

# The Effectiveness of Stress Management Training through Spiritual Therapy Content on Sports Anxiety: a Quasi-Experimental Study

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## Abstract

**Background.** Due to the periodic nature and rapid activities of badminton, in addition to paying attention to technical and tactical skills, special attention should also be given to psychological skills, which play a significant role in the performance of badminton players. In this regard, the present study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of stress management training through the content of spiritual therapy on sports anxiety of the females from Mazandaran who were invited to the selection camp of the country's adult badminton championship.

**Methods.** This quasi-experimental research was conducted in three phases of pretest, posttest and follow-up. Considering the purpose of the study, 10 people were selected from the statistical population, and then they were randomly and equally assigned to control and experimental groups.

The experimental group participated in a stress management training program which was implemented through 8 group sessions held once a week. Both groups completed the anxiety questionnaire in in three stages: baseline, after training and follow-up. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

**Results.** The results of covariance analysis showed that the stress management training program with the content of spiritual therapy had a significant effect on reducing sports anxiety of the females playing badminton in both stages of post-test and the related follow-up 45 days later.

**Conclusion.** Stress management based on spiritual therapy can be one of the effective approaches in reducing the symptoms of sports anxiety along with other medication interventions. The findings of this study confirm the acceptability of the theoretical issues presented in this basin.

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## Extended Abstract

### Background

Given the periodic nature and rapid activities of badminton, in addition to importance of technical and tactical skills, special attention should also be

given to psychological skills, which play a significant role in the performance of badminton players. Athletes often experience certain conditions which negatively influence their performance. Moreover, the

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sport anxiety may lead to the occurrence of various mental and behavioral disorders and consequently to poor athletic performance, especially during competitions. Since badminton is a type of sport which requires instant movements and a lot of concentration, being calm and minimizing the anxiety and stress level can have a great effect on increasing the players' concentration. Spirituality has been considered as an important and effective factor in the promotion of mental health, often defined as personal beliefs and actions that are influenced by a relationship with God or a superior power in the world. Reducing stress through spiritual therapy is a type of psycho-educational intervention that helps people practice mental meditation. In this regard, the present study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of stress management training through the content of spiritual therapy on sport anxiety of the females from Mazandaran Province who were invited to the selective camp of the country's adult badminton championship.

## Methods

This quasi-experimental research was conducted in three phases of pretest, posttest and follow-up. Considering the purpose of the study, 10 people were selected from the statistical population, and then they were randomly and equally assigned to control and experimental groups.

Stress management sessions based on spiritual therapy for the experimental group in 8 sessions, each session was held for an hour and a half and the control group did not receive any treatment program. Both groups completed the anxiety questionnaire in in three stages: baseline, after training and follow-up. For the purpose of data collection, a week prior to the selective camp and during friendly competitions, the researcher provided the badminton practitioners with the essential information on the practices and the way they were going to be done. In additions, the researcher explained the various benefits of stress

reduction through spiritual activities such as mental and physical tranquility, an increase in functions, better concentration, and anxiety reduction. After that, the research received the feedbacks from the badminton practitioners on the effects and benefits of stress reduction through highlighting spirituality. In this session, the emphasis was on reducing anxiety before and during competitions, during which the researcher answered the participants' questions for 20 minutes to remove any existing ambiguities. After that, they were asked to fill out the sport anxiety questionnaire once before the beginning of 8 training sessions and once after those treatment sessions. In addition, 45 days after the start of the baseline, the questionnaire was administered again among the participants during the follow-up phase. Finally, the pre-test, post-test and follow-up data were compared both descriptively and inferentially.

Sport anxiety scale (Smith, small and Schutz, 1990); It is a multidimensional self-report test designed to measure physical and cognitive anxiety. This test has 21 items in a four-point likert range (1 to 4) to measure 3 subscales. These subscales include: physical anxiety (9 items), anxiety (7 items) and lack of concentration (5 items). Subjects were asked to rate how much they experienced the feelings and thoughts expressed in the test phrases before or during the competition. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire in Iran have been investigated by Hadinejad (2012) whose cronbach's alpha has been reported to be 0.849.

## Results

The results showed that the average age of the participants in the experimental group and control group was 25.3 to 26.7 years, respectively. All of five participants in the experimental group were single, and 3% of five participants in the control group were married and 97% were single. The mean scores of sport anxiety of female badminton players in the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages were 32.80, 27.60,

26.40 in the experimental group and 32, 32.20, and 31.60 in the control group, respectively. Before presenting the analysis results of covariance, the presumption of parametric tests were tested. Accordingly, the results of Shapiro-wilk test showed that the presumption of normality of the data sample distribution was established. The general presumption of variance was also examined by the Levene's test, which indicated that it was not significant and showed that the general presumption of variance was observed.

The mean scores of sport anxiety in the two groups were compared through covariance analysis. Calculated F values for sport anxiety while pre-test was controlled, were found to be significant in both post-test and follow-up phases.

The results of the analysis of covariance showed that the training program based on stress management with the content of spiritual therapy, in both immediate and 45-day delayed post-intervention stages, significantly reduced the sport anxiety of the female from Mazandaran who were invited to the selective camp of the national championship badminton tournament.

## Conclusion

Spiritual therapy can be one of the effective options in reducing the symptoms of sport anxiety along with other medical interventions. The findings of this study confirm the acceptability of the theoretical issues presented in this study. Teaching spiritual skills involves the human tendency to seek the meaning of life through self-exaltation or through the need to connect with something beyond itself that can reinforce the optimistic nature of the individual.

So when people learn not to evaluate risks and crises too seriously, they will not feel inefficient, which is one of the causes of anxiety. Factors such as reliance on God, patience, contentment, and a positive outlook on the future can bring peace of mind, in a more practical form, reduce anxiety in individual. In fact spiritually prepares the feeling of peace, adaptation and the creation of a value and purpose in life. Therefore, athletes who use this skill can reduce the probability of failure and control their emotions with adaptive behaviors during competition and achieve more peace by relying on God to Reduces stress, anxiety and despair. To sum up, the results of this study can be considered as an important step in representing the indigenous needs of Iranian athletes and improving their mental health, especially female badminton players who may need more concentration and tranquility in the tournaments.

According to the results of this study, therapists and specialists are recommended to pay attention to the education based on stress management with spiritual therapy content for treatment facilitation of anxiety and stress and other psychological problems. Failure to address simultaneous problems is one of the limitations of the present study, which encounter the generalizability of research results to difficulty. Also, the lack of evaluation of the underlying factors role in the effectiveness of this intervention was another limitations of the present study.