

SPIRITUALITY AND IRRATIONAL BELIEFS OF MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES IN SLOVAKS AND CZECHS

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ABSTRACT

Aim. The present study is focused on exploring of the relationship between spirituality and irrational beliefs particularly in relation to movement activities in Slovakia and Czechia, i.e., helplessness, idealisation, perfectionism, external vulnerability, and negative expectation.

Concept. Our research has been focused on the investigation, comparison, and correlation between the level of spirituality and irrational beliefs depending on the frequency of sport activities.

Method. The research sample (N = 469) consisted of Slovak and Czech health population aged 18-70 (M = 41.97, SD = 13.14), of which 42.2% were men (N = 198) and 57.8% were women (N = 271). The level of spirituality was identified by means of the Expressions of Spiritual Inventory-Revised – ESI-R (MacDonald, 2000). The irrational beliefs were measured using the Scale of Irrational Beliefs (Kondáš & Kordáčová, 2000).

Results. Research results confirmed the differences between the variables of spirituality and irrational beliefs based on the frequency of sports activities. Also, we confirmed the hypothesis of negative correlation between spirituality and irrational beliefs.

Conclusion. In our study, we focused on the correlations between irrational beliefs and spirituality in group of Slovak and Czech population. Based on our results we can draw several conclusions. Research results confirmed the differences between the variables of spirituality and irrational beliefs based on frequency of sports activities.

Key words: spirituality, irrational beliefs, movement activities

INTRODUCTION

The people of post-communist Europe are looking for answers to what values and heritage they should intensively develop in the new global-pluralistic culture. Even Slovaks and Czech, after the fall of the forty-year ideology of communism, face a new world, foreign values and mentalities, unknown traditions and religions. Seeing their “differences” they themselves how to perceive and evaluate other religions; whether to understand and welcome them as guests or to condemn them forever as intruders (Tkáčová & Al-Absiová et al., 2021). The fact is that religious pluralism in European countries has not achieved the expected weakening of faith. On the contrary, it turned out that it leads to an overall increase in religiosity. The surprising return of interest in religion was, on the other hand, reflected in its destiny – with the globalisation of the world grew the globalisation of religion and the activity of religious radicalism and fundamentalism, which led to a reaction in the structures of society but also in everyday interpersonal relationships (Tkáčová & Pavlíková et al., 2021).

In the past, the spirituality and the irrationality were researched in the context of traumatic transition events of spiritual fundamentalism from Lee Kirkpatrick (Kirkpatrick et al., 1991), John Brent (1994), or Steven Hassan (1994). These studies point to a way of spiritual growth, which is associated with the abandonment of authoritarian and restrictive fundamentalism. In Slovakia, the topic of spirituality and irrationality was explored in the context of religious fundamentalism, subjective well-being and mental health (Halama et al., 2006), and this research points to the connection between fundamentalism and the

surviving level of helplessness, idealisation, and neuroticism in the form of a compensatory coping mechanism, but this relationship was not confirmed at a statistically significant level. The previous research of fundamentalism and the attributes of irrational thinking also did not prove any clear evidence for any consistent relationship (Adamovová, 2005; Adamovová & Kordačová, 2002). The irrationality in religion is often painted *inter alia* as a result of a sense of threat that is creating other forms of irrationality (Tkáčová, 2021), as a result of even temporary emotions (i.e., resentment) that can in unfavourable circumstances escalate into permanent emotions (i.e., permanent resentment), which is more difficult to alleviate (Kobylarek, 2016), and indirectly also by consequence of strong religious ideology and cultural roots of believers (Alaverdov, 2021) or religious exclusivism (Žalec & Pavlíková, 2019). Primarily, the irrationality in religion is often highlighted through the emotional survival of a relationship with God, but it underestimates man's knowledge and voluntariness in faith (Suríková & Slomińska, 2001). The connection between spirituality and irrationalism was mentioned only in psychology counselling of emotional, neurotic disorders as an opportunity to using of Ellis's rational-emotive therapy (Johnson, 1992; Lawrence, 1987; Nielsen, 1994). However, the religiosity can be independent of psychological disturbance (Rife & Lester, 1997).

We lack research that would look at spirituality and irrationality in the context of a healthy population and in connection with physical activities and sport psychology. However, we can discover scientists' interest in the spirituality of movement (Haag & Paas, 1992; Hoffman, 1999; MacDonald & Kirk, 1999; Lacombe, 2001; Kahan, 2002; Parry et al., 2007; Preece & Hess, 2006). The first studies in Slovakia and the Czech Republic began to appear in recent years (Bednář, 2009; Jirásek, 2008, 2010, 2011), with the most important publication *Spirituality of physical activities* (Hurych, 2013). Rational thinking and sport are the mostly connected to altruism in common studies (Ridley, 1996, 2000; Tomanová Čerget'ová, 2008). The first mentions of concept of spiritual health use the sense of non-religious spirituality, which basic characteristics are including the aspects of an authentic mode of existence, a relationship with other people, an understanding of the world of nature, the question of the purpose and meaning of life, and transition and transcendence (Jirásek, 2015).

The basic aspects of the humanistic mission of contemporary sport in our concept also include the spiritual part (Robinson & Parry, 2013). Man realises philosophical thoughts about his own being, about other people, about the world, and about life during sports activities. High frequency of body density increases satisfaction with the quality of life also through spiritual comfort (Brod'áni, 2012). Physical activity and its sense can be perceived as a topic of spirituality of movement and its process of cultivation (Lišková & Jirásek, 2013). The human body has a prodigious importance in the cycle of life and death – the body is simultaneously dying (extinct) and thus giving a chance for a new life. The body is also an image of one's disembodied (and also spiritual – in religious and secularised atheistic subcontent) qualities of a person, which

we can observe in the motivation structure of athletes (Oborný, 2015). A person's spirituality also expresses the quality of the meaningfulness of his existence in the world, where human existence is, as opposed to despair as seen, for example, by Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard (1813-1855), confronted with a hope to experience absolute freedom and salvation (Binetti et al., 2021; Pavlíková, 2016; more in receptions in Slovak and Czech: Králik 2013a,b; Králik & Pavlíková 2013). The sphere of modern sport absorbed the spectrum of original anthropological elements (rivalry, aggression, tendency to dominance and victory) in an authentic connection with emotional and spiritual states during cultural development (Nemec, 2010). This idea leads us to research that would prove the connection between spirituality and sport as well as irrationality.

METHODS

Research goal

Our research has been focused on the investigation, comparison, and correlation between the level of spirituality and irrational beliefs depending on the frequency of sport activities. We have established two research questions: Are there differences in spirituality and irrational beliefs based on the frequency of sports activities? Are there relationships between the variables of spirituality and irrational beliefs? The present study aims to test the hypothesis of whether there is a negative relationship between spirituality and irrational beliefs oriented on helplessness, idealisation, perfectionism, external vulnerability, and negative expectation. We assume that the level of spirituality will decrease with the increasing frequency of sports activities, and in the case of irrational beliefs the opposite will be the case.

Participants and study design

The study sample consists of 469 participants - 42.2% men (N = 198) and 57.8% women (N = 271) - aged from 18 to 70, with average age of 41.97 ± 13.14 years. The whole study sample was composed of population in Slovakia and in Czechia with age over 18 years. From perspective of frequency in sports activities, the study sample consists of 10.4% non-athletes (N = 49), 41.4% casual athletes (N = 194), 23.5% regular athletes (N = 110), and 24.7% professional athletes (N = 116).

The data collection phase was conducted in December 2020. The measuring methods were distributed in online form using a snowball technique to collect data. Based on this technique, members of the required group were asked to contact potential respondents in close community who met the criteria of our research intention. All participants of the research agreed with the conditions of research and have been informed about consent complying with ethical and research standards.

Measuring instruments

The research included a sociodemographic questionnaire and sport frequency identification part, followed by the use of other test standardised methods. The set of questionnaires consisted of two measuring methods – the one for spirituality measuring and the second for irrational beliefs. The spiritual structure and the level of spirituality have been identified with *The Expressions of Spiritual Inventory – Revised – ESI-R* (MacDonald, 2000), which is a 32-item self-report questionnaire that is designed to measure a five dimensional model of spirituality – cognitive orientation toward spirituality, experiential phenomenological dimension, existential well-being, paranormal beliefs, and religiosity, whereas thirty of items equally divided across spirituality dimensions and two items as measures of face validity and response honesty. The ESI-R uses a 5-point Likert response scale (0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neutral, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree) for respondents to rate the extent to which they agree with the items as being applicable to themselves. This scale was verified for Slovak health population by Michal Stríženec (2004, 2005). The *Scale of Irrational Beliefs – IPA* (Kondáš & Kordáčová, 2000) is a response original Slovak scale of the Likert type, which captures the level of irrational type beliefs. This scale was applied and based on Rational Emotive Behaviour Theory of Albert Ellis (Kondáš & Kordáčová, 2000). The scale consists of 40 items, where the respondent chooses on a 5-point scale the relevant answer (0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neutral, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree). This scale consists of 5 factors – helplessness, idealisation, perfectionism, external vulnerability, and negative expectations. This scale was selected to determine the level of irrational beliefs in health population. During the evaluation of the results, we worked with the total achieved score.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to give an indicator of mean scores on subscales of spirituality and irrational beliefs in health Slovak and Czech population. The study used the correlation research design, whereby we analysed the frequency of particular item and correlations by means of correlation analysis between cardinal variables using Pearson coefficient representing the linear dependence between the two variables which is used in the normal distribution of data. The tightness of relationship was assessed for 5% and 1% of the level of statistical significance. Data were collected anonymously and evaluated using a statistical program SPSS (Version 23 for Windows, IBM, Armonk, NY, USA).

RESULTS

The basic descriptive characteristics – mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum score value achieved by the Slovak and Czech health population in the questionnaire ESI-R (MacDonald, 2000) and in the scale IPA

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of spirituality (ESI-R) and irrational beliefs (IPA) based on sport frequency in Slovak and Czech health population

Scale	Variable	Sport frequency	N	M	SD	Min	Max
ESI-R	COS	non-athletes	49	17.24	5.97	1	24
		casual	194	17.80	5.03	4	24
		regular	110	16.69	5.37	0	24
		professional	116	18.63	5.41	0	24
	EPD	non-athletes	49	9.89	5.41	0	20
		casual	194	11.09	5.88	0	24
		regular	110	11.32	6.86	0	24
		professional	116	13.08	6.72	0	24
	EWB	non-athletes	49	13.67	3.28	5	20
		casual	194	14.20	3.74	1	24
		regular	110	15.69	3.44	4	20
		professional	116	8.93	4.17	3	20
PAR	non-athletes	49	9.18	3.49	1	15	
	casual	194	10.62	4.12	0	22	
	regular	110	11.54	4.01	0	23	
	professional	116	12.00	2.64	10	15	
REL	non-athletes	49	15.85	6.97	0	24	
	casual	194	16.17	5.93	0	24	
	regular	110	14.07	6.33	0	23	
HL	non-athletes	49	21.79	6.57	11	37	
	casual	194	20.80	6.86	10	44	
	regular	110	21.40	5.93	10	40	
ID	non-athletes	49	23.10	5.59	10	33	
	casual	194	23.11	4.99	8	37	
	regular	110	22.20	4.87	8	33	
PE	non-athletes	49	18.12	5.25	9	33	
	casual	194	17.73	4.84	8	33	
	regular	110	17.77	5.09	8	30	
EV	non-athletes	49	27.51	5.42	15	39	
	casual	194	28.72	6.44	10	43	
	regular	110	28.30	6.50	10	43	
NE	non-athletes	49	17.06	4.36	10	26	
	casual	194	17.27	4.75	7	30	
	regular	110	16.37	5.13	7	22	
		professional	116	15.06	4.65	7	29

Source: own research

(Kondáš & Kordáčová, 2000), and are presented in Table 1. Subsequently, in Table 2 we present the results of correlation analysis between the spirituality dimensions – cognitive orientation toward spirituality (COS), experiential phenomenological dimension (EPD), existential well-being (EWB), paranormal beliefs (PAR), and religiousness (REL) of health population and their irrational belief – helplessness (HL), idealisation (ID), perfectionism (PE), external vulnerability (EV), and negative expectations (NE). The Cronbach coefficient alphas observed in our study – ESI-R: COS – $\alpha = .656$, EPD – $\alpha = .681$, EWB – $\alpha = .640$, PAR – $\alpha = .659$, REL – $\alpha = .666$; EPI: HL – $\alpha = .628$, ID – $\alpha = .615$, PE – $\alpha = .598$, EV – $\alpha = .609$, and NE – $\alpha = .614$ – ensure the reliability of these inventories for a particular dataset.

Table 2

Results of correlation analysis between ESI-R and IPA

Scale	Variables	IPA					
		total score	HL	ID	PE	EV	NE
ESI-R	COS	-.209**	-.318**	-.101*	-.087	-.059	-.230**
	EPD	-.203**	-.277**	-.162**	-.027	-.124**	-.176**
	EWB	-.134**	-.072	-.074	-.135**	-.170**	-.061
	PAR	.037	.025	.041	.096*	-.062	.071
	REL	-.137**	-.237**	-.060	-.026	-.014	-.182**
	total score	-.215**	-.300**	-.122**	-.059	-.130**	-.201**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Source: own research

In Table 1, in the variable of spirituality we can identify significantly higher score in the group of professional athletes in all scales except EWB. In the variable of irrational beliefs we found a difference between groups in the scale of PE, and EV – higher mean of score in group of professional athletes – and in the scale of NE – lower mean of score in the same group. As seen in Table 2, there are significant negative relationships between the spirituality and irrational beliefs. A significant negative correlation was found between several spirituality scales – COS ($r = -.209$), EPD ($r = -.203$), EWB ($r = -.134$), and REL ($r = -.137$). Only in case of the PAR ($r = .037$) scale of spirituality there are some finding in positive direction. The correlation between variables in total score is also in negative direction ($r = -.215$) at the level of significance $p < .01$. From the point of view of irrational beliefs, the highest rate of negative correlation with spirituality in total score we can find in scale of HL ($r = -.300$), also in scale of NE ($r = -.201$). The correlation in total score of spirituality with EV ($r = -.130$) and ID ($r = -.122$) is also significant at the level $p < .01$. In the scale of PE we can see the correlation with EWB ($r = -.135$), and with PAR ($r = .096$).

DISCUSSION

In the first part of our research we try to answer the research question if there are differences in spirituality and irrational beliefs based on frequency of sports activity. In all scale exclude existential well-being (EWB) we can find higher level of answering score in the group of professional athletes. These results are applicable to the concept of non-religious spirituality in sport psychology (Ridley, 1996).

In the second part of our research, we focused on relationship and results of correlation analysis between spirituality – measured by ESI-R (MacDonald, 2000), and irrational beliefs – measured by IPA (Kondáš & Kordáčová, 2000). The spirituality inventory used in our research confirmed the negative correlation with irrational beliefs in four scales – COS (cognitive orientation), EPD (experiential phenomenologist), EWB (existential well-being), and REL (religiousness). The highest negative value of correlation with irrational beliefs was reached by the relationship between cognitive orientation toward spirituality ($r = -.209^{**}$) and experiential phenomenological dimension ($r = -.203^{**}$).

There is positive correlation in only one case, and it is scale of paranormal beliefs (PAR). In this case the paranormal beliefs are characterised by belief in extrasensory perception, transmission of thoughts, witches and ghosts. We expected a positive correlation with irrational thinking in this section.

Our examination turned out to have several limitations. The method of obtaining research sample participants may be questioned due to the purposeful acquisition of research persons. The issue of relevance of our statements can also partially lie in the motivation of the research participants, which might have been influenced by online testing form and the duration of the measurement tools. We recommend using our result as the basis for the hypotheses of next research studies in order to confirm our findings.

CONCLUSIONS

In our study, we focused on the correlations between irrational beliefs and spirituality in group of Slovak and Czech population. Based on our results we can draw several conclusions. Research results confirmed the differences between the variables of spirituality and irrational beliefs based on the frequency of sports activities. Our findings confirmed the relationships between the variables – spirituality and irrational beliefs. The results can help performance coaches and sport psychologist better understand the situation-related aspects of human beliefs in situation of failure or the way to defend oneself from defeat in rational way. Also, this information can be used to advice problems of motivation loss, locus of control, and realistic belief in sport competition.

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