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A comparative study on mental toughness between theist & atheist players

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Abstract

Recent literature clearly shows that mental toughness is essential for peak sports performance. Mentally tough players respond positively to all pressure situations and that enables them to remain relaxed and energized to function effectively in stressful situations. The purpose of the study was to compare the mental toughness of Theist and Atheist players. There are lots of studies about mental toughness, but studies comparing mental toughness between theist and atheist players are very rare in the field of sports psychology. This study consists of 50 subjects, twenty-five in each group (Theist & Atheist). To measure the variable mental toughness among the different players who confessed to being Theist and Atheist, Dr. Alan Goldberg's mental toughness questionnaire was administered. The statistical techniques used for analyzing mental toughness were descriptive statistics and independent t-tests, and the gathered data was calculated by using SPSS 16 Software. The current study revealed that there was no significant difference in scores of theists and atheist players. The *p*-value for the t-test of 0.152 for the two-tailed test with 48 degrees of freedom is 0.879 since this number is greater than our alpha level of 0.05. So, we don't have sufficient evidence to say that the mean of mental toughness between theists and atheists is statistically significant at alpha level 0.05. On the basis of present findings, it can be concluded that mental toughness has no relation to theism and atheism.

Keywords: Mental toughness, theists & atheists

1. Introduction

In today's competitive world, it is very difficult to stay mentally tough and perform better under tremendous pressure. More physical and mental skills are needed and for this, it is essential to be mentally tough hence, mental toughness is in high demand. All state that mental toughness is an important psychological characteristic in sports performance.

Mental toughness is durability in the face of adversity. To elaborate on the term mental toughness; firstly, it involves our reaction to stress, whether we crumble or persist. Secondly, it involves our response to emotions; how do we deal with our anger and frustration during an unfair situation? Finally, it involves resilience; do we push onward or concede defeat? (Zahariades, 2019) ^[1]. We know that a player with a higher level of mental toughness performs better in sports than a player with a low level. Mentally tough athletes view a difficult situation as an opportunity for personal and professional growth and not as a threat. They respond positively to all pressure situations and that enables them to remain relaxed, calm, and energized.

Theism is a belief in the existence of God. A theist is one who accepts the existence and belief in God. Presumably, an atheist is one who follows the rejection of theism or disavows the existence of God. Theism is largely founded on the corresponding range in the meaning of the terms "god" and "God". In monotheistic religion, there is only one God for the Universe. The capital 'G' comes into the picture because there is only one Supreme Being. However, when it comes to polytheistic religions, there are a lot of gods. Hence, the term "god" becomes a common noun, as it denotes a category of beings and not one Supreme Being.

2. Objective of the study

The objective of the study was to make an analysis of mental toughness between theist and atheist players.

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3. Methodology & procedure

3.1 Selection of subjects

For the purpose of the present study, 25 theist and 25 atheist players were selected on the basis of the quota sampling method. Among the twenty-five theist and atheist players, there were 15 male and 10 female players, respectively. All the players were informed precisely regarding the purpose, the procedure of data collection, and what their contribution will be. The age group of the subjects ranged from 18 to 30 years. The subjects have participated in inter-university and state-level competitions, in both individual and team games.

3.2 Tools used

For analyzing the Mental Toughness between the theist and atheist players, the Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire developed by Dr. Alan Goldberg (1998) was selected, because it is the most reliable, valid, and suitable test to measure mental toughness in sports players.

The mental toughness questionnaire developed by Dr. Alan Goldberg consists of 30 questions measuring mental toughness in five components as rebound ability, ability to

handle pressure, concentration, confidence, and motivation. There were only true or false answer options in this questionnaire. Each correct answer is awarded one point and a wrong answer gives zero points. The score for this questionnaire ranges from zero to thirty. A score of 6 in any one of the five subscales indicates a special strength in that area. A 5 indicates solid skill and a 4 or fewer highlights that particular area as a mental weakness that needs to be addressed. The overall score of 26-30 indicates strength in mental toughness and the overall score of 23-25 indicates average to moderate proficiency in mental toughness. A score of 22 or below means that the players need to spend more time in mental training for better performance.

3.3 Statistical Technique

For analyzing the mental toughness between the theist and atheist players, descriptive statistics and independent t-test were calculated by using SPSS Software. The significance level was set at 0.05. Level of confidence.

4. Result

Table I: Descriptive statistics of mental toughness among theist and atheist players

Variable	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Minimum score	Maximum score
Mental toughness	Theist	25	18.0800	4.82977	.96595	09	28
	Atheist	25	17.8800	4.45646	.89129	09	24

Table II: Independent Samples Test

Mental Toughness		Levine's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	DF	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed	.000	.991	.152	48	.880	.20000	1.3143	-2.442	2.8426
	Equal variances not assumed			.152	47.69	.880	.20000	1.3143	-2.443	2.8430

*Significance at 0.05 level of confidence

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mental toughness between theists and atheists. There were no significant differences ($t(48) = 0.152, p = 0.879$) in scores for Theist ($M = 18.08, SD = 4.829$) and Atheist ($M = 17.88, SD = 4.456$) players. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 0.20, 95% CI: -2.44 to 2.84) was very small. Hence, H1 was not supported.

According to Levine's test for equality of variance, the significant value of 0.991 is greater than the 0.05 *p-value*, so for the current study, the equal variance between the two groups is assumed. The *p-value* for the t-test of 0.152 for the two-tailed test with 48 degrees of freedom is 0.879. Since this number is greater than our alpha level of 0.05, we don't have sufficient evidence to say that the mean of mental toughness between theists and atheist is a statistically significant at alpha level of 0.05.

4.1 Discussion

Religion and sport are two major areas that compose the social landscapes in the lives of many. When we talk about religion and sports, these are significant areas of sports sociology. There are limited studies related to comparing a sociological component with a psychological variable. Bryant and McElroy (1997) [4] stated, "Sport embodies religious values including character development, hard work, and perseverance, and like religion, it promotes and inculcates

these qualities behaviors". Coakley (2003) [3] has suggested six possible reasons athletes utilize religious prayer: prayer as a coping mechanism for uncertain stressful situations; to help live a morally sound life; to sanctify athletes' commitment to sport; to put sport into perspective; to establish a strong bond of attachment between teammates; and to maintain social control. The results of the study indicate that there was an insignificant difference in mental toughness among theist and atheist players. Further, it is recommended to do the same research with a large sample and on the mental toughness of male and female athletes for a different outcome of the study.

5. Conclusion

Therefore, within the limitation of the study, it is concluded that there is no significant relation between mental toughness among theist and atheist players.

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