



# The study of the psychological aspects of the phenomenon of «Faith» in the context of sports activities of representatives of various sports fields

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Dr. Hab., Professor **S.M. Ashkinazi**<sup>1, 2</sup>

PhD **G.V. Sytnik**<sup>1, 2</sup>

PhD **Vit.V. Andreev**<sup>1</sup>

PhD **V.Vit. Andreev**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lesgaft National State University of Physical Education, Sport and Health, St. Petersburg

<sup>2</sup>Saint-Petersburg State Academy of Veterinary Medicine, St. Petersburg

Corresponding author: sergei\_ashkinazi@mail.ru

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## Abstract

**Objective of the study** – analysis of the psychological roots of the phenomenon of faith, the definition of its role and the demonstration of ways to implement it in the daily lives of students involved in sports.

**Methods and structure of the study.** In order to identify the peculiarities of the perception of the phenomenon of "Faith" among student-athletes, their views on faith as such, their need for it, their belief in the existence of God, the depth of religious beliefs, predisposition to superstition, participation in religious rituals and attitudes towards paranormal phenomena were analyzed. The study involved 78 fifth-year students of various specializations from the P.F. Lesgaft National University in St. Petersburg. All participants were athletes.

**Results and conclusions.** Faith as a phenomenon reflects the diversity of aspects of mental reality. It has been established that the need for faith is activated under the influence of specific life events, especially often it occurs during periods of crisis. During the study of the phenomenon of faith, four main categories were identified for analysis: "spirituality" (34.29%), "transpersonal aspect" (10.48%), "sphere of extra-psychic phenomena" (7.62%) and "area of psychic phenomena" (47.62%). The presented classification gives grounds to assert that faith is primarily a mental construct. The key concept used to describe faith is "spirituality."

Faith has an effect on an individual, manifesting itself in support, inspiring optimism, accompanying them through life, and having an overall beneficial effect. It is important to perceive faith as an integral part of a psychological portrait that unites various aspects of the psyche into a single whole. Such integration contributes to a fuller understanding of the importance of faith in human life and its impact on the psychological aspects of existence. Considering faith from this point of view allows us to see it as a powerful factor shaping personality and determining behavior. The positive influence of faith can manifest itself in a wide variety of areas of life, from interpersonal relationships to professional activities. Faith is able to give meaning to life, help to cope with difficulties and find a way out of difficult situations.

**Keywords:** *psychological roots, the phenomenon of faith, the role of faith, introduction into everyday life, student-athletes, perception of faith, the need for faith, religious beliefs, superstitions and religious rituals, crisis periods, mental reality.*

**Introduction.** The main purpose of this study is to analyze the psychological nature of the phenomenon of faith, identify its functions and reveal the mechanisms of its manifestation in real-life situations of student-athletes of P.F. Lesgaft NSU, St. Petersburg. At the present stage of the development of psychology, the concept of "Faith" has not acquired sufficient categorical significance. The phenomenon of "Faith" was excluded from psychological analysis due to ideological considerations and the contradiction between the

categories of faith and knowledge, since its essence cannot be adequately captured using the methods of natural sciences. The formation of faith among student-athletes largely depends on their individual characteristics, the specifics of sports activities and personal experience of participating in competitions [1].

**Objective of the study** – analysis of the psychological roots of the phenomenon of faith, the definition of its role and the demonstration of ways to implement it in the daily lives of students involved in sports.



**Methods and structure of the study.** As part of an experimental study on this topic, various survey methods were used, including questionnaires. To study the students' attitude to the phenomenon of "Faith", an author's questionnaire was developed: "The phenomenon of "Faith" in the structure of self-awareness." The attitude of student-athletes to the phenomenon of "Faith" was determined by the following criteria: attitude to faith, need for faith, faith in God, degree of faith, attitude to omens, attitude to rituals, attitude to supernatural phenomena. Such techniques and tests as the questionnaire of protection mechanisms were used. Plutchik-Kellerman-Conti, the questionnaire "Self-actualization of personality", a methodology for determining the ratio of "Value" and "Accessibility" in various spheres of life, as well as the test "Meaningful life orientations" [1].

The study involved 78 fifth-year student athletes from P.F. Lesgaft NSU, St. Petersburg, with 12 different specializations. There are 45 women and 33 men among them. The average experience of playing sports among the subjects was 12 years.

**Results and conclusions.** The survey revealed the general attitude of students towards religion. Students have a positive attitude towards religion. About 10% of the subjects adhere to a deep faith in God; 2.4% are atheists. About 33% of students have faith in God. 42% of the respondents believe that the main reason for the emergence of faith lies in the search for an ideal, in filling a spiritual void. 22% of the subjects think that the strengthening of faith in Russia is connected with the restoration of traditions, 15% associate the need for faith with the need for repentance, and, finally, 11% see the reason for returning to the true faith. The prevailing view among women is that the strengthening of faith is associated with the search for an ideal and is conditioned by a return to the true faith. Men explain this fact by repentance and restoration of traditions. There is a slight negative attitude towards religion among men.

As follows from the data obtained, 62% of students consider themselves believers, 32% have not yet decided whether they are believers or not, and only 6% of the entire sample of subjects consider themselves non-believers. Girls consider themselves more religious than boys: 69% of girls consider themselves believers, compared with 55% among young people. In addition, young men are more likely to experience uncertainty about their faith, unable to identify themselves as believers or non believers – 36%, in contrast to 27% of girls.

It turned out that girls are more likely to turn to God with prayer – 27%, among girls 40% noted that they pray "sometimes", while for boys this figure is 27%. In the group of boys, 36% answered that they rarely pray, while among girls this value is 27%. Finally, 21% of boys indicated that they never pray, compared to only 7% of girls. Thus, there are clear gender differences in the practice of prayer among young people.

For the majority of young people, faith is perceived as a form of spiritual protection, the highest spiritual force, a significant spiritual phenomenon and the highest spiritual motive [1]. There is also a difference in attitudes towards faith depending on gender. Girls express higher rates of faith as a spiritual defense (0.69 versus 0.52 for boys) and faith as a higher spiritual force (0.51 versus 0.32 for boys).

A comparative analysis showed that both men and women have the greatest trust and faith in their parents (women – 4.80 points; men – 4.67 points), in themselves (women – 4.62 points; men – 4.64 points), in reason (women – 4.29 points; men – 4.30 points) and in friends (women – 4.16 points; men – 4.03 points). Men show more confidence in science (women – 3.93 points; men – 4.30 points) and the state (women – 2.76 points; men – 3.15 points), while women have more faith in a mentor (women – 3.96 points; men – 3.52 points), in money (women – 3.73 points; men – 3.36 points) and parents (women – 4.80 points; men – 4.67 points).

A comparative analysis of students' personality indicators based on the criterion of "faith in God" revealed that the features of faith depend on the level of psychological protection of students. The overall level of defense mechanisms is slightly higher among those who believe in God (44.73% versus 43.20% for non-believers). Among believers, such protective mechanisms as regression (47.88%, compared with 37.64%) and compensation (64.09% vs. 42.00%) stand out prominently. At the same time, the mechanisms of "projection" prevail among non-believers (52.05% among believers and 60.19% among non-believers) and "rationalization" (50.55% among believers and 63.27% among non-believers).

Believers in God have a higher level of performance according to four criteria of self-actualization. The use of such strategies as "entering into social contact" (23.42% among believers compared to 21.67% among non-believers), "seeking support" (26.19% among believers and 19.67% among non-believers), "manipulative actions" (20.45% among believers ver-



sus 16.67% among non-believers) and "antisocial actions" (19.39% among believers compared to 14.00% among non-believers), significantly more among believers in God.

Psychological differences in value orientations showed that "non-believers" are characterized by the predominance of such values as "health" (6.92 points for believers and 8.20 points for non-believers), "love" (8.08 points for believers and 8.80 points for non-believers), "friends" (6.96 points for believers and 8.60 points for non-believers), as well as "cognition" (4.21 points for believers and 6.00 points for non-believers). In turn, "believers in God" have higher rates of the following values: "active active life" (3.29 points for believers and 2.80 points for non-believers), "interesting work" (5.21 points for believers and 4.20 points for non-believers), "family" (9.33 points for believers versus 7.60 points for non-believers) and "freedom" (4.88 points for believers versus 3.00 points for non-believers).

"Believers" have high rates of self-actualization on the following scales: "time orientation" (46.40% for believers and 38.50% for non-believers), "support" (51.12% for believers and 47.50% for non-believers), "flexibility of behavior" (50.07% for believers and 40.75% for non-believers) and "sensitivity" (54.61% among believers and 48.00% among non-believers). At the same time, among "non-believers" there is a predominance of indicators on such scales as "value orientations" (59.72% among believers and 63.75% among non-believers), "creativity" (46.01% among believers and 48.00% among non-believers) and "cognitive need" (44.95% among believers and 57.00% for non-believers).

In our sample, the most important is "self-confidence and self-reliance" (32.62%). The second place is taken by "faith in God" (23.08%). The study showed that a significant percentage of respondents also expressed "faith in parents and relatives" (15.38%). "Faith in friends" is also important for young people (11.11%). "Faith in the 'good'" (5.97%) turned out to be relatively significant among other types of faith. The remaining 14 categories of faith according to the classification in the sample of students of sports specializations are rather poorly represented.

**Conclusions.** As a result of the analysis of the concept of faith, detailed material was collected that made it possible to determine the essential meaning of the phenomenon of faith from the point of view of

student-athletes. First of all, the connection was revealed between the need to actualize faith and certain life circumstances: most often, the need for faith arises in crisis situations. Difficult, complex, dangerous, dead-end and extreme conditions are the main determinants of the emergence of faith.

In the course of the study, four enlarged blocks were identified for the analysis of the phenomenon of faith: the "spirituality block" (34.29%), the "transpersonal block" (10.48%), the "block of extrasychic phenomena" (7.62%) and the "block of psychic phenomena" (47.62%). This systematization allows us to state that the phenomenon of faith is a purely mental education.

The central concept describing faith is "spirituality," which underscores the need for a deeper study of this concept, which currently has a high degree of uncertainty. When describing faith, the subjects often use transpersonal terminology (10.48%), which indicates a wide range of concepts of faith and its transcending traditional concepts of reality.

An analysis of the influence of faith on a person showed that the main positive function of faith is to help (31.48%). The second most important place is occupied by "hope" (18.52%), and the third is "escort" (9.26%). Thus, the impact of faith on a person manifests itself in the form of help, hope, guidance, and overall positive influence. Respondents perceive the influence of faith on their lives exclusively in a positive way (18 points).

In general, the phenomenon of faith reflects various aspects of mental reality. In order to avoid "dissolving" into this diversity, it is necessary to consider faith as an integral psychological characteristic that unites various manifestations of mental reality into a single whole. This integration can help in a deeper understanding of the role of faith in human life and its impact on the psychological aspects of being.

The results of the study can serve as a basis for the development of psychological support programs and trainings for the development of spirituality and personal faith, especially among young people and students. This can help in improving their psychological state, building self-confidence and self-reliance, as well as creating a healthy and constructive atmosphere in a sports and educational environment.

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