

Daily spiritual experience in Indonesian elite athletes: able-bodied and disabilities

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Abstract

Spirituality is the individual's belief in the existence, presence and involvement of transcendent divine beings in everyday life. This belief is accompanied by activities that aim to get closer to the transcendent figure (God). The aim of this research is to describe the level of daily spiritual experience in the elite able-bodied athletes and with disabilities, compare the spiritual experience level of the elite athletes of able-bodied and with disabilities, describe the socio-demography of elite athletes able-bodied and with disabilities. To support the study, we used a descriptive analysis method of 10 elite athletes consisting of five elite athletes with able-bodied athletes and five elite athletes with disabilities. The Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale was used in this study to measure daily spiritual experiences. The univariate test model was used to test the relationship between sociodemographic factors and the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale score. The results show that of the 10 respondents have a different average score of daily spiritual experiences. Five able-bodied athletes show a very high spiritual level, while two athletes with disabilities exhibit a very high spiritual level and three people with a high spiritual level. Further research is needed to conduct in-depth studies related to the Daily Spiritual Experience in athletes by combining and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data.

Keywords: Spiritual, daily spiritual experience, elite athlete, able-bodied, disability

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Introduction

A person's beliefs and religions have historically been closely related to body techniques, character and body practices (Benn & Dagkas, 2013). An exhilarating experience in sport itself is a form of worship (White, 2018). The meaning of sports in our personal lives is an expression of spirituality, there are times when it goes up and sometimes it goes down (Hutch, 2012), it should not be considered something separate from the body (Noaparast, 2013). Life is seen spiritually as decline and renewal parallel to sporting activity as failure and domination (Hutch, 2012). Sport and spirituality are developing fields of academic study (Smith, 2019). Reference has often been made to bodies of data linking religious variables with mental and physical health outcomes (Underwood & Teresi, 2002). Every professional must respect the authenticity and spiritual needs of the personality, so that he can remember the preparation for concrete activities in physical education, sports training, or sporting performances (Jirásek, 2015). From this belief, it is clear that the spiritual aspect cannot be ignored in sports activities, especially in elite athletes with very heavy pressure and challenges.

Although there have been no previous studies using the DSES on elite athletes, many qualitative studies have explored the spiritual meaning felt by elite athletes. The former athlete who shared his personal story of finding spiritual meaning while running has maintained a strong runner identity after the transition and continues to run even though their competitive abilities have decreased (N. Ronkainen & Ryba, 2012), simply follow the footsteps and enjoy running without performing for anyone apart from God and yourself (Cronshaw & Parker, 2018). This introspective spiritual experience results from the physical and emotional struggles of running (Meyer & Johnson, 2018). The nature of sport in turn encourages a number of spiritual practices (Hoven & Kuchera, 2016). Someone is involved in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu to pursue spirituality (Pope, 2019). The flow of personal and spiritual meaning in sports includes, among others, a spiritual journey (N. J. Ronkainen et al., 2015).

Elite sports are always inflated with a tone of praise that gives birth to sports heroes, as a strategy to keep the emotional ethos of competition high and to encourage the sports business industry (Silva & Howe, 2012). Modern sports have become an extraordinary magnet in the joints of human life, even for some groups considered to be a religion that has a very strong influence (Sofyan et al., 2021). Religious belief and spirituality are standard constructs of the paralympic sports culture (Howe & Parker, 2014). The context of paralympic sports (disability) presents another unique area that deserves investigation, especially as paralympic athletes (with disabilities) experience different challenges from able-bodied athletes in pursuit of superior sports performance (de Cruz et al., 2017). Tension arises when the "deformed body" is expected to adapt to normal sports practices (Fitzgerald, 2012). Disability is often equated with inferiority and deficiency rather than neutral differences which may require adaptation (Kiuppis, 2016). Athletes with disabilities compete at the elite level who are equal to their peers who are not disabled (Wareham et al., 2017). Athletes with disabilities consider that their commitment to sport is what defines them as athletes, regardless of their disability status (Pack et al., 2016).

As far as we know, there have been no studies of daily spiritual experiences in elite athletes. The main objective of this study is to describe the daily spiritual experience level of elite able-bodied athletes and disabilities, to compare the spiritual experience levels of the elite able-bodied athletes and with disabilities and to describe the socio-demography of the spiritual experiences of the elite able-bodied athletes and with disabilities. Whether we realize it or not, for many people to identify themselves as someone who is religious or not, with various contexts of life they live. However, spiritual values must exist in each individual so that they can feel transcendent things. Spiritual, of course, is very much needed and even every human being must have, including the elite athletes of able-bodied and disabilities. Spirituality is an important dimension in life that gives strength to the presence of other forces that control itself to achieve success, so that every human being is aware that we do not stand alone and of course need help and servitude to God. Our study tries to fill the gaps in our knowledge of the spiritual experiences of elite athletes by using the DSES developed by Underwood and Teresi. It measures experiences of relationship with and awareness of the divine or transcendent (Underwood, 2006). The goal of this instrument is to obtain a measure of various qualities of the spiritual life as it plays out in the experiential and emotional details of daily life (Underwood, 2011). The DSES is a 16-item, self-report measure of perceived awareness of the transcendent (i.e., God, the divine) as manifested in daily life activities (S. Lee et al., 2018; Underwood, 2006).

A relationship with the transcendent appears to be enriching and important in and of itself, independent of any religious association (Khanna & Greyson, 2014). Findings have linked various aspects of religiousness and spirituality with a broad array of health outcomes, including mental health, physical health, and mortality risk (Ellison & Fan, 2008). Since its publication in 2002, the scale has been widely used in social science research, resulting in more than 200 published studies, more than 40 translations, and more than 500 citations of Underwood and Teresi's (2002) article (Kim et al., 2016). Many consider spirituality to be an important psychological aspect of overall well-being with the potential to influence mental and physical health (McCauley et al., 2008).

Method

Participants

The population in this study amounted to 27 people consisting of 10 male and 17 female. 27 participants embracing different religions, 23 are Muslim, two are Christian, one is Catholic, and one is Buddhist. The formal education participants are two masters, 10 undergraduates, and 15 high school students. Employment status, namely 12 civil servants, two candidates for civil servants, one TNI / POLRI, 14 people have not worked. Population sports are three able-bodied athletes, four disabled athletes, an able-bodied bicycle racing person and a disabled person, six able-body Judo, three from kurash, one person sepak takraw, one person basketball, one person swimming, three person soccer.

Sampling Procedures

In this study, the sampling procedure used non-probability sampling techniques with purposive sampling type. To make it easier to determine the sample, we limit the sample criteria. These criteria include: 1) Having a religion that is embraced as a personal belief, 2) the minimum education level of school wins over and a maximum of a doctorate degree, 3) minimum achievement of winning an international championship (at least the SEA Games), 4) the sample is willing to fill out a questionnaire. Participants were selected according to predetermined criteria in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the study with 10 participants. To obtain a sample in this study, we were assisted by two former national athletes. The selection of the ten athletes to become participants was on the basis that the participants were former athletes or athletes who were still active who had defended Indonesia who played internationally. For information on the achievements of participants in this study can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 <Participants' Achievement Info>

Athlete Identity	Achievement
001	Gold Medal SEA Games 2007 & 2009
002	Silver Medal Asian Games 2018 & Gold Medal SEA Games 2019
003	Silver Medal Asian Games 2018
004	Silver Medal Asian Games 2018
005	Gold Medal SEA Games 2003, 2005, 2007
006	Gold Medal & Silver Medal Asian Para Games 2018
007	Gold Medal Dubai World Para Athletic 2019
008	Gold Medal Asian Para Games 2018
009	Silver Medal Asian Para Games 2018
010	Gold Medal ASEAN Para Games 2017

Source: Personal research data

Materials and Apparatus

In this study, the instrument used was the DSES. The psychometric properties of 16 original statement items have been established, and have been shown to be a valid and reliable measure of the DSES construct (Idler et al., 2003; Skarupski et al., 2010; Underwood & Teresi, 2002). DSES is a reporting scale for assessing experiences related to transcendence in everyday life. Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale was developed using extensive qualitative testing in various groups. It includes constructs such as awe, gratitude, compassion, love related to transcendence, also includes measures of awareness of discernment/inspiration and a deep sense of inner peace.

The first 15 items were answered on a Likert-type scale, with scores ranging from 6 (many times a day), 5 (every day), 4 (almost every day), 3 (several days), 2 (occasionally) and 1 (never or almost never). Item 16, generally stating how close you feel to God? is answered on a 4-point scale (1 = not at all close, 2 = rather close, 3 = very close, and 4 = always close). The total score is obtained by adding up the scores of the 16 items, which can vary from 16 to 94. A score between 16 and 36 indicates a relatively poor (low) spiritual level, a score between 37 and 56 indicates moderate spiritual level, a score between 57 and 76 indicates a spiritual level. spiritual level, and a score between 77 and 94 indicates a very high spiritual level (Salehi et al., 2016).

Data Analysis

In this study, the data analysis we used was with the help of SPSS 21 software to make it easier to describe the research data. The statistics used are univariate tests to check the level of Daily Spiritual Experiences for our participants. We also used the independent sample t-test or Wilcoxon test to compare the mean differences between elite able-bodied athletes and disabilities. We also use linear regression to model variables associated with Daily Spiritual Experiences scores.

Results and Discussions

Result

Participant Socio-demography

From the participant's socio-demography, we can conclude through several descriptive analyzes. First, in terms of religion, the number of participants who are Muslim is far more (dominant) than other religions. This is based on the fact that the number of followers of Islam in Indonesia is very dominant compared to adherents of other religions. Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim religion in the world. Second, almost 80% of the participants are government employees. This shows that there is more attention from the Indonesian government for athletes who have made the nation and state proud at the international level by providing job guarantees to be employed in government institutions / agencies. Third, related to the sample education level. If you look at the level of education, it turns out that elite athletes are aware of education, this shows that education plays an important role in the development of science and can support athletes' careers. The basis is that being an athlete is limited in time, after not being an athlete, a steady job is one that can sustain a decent life for athletes in the future. Table 2 shows the socio-demography of the 10 participants in our study.

Table 2 <Participant Socio-demographies>

Items	Frequency (N=10)	Able-bodied (N=5)	Disabilities (N=5)
Religion			
Islam	8	3	5
Christian	1	1	-
Catholic	1	1	-
Gender			
Male	6	3	3
Female	4	2	2
Level of Education			
Magister	2	2	-
Bachelor	3	2	1
Senior High School	5	1	4
Job			
Government employees	6	5	1
Candidate Government Employees	2	-	2
Not yet working	2	-	2
Sport			
Athletics	7	3	4
Bike Racing	2	1	1
Judo	1	1	-

Source: Personal research data

Athlete Spirituality Level

The main objectives of this study are to describe the daily spiritual experience level of elite able-bodied athletes and disabilities, to compare the spiritual experience levels of able-bodied athletes and disabilities and to examine sociodemographic correlations of spiritual experiences using the DSES. We found a daily spiritual experience level that was 70% very high in our population which illustrates that the participants have daily spiritual experiences or even many times a day. For able-bodied athletes, all athletes experience and experience spiritual experiences in each of their sports activities both during training and in competition, two athletes with disabilities experience and experience very high spiritual

experiences when practicing or competing, this is related to the scope of research in sports field. While 30% have a spiritual level in the high category and all are athletes with disabilities. For more details, see tables 3 and 4.

Table 3 <Spiritual Level of Able-bodied Athletes>

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very high	5	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4 <Spiritual Levels of Athletes with Disabilities>

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High	3	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Very high	2	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	5	100.0	100.0	

Analyze participant's answer item

DSES is a reporting scale for assessing experiences related to transcendence in everyday life. The DSES was developed using extensive qualitative testing in various groups. Includes constructs such as awe, gratitude, compassion, love related to transcendence. It also includes a measure of awareness of discernment / inspiration and a deep sense of inner peace. Figure 1 shows a scale graph of daily spiritual experiences.

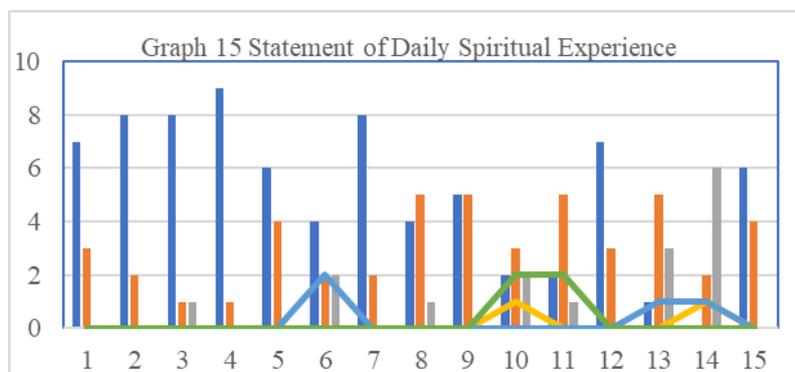


Figure 1. Graph scale 6 of the distribution of respondents' answers

Item: Relationship. 1. I feel God's presence, 2. I experience a connection with God throughout my life. Related to this, the results of the questionnaire show that God's presence and connection with God for the elite able-bodied athletes and with disabilities are very close, so that everyday phenomena can be used as a reflection in getting closer to God. Item: Joy, a transcendent sense of self. 3. During worship, or other times in contact with God, I feel joy, which lifts me from my daily affairs. Regarding worship, several religions differ in the amount of obligatory worship. For Muslims themselves, one of the obligatory prayers, namely 'Shalat', is carried out five times a day without being added to the 'Sunnah' worship, meaning that from waking up to going to sleep, Muslims always pray. For the elite Muslim athletes, worship is not used as a burden even though it may conflict with training and competition times. Item: Strength and comfort. 4. I find strength in my religion or spirituality, 5. I find comfort in my religion or spirituality. All athletes show that religion has a very vital role in every individual, meaning that humans need God, not the other way around. Humans without religion will feel emptiness in their hearts. This is indicated by their embracing one of the religions according to their beliefs, even though it is sometimes influenced by the religion of the parents who gave birth.

Item: Peace. 6. I feel a deep inner peace or harmony. The results show that not all athletes experience inner peace several times a day. It could be intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as the training ground, family problems, financial matters, defeats, injuries and so on. Big or small it will have an impact on feelings of peace. However, if the spiritual level of the athlete is good, of course it can control feelings that can interfere with achieving a sense of peace. *Item: Divine help. 7. I ask for God's help in the middle of my daily activities.* All athletes claim that they always ask for God's help in the midst of daily activities, maybe when they are going, are and have been training even during competitions, this is the umpteenth proof that humans need God not the other way around. *Item: Divine Guidance. 8. I feel guided by God in the midst of my daily activities.* Most athletes feel guided by God. Elite athletes feel that God provides instructions for exercising both during training and competing. *Item: Perception of divine love. 9. I feel God's love for me directly, 10. I fall in love with God through other people.* The results showed that elite athletes felt God's love directly. As for falling in love through other people, the results show that not all athletes experience it, but they experience it themselves. Certain events that may cause an athlete to naturally fall in love with God, for example, when an athlete experiences a failure or victory while competing.

Item: A feeling of awe. 11. I am spiritually touched by the beauty of god creation. For the elite, able-bodied athletes are not so foreign to be able to carry out sports activities with beautiful, fast, strong, powerful movements. But it would be amazing if it was an elite athlete with a disability. Spiritually, of course, we should be grateful for God's gift to us, and of course we will feel touched by God's creation which is lacking but is able to carry out normal people's activities. *Items: Gratitude and appreciation. 12. I feel grateful for the blessings bestowed on me.* The results showed that all athletes felt grateful for God's blessings and gifts. The indicators include, among others, they continue to exercise diligently to keep the body healthy, maintain and increase the quantity and quality of exercise in order to be able to display their best ability to make personal, family, nation and state proud. *Item: Love. 13. I give unconditional care for others. 14. I accept other people even when they do wrong things.* The results show that every day athletes give unconditional attention, meaning that they are at a high spiritual level because they do not expect favors from others. Even they still accept other people even though they are wrong. This shows that a high spiritual level can have an impact on the psyche of the athlete. *Item: Unity and closeness. 15. I want to be closer to God or be beside him.* The results show that all athletes every day want to be closer to God. This implies that they believe that God is an almighty and all-powerful being, so that it is God who deserves to be worshiped and exalted.

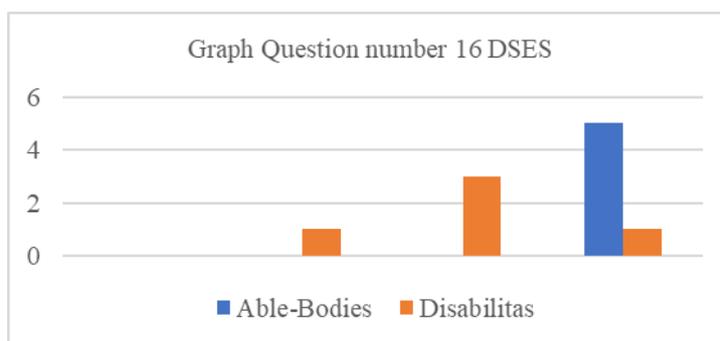


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents' answers

Item: Unity and closeness. 16. In general, how close you are to God. 60% of participants (five able-bodied athletes and an athlete with disabilities) answered that they were always close to God, 30% of participants (three with disabilities) gave answers that they were very close to God, and 10% of participants with disabilities gave answers that they were somewhat close to God.

Discussion

Socio-demography relationship with spirituality

There is little research on the spiritual experiences of able-bodied athletes and with disabilities. We found that the spiritual level of athletes was 70% very high, while 30% of athletes at a high level of spiritual

experience. This shows that athletes both able-bodied and with disabilities experience and feel the presence of God in every activity. They also claim to have at least a few spiritual experiences each day.

First, the relationship between the level of formal education and the spiritual. There is a very long tradition among religions that considers spirituality only as 'spiritual', as opposed to physical effort (Noaparast, 2013). The education of the elite able-bodied athletes shows that spiritual experiences are at a very high level. There was no significant difference in the level of education for the able-bodied athletes in the spiritual experience of athletes, meaning that the sample experienced spiritual experiences several times a day. Meanwhile, the elite athletes with disabilities show that there are quite unique differences with the distribution of high to very high spiritual experiences. That is, a higher level of education does not guarantee a very high spiritual experience. It is evident that, the level of education is quite high but the spiritual experience is also high, not very high. This shows that the relationship between the two is low.

Second, the relationship between gender and spirituality. Gender and spirituality are considered as integral factors in all aspects of human development, which affect our minds and bodies (Bosacki et al., 2011). Spirituality is an individual and open approach in finding meaning and purpose in life (Büssing et al., 2010). There is a growing demand for more moral and spiritual education for boys (Engebretson, 2006). Men are more likely to emphasize charity involvement, religious skepticism, and spiritual / religious growth, while women tend to show inner balance, aesthetic-based spiritual experiences, spiritual pursuits, and the self-concept of compassion (S. Lee et al., 2018). Religious and spiritual experiences are constructed differently for girls and boys (S. Lee et al., 2018). Spiritual struggles are more likely to undermine women's spiritual self-assessment than men (Bryant, 2007). The results also reinforce gender differences in assessments of spirituality. Regardless of age, girls scored higher than boys on all spirituality scales we employed; spiritual well-being, spiritual beliefs, and spiritual experiences (M. T. Lee et al., 2014). Male students showed a moderate level of spirituality, with females showing a higher measure of spirituality than males (Anye et al., 2013).

In the elite able-bodied athletes, the results of the DSES score indicate that the spiritual experience of the elite able-bodied athletes is at a very high level. This means that there is no significant difference between the gender of able-bodied athletes in spiritual experiences. Whereas for the elite athletes with disabilities, all female participants in the elite athletes with disabilities have high spiritual experiences. This means that female athletes with disabilities feel something different so that it can be traced using qualitative methods.

Third, the relationship between religion and spirituality. Spirituality represents everything that is good, liberates, and encourages individuality, whereas religion will represent everything that is bad, hinders, and hinders independent thinking (Bauer & Johnson, 2018). Spirituality and religion may be related, but not the same. Spirituality can add meaning to religious practices and religious practices can deepen spirituality (Ganga & Kutty, 2013). A study conducted reported that, Hindus, only 20% agreed that being religious means following a religious leader; Muslim (76%) and Christian (56%) (Ganga & Kutty, 2013). In consecutive Harris polls in the United States, 90% of people claimed to believe in God (King, 2014). Spirituality and religion seem closely related (MacKenzie, 2020). Spirituality talks about self-transcendence, the religion of responsibility (Eisenberg, 2019). Every effort to keep the heart clean will purify the heart from anything other than God (Bolandhematan, 2019).

The religions practiced by the participants are Islam, Christianity and Catholicism. Different religions are only found in elite participants of able-bodied athletes. All of the participants showed a very high spiritual level. This means that every religion adopted has a very strong relationship with the athlete's spiritual experience.

Conclusions

Our results show that the able-bodied athletes' elite and two disabled athletes have a very high spiritual level, while the three elite athletes with disabilities have a high spiritual level. Our research results also show that most of the participants felt and experienced spiritual experiences several times a day. The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) is a valid and reliable instrument for measuring the spiritual experiences of elite able-bodied athletes and disabilities in our study participants. Our results also show that the religious differences of each participant do not have a subjective impact on spiritual experiences.

The limitation in this study is that the sample used is too small so that it does not describe the state of the elite athletes' daily spiritual experiences. Recommendations for further research are the use of large-scale samples so that they can be used as reference materials for coaches, sports organizations and the government to pay more attention to the spiritual aspect as a component in the development and improvement of athlete achievement.

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