality has also been connected to health and healing strategies (Udermann, 2000; Wills, 2007), which is ultimately connected to student athletes through athletic training and treating athletic injuries. Sports psychologists have initiated some quantitative research on the role of religion in the lives of athletes. This body of literature suggests religiousness is an important construct for athletes and has important implications for their well-being. For example, based on their studies of elite athletes, Storch and his colleagues (e.g., Storch *et al.*, 2001; Storch & Storch, 2002; Storch *et al.*, 2003; Storch *et al.*, 2002) reported higher levels of religiousness in collegiate athletes than non-student athletes, and that higher levels of religiousness in athletes are related to empirically based mental health variables.

Other sports psychology researchers, through qualitative methods, have taken a closer look at the role of religious beliefs and practices of athletes and how they are incorporated

into their sports participation. For example, in their interviews with 15 Olympic track and field athletes from the United States, Vernacchia *et al.*, (2000) found that religious beliefs impacted athletes in several important ways.

Review of Literature

Chamberlain and Zika (1988) reported that meaning in life was mediated by the relationship between intrinsic religiousness and life satisfaction. Steger and Frazier (2005) found that meaning in life mediated the relationship between religiousness and life satisfaction. This suggests that meaning in life is an important mediator of the relationship between everyday activities that involve religion and well-being, implying that individuals gather meaning in life from their religious activities. A person's values may change over time, but their sense of meaning remains stable (Edwards & Holden, 2001).

From the literature on meaning in life, there is a link between meaning in life and well-being (Auhagen, 2000; King *et al.*, 2006). In general, meaning in life is tied to positive well-being and crisis management strategies and is negatively related to depression. When one is in crisis or when critical life events are experienced, a religious or spiritual struggle may initially invoke ambivalence as to how this fits into meaning in life. Research has found that there is the potential for reassessing the situation and discovering new meaning in what already exists (Frankl, 1985, 1990). Through the experience, the belief system is strengthened. Religion and spirituality has shown to play a part in meaning in life, and although complex, it is important to understand the relationship between meaning in life and religiousness and spirituality.

Despite one the most indispensable variables of spirituality i.e. meaning and purpose in life, unfortunately no researcher considered this particular term for research in relation to sports so far. Fernando *et al* (2010) examined the relationship between spiritual well-being and ethical orientations in decision making through a survey of executives in organizations listed on the Australian Stock Exchange. The four domains of spiritual well-being, personal, communal, environmental and transcendental are examined in relation to idealism and relativism. Results reveal that spiritual well-being, in particular the communal domain of spiritual well-being, is correlated with and predictive of idealism. There is no doubt that idealism is very important to sportsperson but researches are yet to emerge for proper understanding of idealism in relation to spirituality.

Athletes that enter into career transition need to explore the emotions associated with making a major life change. Athletes are often taught to move past their emotions in order to be successful in sports. However, when making a transition out of sports, it is important for athletes to learn to be aware of and acknowledge their emotions. The level of anxiety that is likely to accompany the transition can affect the success of the transition. This fear can lead to a lack of confidence which creates difficulty when transferring skills (Danish *et al.*, 1992). Athletes may have an identity that is so closely tied to sports that they lack interest in exploring non-sporting options, or they lack the confidence to use the skills to be successful in other settings (Danish *et al.*, 1992). Therefore, exposure-based therapy that focuses on increasing awareness and tolerance of emotions associated with career transition would be beneficial. Exposure-based therapy can be useful to help athletes address feared stimuli. Exposure-based therapy may be helpful if an athlete perceives career transition as traumatic and has subsequently been avoiding situations he/she perceives as

fearful. In vivo (real life) exposure techniques should be implemented when possible as they are more likely to produce more rapid results and foster greater generalization than imaginal exposure (Cormer & Nurius, 2003). Through exposure-based therapy, the athlete is able to learn how to cope with the heightened emotional response associated with uncomfortable situations (Cormer & Nurius, 2003). Once athletes are better able to understand and effectively address their emotions associated with career transition, the counselor can begin to utilize psycho-educational interventions and cognitive behavioural interventions for athletes in particular and general public, in common.

Research Methodology

The whole study was finished in two phases. The first phase was related to construct the preliminary spiritual well being scale. The second phase of the study was to standardize and develop the related norms, by using the appropriate statistical techniques. The purpose of this part of the study was to develop a preliminary spiritual well being scale and a protocol for each of the variables that were representative of the spirituality. In order to scale information required to identify potential scale items for inclusion in a preliminary spiritual well being scale was obtained through previously gathered information (i.e. review of literature) including knowledge & expertise of personals i.e. scholars of spirituality working in the area were included and considered an important step in finalizing the preliminary spiritual well being scale.

The details of the procedure are described in the order given below:

1. Sampling
2. Preliminary Scale
3. Statistical Tool
4. Procedure of data collection

1. Sampling

It is one of the most important aspects of the methodology followed in an investigation. The sample for the present study was male sportspersons up to the age of 25 years. All the sportspersons were randomly obtained from intervarsity competitions and other similar state and national tournaments. The sample was divided into two phases:

- 1) For the construction of the spiritual well-being scale; and
- 2) For the standardization of the scale & development of norms.

2. Preliminary Scale

Self-formatted tool was used comprising 112 items with 14 variables after reviewing the literature and consulting the scholars of spirituality. In addition to their review of the definition of spirituality and the fourteen variables proposed for the scale, most of the authorities made suggestions concerning individual measurement items. These suggestions took the form of revisions, deletions, or additions. The suggestions from each of the authorities were studied and evaluated by the researcher and accepted and rejected on the basis of several criteria, the most important of which was universality and the opposing comments of other authorities. As a result, not all suggestions made by the authorities were incorporated into the scale. Furthermore, since changes to definitions and items were made on a rolling basis during the course of the multiple interviews, talks on telephone and internet, not all of the authorities reviewed the same set of definitions or items. Therefore, an important caveat regarding

the spiritual well-being scale is that each of its items has not been endorsed by all of the authorities or even necessarily by some of the authorities; and, therefore, the authorities are not to be held responsible individually or collectively for the wording of the measurement items.

3. Procedure of data collection

Following clearance by the organizing secretary of intervarsity competitions and other similar state and national tournaments, researcher contacted the coaches/managers of sportspersons or teams from the relevant sports regarding participation of their sportspersons in the study. All coaches agreed to allow their sportspersons to participate. Data from all participants were collected during their free time so that they may concentrate on each question at their optimum. The subjects were allowed either to fill the questionnaire in front of the researcher or take the questionnaire to his place. Before completing the questionnaire, all respondents were informed that the honesty in responses is vital to the success of the study. It was also explained that all responses would be kept strictly confidential and would be used only for research purposes. Participants signed an informed consent form prior to completing the questionnaire, which took approximately 10–15 min to complete. In total, 5,000 questionnaires were distributed, with a response rate of 99.80%.

4. Statistical Tool

A questionnaire prepared by the researcher went under rigorous treatment of factor analysis. An orthogonal factor analysis of all scale items using a varimax rotation yielded a three-factor structure. Varimax rotation technique proposed by Kaiser (1958) was used to extract the factors that contribute to spirituality. The extracted factors were rotated to the Varimax criterion of simple structure. Principal component analysis was used to determine the minimum number of independent dimensions needed to account for most of the variance in the original set of variables.

The Varimax rotation was used to simplify factors rather than variables of the factor matrix. A three-factor solution was obtained having Eigen values 1.0, and factor loading of 0.50 and above. Internal validity of the spiritual well-being scale was assessed by determining the Cronbach's alpha, a measure of the degree to which scale items measure a homogeneous construct or characteristic. Test-retest reliability was determined by correlating the total scale scores on the scale at the initial and subsequent administrations. Scores from the scale administered during the re-testing phase were used only to calculate test-retest reliability, and were excluded from all other analysis.

Analysis

The collected data were subjected to Factor Analysis which has been used in this study to decipher the behavior of numerical data concerning attributes to Spiritual Well-Being Scale. The Pearson-product-moment technique was used to inter-correlate the scores from the 112 scale items. The resulting co-relational matrix was used to factor analyze the data using the principle axes method with the vari-max criterion for rotation. The factor analysis yielded three factors with eigen values above 0.5. In the context of the analytic method that the researcher employed factor analysis- Gorsuch (1983) made a related observation that, "Factors that will appear under a wide variety of conditions are obviously more desirable than factors that appear only under specialized conditions", e.g., only when certain samples or certain factor

extraction or rotation methods are used.

Given the premises, the researcher investigated the different sportspersons upto the age of 25 from major games and sports at level of intervarsity competitions and other similar state and national tournaments and using both first-order and second-order factor analyses and several factor rotation strategies.

Many researchers acknowledge the prominent role that factor analysis can play in efforts to establish construct validity. For example, Nunnally (1978) noted that historically, "construct validity has been spoken of as (both) 'trait validity' and 'factorial validity'".

Conclusion of the Study

The prime object of the researcher was to undertake the study of construction and standardization of the spiritual well-being scale in sports context.

The following objectives of the study were determined:

(1) The primary objective of the study was to construct and standardized the spiritual well-being scale for sportspersons upto the age of 25 years of chronological age.

(2) Secondary objective was to develop norms for sportspersons upto the age of 25 years of chronological age.

To accomplish the objectives of the study, 5,000 sportspersons upto the age of 25 years were randomly selected from major games and sports of intervarsity competitions and other similar state and national tournaments of India approved by All India Universities (AIU). In the selection of subjects, a proper care was taken that sample truly represents the total population belonging to the specified level. Subsequently, the scale battery developed by the use of factor analysis, has standardized item for each variable of spirituality of the targeted sample of sportspersons up to the age the ages of 25 years.

The data and information collected for the study was rich, both in content and magnitude. It was perhaps not possible to carry out an exhaustive analysis in the time frame available.

By reviewing the standard scale batteries available, the most prominent scale variables which have been used by well known spiritual well-being scale batteries, 14 scale variables, which were predicted to measure the different aspects of spiritual well-being Scale in sports context. Male sportspersons were selected from a wide variety of variables of scale items.

At the out set, the selected 14 scale variables were administered to 5000 sportspersons from all games and sports of intervarsity competitions and other similar state and national tournaments of India with fullest care and serious attention. The data so collected were subjected to factor analysis in IBM PC AT, Computer having SPSS package (version16), at Computer Centre, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. Since factor analysis starts with the correlation matrix, correlation matrix was initially obtained. Then principal Components Analysis method was used to extract factors, which general fewer factors. Then factor matrix was extracted to have rotated factor loading.

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