

# Barriers and motives for training combat sports

## Authors' Contribution:

- ☑ **A** Study Design
- 📁 **B** Data Collection
- 📊 **C** Statistical Analysis
- 📄 **D** Manuscript Preparation
- 🏆 **E** Funds Collection

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## Abstract

### Background & Study Aim:

The legitimacy of combat sports training, which unifies the ideas and values of martial arts, was assumed as the background of the work. Nowadays, martial arts can only survive thanks to combat sports. Therefore, the aim of the study was knowledge about the barriers and motives for training combat sports.

### Material & Methods:

Martial arts champions from Wrocław (n = 15, including 13 men and 2 women) over 30 years of age were examined using the method of individual cases through an interview. They represented the following disciplines in which they have international and domestic sports successes as well as coaching experience: judo, kyokushin karate, Olympic karate, Shotokan karate, kickboxing, sumo, Olympic taekwondo, wrestling.

### Results:

There are physical and mental barriers for combat sports arts that are created among young people during poorly conducted physical education classes. The motives for training combat sports include comprehensive psychophysical development and children's inspirations drawn from pop culture.

### Conclusions:

Barriers to training combat sports are related to physical conditions and poorly organized physical education class. Meanwhile, the motives for training martial arts are related to high-level combat skills, and trends that are set by the media.

### Key words:

interview • martial arts • neo-gladiatorism

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**Judo** – a combat sport created by Jigorō Kanō, based on the jū-jutsu self-defense method, based on throws and holds [35].

**Karate kyokushin** – karate style created by Masutatsu Ōyama. Competitions in kumite are conducted in a knockdown system [36].

**Olympic karate** – sports karate according to the rules of the World Karate Federation. The competition in kumite is conducted in the semi-contact system [37].

**Karate Shotokan** – a karate style created by the Japan Karate Association based on karate-do master Gichin Funakoshi. The competition in kumite is conducted in the semi-contact system [38].

**Kickboxing** – a combat sport derived from full contact karate, in which one fights using boxing hand techniques and karate kicks [39].

**Sumo** – Japanese national sport, a variation of wrestling, based on 70 techniques leading to victory, including 48 considered 'classic' [40].

**Olympic taekwondo** – a sports variant of taekwondo according to the rules of the World Taekwondo Federation, where the emphasis is on the lower limbs [41].

**Wrestling** – a combat sport based on grappling and throwing. There is a classic style (only grips above the waist) and a free style [22].

**Martial arts** – plural noun any of various systems of combat and self-defence, e.g. judo or karate, developed especially in Japan and Korea and now usually practised as a sport [42].

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, advancing technology and the dizzying pace of life, people's awareness of mental and physical hygiene is increasing [1]. Nowadays, there is a dynamic development of many scientific disciplines and a renaissance of physical culture [2] through the social perception of appearance. In the media there is a cult of one canon of beauty and silhouette, and deviation from it is often stigmatized and pointed out. Anyone who does not fit into the established criteria of corporeality is pushed to the social margin and has little prospects for social advancement [3]. That is why people are looking for comprehensive activity for the body and spirit [4].

These values can be found in combat sports [5]. The emphasis here is on long-term sports training. In the basic stage, the most important thing is to educate adepts through sport [6]. At the targeted stage, the most important thing is to maximize the training effects of adepts [7]. At the stage of specialization, the most important thing is to maximize the sports results of adepts [8]. It should be noted that in combat sports, unlike in martial arts, exploiting the body in order to achieve a sports result is allowed [9]. Martial arts are aimed at maintaining health and self-improvement, but have lost much of their appeal because they do not generate champions [10]. The master model – an erudite expert in combat – is being replaced by the escalation of neo-gladiatorism in the mass media [11]. Combat sports are the only opportunity to cultivate budo values [12]. In this sense, contemporary martial arts must follow the trend of combat sports [13] in order to survive and pass on the ideas and values promoted by masters to future generations [14].

If the attractiveness of combat methods can survive today through combat sports, then the question arises as to what can be done to promote this activity socially by opposing the escalation of neo-gladiatorism. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was knowledge about the barriers and motivations for training combat sports.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Examined persons

The study involved 15 Wrocław combat sports champions (experts) (13 men and 2 women) aged over 30 years of age from the following disciplines: judo, kyokushin karate, Olympic karate,

Shotokan karate, kickboxing, sumo, Olympic taekwondo and wrestling. All respondents have international and domestic sports successes in their disciplines as well as coaching experience.

### Method

As a research method, a study of individual cases developed by Mary Richmond [15] was used. It is a method of research based on the analysis of individual human histories in specific educational situations and specific phenomena of an educational nature through the prism of individual human biographies. An interview was used as a research technique, which consisted in obtaining information by conducting direct conversations. Accordingly, conclusions were obtained not only as a result of the questions asked and the answers provided, but also through the interactions between the researchers and the respondents.

### Organization of research

Interviews were conducted in the first quarter of 2021 at the Department of Sport Didactics of the University School of Physical Education in Wrocław.

## RESULTS

The answers obtained were systematized and summarized in the form of a detailed message.

### Barriers

The main barrier to training combat sports is physical conditions. In the beginning, adepts do not have a trained tolerance for pain and are afraid of injury. The problem is often the lack of an appropriate amplitude of flexibility. It should be noted that trainers adapt exercise groups to the physical fitness of adepts. First, the emphasis is on building self-confidence and mental resilience. At a later stage, the emphasis shifts to physical skills in accordance with the principle "a strong mind is a strong body, and a weak mind is a weak body". The respondents emphasized that competitive and professional combat sports training is conditioned by a healthy personality, conscientiousness, self-discipline, perseverance, determination, uncompromising character and patience. It is important that barriers to training martial arts among young people are created by poorly conducted physical education class. Young people with fighter ambitions are often limited by the norms of the school

curriculum and ridiculed by peers representing popular team sports games.

### Motives

The motives for undertaking martial arts training are: comprehensive physical development, body shaping, and excitement. The motivation to start training in the interviewees was the interest derived from childhood inspirations based on films and video games about the way (development) to mastery and international popularity. The media play an important role here. The motives also included self-defence skills and a sense of one's own safety. It was found that every motivated person is capable of training combat sports at a high level. People who lack motivation build it during training and can also reach a high level, but it takes more time.

### DISCUSSION

Interesting cognitive results were obtained from the interviews conducted. In terms of barriers to combat sports training, physical conditions and poorly conducted school physical education class were noted. Not every potential combat sports adept believes in his abilities, which creates a mental barrier [16]. This barrier can be eliminated by well-organized physical activity [17]. And here the physical education teacher plays an important role. It is he who must introduce each child to physical culture and direct them to extracurricular physical activity adapted to their predispositions [18]. And only after this stage does the coach play an important role [19]. Well-organized training of a martial arts adept has broad educational values [20]. Through combat training, they develop their motor potential [21], tactical and technical capabilities of effective operation [22, 23] healthy personality [24], eating habits [25], their own physicality [26] and injury prevention [27]. The physical education teacher and the coach must cooperate to promote the physical culture of athletes to achieve a higher level of performance [28].

As for the motives for training combat sports, apart from high-level combat skills [29], following the patterns popularized by films and video games was noted. That is why the mass media, such as the Internet, television, the press, and cinema, have such a huge impact on the promotion of combat sports. Due to media coverage, the society is in contact with combat sports reports on a daily basis. This coverage may encourage many people

to take action in this area [30]. Therefore, the mission for society should be to exclude media coverage of the fights of neo-gladiatorism.

Parents of pre-school and school-aged children are noticed to direct their children to combat sports derived from budo [31]. The budo values propagated by martial arts trainers support the families of training children in the process of their upbringing. Young martial arts practitioners in adolescence, just like their peers, undergo an extraordinary transformation in terms of physical appearance and mental functioning. Very often, calm and stable children emerge into aggressive teenagers who contest the norms they know and are susceptible to the influence of their peers. They strive to rebuild and reintegrate into young adults [32]. It should be noted that this life period includes fears and anxieties related to the uncertainty of entering adulthood and the challenges of their future [33]. Therefore, during this period, youth is so susceptible to the escalation of neo-gladiatorism. They are impressed by violent fights and neo-gladiators portrayed in the media as heroes. This is why young people training martial arts so often transfer to training mixed martial arts and in this way, with social consent, they become modern gladiators. Young people perceive neo-gladiatorism as a certain perspective of building their own image, popular in social media, and the possibility of earning legal money on fights.

Accepting mixed martial arts (i.e. gladiatorship camouflaged under this name) pushed another frontier of socially tolerated violence. The effect of this is certainly brutal fights among young people and the intensification of hate speech.

Twenty years earlier, Artur Kruszewski wrote a doctoral dissertation dedicated to the factors that inspired and limited practicing sports and martial arts in Poland [34]. However, the thematic scope of our research is significantly narrowed down, and therefore in the discussion we do not refer to the detailed issues raised by Kruszewski at that time.

### CONCLUSIONS

Barriers to training combat sports are related to physical conditions and are reinforced by poorly conducted physical education class, and the motives relate to high-level combat skills and are determined by media coverage.

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