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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES AND PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY**

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the relationship between religious attitudes and physical activity was examined. The methodology of the study is descriptive of correlational type. The population of the study consisted of all elementary school students of Marivan who were studying in the academic year 2013-2014, of whom a sample of 120 parents whose children have significantly contributed in school sports activities were selected by available sample method. For this purpose, Khodayarifard and colleagues' religious attitudes questionnaire was used while parents referring to school. The obtained data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient using (SPSS-18). The results showed that there is a relationship between religious attitudes and engaging in physical activities for students at a significant level ($p < 0.05$) so that high religious attitudes of parents increases the active participation of students in physical activity. Thus, it can be said that religion and its various dimensions plays an important role in explaining the physical and mental health of students, including student participation in physical activities.

Keywords: Religious attitudes, physical activity, students

1. INTRODUCTION

Participation in sports can help increase children's social behavior that is required for their compatibility with the world around them and various environmental phenomena, and lead them to socially

desirable and acceptable standards (Aslankhani, MA (2000). In contrast, children who are not exposed to moving experience the likelihood to learn social skills is less, so if the opportunity to

practice and gain experience is not provided for them, it is likely to lose their interest and become withdrawn (Heywood, Kathleen (1993). Albert and Pettitt Pass (2004) in the program called "Athlete students' life skills development program" concluded that after-school sports activities are suitable ground for the growth of the initiative and a sense of self-efficiency of the adolescents and ability to strengthen their relationship (Albert J. Petitpas F (2004). With the arrival of Islam in Iran, physical exercise and training found a special place in the public life and inspired by the message of Islam, exercising was given more attention by the Iranians. Today, religion and spirituality and their impact on physical and psychological health have been the subject of a lot of research and clinical activities (Shafranske, E. P., & Sperry, L. (2005). From the perspective of reason and religion, exercising is necessary for strength and health of body. A nation that does not have healthy vibrant and strong physique benefits less of suitable mind and thought. There is a famous proverb that says: "A sound mind is in a healthy body" because the interaction of body and soul is fixed and certain. People who have frail and infirm body because of laziness and lack of exercise, or too plump cannot have a calm and fresh spirit. These people are generally

nervous, impatient, pernickety and have raucous spirit and sick thought and the same issues have negative effects on their bodies (Sabouri, H (2003). Religious beliefs are of the individual values that can strengthen the motivation of individuals to carry out specific behaviors. Religion and spirituality, in addition to strengthening internal motivation is of external motivational factors that drive individuals to adaptive behaviors to avoid negative feelings and internal pressures and also to gain social approval and self-esteem (Thøgersen-Ntoumani C, Ntoumanis N.).

What can be described as effects of exercise from the perspective of Muslim athletes include proximity to God, health, happiness, beauty, fitness and ability (Khalili, MI (2004). By studying the Qur'an, it is understood that in the Quran being strong has always been assessed as a positive factor. To illustrate this, some of the verses from the Qur'an are referred to: in the Qur'an, the importance of physical strength has repeatedly been confirmed and emphasized, for example when Israelites criticized the selection of Saul by their prophet Holy Ishmael as leader, He says in response:

انالهاصطفيٰهعليكموز اذهب سطة هيا العلم والجسم

(Bagharah, 247)

God has chosen him over you and given physical and mental power to him more than

you. It is also referred to playing and racing in the Qur'an. In the instructive story of Joseph, when his brothers make their decision to plot against Joseph, they told to their father, "O father, send him to the desert with us so that we play in the grass and pastures and, of course, we guard him of any danger (Joseph / 12), which means the pretext of playing sports is a justifiable excuse for the children of Jacob and their father and he confirmed this issue (qoran karim). Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) about the human body says, "God has a right over you, your body has a right over you, and your family (also) have a right upon you" (Majlesi, MB (Allameh Majlisi). What is appealing in this Hadith is that Prophet (pbuh) mentions the body right next to the God's right, and one can fulfill his family and God's obligations when he has a healthy and vigorous body. In a study of African American stagnant adults, faith-based intervention increased their physical activity levels (Whitt-Glover M C, Hogan P E, Lang W, Heil D P). Williams and Hal Stern (2007) showed that performing religious rituals and strong social bond arise from being religious in the positive impact of religion on health (Williams, D. R & Sternthal, J. S, (2007). Holder et al. (2008) in a study entitled "Tendency towards religion, religious attitudes and happiness in children of 8 to 12 years old"

came to the conclusion that tendency to religion in children is strongly associated with happiness and children with tendency to religion are happier (Holder, Mark D., Coleman, Ben & Wallace, Judi M. (2008). The relationship between religion and spirituality with health has repeatedly been demonstrated. There is research available concerning the effect of the spiritual and religious participation in physical activity and exercise (Bopp M, Lattimore D, Wilcox S, Laken M, McClorin L, Swinton R, et al., Musick MA, House JS, Williams DR.). Religion is one of the factors that influence behavior and cognition. Research literature also has a considerable amount of research that indicate a relationship between religion and spirituality with physical and mental health (McCauley, J., Jenckes, M. W., Tarpley, M. J., Koenig, H. G., Yanek, L. R., & Becker, D. M. (2005), Simpson, D. B., Newman, J. L., & Fuqua, D. R. (2007). Moreover, religious people are physically healthy and have longer life (Koenig, H.G. (1997). Promoting general health and giving meaning to life and life expectancy and improving social communication are of other functions of religious trends (Halling, A, Halling, A, Unell, L., Trevino, M. K, Pargament, I. K, Cotton, S, Leonard. C. A, et al). Tkach et al (2006) concluded that communication,

separation, health control, search of goals, leisure time, religion and trying to create happiness are of predictive factors of happiness (Tkach, C & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). Trevino et al. (2007) stated that religious beliefs lead to improved health, quality of life and increased self-esteem (Trevino, KM & et al, (2007). In addition, there is a negative relationship between the tendencies towards religion with depression, anxiety, and aggression, (Sharifeh T, Mehrabizadeh Honarmand, M. and Shekarkan, H. (2006). Torsen and Harris (2002) showed that religious beliefs have a positive impact on people's physical and mental health (Thoresen, CE & Harris, HS, (2002). Moreover, there is a negative relationship between high levels of religious beliefs with use of alcohol, drugs and smoking (Ru and Wang, 2006) (Rew, L & Wong, Y.J, (2006). Today, although advances in science and technology and the automation of the communities have brought valuable services to mankind, they have also brought numerous complications. One of these effects is reduction of inactivity. Inactivity has threatened physical and mental health of students. To overcome this inactivity a tool must be used to attract children, adolescents and young people to sport. Therefore, the religious doctrines associated with physical activity and sport

must be used in educational content documents and its efficacy must be reminded to parents. Due to the fact that, despite the emphasis on physical and mental health in the Islamic tradition, no research has been done in terms of the relationship of religion and to engagement in sport activities. Thus, the present research was carried out aimed at addressing the relationship between religious attitudes with performing physical activity.

2. METHODOLOGY

The population of the investigation was all parents of elementary school students in Marivan of whom 120 parents whose children significantly participated in school sports activities (through distinction of sport trainers and evaluations done) aged 32-48 were selected as samples with available sampling method. To this end, for this purpose, Khodayarifard and colleagues' religious attitudes questionnaire was used when parents visited the school. Khodayarifard built religious attitude gauge in 1999 at Tehran University, which includes 40 questions on five-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Thus, religious attitude score is calculated from 40 to 200. People who get 40 to 84 and 166 have low and high religious attitudes, respectively. The content of the questionnaire measure

ethical issues, values, effect of religion in life, human behavior and social issues, ideology and religion. He reported Spearman-Brown split half reliability and internal consistency by Cronbach's coefficient as 0.93 and 0.95, respectively (Khodayarifard et al 2000) (Khodayarifard MB, Gobari Bonab B, Shokouhi Yekta M (2000). In this study, the reliability of the questionnaire was obtained as 0.88 the Cronbach's alpha. Data obtained through descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient were analyzed using SPSS (SPSS-18).

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and coefficient of correlation of partnership and religious attitudes variables

Variables	Religious attitudes of parents		r	Significance level
	X	SD		
Active participation of students	123.94	19.16	0.58	p<0.05

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was finding the relationship between religious attitudes and physical activity. Based on the results of this study, religious trends of the parents of students is the main cause of participation of the students in physical activity. Therefore, as the religious attitude is higher, the participation in sports activities gets more. The most effective institution of socialization in the early years of a child's life is family, where the child learns participation in social groups including sport groups. Several studies have identified that family is one of the most influential factors of socialization role of sport (Lubans, D.R., Sylva, K., & Morgan,

3. FINDINGS

Table 1 shows mean and standard deviation factors involved in sporting activities and religious attitudes. As can be seen in Table 1, the mean of the variable religious attitude of parents is 123.94 and standard deviation is 19.16.

The correlation coefficient between the active participation of students and religious attitudes is 0.58, which is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, we can see that there is a positive correlation the religious attitude of parents and students' participation in sports.

P (2007). Principle and foundation of sport and physical education is based on strengthening the body and purification of the soul, so it is often mentioned in the Qu'ran and high physical strength is cited as the characteristic of the chosen people. A religious person is the one who follows a religion by having knowledge of its principles and practices so that this practice affects his personal and social life. In other words, religion is the extent of love and respect paid to it by its followers (Serajzadeh, SH (1997). Considering the importance of the health in religion, parents are expected to encourage their children to do more sports activities that are consistent with the results of this study. Demras

(2003) states that, at micro level, religion can be considered as the social capital that by training people encourages their participation and strengthens social and political participation in them (Demerath, N.J (2003). Therefore, it can be concluded that considering the important consequences of religion in strengthening social relations of people, religious trends lead to their participation in the various groups including sports teams. Another benefit of exercise in morality enhancement that has been mentioned in religious teachings and this makes parents more willing to want their children to take part in sports. In Islam's school, tendency towards morality is of the underlying issues of every category. In this school, it is believed that after man realized a general moral principle and rule that correspond to the perceived virtues, they tend towards them as well. Therefore, in a part of the physical education program, the characters of moral perceptions should be developed and shaped. As more facts are available to human, the ground for ethical funds will be further as well, for example, if one understands that justice is a provider of social welfare, he creates the credit that "justice must be kept" (Mozaffari, SA and Poursoltani Zarandi, H. (2007). Mental health is another common aspect between participation in sports and religious

teachings that compels people to participate in sports activities. Watson (1994) believed that religious orientation could be used as a useful experimental model to explore the relationship between personality and mental health (Watson, P.J (1994). Physical health and social functioning, physical education, and religion are common goals that make people participate in sports activities. Koenig et al (2001) in their book on the relationship between religious beliefs and practices and mental health and social function of religion stated that there is a positive relationship between religion and well-being and mental health, faith and optimism and hope, religion depression and anxiety, religion and social support, and religion and physical health. They also stated that religious beliefs and practices are involved in creating positive emotions such as better living, life satisfaction and happiness (Koenig, H.G., McCullough, M.E., & Larson, D.B (2001). Moreover, in the field of the role of religion in the human body health many theories are presented. Some researchers believe that religious people have suitable social support, greater optimism and higher levels of self-control that will also lead to physical health (Koenig H, King D, Carson VB. 2012). Generally, people who believe in principles and laws of Islam Muslims pay more attention to healthy living and exercise and

stay away from factors harmful to physical and mental health such as eating, drinking, smoking, drugs and this issue can be involved in the results of this study. It seems that physical activity as well as other health activities is influenced by beliefs and attitudes of a person because behavior is influenced by three types of people beliefs: beliefs about the advantages and disadvantages of such activities (attitude), the individual's beliefs about the people who encouraged him to perform particular activities (the incentives) and beliefs that lead to the presence of factors or obstacles in operations (hurdles of operations) (Ajzen I. Constructing a TPB questionnaire: conceptual and methodological consideration 2001). Macintosh et al. (1993) quoted by Badri Gargari R. et al. (2012) believe that religious people have religious mental forms that can help them in cognitive processing. Based on this theory, we can say that religious mental forms can influence behavior related to physical and mental health (Badri Gargari R., Farid. A. (2012). In other words, faith in God reduces stress and is an opportunity for growth and development of people including the health of the people. In addition to the impact of parents' religious views on students' participation in physical activities, the school also has a huge impact

on the sports action and follow-up at the start of the exercise. Therefore, the interaction of these two important institutions should be strengthened for extensive participation in physical activities. Based on the results of the present study concerning the impact of religion and religious attitudes on various aspects of people's life, to promote religious beliefs of youth, it is suggested to make the needed efforts through various means such as parents, Clergymen, teachers, professors and mass media and strengthening life skills is included in training programs for all segments of society. Finally, it is recommended that by providing sports facilities and infrastructure including the importance of sport in Islam in the literature and textbooks by the Ministry of Education the greater participation of students in the school sports activities be brought about.

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