

## SOCIOLOGY & PEDAGOGY

WOJCIECH J. CYNARSKI<sup>1(ADEFG)</sup>, MARTA NIEWCZAS<sup>1(BCD)</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Physical Education, University of Rzeszow, Rzeszow (Poland)

Corresponding author: Dr Marta Niewczas, e-mail: martaniewczas@wp.pl

# Attitude towards karate among the members of the Polish Cadet representation – diagnostic survey

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**Key words:** martial arts, *karate*, values, attitudes, perception

### Abstract

Background. As a scientific framework we have chosen, on the one hand, the holistic anthropology of martial arts within the sphere of humanistic values, and on the other, the traditionally-understood theory of attitudes with its components of knowledge, emotions and behaviors.

Problem. The problem of the attitude of members of the Polish national team in the cadet age category, to *karate*, as well as an analysis of their world of values have been addressed. What does karate mean to the athletes' lives? What is their perception of *karate*? What is their general hierarchy of values?

Methodology. The main method of empirical research is a diagnostic survey. The tools are: a direct extended questionnaire by Cynarski; auxiliary questionnaire; survey questionnaire “Perception of martial arts by practicing youth: Motives and effects of training, values of martial arts against other values”, and the Rokeach scale of values. The research material is based on the responses received from members of the Polish Traditional Karate Association national squad, in the junior / cadet category (14-15), N=29. The study used statistical coefficients, non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test, the mean, median, standard deviation, chi-square test and the Fisher's exact test.

Results. The subjects strive for mastery in martial arts and in sport; they want to earn higher ranks (*kyu / dan*) and win in prestigious competitions. Women more often than men pointed to the “habit of continuous pursuit of the goal” as the most important value in their lives, while men more often pointed to “family and friends”. “Family safety” is better appreciated by those who consider the constant habit of pursuing a goal to be the most important value in their lives. Also, these subjects assess “responsibility” higher. The respondents who did not recognize “the habit of continuous pursuit of the goal” as the most important value in life evaluate “logic” more highly on the scale of instrumental values.

Conclusions. The subjects' attitudes to *karate* were active and generally affirmative. The perception of *karate* stretches from the traditionally-understood martial art, through fighting sports, to a set of self-defense techniques. For many, *karate* is a passion for life; in its cultivation they perceive numerous values and a positive influence on personality. However, indications for family and friends are typical of the axiology of the entire Polish society.

### Introduction

*Karate*, which becomes an Olympic discipline since 2020, is still practiced in many organizations, with competitions with different regulations or without any competition [Mattson 1963; Cynarski 2014, 2017; Ben Messaoud 2015]. In this research the authors attempt to study the attitudes towards *karate* and the karatekas' scope of values in one of the major varieties of this martial art.

The cadet category, in other words, younger juniors is one of the age categories of the Polish Traditional

Karate Federation (ITKF) [Nishiyama, Brown 1960].

There are five age categories:

Lower junior – 12-13 years old,

Mid junior – 14-15,

Junior – 16-17,

Youth – 18-20,

Senior – 21+.

The problem of attitude towards *karate* among the members of the Polish national team in the age category of cadets, as well as the analysis of their individual, social, instrumental and terminal values have been addressed to.

What is the place of *karate* in the athletes' lives? How do they perceive *karate*? What is their hierarchy of values?

As a scientific framework, on the one hand, is the holistic anthropology of martial arts with the sphere of humanistic values [Cynarski 2006, 2012], and on the other – traditionally understood theory of attitudes, with the components of knowledge, emotions and behaviours [Cohen 1964].

The literature indicates the educational and personality-shaping values of *karate* and other traditional martial arts, as well as the ethical values and positive health potential brought by them [Capulis, Dombrovskis, Guseva 2014; Jennings 2017]. However, how do today's young karatekas who are successful in this discipline, internalize the values of the *Bushido* tradition and moral ideals indicated by famous teachers and popularisers [Nishiyama, Brown 1960; Jorga 1991; Cynarski 2018]? Is it becoming just a sport functioning on the global market [cf. Ko, Yang 2008]?

## Methodology

The main method of empirical research here is a diagnostic survey. The tools are: a direct extended questionnaire by Cynarski [2006: 370-396], auxiliary questionnaire A, survey questionnaire “Perception of martial arts by the practicing youth. Motives and effects of training, values of martial arts against other values”, and the Rokeach scale of values [Rokeach 1973].

The research material is based on the responses obtained from the members of national squad of the Polish Traditional Karate Association. N = 29 (target sample, full) of questionnaires were collected during the grouping of the national squad. The subjects are people aged 14-15, mostly young men (Table 1).

They all practice “traditional karate”, i.e. *Shotokan*, ITKF version, and one of the respondents (3.4%) also practices Brazilian jujutsu. 79.3% of respondents practice the indicated *karate* variety for over 5 years. 20.6%

Tab. 1. M3. Gender

		Frequency	%
Valid	Female	11	37,9
	Male	16	55,2
	Total	27	93,1
No data	Systemic lack of data	2	6,9
	Total	29	100,0

[Source: own research]

Tab. 2. \$o7 Frequencies

O7. Who influenced you most in your interest to practice martial arts?	Answers		% of observation	
	N	%		
\$o7 <sup>a</sup>	Father	16	44,4	57,1
	Mother	12	33,3	42,9
	Brother	5	13,9	17,9
	Sister	1	2,8	3,6
	Friend	1	2,8	3,6
	Other people	1	2,8	3,6
	Total	36	100,0	128,6

a. Counted values 1

Tab. 3. \$o6 - Frequencies

O6. What grasped your interest and made you want to start martial arts training?	Answers		% of observation	
	N	%		
\$o6 <sup>a</sup>	Cinema, film, TV	5	13,2	18,5
	Favourite character	3	7,9	11,1
	PC games	5	13,2	18,5
	Fashion	1	2,6	3,7
	A tournament i viewed, a show	9	23,7	33,3
	Friend's stories	9	23,7	33,3
	Literature	1	2,6	3,7
	Others	5	13,2	18,5
	Total	38	100,0	140,7

a. Counted values 1

of respondents already have the 1 *dan* master degree, the rest have higher student degrees, 3-1 *kyu*. All of them, according to their birthplace and residence, are Poles. 62.1% declared their religion as Catholic. These are people with primary or partial secondary education (89.7%), due to their age still learning, which was declared by 82.8% of respondents. 100% of the *karatekas* had no criminal record. None of the respondents had previously pursued another competitive sport discipline. The respondents usually live in big cities (51.7%) and declare a very good economic situation of the family (48.3%). Mother's education is mostly higher (62.1%), as well as the father's (79.3%).

The study used statistical coefficients, non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test, the mean, median, standard deviation, chi-square test and the Fisher's exact test.

## Results

What else conditioned the undertaking of *karate* training by the participants (apart from the good economic situation of their families mentioned above)? Usually, parents, especially father, encouraged to make an effort to practice *karate* (Table 2). Those who opposed practicing this sport were only 6.8% (mothers, grandmothers).

The knowledge of the subjects about martial arts and their philosophy is limited to the knowledge about the *karate* variety they practice. The verifying question was to mention five greatest martial arts representatives. The names of people from the ITKF elite were falling, as well as G. Funakoshi and Bruce Lee. The main source of knowledge was literature, Internet and trainers (20.6% of responses). 58.6% of respondents do not attach importance to the philosophy and principles of martial arts. Knowledge of this philosophy was rated as very good only by 10.3%, and as good by 24.1%. Over half of the respondents (51.6%) declared that the aspect of art is more important to them than sport. As the achievements in *karate*, martial arts or sport, everyone declared only sports results – the championships of Poland, Europe and the world. When asked about the meaning of martial arts philosophy, 88.9% of the respondents answered: "striving for excellence through practicing karate". As the most important principles, 60% mentioned: "stable emotions, hard work, striving for excellence, self-confidence, humility", and 40% – rules of the *dojo* oath.

What was the time span of the change in the perception of karate and attitudes to karate? The motives for taking up the training were different (Table 3); the decision was particularly influenced by the shows and stories of the friends, media content and computer games. For 64.3% of the respondents, the reason for undertaking training was "willingness to learn martial arts and self-defense", and for 28.6% – the will of the parents. "Traditional karate" was chosen as a result of the inter-

est (66.7%) or, for example, due to the fact that "there was a karate club in the hometown" (18.5%).

What were the Oriental martial arts for the subject when he was beginning to practice them? "Interesting physical activity" (53.8%), the competition "who will be stronger" (23.1%), "fashion" (15.4%), "the road to excellence" (7.7%). In conversations with younger colleagues and debutants, they see a similar understanding of *karate*. Three-quarters of the respondents see changes in their own comprehension of karate. 54.5% of them speak about "the development of the spirit". 60.9% of answers were statements of the kind "traditional karate developed me emotionally and spiritually". In question B11: "Has karate changed something in your life?" most of the answers were "life awareness" (58.3% of observations), and improvement in physical fitness (33.3%). 100% of the respondents rated these changes as positive, especially the impact on their personality. For 40% it is still a self-defense practice, but for 61.9% of the respondents it is also a way to "achieve the internal balance".

For 78.1% of respondents, "the path of martial arts" is a passion for life, for others – entertainment and recreation. According to 86.4% of the respondents, the philosophy and principles of traditional martial arts are always and everywhere in life, but half (50%) of them are indifferent to this philosophy. Perhaps those who are not indifferent feel that they have understood the ethical values and sense of self-realization of the warrior's path. For 93.1%, the teacher (*sensei*) is still important, and is the one who plays mainly the "educational and motivational" role (78.1%), not just a spiritual *guru*. Generally, however, they do not use meditation practices (86.2%) and do not seek mystical experiences. The fact that 58.6% of cadets encouraged others to practice *karate*, allows us to assume that they consider *karate* to be an autotelic value. Interestingly, the most common argument (82.1% of observations) for starting to practice karate was to acquire self-defense skills. However, they are mostly people who have already achieved sports success, declaring (95%) such a success.

They approach *karate* affirmatively, especially appreciating the training and the technique itself (25.6% of answers). Among the main motifs that were declared, we also find the aspect of self-defense and improvement of physical fitness (6.3 and 6% of responses, and about 80% of observations in multiple choice questionnaire). In the question O14: "What would you like to achieve in martial arts / sports?" most of the answers indicated a higher technical degree (29.5% of answers) and a victory in prestigious competition (26.9%). As the most attractive values of practicing karate, respondents most often indicated the pursuit of mastery / perfection and "the opportunity to meet many interesting people" (15% of answers), but also "to shape positive character traits" (12.5%).

The characteristics of the ideal trainer are "patience and persistence" (50% of observations) and "ability to motivate to work" (39.3%). What the subjects despise in the world of martial arts and combat sports is "showing off, flashing around" (29.3%) and monotonous, tedious methods of training (24.4%), but sometimes also sports competition (4.9%).

What is the general hierarchy of values of the studied karatekas? As the most important value in their lives, they mostly pointed to family and friends (53.3% of responses). Many (33.3%) reported "the habit of con-

stant pursuit of the goal". Rokeach value choices were also analyzed. Statistical analysis in the group of "cadets" showed several statistically significant differences, which inform that the safety of the family, on the scale of terminal values, is better assessed by those who consider the continuous habit of pursuing a goal to be the most important value in their lives. Also, these subjects assess responsibility higher on the scale of instrumental values. The respondents who did not recognize the habit of constant pursuit of the goal as the most important value in life, evaluate logic on the scale of instrumental

**Tab. 4.** Statistics Z1

Z1. Scale of terminal values	N		Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Minimal	Maximal Valid
	Valid	No data					
Family security	17	12	<b>5,65</b>	6,00	3,968	1	13
Freedom	16	13	<b>5,81</b>	5,00	3,902	1	16
Wisdom	17	12	<b>6,06</b>	5,00	4,069	1	13
Happiness	17	12	<b>6,53</b>	5,00	4,862	1	17
True friendship	17	12	<b>8,71</b>	10,00	4,327	1	15
Mature love	17	12	<b>8,94</b>	7,00	5,117	2	18
Self respect	17	12	<b>8,94</b>	8,00	5,584	1	18
World at peace	17	12	<b>9,41</b>	10,00	3,537	3	14
Inner harmony	17	12	<b>9,76</b>	11,00	4,644	1	17
National security	15	14	<b>9,80</b>	11,00	5,281	1	18
Pleasure	17	12	<b>9,82</b>	10,00	5,376	1	18
Social recognition	17	12	<b>10,53</b>	10,00	5,352	2	18
Self accomplishment	17	12	<b>10,71</b>	11,00	5,145	1	18
Equality	17	12	<b>10,76</b>	12,00	5,250	2	18
Wealthy life	16	13	<b>11,50</b>	13,00	3,916	4	17
World of beauty	17	12	<b>11,59</b>	13,00	4,938	4	18
Salvation	16	13	<b>12,44</b>	15,00	5,391	2	18
Exciting life	16	13	<b>12,63</b>	15,00	4,603	2	17

**Tab. 5** Statistics Z2

Z2. Scale of instrumental values	N		Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Minimal	Maximal Valid
	Valid	No data					
Ambition	18	11	<b>4,11</b>	3,00	3,628	1	13
Independence	18	11	<b>5,83</b>	6,00	4,382	1	18
Responsibility	18	11	<b>6,11</b>	5,50	3,359	1	14
Intellect	18	11	<b>6,61</b>	6,00	3,648	1	15
Logic	18	11	<b>7,22</b>	6,50	4,440	1	18
Courage	17	12	<b>8,06</b>	6,00	5,238	2	18
Placidity	17	12	<b>8,18</b>	8,00	4,613	2	17
Love	18	11	<b>8,33</b>	7,50	5,380	1	17
Self-Control	17	12	<b>8,76</b>	9,00	4,409	2	17
Imagination	18	11	<b>9,61</b>	9,50	4,996	1	17
Politeness	15	14	<b>10,80</b>	12,00	5,267	1	18
Cleanliness	18	11	<b>10,94</b>	12,50	5,104	3	18
Broad-Mindedness	17	12	<b>11,41</b>	11,00	4,731	2	18
Honesty	17	12	<b>11,71</b>	13,00	5,229	1	18
Helpfulness	16	13	<b>11,94</b>	13,00	4,250	1	18
Forgiveness	15	14	<b>13,40</b>	14,00	3,225	4	17
Talent	17	12	<b>13,76</b>	14,00	2,412	10	18
Obedience	16	13	<b>15,19</b>	16,50	2,994	10	18

**Tab. 6.** What would you consider to be the most important value in your life?

	family/friends	M2. Age	M4. Time of practicing martial arts/sports (total)	M5. Time of training/practicing different styles (years)
Yes	Mean	14,44	7,31	7,27
	Median	14,00	7,50	7,00
	N	16	16	15
	Standard deviation	,512	1,887	1,944
No	Mean	14,45	7,11	6,25
	Median	14,00	7,00	7,00
	N	11	9	8
	Standard deviation	,522	1,167	2,435
Total	Mean	14,44	7,24	6,91
	Median	14,00	7,00	7,00
	N	27	25	23
	Standard deviation	,506	1,640	2,130

values higher. In the case of other variables, no statistically significant differences were found. In turn, the Mann Whitney U test in the “cadet group” did not show a statistically significant difference in the scale of terminal and instrumental values due to the choice of family / friends (the most important value in life) (Table 4-6). Instances of correlation with the values of “health”, “life”, “honesty” and “intelligence” were not found.

Women more often than men pointed to the “habit of continuous pursuit of the goal” as the most important value in their lives ( $p = 0.36$ ), while men more often “family and friends” ( $p = 0.21$ ). Honesty was more appreciated by women ( $p = 0.22$ ), and health and intelligence - by men ( $p = 0.59$ ).

## Discussion

Wided Ben Messaoud [2015] studied people practicing karate at various ages and at different levels of advancement. Her respondents (Tunisia) treated karate more as a martial art. Also in the studies of Portuguese [Rosa 2012] and Polish [Kusnierz 2011] karatekas there were predominant indications peculiar of the “martial arts path” – the Japanese *budo*.

On the other hand, Jakhel and Pieter [2013], as a result of a 30-year observation, indicated clear increasing willingness in younger karatekas to compete in sport. This, in turn, does not exclude the educational influence on the personality [Jorga, Mastrappas, Damigos 2018]. Still, according to our own research, the representatives of sports karate praise the values of self-realization (present in Japanese *karate-do*), respect the teacher (sensei position), accept the asceticism of hard training, discipline and self-discipline.

From the perspective of the examined cadets, the perception of karate through its pro-health function is minimal, despite its notable significant health impact [Momola, Cynarski 2003; Piorko-Pawlinski 2009].

Respectively, the idea of combining karate with Zen Buddhism and spirituality is not popular and it is quite niche today [*cf.* Mor-Stabilini 2013]. The effects of training in the form of improving physical fitness turned out to be much more appreciated by the respondents, which is also consistent with the research of several authors [Starosta, Pawlowa-Starosta 2004; Kruszewski *et al.* 2008; Litwiniuk, Wieleba, Cynarski 2008]. Unexpectedly, the aspect of self-defense was emphasized by the respondents, same as in the traditional understanding of *karate* by Georg Mattson [1963] and Lothar Sieber [Sieber 2011; Cynarski 2014].

Identical methodological instruments used in the study of the diverse milieu of martial arts and martial sports in the Polish Podkarpacie region showed interest in the aspect of health in older adepts with longer training experience. Internalisation of the rules was most fully represented among the instructors. The moral and non-religious dimension of the practice of martial arts is accepted. In comparison with the sample group (not practicing school children), the knowledge of the subject among martial artists is much greater. Also, the positive effect of practicing martial arts and combat sports on personality is widely recognized. There were differences between the attitudes of people representing non-competitive martial arts and contact fighting sports. In general, however, the values that coincide with the Christian ones prevailed among those who practice traditional martial arts [Cynarski 2006: 414-415].

The ITKF “Traditional Karate” combines the advantages of traditional martial arts and the sports dimension, which is at the same time a martial art and a specific combat sport. Similar research has been conducted so far only in the junior category. It was stated that the gender variable differentiates the choice of the most important values – women more often pointed to “family and friends” and “respect”. (...) Respondents most often pointed to “family security”, “happiness” and “wisdom” on the scale of terminal values, as well as “ambition” and

"responsibility" on the scale of instrumental values. For most of the subjects, the karate philosophy is important, but this does not imply internalisation of the imperative of "continuous goal pursuit" [Cynarski, Niewczas 2017]. However, in the above-described results of our own research, references to the Rokeach scale values were different. Here, men more often emphasized the value of "family and friends". The novelty of the research is the study of the perception of *karate* in a group of top players in the 14-15 age category.

## Conclusions

The attitudes of the respondents to *karate* were generally affirmative, active (active participation), with the intellectual component being limited to the content taught and promoted within their own organization. The perception of *karate* stretches here from traditionally understood martial art (*do* – path), through combat sport, to a set of self-defense techniques, which is reminiscent of *taekwondo* (especially in the ITF version) or *judo* (to a lesser extent). For many *karate* is a passion for life; they perceive numerous values and a positive influence on personality in its cultivation. However, indications for family and friends are typical of the axiology of the entire Polish society.

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## Postawa wobec karate członków reprezentacji Polski kadetów – sondaż diagnostyczny

**Słowa kluczowe:** sztuki walki, karate, wartości, postawy, recepcja

### Abstrakt

Perspektywa. Za naukowe ramy służą tu z jednej strony holistyczna antropologia sztuk walki ze sferą humanistycznych wartości, a z drugiej – tradycyjnie rozumiana teoria postaw, z komponentami wiedzy, emocji i zachowań.

Problem. Podjęto problem postawy wobec *karate* członków reprezentacji Polski w kategorii wiekowej kadetów, a także analizy ich świata wartości. Czym jest dla badanych sportowców *karate* w ich życiu? Jak wygląda ich recepcja *karate*? Jaka jest ich ogólna hierarchia wartości?

Metoda. Główną metodą badań empirycznych jest tu badanie diagnostyczne. Narzędzia to: bezpośredni, rozszerzony kwestionariusz Cynarskiego, pomocniczy kwestionariusz

A, kwestionariusz ankiety „Postrzeganie sztuk walki przez ćwiczącą młodzież, motyw i efekty treningu, wartości sztuk walki na tle innych wartości”, oraz skala Rokeacha. Materiał badawczy opiera się na odpowiedziach członków kadry narodowej Polskiego Związku Karate Tradycyjnego, kategorii junior młodszych / kadet (14-15 lat), N = 29. W badaniu wykorzystano współczynniki statystyczne, nieparametryczny test U Manna-Whitneya, średnią, medianę, odchylenie standardowe, test chi-kwadrat i dokładny test Fishera.

Wyniki. Badani dążą do mistrzostwa w sztuce walk i w sporcie; chcą zdobywać kolejne stopnie (*kyu / dan*) i wygrywać w prestiżowych zawodach. Kobiety częściej niż mężczyźni wskazywały na „nawyk ciągłego dążenia do celu”, jako wartość najważniejszą w swoim życiu, natomiast mężczyźni - częściej „rodzinę i przyjaciół”. „Bezpieczeństwo rodziny” lepiej jest oceniane przez tych, którzy za najważniejszą wartość w swoim życiu uznają ciągły nawyk dążenia do celu. Również ci badani wyżej oceniają „odpowiedzialność”. Badani, którzy nie uznali nawyku ciągłego dążenia do celu, jako najważniejszej wartości w życiu, wyżej oceniają „logiczność” w skali wartości instrumentalnych.

Wnioski. Postawy badanych wobec *karate* były aktywne i generalnie afirmatywne. Recepcja *karate* rozciąga się tu od tradycyjnie rozumianej sztuki walki, poprzez sport walki, po zestaw technik samoobrony. Dla wielu *karate* jest życiową pasją; dostrzegają w jego kultywowaniu liczne wartości i pozytywny wpływ na osobowość. Natomiast wskazania na rodzinę i przyjaciół są typowe dla aksjologii całego polskiego społeczeństwa.