A comparative study of behavioral patterns of sportspersons and non-sports persons quarantined during COVID-19: A case study of Ghaziabad city

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Abstract

COVID-19 has caused an excruciating impact on the mentality of people. It has severely affected the different attributes of the personality of an individual. If we further investigate the problem, we would find that the period of quarantine in the COVID hospital is the most difficult one. It affects different attributes of the personality of an individual. If we look at the other side of this problem, we find that the solution to the problem lies within the person. It depends on the mental and physical strength of the person as to how he or she copes with a difficult situation. It is a general perception that a person who has ever played sports is more disciplined, cooperative, and coordinative in comparison to other persons. The basic hypothesis of the present research is that whether sportspersons have a positive approach towards life in comparison to other persons during the crises like a pandemic of COVID-19. To accomplish the task, a question-based survey was conducted to collect the desired data. Five behavioral aspect-bases were laid for the survey. The samples were collected from COVID patients identified as a sportsperson or non-sports persons. On these grounds, it was concluded that the behavioral pattern of players is better than the non-players; during the quarantine period of the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding offers great help to a primary care physician who provides care to the patient at the point of the first contact. Being a specialist in family medicine, internal medicine, or pediatrics such a person takes continuing responsibility for providing the patient’s comprehensive care.

Keywords: Behavior, COVID-19, non-sports person, sportsperson

Introduction

It is said that if a person’s behavior has to be tested, then in times of adversity and difficulty one should watch his movements carefully. And what must have been a worse time than Corona! From the physical and economic harm that coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has caused, it would not be an understatement to say it has also mentally affected the world citizenry. Asking a person to stay away from people you know, you trust, you love, in these difficult times, it is not hard to imagine the excruciating impact it can have on the mentality of any person.

Behavior is a summation of many attributes combining physical and psychological characteristics. Since behavior is the product of heredity and environment, the people from the same environment will have some common characteristics which will reflect in their behavior to a great extent. From this point of view, it can be observed that participation and interest in competitive sports will be associated with certain personal and behavioral characteristics of people.

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Background

The question of whether behavioral patterns and competitive sports are related was a topic with a heated discussion on many tables. The sports psychologists and counselors of different teams participating in higher-level tournaments play a very significant role by providing mental support to their athletes and players. Earlier, Morgan (1988) had concluded that success in sports performance is dependent partly on selected psychological states and traits.

Different studies have shown different and diverse findings on the psychological characteristics of sportsmen and non-sportsmen over the last many years. Sports such as swimming, running including the marathon, badminton, hockey, cricket, football, cycling, etc., demand a higher level of determination, persistence, introversion, emotional stability, and self-control. Here, the very purpose of the study was to compare the behavioral patterns of the sportsmen and non-sports persons who were quarantined during COVID-19.

The question before us was, even in such a testing situation can a sports person cope better as compared to a non-sports person? This question did not arise spontaneously. A common public perception was also hidden behind it. We generally assume that participation in different sports activities leads to changes in the personality characteristics of an individual. It affects different attributes of the personality of an individual.

Besides, the society witnessed a large rebellion attitude of persons under quarantine, not cooperating with authorities or even posing an obstacle in the smooth functioning of duty-bound officials. We are all familiar with instances where people argued, misbehaved, and manhandled the authorized personnel. Healthcare professionals are at the highest risk of violence in their work among all professionals. They are four times more likely to be injured and away from work as compared to other professionals, particularly because a doctor often deals with a person when he/she is in a stressful and emotionally taxing situation.

We are not just talking about a particular group making headlines, but surprisingly the educated ones like doctors, businessmen, government officials, non-resident Indians who never made such headlines. Therefore, we also decided to evaluate and see whether people with sports backgrounds usually act more appropriately with responsibility and create examples before society at large.

COVID-19 caught the world yawning, but this certainly will leave us all with more questions than answers. This has proved that we are not bigger than Nature, one virus has brought the world to its knees. There are things we cannot control, but what we can do is prepare a citizenry that is more law-abiding, cooperating, disciplined, and better equipped to handle pressures of negatives and testing situations. The sportspersons may set an example for fighting the pandemic of COVID-19.

Literature Review

The major portion of the research literature on personality structure in the field of sports psychology is related to the comparison between sportspersn and non-sportspersons. Majority of the investigations have indicated that sportspersons differ from non-sportspersons on several personality traits. Alderman (1974) has identified seven personality dimensions mostly prevalent in sports participants. Many other investigators have reported that sportspersons could be differentiated from non-sportspersons concerning their self-control, extraversion, dominance, locus of control, death anxiety, self-esteem, and mental health. However, such literature could not be traced which had undergone a testing situation e.g., a severe pandemic situation where studies have been made to compare the personality traits of a sportsperson as compared to a non-sportsperson.

Recent research has discussed the psychological impact of quarantine and mentioned five studies comparing psychological outcomes for people quarantined with those not quarantined. A recent report of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (United Nations) on ‘The impact of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity, and well-being and its effects on social development’ mentions that the COVID-19 pandemic has had and will continue to have very considerable effects on the sporting world as well as on the physical and mental well-being of people around the world. A study shows that there are many other lifestyle challenges for South African athletes that need to be overcome before returning to pre-COVID-19 normality.

Objective

The primary objective of the study is to understand the difference in behavioral patterns between sports and non-sports person in the purview of the COVID-19 situation.

The study also verifies whether, with a good immune system and mental stability, a person with a sportive attitude can win even in extremely unfavorable circumstances or not.

Hypothesis

During the training of the players/sportspersons, besides good physique and physical fitness, the main emphasis is laid on the development of various types of motor skills as well as on the techniques and tactics of the game. Such a person may conquer even the mighty virus under these physical, physiological, psychological, and sociological factors. The basic hypotheses which present research tries to confirm are whether sportspersons have a positive approach towards life in comparison to other persons during the crises like a pandemic of COVID-19? It further tries to explore whether sportspersons are more disciplined, cooperative, coordinative, and law-abiding in comparison to other persons even if quarantined for COVID-19?

One of the most crucial benefits of getting into the playing field is discipline. Adhering to sports rules, punctuality, staying sober, giving respect, etc., is a big lesson in the sports ground.
Another quality of a sportsperson is combativeness and showing a coping character in adverse situations. In different areas of society, we see people give up on small matters. But the sportsman struggles to win every moment for his team. He struggles to earn lead, to maintain the lead, to further increase the lead, every moment struggling to move forward.

The learning of tolerance cannot be found anywhere beyond the playing field. The game has amazing power. It converts the negative energy absorbed within the person to positive energy. Outrage against society, frustrations towards own level, oppose the rules, if these are in the person’s character, he forgets everything in sports.

**Methodology**

In the present study, for research work, we have considered a sportsperson as an individual who has ever played any physical sports at any level irrespective of winning or losing either a tournament/medal, etc., If he/she has been actively associated with any sporting activity like swimming, running including the marathon, badminton, hockey, cricket, football, cycling, etc., at any level, we have included the person as a sportsperson. Rest of the individuals who could not qualify this criterion have been termed as “non-sports persons.”

The main motive behind the present study has been to measure the various aspects of the behavior of a person during the severely adverse COVID-19 pandemic conditions. The period of quarantine is the most suffering one. To verify whether sportsperson possesses stronger characteristics as compared to non-sports persons, the basic hypotheses which the present research tries to confirm is that: whether sportspersons have a positive approach towards life in comparison to other persons during the crises like a pandemic of COVID-19?

To accomplish the task, a question-based survey was planned to be conducted to collect the desired primary data. For this, five behavioral aspect-bases were laid for the survey for the measurement of personality traits of all the subjects. The behavioral aspects of the sportspersons and non-sports persons were measured with the following five aspects:-

1. Altercations with medical staff
2. Following instructions given by medical staff
3. Cooperation and Coordination with fellow mates
4. Coping with the situation
5. Response to medication

The first two aspects show the level of discipline, third as the level of harmony, fourth as mental health, and the last as physical as well as mental health of the persons. For collecting data, samples of patients were selected from four well-recognized hospitals of district Ghaziabad. The Chief Medical Officer, Ghaziabad Hospital, Ghaziabad. The Chief Medical Officer, Ghaziabad recommended to these hospitals for cooperation in collecting data. The due permissions were also taken from these four hospitals.

A specific COVID-19 Survey Questionnaire was devised and was administered in the English version to all the subjects of the study. This test consists of 13 items and measures 5 traits of personality measures.

The samples were collected from COVID patients identified as a sportsperson or non-sports persons.

The significance of the research is that all the samples surveyed under similar environmental conditions, kept in a similar situation, facing similar circumstances, interactive with similar kinds of medical staff, getting similar treatment and foods, and facing the same kind of uncertainty. On a random basis, 258 samples were selected with the following breakup [Figure 1]:-

The study is based on primary data collected through a schedule developed for 258 samples and medical staff of different quarantine centers of Ghaziabad city. Since the aspects of the study are behavioral, the subjective indices were developed to measure these aspects.

The primary data were collected, tabulated, and the percentile ratio of different indicators was calculated and represented through the wheel diagrams.

**Results and Observations**

As all the samples were surveyed under similar environmental conditions, kept in a similar situation, with similar kinds of medical staff, and facing the same kind of uncertainty, the results will reveal the inference drawn under the different aspects.

**Discipline**

Adhering to discipline means punctuality, staying sober, giving respect, etc., This is a big lesson on the sports ground. This is very essential for dealing in adverse situations in life. The question is what the relevance of discipline is during pandemic situations?

This question was answered under two separate heads:

a. Whether a person had an altercation with the staff/doctor/incident of misbehavior? To this 18% of non-sports persons were found to have misbehaved with the authorities on one occasion or other whereas only 7% of sportsperson misbehaved and 93% sports persons had zero instances of indiscipline or altercations [Figure 2].

b. When asked about following the instructions given by the doctors, adhering to what he says or directs, 23% no sportspersons defied doctors’ orders whereas only 5% of sportsperson did so. About 95% of sportspersons adhered to what doctors said or prescribed [Figure 3].
Cooperation and Coordination with fellow mates

For any system to run smoothly and meet its goals, it is important to foster an environment that supports collaboration amongst different mates. Unfortunately, this does not occur naturally, and thus a few persons have to make an effort and take steps to help build and sustain a cooperative work environment.

As far as the COVID-19 pandemic is concerned, to what extent the cooperation and coordination were observed in the present study is analyzed as follows:

Approximately 56% of non-sports persons cooperated with their fellow mates helping them in various instances whereas 80% of sportspersons did so [Figure 4].

Coping with the situation

Showing a coping character and combativeness in adverse situations is a rare quality. In different areas of society, we see people give up on small matters. Buckle down in front of the problems.

But under the pandemic situation the different behavioral patterns were observed as follows:
1. In tough situations like the present one is a sportsperson better equipped to handle the pressure?
2. Is he more positive towards life?

About 76% of people from the sports background had a positive coping mechanism and were positive about life and situation whereas 36% of people from non-sports background showed negativity and signs of depression [Figure 5].
Medication
Medication in the COVID-19 situation is extremely vital for the survival of a corona patient. The following are the findings:

Nearly 45% of sportspersons showed a quick and normal response to medicines administered and recovered quickly whereas only 10% of non-sports persons should a quick recovery. This can be attributed to better immunity or a healthier body which one attains to participate in sports [Figure 6].

The research establishes the following:
1. People from sports background are more disciplined approximately (95% vs 75%)
2. People from sports background are more responsible and cooperating towards fellow citizens/society (80% vs 50%)
3. People from the sports background are more positive towards life even in a negative situation better equipped to handle pressure (76% vs 55%)
4. Sportspersons have shown quicker response to medication as compared to the non-sports person (46% vs 9%)

Conclusion
This study has proved how an adverse situation can be handled by exercising several important behavioral traits in the situation of pressure. Only a physically and mentally sound person can show such a restrained behavior amongst the situation of pressure, depression, illness, and adverse conditions of the COVID hospital.

Sportspersons were found to have a better record of not being involved in an altercation with the staff/doctor/incident of misbehavior. The reason behind this might be discipline. Discipline can be strengthened through sports. In the field, the spectators hoot, shout angrily, and try to weaken the player's faith. But the player keeps on playing to his tune. He is also not affected by the win-defeat. He does not break emotionally even if the result is not favorable. He again prepares himself for the next phase. In our society a lot of fights, tensions prevail just because we do not know how to speak in the right way. This quality automatically develops in the playing field. In the playing field, the player expresses his words to his partner with his gesture more than words and keeps moving towards his goal. They keep their language so civilized and simple that listening to them does not feel bad to even rivals. The player also makes full use of this communication skill in practical life. With this skill, he survives a lot of problems and stress in his life. He leads an easy, simple, successful, and peaceful life.

An examination of cooperation factor revealed that sportspersons scored higher on cooperation traits than the non-sports persons.

In tough situations of the hospital ward, sportsperson was found better equipped to handle the pressure. They were positive about life. When asked questions like do you think the situation will improve? Will cases eventually depreciate? Will you get better? They were positive about life and the situation. They revealed a positive coping mechanism. There were no signs of depression.

Sportspersons were found to help their fellow mates in various instances. This might be because participation in modern sports is influenced by various physical, physiological, psychological, and sociological factors. Such helping nature is an essential aspect of each sport.

Sportspersons showed a quick and normal response to medicines administered and recovered quickly. This can be attributed to better immunity and a healthier body which one attains by participation in sports.
With the cancellation of several Sports Tournaments and Championships, the year 2020 will be recalled more readily for the shifts in the sporting season as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.[13] Restrictions on travel, physical activity, and mass gatherings because of the COVID-19 pandemic have had major implications for players, with restrictions of access to training venues, cancellation of events, and loss of earnings.[14-16] These implications can have commensurate psychological consequences. Research may be conducted on this topic, by doing direct interventions with sportspersons and other stakeholders including coaches and parents. Research work may include emotional regulation, coping skills, resilience, mental health stigma, and well-being strategies. The goal of the research work may be to encourage new perspectives on how sportspersons and coaches may respond to these challenges.

The key-points may be summarized as follows:
1. Sportspersons were found to have a better record of not being involved in an altercation with the staff/doctor/incident of misbehavior.
2. An examination of the cooperation factor revealed that sportspersons scored higher on cooperation than the non-sports persons.
3. Sportspersons showed a quick response to medicines administered and recovered quickly. This can be attributed to better immunity and a healthier body which one attains by participation in sports.
4. This finding offers great help to a primary care physician who provides care to the patient at the point of the first contact. Being a specialist in family medicine, internal medicine, or pediatrics such a person takes continuing responsibility for providing the patient's comprehensive care.

If the primary care physician is aware before the treatment that the patient's background is related to sports, then he can make an accurate estimate or assessment of recovery.

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Conflicts of interest
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