

## SOCIOLOGY

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### Polish students' knowledge and their attitudes towards martial arts and combat sports<sup>1</sup>

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#### 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 ( $N_0 = 300$ ) 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  $\chi^2$  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; Gieszkowski, 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*

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al. 2004; Wolters, Fußmann 2008].

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 *budō*) serve versatile psychophysical and moral education of children and adolescents well [see: Hyun-ju, Hannon, Banks 2006; Theeboom, DeKnop, Wylleman 2008; Figueiredo 2009; Vertonghen, Theeboom 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. Evaluation of the influence of martial arts practice is independent of the gender of respondents;

Hypothesis 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;

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

## Methods

The area covered by the research consists of two Polish southern regions – Rzeszów city (the capital of the region) and Podkarpacie region as well as Wrocław and Lower Silesia. Two factors were decisive within the area: 1) social and economic similarity; 2) practical possibilities arising from co-operation of the three scientific centres and members of the research team.

The material of the research - samples from among the youth studying in junior secondary schools (gymnasiums) and secondary schools (liceums) - were chosen at random. 300

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 W.J. 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.

The most important for the study questions, are: 4<sup>th</sup> – What do you know on Far Eastern martial arts?; 6<sup>th</sup> – Cite some outstanding representatives of martial arts; 8<sup>th</sup> – What do you associate martial arts with?; 12<sup>th</sup> – Would you like to practice [martial arts]?; 13<sup>th</sup> – If so, why?; 14<sup>th</sup> – If not, why?; 17<sup>th</sup> – What benefits causes practising martial arts?; 18<sup>th</sup> – What dangers of participation (in martial arts and combat sports) may be indicated?; 19<sup>th</sup> – Personal details. Please write your gender, age, place of birth and place of residence.

For verification of 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, and for hypothesis 3 – answers to question 4 (knowledge) compared with answers to questions 12, 13, 14 (behavioral component of the attitude). Hypothesis 4 has been verified on the correlation between answers to question 6 (knowledge) and choices from questions 8 (associates) and 17 [Cynarski 2006, pp. 393-396]. The  $\chi^2$  independence test was used.

## Results

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

**Table 1.** Evaluation of danger of practising martial arts depending on the gender

gender of respondents	Dangers in practising martial arts (evaluation)		
	injury risk	increased level of aggressiveness	other
boys	106	42	5
girls	79	30	8

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.

$$df = (2-1) * (3-1) = 2, p = 0,05$$

$$\chi^2\alpha = 5,991, \chi^2emp = 1,841$$

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.

$$\chi^2emp = 1,841 < \chi^2\alpha = 5,991$$

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 2.** Evaluation of benefits resulting from practising martial arts

Age of respondents	Benefits from doing martial arts (evaluation)		
	Increase in moral immunity	Improvement of fitness and health	Ability to self-defend and fight
Secondary school students	51	105	145
Gymnasium students	26	53	73

Note: The data do not sum up to 100% because the respondents could indicate more than one answer/value.

Source: own research

$$df = (2-1) * (3-1) = 2, p = 0,05$$

$$\chi^2\alpha = 5,991, \chi^2emp = 0,019$$

The empirical analysis of the data allows for assumption that the evaluation of the influence of martial arts practice is independent of the age of respondents.

$$\chi^2emp = 0,019 < \chi^2\alpha = 5,991$$

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 3.** Attitudes of the young people towards martial arts in relation to knowledge

Level of knowledge	Attitude	
	Interested in a martial art	Lack of interest in a martial art
High	79	30
Average	40	37
Low	33	51

Source: own research

$$df = (2-1) * (3-1) = 2, p = 0,05$$

$$\chi^2\alpha = 5,991, \chi^2emp = 22,551$$

From the above presented interdependency it results that attitudes towards martial arts depend on the respondents' knowledge.

$$\chi^2emp = 22,551 > \chi^2\alpha = 5,991$$

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 4.** Interdependency between evaluation and association of martial arts and the level of knowledge

Level of knowledge	Martial art values (evaluation, main associations)			
	Self-defence	Combat	Sport	Culture of the East
High	120	109	93	85
Average	59	47	51	67
Low	31	29	42	52

Note: The data do not sum up to 100% because the respondents could indicate more than one answer/value.

Source: own research

$$df = (4-1) * (3-1) = 6, p = 0,05$$

$$\chi^2\alpha = 12,592, \chi^2emp = 17,622$$

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.

$$\chi^2emp = 17,622 > \chi^2\alpha = 12,592$$

## 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, Jagiełło 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: Obodyński, 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).

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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 szkół ponadpodstawowych wobec sztuk walki. Drugim celem była ocena percepcji sztuk walki przez młodzież ze szkół średnich i gimnazjów z południowej części Polski (Podkarpacie 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.

Metoda. Uczestnikami badań ( $N_0 = 300$ ) była młodzież ucząca się w szkołach średnich (gimnazja i licea). Zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego z techniką ankiety. Narzędziem był kwestionariusz: „Percepcja sztuk walki i sportów walki przez młodzież z gimnazjów i szkół średnich”, opracowany przez W.J. Cynarskiego [2006], który zawiera 18 pytań, dane osobowe (w pytaniu 19) i skalę wartości Milтона Rokeacha. Do opracowania przyjęto (po odrzuceniu błędnych i niepełnych)  $N = 274$  kwestionariuszy. W analizie statystycznej użyto testu niezależności  $\chi^2$ .

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 niewystarczający poziom wiedzy na temat sztuk walki, jako dziedziny kultury fizycznej (- ruchowej, sportowej).