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Polish Students’ Knowledge and Their Attitudes Towards...

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Polish students’ knowledge and their attitudes towards martial arts and combat sports¹

**Key words:** martial arts, combat sports, attitudes, knowledge, students

**Abstract**

Objective. The research perspective is constituted by the 'humanist theory of martial arts' [Cynarski 2004]. The main research problem and the aim of the research carried out by the authors was to test and describe the interdependency between knowledge and attitudes. The second aim is an evaluation of perceptions of martial arts by the young people from secondary and junior secondary schools from the southern part of Poland with emphasis put on the aspect of perceived values and dangers. 4 hypotheses have been stated.

Method. Participants (N₀ = 300) were the pupils studying in junior secondary schools (gymnasiums) and secondary schools (lyceums). They completed a questionnaire “Perception of martial arts and combat sports by the youth of gymnasiums and secondary schools” prepared by W.J. Cynarski, which includes 18 questions, personal details (in question 19) and Milton Rokeach’s scale of values. With the use of the diagnostic survey 300 questionnaires were administrated from which N = 274 were accepted for analysis. The χ² independence test was used.

Results and conclusions. While revising the hypotheses it has been assumed that: 1) the evaluation of the influence of martial arts practice is independent of the gender of respondents; 2) the evaluation of the influence of martial arts practice is independent of the age of respondents; 3) attitudes towards martial arts depend (directly proportional) on the knowledge of respondents; 4) the evaluation of martial arts value depends on the respondents’ level of knowledge (on martial arts).

Moreover, an insufficient level of knowledge of martial arts as a field of physical culture (motion – sportive culture) in case of students of secondary schools has been noted.

**Introduction**

The theoretical perspective of the undertaken scientific venture is ‘the humanistic theory of martial arts’ [Sterkowicz 2001; Cynarski 2004; Cynarski, Obodyński 2003; Cieszkowski, Sieber 2006] developed among researchers gathered around the editorial board of the “Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology” (Idōkan Poland Association in Rzeszów) and in the Department of Combat Sports at Rzeszów University. The humanist theory of martial arts consists of some parts and dimensions – philosophical, historical, social-cultural, psychological, pedagogical, with aspects of semiotics, anthropology and education [Cynarski 2004, pp. 9-392]. The holistic perspective seems to be very useful for the research.

In particular, the aspect of global popularity of martial arts and social perception of their value is being studied. There are published two studies, where the perceptions North American and Central European were compared [Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005, 2006]. It is a very important problem, what people know on martial arts. It causes social interest and popularity. The right perception of martial arts’ values can give important effects for the culture of free time on a global scale. It can be connected with new programmes of physical education and application in movement recreation or sport for all [see: Fuller 1988; Galloway 1991; Wolters 2005; Winkle, Ozmun 2003; Neumann et
The general paradigm of holistic studies is connected with pedagogical reflection on the recommendations concerning translating the rich axiology of martial arts into the terms of physical education [Szyszko-Bohusz 1989, 2003; Cynarski 2004]. Numerous authors indicate the essential difference between the aims of practising martial arts and combat sports [Kiyota, Kinoshita 1990; Binhack 1998; Sato 1998; Maroteaux, Cynarski 2002; Wolters 2005], greater values for education and health-oriented recreation and, what follows, also increasing popularity of non-competitive martial arts [Moegling 2006]. Traditional martial arts as ‘psychophysical educational systems’ are being practiced more for self-realizational aims, than for achievements in contests. The ways of martial arts (Japanese budo) serve versatile psychophysical and moral education of children and adolescents well [see: Hyun-ju, Hannon, Banks 2006; Theeboom, DeKnop, Wylleman 2008; Figueiredo 2009; Vertonghen, Wylleman 2010].

The aim of the research was to evaluate perceptions of martial arts by the young participants from secondary and junior secondary schools from the southern part of Poland with emphasis put on the aspect of perceived values and dangers. The scientific-research problem put forward in this way required answering numerous research questions and revising hypotheses. It had been assumed that hypothesis 1 correlation between answers to questions 18 (fears) and 19 (age) has been checked. Respectively, for hypothesis 2 interdependence between answers to questions 17 (benefits) and 19 as well as the choices on the M. Rokeach’s scale of values [Rokeach 1973; Brzozowski 1989; Cynarski W .J. Cynarski, which includes 18 questions, personal statistical elaboration. Uneven gender split outcomes (157 boys, 117 girls) has been accepted for the remaining 2274 questionnaires were handed in. After eliminating incomplete or erroneous questionnaires N = 274 (157 boys, 117 girls) has been accepted for the statistical elaboration. Uneven gender split outcomes from a random selection (drawing groups).

The method of research was a diagnostic survey. For this purpose the questionnaire “Perception of martial arts and combat sports by the youth of gymnasiums and secondary schools” prepared by WJ. Cynarski, which includes 18 questions, personal details (in question 19) and Milton Rokeach’s scale of values [Rokeach 1973; Brzozowski 1989; Cynarski 2006, pp. 393-396], was used as a research tool.

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Results

Hypothesis 1. Evaluation of the influence of martial arts practice is independent of the gender of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gender of respondents</th>
<th>Dangers in practising martial arts (evaluation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>injury risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boys</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>girls</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own research

The interdependence between the answer to the question “What dangers in practising martial
arts or combat sports may be indicated?" (17) and
the variable of the gender (19) has been examined.
The result – respondents’ evaluation – is presented
in Table 1. Both boys and girls most frequently
indicated the risk of injury:
\[ df = (2-1) \times (3-1) = 2, \ p = 0,05 \]
\[ \chi^2 = 5,991, \ \chi_{\text{emp}} = 1,841 \]

Empirical analysis of the data allows for the
assumption that evaluation of the influence of
martial arts practice is independent of the gender
of respondents.
\[ \chi_{\text{emp}} = 1,841 < \chi^2 = 5,991 \]

Hypothesis 2. Evaluation of the influence of
martial arts practice is independent of the age of respondents.

The correlation between answers to questions
17 (about benefits from practising martial arts)
and 19 has been examined. The evaluations of
gymnasium students (age 13-15) and secondary
schools (16-19) have been considered separately.
The results have been shown in Table 2. However,
statistically significant interdependencies with
choices from M. Rokeach’s scale of values have not
been noted. Also, we can not say that the choices
of other social and individual values are correlated
with age of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of knowledge</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested in a martial art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 3. Attitude towards martial arts
is independent of the knowledge of respondents.
The respondents’ attitudes towards martial arts
(their cognitive and emotional components) being
reflected in their interest in this field of physical
culture has been analyzed on the basis of answers
to question 4 (What do you know about Far Eastern
martial arts?) and question 12 (Would you like to
practice?), 13 (If yes, why?) and 14 (If not, why?).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of knowledge</th>
<th>Martial art values (evaluation, main associations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 4. Evaluation of the influence of
martial arts practice is independent of the level of
knowledge of respondents.

For verification of hypothesis 4 correlation
between answers to question 6 (List a few eminent
representatives of martial arts) with choices from
questions 8 (What do you associate martial arts
with?) and 17 (According to you what benefits from
practising martial arts may be indicated?) has been
examined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of knowledge</th>
<th>Self-defence</th>
<th>Combat</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Culture of the East</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 4. Evaluation of the influence of
martial arts practice is independent of the level of
knowledge of respondents.

The empirical analysis of the data allows for
assumption that the evaluation of the influence of
martial arts practice is dependent on the level of
knowledge of respondents.
\[ \chi_{\text{emp}} = 17,622 > \chi^2 = 12,592 \]
Discussion

There is the lack of research published on Polish participants on this subject. There were published only results of regional research on young people’s perception of martial arts and combat sports in Podkarpacie province. Also this study is important for its cognitive and applicational aspects.

There have not been any statistically significant dependencies between the studied variables and the choices from M. Rokeach’s scale of values. Thus one may conclude that regardless the mentality and viewpoint of respondents they indicated rational values (especially utilitarian and health-related ones) as benefits from practising martial arts. The analysis of perception of martial arts by respondents (not practising martial arts) to a small degree confirms the perceived educational values and significant ethical dimension of martial arts, which are connected with hierarchies of values the practitioners subscribe to. It results from a generally low level of knowledge of martial arts as a field of physical culture (motion, sportive one). The respondents often mistake martial arts and combat sports and also only 40% of respondents are able to list a few eminent representatives.

The results of conducted own research are generally in accordance with results of similar research on perception and reception of martial arts in Europe [Saldern 1998; Kalina, Jagiello 2000; Cynarski 2002, 2006; Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005, 2006; Figueiredo 2009; Kuśnierz 2011]. But other research has been investigated by people practising martial arts or combat sports. The perception of people practising martial arts and/or combat sports is not the same, as the perception of the young people and students from the same regions [see: Obodyski, Cynarski, Witkowski 2008; Vertonghen, Theeboom 2010].

The new knowledge that has been gained, derives from school children and young people’s perception of martial arts and combat sports, the first such research in Poland.

Conclusions

Hypothesis 1 and 2 have been positively verified. We can formulate conclusions that: 1. Evaluation of the influence of martial arts practice is independent of the gender of respondents; 2. Evaluation of the influence of martial arts practice is independent of the age of respondents.

Hypothesis 3. Attitude towards martial arts is independent of the knowledge of respondents’ has not been confirmed. It has been observed that, on the contrary, attitudes towards martial arts depend on the level of knowledge. It similarly applies to hypothesis 4. It is not true that ‘Evaluation of the influence of martial arts practice is independent of the level of knowledge of respondents’. It is the case that the evaluation of the value of martial arts depends on the respondents’ level of knowledge (of martial arts).

References

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Wiedza polskich uczniów i ich postawy wobec sztuk i sportów walki

Słowa kluczowe: sztuki walki, sporty walki, postawy, wiedza, studenci

Streszczenie
Perspektywę dla badań stanowiła „humanistyczna teoria sztuk walki” i socjologia sztuk walki [Cynarski 2004]. Głównym problemem badawczym i celem badań przeprowadzonych przez autorów było sprawdzenie i opisanie współzależności wiedzy i postaw uczniów szkol ponadpodstawowych wobec sztuk walki. Drugim celem była ocena percepcji sztuk walki przez młodzież ze szkół średnich gimnazjów z południowej części Polski (Podkarpackie i Dolny Śląsk), z naciskiem na aspekt postrzeganych wartości i niebezpieczeństw związanych z uprawianiem sztuk i sportów walki.

Postawiono cztery hipotezy:
1. Ocena wpływu praktyki sztuk walki jest niezależna od płci respondentów;
2. Ocena wpływu praktyki sztuk walki jest niezależna od wieku respondentów;
3. Stosunek do sztuk walki jest niezależny od wiedzy respondentów;
4. Ocena wpływu praktyki sztuk walki jest niezależna od poziomu wiedzy respondentów.


Wyniki i wnioski. W efekcie sprawdzenia hipotez ustalono, że: 1) ocena wpływu praktyki sztuk jest niezależna od płci respondentów, 2) ocena wpływu praktyki sztuk walki jest niezależna od wieku respondentów, 3) postawy wobec sztuki walki zależą (wprost proporcjonalnie) od wiedzy respondentów, 4) ocena wartości sztuk walki zależy od poziomu wiedzy respondentów o sztukach walki. Ponadto u badanych uczniów szkół średnich odnotowano niewystarczającą poziom wiedzy na temat sztuk walki, jako dziedziny kultury fizycznej (- ruchowej, sportowej).