

# Identifying the motivating factors influencing the enjoyment of kendo by international practitioners: a study to support international kendo adoption and growth

## Authors' Contribution:

- A Study Design
- B Data Collection
- C Statistical Analysis
- D Manuscript Preparation
- E Funds Collection

Takamitsu Iwamoto<sup>1ABCDE</sup>, Mitsuru Nakamura<sup>2AD</sup>, Yukiko Takami<sup>3C</sup>,  
Tatsuya Ohno<sup>3C</sup>, Yuji Arita<sup>4B</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Beppu University, Beppu, Japan

<sup>2</sup> Juntendo University Graduate School, Chiba, Japan

<sup>3</sup> Juntendo University, Chiba, Japan

<sup>4</sup> University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan

**Received:** 02 April 2018; **Accepted:** 09 May 2018; **Published online:** 10 May 2018

**AoBID:** 12076

## ABSTRACT

### Background and Study Aim:

The International Kendo Federation seeks to promote *kendo* globally through the cultivation of fellowship between its member organizations. Previous research assessing the motivations of those practicing *kendo* has been conducted at the national level, but not on a multi-regional global scale and did not specifically assess the motivations of international *kendo* practitioners (those practicing *kendo* outside of Japan). As such, this research employed a questionnaire designed to identify the motivating factors influencing the enjoyment of *kendo* for those practicing *kendo* in specific global regions; thus providing greater insight for the adoption and growth *kendo* around the world. The aim of our research is the knowledge on the motivating factors influencing the practitioners *kendo* in their lives and their ability to derive enjoyment from this traditional Japanese martial art.

### Material and Methods:

For the study, 1,005 participants over the age of 18 who practice *kendo* on a regular basis, were surveyed with a questionnaire. The participants were made up of 236 *kendo* practitioners in Japan and 769 international *kendo* practitioners. Initially, 20 non-Japanese *kendo* practitioners were surveyed through open-ended questions in order to ascertain some of the factors influencing their enjoyment of *kendo*. From this information, 40 survey questions were created for the questionnaire used in the study. A five-grade answer-scale was used to measure how respondents valued each of the factors. Factor analysis was performed on each response value, and 40 questions were extracted for the questionnaire.

### Results:

The motivating factors influencing the enjoyment of *kendo* is assessed through the four following factors: skill improvement, spiritual aspects, personal relationships, and discipline. International *kendo* practitioners placed more emphasis on "spiritual aspects" and "discipline"; while the Japanese research participants valued "skill improvement" and "personal relationships" more.

### Conclusions:

The four factors, skill improvement, spiritual aspects, personal relationships, and discipline, were analyzed in this study to identify the factors influencing the enjoyment of *kendo*. The research results suggest that international *kendo* practitioners use *kendo* as a way to study Japanese culture and implement aspects of this culture into their lives. These findings may help to direct future adoption and growth of *kendo* around the world.

### Keywords:

budo • bushido • samurai spirit • skill

### Copyright:

© 2018 the Authors. Published by Archives of Budo

### Conflict of interest:

Authors have declared that no competing interest exists

**Ethical approval:** Not required

**Provenance & peer review:** Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed

**Source of support:** Departmental sources

**Author's address:** Takamitsu Iwamoto, Faculty of International Management, Beppu University, 82 Kitaisigaki, Beppu-City, Oita, 874-8501 Japan; e-mail: iwamoto@nm.beppu-u.ac.jp

**Budo (Budō)** – originally a term denoting the “Way of the warrior”, it is now used as a collective appellation for modern martial arts of *kendō*, *jūdō*, *kyūdō* and so on. The primary objective of these “martial ways” is self-perfection (*ningen-kesei*) [18].

**Bushidō (bushido)** – the ethical framework developed by Japan’s warrior class. During the Tokugawa period, the Neo-Confucian notion of *chūgi* (loyalty) was considered important to maintain the feudal structure. What is commonly referred to as “*bushido*” now, was usually called “*shido*” during the early-modern period. Nitobe Inazō’s internationally renowned book *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan* (1900) claims that *bushidō* forms the core of Japanese morality [18].

**Dan (dan’i)** – a term used to denote one’s technical level or grade [18].

**Dojo (dōjō)** – originally used in reference to places where Buddhism is studied, it is now also used to denote a training hall for the martial arts [18].

**Ippon** – one point. Achieved through the execution of a valid technique on the opponent [18].

**Kakari-geiko** – attack practice in which the attacker unleashes a barrage of techniques to develop technical skill, stamina and fighting spirit [18].

**Skill** – *noun* an ability to do perform an action well, acquired by training [19].

**Iaidō** (abbreviated with *iai*) – is a Japanese martial art that emphasizes being aware and capable of quickly drawing the sword and responding to a sudden attack [20].

**Jōdō (jodo)** – meaning “the way of the *jō*”, or *jōjutsu* is a Japanese martial art using a short staff called *jō*.

## INTRODUCTION

The International Kendo Federation seeks to promote *kendo* (also *iaido* and *jodo*) internationally through cultivating fellowship and trust among its member organizations [1]. With regards to the global diffusion of *kendo*, the All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF) seeks to “accurately disseminate” the unique Japanese cultural aspects inherent in *kendo* as a *budo* through day-to-day practice and sporting competitions; and to spread the teachings of the samurai spirit to a larger population [2]. In comparison, judo has been able to gain worldwide exposure since its inclusion in the 1964 Olympics. That being said, *kendo* is also seeing growth outside of Japan. As *judo* increasingly gains worldwide popularity, one concern has been the loss of the qualities linking it to traditional Japanese culture [3]. This presents a dilemma to those who seek to maintain the cultural qualities of *judo* as a martial art while making it widely accessible as a sport.

In related research, the consciousness and motivation of *kendo* practitioners in specific countries has been the subject of past research [4-8]. However, to date, there have been few studies conducted in accordance to the AJKF’s objectives to ‘accurately disseminate’ the unique Japanese cultural aspects inherent in *kendo* as a *budo* through day-to-day practice and sporting competition; and to spread the teachings of the samurai spirit to a greater population”. Specifically, none analyzing the motivating factors influencing the enjoyment of *kendo* for those practicing *kendo* worldwide. Additional research is necessary for the purpose of identifying those qualities of *kendo* which motivate people to practice it. To fill this research gap, the current study surveyed international *kendo* practitioners with a questionnaire to analyze the centrality of *kendo* to their lives and their ability to derive enjoyment from it.

The aim of our research is the knowledge on the motivating factors influencing the practitioners *kendo* in their lives and their ability to derive enjoyment from this traditional Japanese martial

art.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Subjects

The study targets the six global geographic regions where *kendo* is practiced. The group of 1,052 respondents, ages 18 and over, from 58 countries within the six global regions completed the questionnaire; however, 47 responses were excluded from analysis data because of incomplete questionnaires; for a total of 1,005 subjects. There were 769 respondents from outside of Japan and 236 respondents from Japan. The 769 study participants residing outside of Japan had an average age of 31.95 years, and had trained for an average of 8.57 years. They trained an average of 2.56 times a week, for an average of 2.19 hours per session. They participated in competitions an average of 2.36 times a year. The 236 Japanese study participants had an average age of 31.67 years, and had trained for an average of 21.12 years. They trained an average of 3.83 times per week, for an average of 1.67 hours per session. They participated in competitions an average of 3.72 times per year (Table 1).

### Survey details

#### Survey Questions

Initially, twenty *kendo* practitioners from five countries other than Japan were surveyed, answering ten questions regarding their feelings towards *kendo*. 200 attributes were derived from the responses. Three Japanese 7th dan *kendo* practitioners collaborated to interpret and validate the specific nuances of the responses, and using the KJ method developed by Kawakida [9], 40 questions were extracted, and a five-grade answer-scale was developed, with the following associated values: 1= not pleasant at all; 2 = not enjoyable; 3 = neutral; 4 = somewhat fun; 5 = very fun

#### Questionnaire Creation

Questionnaires were composed in both English and Japanese. The English questionnaires were

**Table 1.** Characteristics of subjects (international and Japanese *kendo* practitioners).

Variable	International (n = 769)		Japanese (n = 236)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age	31.95	10.69	31.67	15.52
Practice duration	8.57	7.70	21.13	12.98
Weekly practice count	2.57	1.11	3.84	2.14
Average training time per practice	2.20	0.94	1.67	0.62
Yearly competition participation	2.36	2.59	3.72	4.04

designed to account for variations between European English and North American English with the assistance of a university language faculty staff member from the researchers' university.

One long-time Japanese resident Dutch national (7th dan) who coaches *kendo* in Europe and the U.S., and one American (6th dan) provided assistance to ensure the questionnaires' wording was easy to understand, yet conveyed the intent, scope, and spirit of the survey. Chinese and Korean versions of the questionnaires were created by university professors, with corrections and translations being made by 5th dan Chinese and Korean *kendo* practitioners living in their native countries.

### Procedure

The survey was conducted between August 2016 and August 2017. Questionnaires were completed at *kendo* seminars and competitions. Specific countries in which the questionnaire was distributed were the following: Canada, Ecuador, Finland, Japan, the Netherlands. In each case the survey was delivered with an explanation of the purpose of the study. Surveys for participants from a total of 58 countries were delivered over the internet.

### Survey Response Processing

For each survey question, the average and standard deviation was calculated from all participants' answers. Factor analysis (maximum likelihood method, Promax rotation) was performed on each measurement scale and the factors were extracted. Factor analysis was carried on the 1,005 submissions for the 40 questions in

this research. Eight general factors were derived from the eigenvalues and scree plot, with four general classifications derived to facilitate interpretation. Each factor was then interpreted and the factor score was calculated for each factor. Finally, t-tests were performed for each factor in order to determine variations between international and Japanese practitioners. Windows OS SPSS version 24.0 was used for the calculations.

## RESULTS

### Overall Factor Identification

The factor loading amount 0.400 was used as an inclusion standard (methodological remark). Three items did not meet this standard, and so were excluded. Factor analysis was then performed on the remaining 37 items. Alpha coefficient and factor scores were calculated for the four primary factors (Table 2). The alpha coefficient numerical value was high, indicating the factors' internal consistency. The first factor, "Skill Improvement", comprises the following variables and their corresponding factorized scores: "Being able to take ippon in competitions" (0.850), "Winning individual matches" (0.792), "Winning as a team in interclub competitions" (0.748), "Perform skills as desired" (0.711), "Passing dan certification tests" (0.664) "Hearing the sound when the strike zone is hit correctly" (0.637), "Learning new skills" (0.582), "Using many skills" (0.528) and "Spirit harmonization, body movements, and posture" (0.483).

The second factor, "Spiritual Aspects", comprises the following variables and their corresponding

**Table 2.** Overall Factor Analysis – structure matrix (factor extraction method: maximum likelihood method; promax method).

Factors items	Factor code			
	1	2	3	4
<b>Factor 1: Skill Improvement</b>				
(a = .879)				
Being able to take <i>ippon</i> in competitions	0.85	0.18	0.23	0.13
Winning individual matches	0.79	0.12	0.20	0.08
Winning as a team in interclub competitions	0.75	0.34	0.19	0.24
Perform skills as desired	0.71	0.26	0.24	0.24
Passing <i>dan</i> certification tests	0.66	0.22	0.19	0.18
Hearing the sound when the strike zone is hit correctly	0.64	0.34	0.24	0.33
Learning new skills	0.58	0.31	0.40	0.43
Using many skills	0.53	0.36	0.32	0.34
Spirit harmonization, body movements, and posture	0.48	0.39	0.38	0.40
<b>Factor 2: Spiritual Aspects</b>				
(a = .810)				
<i>Kendo</i> gives meaning to life	0.28	0.72	0.11	0.35
<i>Kendo's</i> teachings are useful for regular life	0.29	0.64	0.22	0.36
Hold your <i>dojo</i> and <i>kendo</i> equipment in high regard	0.14	0.64	0.14	0.49
Appropriate greeting skills	0.30	0.57	0.36	0.41
Stress relief	0.11	0.56	0.14	0.27
Feeling refreshed after practice	0.24	0.52	0.31	0.30
<i>Kendo</i> has become popular in your country	0.14	0.50	0.24	0.26
Being able to communicate with confidence	0.21	0.50	0.36	0.35
A feeling of achievement when acquiring high skill levels through practicing	0.34	0.48	0.26	0.39
Being able to appreciate <i>kendo</i> forms' beauty	0.21	0.46	0.26	0.31
Becoming physically stronger	0.34	0.45	0.39	0.43
Unsuccessful use of a technique that results in a failed strike attempt	0.02	0.44	-0.11	0.37
Representing your country in <i>kendo</i> competitions	0.14	0.43	0.24	0.28
<b>Factor 3: Personal Relationships</b>				
(a = .745)				
Encouragement among team members	0.22	0.26	0.73	0.28
Valuing other members	0.20	0.11	0.70	0.17
Assistance among team members	0.17	0.26	0.68	0.27
Traveling to competitions together	0.25	0.33	0.50	0.21
Fraternizing outside of <i>kendo</i> -related events	0.31	0.40	0.41	0.28
Courteous treatment from coaches	0.04	0.24	0.41	0.36
Winning as a team in competitions	0.26	0.19	0.40	0.08
<b>Factor 4: Discipline</b>				
(a = .746)				
My instructor(s) enthusiasm is evident	0.15	0.47	0.25	0.70
My instructor teaches difficult concepts well	0.16	0.31	0.22	0.69
My teacher enforces discipline	0.23	0.40	0.20	0.65
I can practice with teacher in <i>kakari-geiko</i>	0.30	0.39	0.28	0.56
I continue practicing in spite of being in pain	0.23	0.51	0.10	0.54
I learn courtesy	0.25	0.46	0.34	0.54
I work hard until the completion of practice	0.38	0.53	0.26	0.53
I practice even if I am wounded <e.g. blisters and skin peeling>	0.17	0.41	0.08	0.42
I can practice at a well-organized <i>dojo</i>	0.20	0.18	0.37	0.31
I can practice with superiors	0.15	0.14	0.37	0.37

**Table 3.** Scoring of each factor (international and Japanese *kendo* practitioners).

Factor name	International (n = 769)		Japanese (n = 236)		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Skill improvement	29.88	6.64	34.08	4.61	-10.94**
Spiritual aspects	46.82	5.73	29.88	6.61	6.04**
Personal relationships	15.59	2.96	17.63	2.45	-10.58**
Discipline	16.44	2.72	14.73	3.54	6.84**

\*\*p&lt;0.01

factorized scores: “*Kendo* gives meaning to life” (0.716), “*Kendo*’s teachings are useful for regular life” (0.642), “Hold your dojo and *kendo* equipment in high regard” (0.640), “Appropriate greeting skills” (0.565), “Stress relief” (0.555), “Feeling refreshed after practice” (0.522), “*Kendo* has become popular in your country” (0.500), “Being able to communicate with confidence”(0.498), “A feeling of achievement when acquiring high skill levels through practicing” (0.483), “Being able to appreciate *kendo* kata beauty” (0.459), “Becoming physically stronger” (0.454), “Unsuccessful use of a technique that results in a failed strike attempt” (0.435) and “Representing your country in *kendo* competitions” (0.429).

The third factor, “Personal Relationships”, comprises the following variables and their corresponding factorized scores: “Encouragement among team members” (0.734), “Valuing other members” (0.699), “Assistance among team members” (0.676), “Traveling to competitions together” (0.498), “Fraternizing outside of *kendo*-related events” (0.414), “Courteous treatment from coaches” (0.410) and “Winning as a team in competitions” (0.401).

The fourth factor comprises the following elements and their corresponding factorized scores: “My instructor’s enthusiasm is evident” (0.702), “My instructor teaches difficult concepts well” (0.691), “My teacher enforces discipline” (0.653), “I can practice with teacher in *kakari-geiko*” (0.556), “I continue practicing in spite of being in pain” (0.539), “I learn courtesy” (0.535), “I work hard until the completion of practice” (0.531) and “I practice even if I am wounded (e.g. blisters and skin peeling)” (0.418). This factor has been named “Discipline”.

### Comparison of International and Japanese *Kendo* Practitioners

#### Comparison of Factor Scores

International respondents rated “Spiritual Development” and “Discipline” factors higher than the Japanese, while “Skill Improvement” and “Personal Relationship” were rated more important by the Japanese (Table 3).

#### Comparison of Individual Questionnaire Responses

Table 4 presents comparisons between the international and Japanese practitioners in terms of the 5-point rating scale and tabulated responses to the 40 questions.

There were 17 items that the international practitioners rated significantly higher than the Japanese; specifically, “My instructor(s) enthusiasm is evident” (p<0.01), “Hold your dojo and *kendo* equipment in high regard” (p <0.01), “*Kendo*’s teachings are useful for regular life” (p<0.01), “*Kendo* has become popular in your country”(p<0.01), “A feeling of achievement when acquiring high skill levels through practicing” (p<0.01), “Courteous treatment from coaches” (p<0.05), and “*Kendo* gives meaning to life” (p<0.01).

There were 18 items that the Japanese *kendo* practitioners rated higher than international *kendo* practitioners; specifically, “Winning as a team in competitions” (p<0.01), “Passing dan certification tests” (p<0.01), “Traveling to competitions together” (p<0.01), “Being able to take *ippon* in competitions” (p<0.01), “Perform skills as desired” (p<0.01), “Encouragement among team members” (p<0.01), and “Assistance among team members” (p<0.01).

**Table 4.** Simple comparison of all items of *kendo* practitioner (international and Japanese).

Question items	International (n = 769)		Japanese (n = 236)		t
	mean	SD	mean	SD	
My instructor(s) enthusiasm is evident	4.65	0.69	4.07	0.92	<b>10.35**</b>
Hold your dojo and <i>kendo</i> equipment in high regard	4.59	0.78	4.24	0.72	<b>6.15**</b>
<i>Kendo's</i> teachings are useful for regular life	4.48	0.73	4.19	0.83	<b>5.08**</b>
Winning as a team in competitions	4.46	0.72	4.71	0.52	<b>-4.94**</b>
<i>Kendo</i> has become popular in your country	4.43	0.76	4.26	0.82	<b>2.90**</b>
A feeling of achievement when acquiring high skill levels through practicing	4.38	0.81	4.20	0.80	<b>3.07**</b>
Courteous treatment from coaches	4.37	0.86	4.23	0.78	<b>2.10*</b>
<i>Kendo</i> gives meaning to life	4.37	0.90	3.96	0.98	<b>6.01**</b>
Appropriate greeting skills	4.32	0.93	4.35	0.77	-0.42
Feeling refreshed after practice	4.29	0.93	4.26	0.84	0.41
I work hard until the completion of practice	4.27	0.80	4.00	0.90	<b>4.32**</b>
Fraternizing outside of <i>kendo</i> -related events	4.24	0.87	4.32	0.82	<b>-1.17*</b>
Representing your country in <i>kendo</i> competitions	4.24	0.91	3.99	0.99	<b>3.60**</b>
I learn courtesy	4.23	1.01	4.27	0.73	-0.61
I continue practicing in spite of being in pain	4.20	0.88	3.44	1.16	<b>10.81**</b>
Stress relief	4.19	1.04	3.80	1.04	<b>5.11**</b>
Assistance among team members	4.17	0.94	4.40	0.66	<b>-3.41**</b>
Becoming physically stronger	4.16	0.95	4.19	0.79	-0.37
Traveling to competitions together	4.15	0.90	4.46	0.68	<b>-4.85**</b>
Being able to communicate with confidence	4.11	0.98	4.10	0.89	0.16
My instructor teaches difficult concepts well	4.11	0.96	3.49	1.09	<b>8.36**</b>
I can practice at a well-organized <i>dojo</i>	4.01	1.02	4.36	0.73	<b>-4.90**</b>
I can practice with superiors	4.01	1.07	4.24	0.85	<b>-3.12**</b>
Hearing the sound when the strike zone is hit correctly	4.01	0.97	4.21	0.81	<b>-2.84**</b>
Being able to appreciate <i>kendo</i> forms' beauty	3.98	1.10	3.91	0.92	<b>0.83*</b>
Perform skills as desired	3.93	1.14	4.42	0.75	<b>-6.16**</b>
Encouragement among team members	3.91	1.07	4.41	0.71	<b>-6.74**</b>
Spirit harmonization, body movements, and posture	3.90	0.95	4.04	0.88	<b>-2.11**</b>
My teacher enforces discipline	3.88	1.04	3.64	1.05	<b>2.99**</b>
Passing <i>dan</i> certification tests	3.87	1.27	4.51	0.68	<b>-7.41**</b>
Learning new skills	3.87	0.96	4.31	0.76	<b>-6.46**</b>
Unsuccessful use of a technique that results in a failed strike attempt	3.82	1.08	2.87	1.24	<b>11.37**</b>
I can practice with teacher in <i>kakari-geiko</i>	3.81	1.11	3.53	1.13	<b>3.46**</b>
I practice even if I am wounded <e.g. blisters and skin peeling >	3.80	1.11	3.47	1.19	<b>3.84**</b>
Being able to take <i>ippon</i> in competitions	3.73	1.22	4.43	0.69	<b>-8.42**</b>
Using many skills	3.61	1.02	4.00	0.89	<b>-5.35**</b>
Winning as a team in interclub competitions	3.55	1.20	3.96	0.93	<b>-4.76**</b>
Valuing other members	3.37	1.16	4.36	0.71	<b>-12.50**</b>
Winning individual matches	3.30	1.33	4.24	0.75	<b>-10.34**</b>
Wining competitions because of mistakes by referees	2.53	1.25	2.61	1.27	<b>-0.89*</b>

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01



## DISCUSSION

*Kendo* is one of a number of martial arts originating in Japan, and includes both sporting aspects through competition, and Japanese cultural characteristics. The survey results in the study were intended to measure “enjoyment derived from *kendo*” by international *kendo* practitioners, and analyze and categorize the constructs of “Skill Improvement”, “Spiritual Aspects”, “Personal Relationships”, and “Discipline”.

The first factor, “Skill Improvement”, included those aspects relating to *kendo* skill acquisition and improvement, success at passing certification tests, and competition-related items. Specifically, these variables are as follows:

- related to skill improvement such as “Learning new skills” and “Using many skills”;
- related to winning competitions such as “Being able to take ippon in competitions” and “Winning individual matches”;
- related to examination promotion for dan such as “Passing dan certification tests”.

Two aspects of *kendo* thought to be important to its practitioners are their dan rank and participation in competitions. Alexander Bennett [10] states that, “Within Japan, it is upright to say that martial arts are not about winning or losing; but in fact, depending on the outcome of a match, it is not unreasonable to say that the subsequent life of the athlete may be decided. Therefore, in reality, winning is in fact of utmost importance when it comes to practice.” He points out that Japanese practitioners place a great deal of value on winning in competitions. It is thought that the long time required for acquiring technically advanced skills results in the long-term participation of Japanese practitioners [11].

International *kendo* practitioners place relatively less importance on the variables found in the “Skill Improvement” factor. Japanese research participants rated variables in the “Skill Improvement” factor higher than their international counterparts. Okajima et al. [12] reported that “winning experiences and gaining higher skills will affect the willingness to continue *kendo*.”

This study concluded that for native Japanese practitioners, competing and winning competitions at an early age resulted in *kendo* practitioners’

continued participation in the sport. Honda et al. [6] and Ohno et al. [8] reported that *kendo* coaches outside of Japan are often volunteers and promote the sport through participation in programs such as the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers etc.

The amount of time actually needed to organize and manage competitions limits their frequency for international *kendo* practitioners. In addition, dan certification testing opportunities are limited outside of Japan due to an insufficient number of qualified examiners to administer such tests; and so many *kendo* practitioners must travel outside of their own country for such events. This may explain the relatively low motivation international *kendo* practitioners place on dan certification tests. Nakabayashi’s [13] observations on differences between the Japanese and Western mindset provide a different view on the variations between Japanese and international *kendo* practitioners regarding the skill acquisition process. Nakabayashi believes that in Western thinking, the mind and body are two separate entities, and that the mind must take control of the body to acquire physical skills. In contrast, Japanese thinking considers the body as a tool of the mind. In addition, young Korean practitioners have the perception that skill level is concomitant to the length of time spent practicing [14]. This may lead to ambivalence in their attempts at acquiring a high level of *kendo* expertise. These points may account for some of the differences between Japanese practitioners and international practitioners in their answers for the “Skill Improvement” factor section.

The “Spiritual Aspects” comprised these variables: “*Kendo* gives meaning to life”, “Stress relief”, “Feeling refreshed after practice”, and related to educational value for everyday life, such as “*Kendo*’s teachings are useful for regular life”, “Appropriate greeting skills”, and “Being able to communicate with confidence.” Education-related questions in the questionnaire were included in the “Spiritual Aspects” factor because education may attribute to *kendo* practitioners leading a fulfilling life through learning skills related to spiritual development.

International *kendo* practitioners rated “Spiritual Aspect” variables significantly higher than the Japanese did. As previously noted, Japanese *kendo* practitioners place more value on those aspects of *kendo* related to competing. Sasaki et al. [7] and Takeda et al. [4] point out that American

and British *kendo* practitioners are drawn to the sport through an interest in Bushido, human development, health aspects, and other benefits. Uehara et al. [5] analyzed the motivation for doing *kendo* among practitioners in eight countries and found that they were drawn to the sport because “*kendo* places value only on the process of physical and mental training.” Analysis of questionnaire responses from the current research suggests that international *kendo* practitioners do *kendo* for the purposes of spiritual refreshment and development through practice.

The third factor of “Personal Relationships” included the following variables: “Encouragement among team members”, “Assistance among team members”, and items to nurture friendship through *kendo* such as “Traveling to competitions together”, and “Fraternizing outside of *kendo*-related events.” *Kendo* practice and competition requires more than one person and training is often mentally and physically demanding. The challenge presented by rigorous practice promotes bonding among teammates. This companionship appears to carry over into non-*kendo* related activities where those who practice *kendo* together fraternize outside of practice and competitions.

Those variables related to “Personal Relationships” in this study’s questionnaire showed that Japanese *kendo* practitioners placed more importance on this aspect of *kendo* than their international counterparts. It has been noted that a strong relationship among *kendo* practitioners on the same team might result in increased motivation [15]. Thus, high-level coaches may promote strong comradery amongst their team members to improve the overall motivation level of the team. *Kendo* is practiced as an extracurricular activity in Japanese schools which likely influences club members’ behavior in that they naturally bond through club participation.

For Japanese practitioners, friendships made in *kendo* extend to other aspects of their lives outside of *kendo*. Conversely, *kendo* practiced outside of Japan is generally not practiced as a part of a practitioners’ school life, but rather in the context of a local martial arts club. In many cases, when someone in the community attains black belt level ability, they leave their clubs and establish new clubs, resulting in relatively weak bonds among practitioners [8]. This fragmentation of the *kendo* community outside of Japan results in loose bonds among

practitioners, that is less than ideal for creating and sustaining motivation to engage in the sport. It is reported that building relationship through *kendo* life results in higher motivation to engage in the sport [6]. In light of this observation, it is important for those *kendo* practitioners outside of Japan to create as many opportunities as possible to nurture practitioners’ engagement with the sport and each other.

The fourth factor, “Discipline”, comprised the following variables related to respecting instructors such as “My instructor(s) enthusiasm is evident”, “My instructor teaches difficult concepts well”, “My teacher enforces discipline”, and “I can practice with teacher in *kakari-geiko*”. This factor also includes those variables related to overcoming physical and mental hardship in the course of training, such as the following points: “I continue practicing in spite of being in pain”, “I learn courtesy”, “I work hard until the completion of practice” and “I practice even if i am a wounded (e.g. blisters and skin peeling)”. Under normal circumstances, continuing an activity when faced with physical and mental discomfort would be unlikely; however, the questionnaire results support the notion that *kendo* practitioners view these difficulties as part of the overall personal development that Bushido seeks to build, and considers these adversities in a positive light [7].

International practitioners rated the variables in the “Discipline” factor higher than the Japanese practitioners. A survey conducted in the U.S. and the U.K. by Takeda et al. [4] revealed that *kendo* practitioners in these countries place importance on the mental training and skill acquisition aspects of *kendo*. Samukawa [16] notes that *kendo* practitioners outside Japan are drawn to *kendo* for the specific purpose of experiencing Japanese culture – something that Japanese practitioners don’t need. As such, the impetus for practicing *kendo* is fundamentally different for the Japanese versus their international counterparts.

In fact, those factors which international *kendo* practitioners valued higher compared to the Japanese, from highest to lowest, were the following: “My instructor(s) enthusiasm is evident”, “Hold your dojo and *kendo* equipment in high regard”, “*Kendo*’s teachings are useful for regular life”, “*Kendo* has become popular in your country”, “A feeling of achievement when acquiring high skill levels through practicing”, “Courteous treatment from coaches” and “*Kendo* gives meaning



to life". These seven items were rated significantly higher by international practitioners than their Japanese counterparts. Specifically, five of these seven variables were part of the "Spiritual Aspect" factor, underscoring the importance of the spiritual aspects of *kendo* to international practitioners. These results suggest that international *kendo* practitioners find the most satisfaction in the spiritual aspects of *kendo* and place less importance on competition and skill acquisition. Budo is interpreted in many different ways around the world [17], and because of this, the concept takes on characteristics that are different in each country [4-8]. As such, it is critical to consider and include cultural aspects of how to manage the dissemination of the sport as it spreads globally.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research analyzed answers to a questionnaire with the intent of identifying similarities

and differences in *kendo* practitioners' motivations for practicing *kendo*, by comparing the questionnaire results from Japanese and international respondents.

International questionnaire respondents rated "Spiritual Aspects" and "Discipline" higher than their Japanese counterparts, while Japanese found the factors of "Skill Improvement" and "Personal Relationships" more important. Notable were the five variables in the "Spiritual aspects" factor being rated most important by international respondents.

This research revealed that international *kendo* practitioners view *kendo* as a gateway to personal and spiritual development and enlightenment. This insight is likely to be valuable in supporting the expansion of *kendo* around the world.

## REFERENCES

1. International Kendo Federation. <http://www.kendo-fik.org/index.html> (accessed 2018 Jan 30)
2. All Japan Kendo Federation. <http://www.kendo.or.jp/kendo> (accessed 2018 Jan 30)
3. Guttman. *Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press; 1994
4. Takeda R, Saitou K, Kobayashi H et al. A Study on internationalization of kendo. *Res J Budo* 2005; 38(Suppl): 9a [in Japanese]
5. Uehara K, Alexander B, Michael K. An international survey on recognition and transformation of culture and competitiveness accompanying international spread of kendo. *Res J Budo* 2005; 38(Suppl): 10a [in Japanese]
6. Honda S. A study of the factors that influenced British university students to continue kendo. *Res J Budo* 2009; 42(2): 19-32 [in Japanese]
7. Sasaki S, Hashimoto T, Yoshimura T. About the view and understanding of kendo practice of foreign kendo practitioners. *Res J Budo* 2010; 43(Suppl): 3 [in Japanese]
8. Ohno N, Honda S, Koda K et al. Study into process of Establishment of Kendo in Greece: From establishment up until the present day. *Res J Budo* 2011; 43(2):13-24 [in Japanese]
9. Kawakida J. *Idea method. Chuukou-sinsho; 1967* [in Japanese]
10. Bennett A. *The Bushido That Japanese People Do Not Know. Risousha; 2013* [in Japanese]
11. Ohishi J, Nabeyama T, Nakao K et al. Analysis of Kendo as a sporting activity in life: A survey about the aging Kendo player. *Res J Phys Arts* 2004; 11(1): 41-56 [in Japanese]
12. Okajima T, Asami Y, Uehara K et al. A Study of the perception on Kendo held by elementary school pupils. *Res J Budo* 1997; 20(3): 36-43 [in Japanese]
13. Nakabayashi S. *Recommendation of Budo. Simazu-shobou; 1994* [in Japanese]
14. Kim H, Takata Y. A research into how Korean youths perceive kendo: Based on a comparison of males and females. *Res J Budo* 2012; 45(1): 57-69 [in Japanese]
15. Bloom GA, Salmela J H. Personal Characteristics of Expert Team Sport Coaches. *J Sport Peda* 2000; 6(2): 56-76
16. Samukawa T. On internationalization of Budo. *Res J Budo* 2011; 43(2): 57-74 [in Japanese]
17. Nakiri F. Global perceptions of Budo. *Res J Budo* 2012; 45(Suppl): 2-4 [in Japanese]
18. Budō. *The Martial Ways of Japan*. Tokyo: Nippon Budokan Foundation; 2009
19. *Dictionary of Sport and Exercise Science. Over 5,000 Terms Clearly Defined*. London: A & B Black; 2006
20. Hall DA, editor. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Martial Arts, (Reviewing.) Irie Kōhei, Omiya Shirō and Koike Masaru., New York, USA: Kodansha USA, Inc.; 2012: 168*

Cite this article as: Iwamoto T, Nakamura M, Takami Y et al. Identifying the motivating factors influencing the enjoyment of kendo by international practitioners: a study to support international kendo adoption and growth. *Arch Budo* 2018; 14: 133-141