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Evaluation of superstitious behaviour in elite male sportsperson

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to assess superstitious behaviour among elite male sportsperson. To conduct the study, 100 elite male sportsperson (Average age 25.23 years) were selected as sample. The criteria for selection of subject was participation in national level tournament with top four finish in individual and team sports. The sample was selected purposively. Superstition scale prepared by Dubey and Dixit (2011) was used to assess superstitious behaviour among elite male sportsperson. Results reveal that majority i.e. 78% male elite sportspersons were highly superstitious while 18% exhibited moderate level of superstition. Only 4% subjects were non-superstitious. It was concluded that uncertainty of outcome of a match makes elite male sportsperson superstitious so that they assume false illusion that they are in control of the outcome of an event.

Keywords: Superstition, elite, sportsperson

Introduction

Almost every culture and communities have their own superstition and beliefs. The superstitious belief exists from thousands of years. Vyse (2013) [7] propagated that superstitious beliefs are those functions and beliefs that enables a person to decrease anxiety in a given situation. He postulated that the main objective of these rituals and superstition is to ease off uncertainty and reduce anxiety.

Psychologists like Brevers, Dan, Noel and Nils (2011) [2] believe that superstitious belief gives an illusion that we are in control of the situation and the outcome. The main theme of any sporting event is uncertainty of final results. This intriguing aspect also make athletes superstitious social group (Guttman, 1978) [1]. When two sides are equal, the uncertainty regarding winning and losing is also at its greatest height. Sporting contest between two equal opponents are exciting for fans, it also leads to superstitious behaviour.

Ciborowski, 1997 [3], Schippers & Van Lange, 2006 [6], Brevers *et al.*, 2011 [2], Dömötör, 2016 [4] to name a few, worked extensively in the field of sport regarding superstitious behaviour of sportsperson. In Indian context no study has yet been conducted on sportsperson with superstition as central theme. This is even more surprising in Indian cultural where rituals and superstition are part of day-to-day life. Hence the present study was planned to assess superstitious behaviour among elite male sportsperson.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that elite male sportsperson will be highly superstitious.

Methodology

The following methodological steps were taken in order to conduct the present study.

Sample

To conduct the study, 100 elite male sportsperson (Average age 25.23 years) were selected as sample. The criterion for selection of subjects was participation in national level tournament with top four finishes in individual and team sports. The sample was selected purposively.

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Tools

Superstition Scale

Superstition scale prepared by Dubey and Dixit (2011) ^[5] was used to assess superstitious behaviour among elite male sportsperson. It consists of 40 statement with three alternatives for each statement. This scale has been standardized and it is fairly reliable and valid with Spearman Brown coefficient of .82 and correlation coefficient with Radical conservative attitude scale.

Procedure

100 elite male sportspersons were identified by the researcher keeping in mind the inclusion criteria. A written consent was taken before administering psychological scale. Subjects were

assured that the information and response will be used only for research purpose. Superstition scale prepared by Dubey and Dixit (2011) ^[5] was administered to each subjects according to their convenience and comfort. The scoring was carried out as per author's manual. Afterward subject were divided into three categories i.e. highly superstitious, moderately superstitious and not superstitious respectively. To compare distribution of elite male sportsperson in various categories of superstition, χ^2 test is used. Results depicted in table 1.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Male Sportspersons on the Basis of Various Categories of Superstition

Categories of Superstition	Frequency	Percentage (%)	χ^2
Highly Superstitious (More than 100)	78	78%	$\chi^2 = 91.28 (p < .01)$
Moderately Superstitious (Between 84-100)	16	16%	
No Superstition (Less than 84)	06	6%	
Total	100	100.0	

$\chi^2 (df=2) = 5.99$ at .05 level and 9.21 at .01 level

Results presented in table 1 reveal that majority i.e. 78% elite male sportsperson were highly superstitious while 16% were moderately superstitious. Only 6% of selected elite male sportspersons were not superstitious. The calculated $\chi^2 = 91.28$ which is statistically significant at .01 level confirms the above finding.

The competition at elite level is really tough in modern world. It is equally true in sports also. Uncertainty related to outcome of a particular match or competition is very high because two opposing teams of players match each other in every aspect of the game. It leads to superstitious behaviour and an elite sportsperson do it for a imagery illusion that by doing a certain physical / mental activity the outcome of an event will be in his favour. This is highlight by researchers such as Schippers and Van Lang, 2006 ^[6], Brevers *et al.*, 2011 ^[2] also. Hence the results once again reiterate the fact that due to highly uncertain outcome environment in sports majority of elite athletes are superstitious.

Conclusion

It was concluded that uncertainty of outcome of a match makes elite male sportsperson superstitious so that they assume false illusion that they are in control of the outcome of an event.

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