

MARTIAL ARTS AS PHYSICAL CULTURE

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Correlates for Arnis Participation of Philippine Junior High School Students

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Abstract

Problem. The purpose of the study was to examine the participants' perceived physical competence and their level of cultural appreciation of the Philippine martial art Arnis.

Method. This cross-sectional study adopted Fox and Corbin's (1989) Physical Self-Perception Profile Questionnaire and Malmo's (2013) Cultural Appreciation on Martial Arts Scale (CAMAS), both of which were adapted to Arnis. Our questionnaire was completed by n=233 (n = 105 male, n = 128 female) 13-16-year-old junior high school students who volunteered to participate. Descriptive and correlational analyses were conducted.

Results and Conclusions. Findings revealed that the perceived physical competence of the students of Arnis was at a moderate level while the cultural appreciation of the participants in Arnis was moderately high. Also, the results showed a significant relationship between the perceived physical competence level and the cultural appreciation of the participants regarding Arnis.

Introduction

The Philippine indigenous martial art Arnis has been considered the backbone of Filipino society and has played an important role in Filipino history; initially as a necessity to combat invaders and today as a matter of cultural heritage and leisure activity [Malmo 2013; Wiley 2012]. It is characterized by the use of swinging and twirling of arm movements, accompanied by striking, thrusting and parrying techniques for defense and offense, which develops the skill, accuracy, agility and speed of its practitioners [Carol 2017]. It is a form of art executed mainly for self-defense by the pre-Spanish Filipinos who called it a “complete martial art,” which has been preserved by families and teachers throughout the different regions of the country and developed into many styles in various countries around the world [*History of Arnis* 2011]. The Filipino Martial Art is officially known as Arnis, but it may also be called Eskrima, Kali, Kuntaw, Garrote, and other names in various regional languages, such as Pananandata in Tagalog; Pagkalikali, Ibanang; Kabaroan and Kalirongan, Pangasinan; Kaliradman, Bisaya; and

Didja, Ilokana [Republic of the Philippines, Congress of the Philippines 2009]. Ethno-linguistic groups have their own purpose and style in practicing martial arts where a unique methodology is used based on their culture.

In the 1990's Abner Pasa, founder of the Institute of Filipino Martial Arts, proposed Arnis to be integrated into the tertiary physical education systems in the Philippines. According to Pasa, without Arnis developing in its sport form and being integrated in school curriculum, local martial arts would not be imbibed in the collective consciousness of the Filipino youth [Wiley 2012]. The rationale behind integrating Arnis to school curriculum was to foster a national identity among the Filipinos in the field of martial arts such as Taekwondo was to Koreans, Jiu-jitsu was to Brazilians, and Kendo was to Japanese. Acknowledging the importance of martial arts in culture, Guodong, Green and Gutierrez-Garcia [2016: 26] wrote “That by recognizing a cultural practice such as a traditional martial art as an integral concept of group identity, it becomes more resilient to culture extinction and more adaptive to change of society across generations.”

Moreover, due to Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo believing that Arnis was an important component of Filipino identity, she approved Republic Act Number 9850 to declare the indigenous Filipino martial art Arnis as the Philippine national martial art and sport [Republic of the Philippines, Congress of the Philippines 2009]. As stated by Malmo [2013], “This national recognition represents a huge shift in the movement to educate, promote and propagate the Filipino martial arts not only to Filipinos but the world at large”. According to Al Pelgone, Department of Education Arnis Association of the Philippines National President, “the inclusion of the Arnis in many school’s curriculum is vital because it would help the younger generation to appreciate our very own national martial art and sport” (Fabrero, 2012).

Experts agree that martial arts such as Arnis are often adept as a sport or physical activity [Jakhel, Pieter, as cited in: Kusnierz, Cynarski, Gorner 2016], which can be practiced for self-defense, fitness attainment [Litwiniuk, Cynarski 2001; Zeng, Cynarski, Xie 2013; Zeng *et al.* 2015], cultural and entertainment purposes [Messaoud, cited in: Kusnierz, Cynarski, Gorner 2016]. To promote the practice of Arnis as a fitness and cultural activity, junior high school teachers must cultivate the physical competence of students through training. Studies found that a sense of competence is related to a student’s strength and commitment to an action [Bandura 1986, Wang *et al.* 2002]. Similarly, studies have shown that students who have high physical competence have higher enjoyment and motivation to participate in sports or physical activity [Biddle *et al.* 2003 Ferrer-Caja, Weiss 2000; Martin *et al.* 2016].

When it comes to perceived competence in martial arts, studies are scarce. Hence, one study by Rutkowska and Klimczak [2012] reported average levels of perceived competence in young people, but that research studied various martial arts discipline and was not Arnis-specific. When it comes to cultural appreciation of the martial arts or Arnis, no research was found. However, a study by Malmo [2013] developed a cultural appreciation for martial arts scale but no known study was reported on the use of said scale. Furthermore, the relationship between the perceived physical competence and the cultural appreciation on martial arts has not been explored. It is postulated in the current study that high physical competence can lead to higher cultural appreciation. This study, therefore, examined the relationship between the students’ perceived physical competence level and their level of cultural appreciation on the Philippine martial art Arnis.

The paper set the following research questions:

1. How may the respondents’ perceived physical competence in Arnis be described?
2. How may the respondents’ cultural appreciation in Arnis be described?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents’ perceived physical competence and cultural appreciation in Arnis?

Method

Participants and procedure

A total of n=233 (n = 105 male, n = 128 female) in the age of 13-16-year-old junior high school students from three high schools in Angeles City, Pampanga, Philippines who practice Arnis volunteered to participate in this cross-sectional study by completing a survey questionnaire on cultural appreciation and perceived physical competence in about Arnis. Each participant was required to read and sign an informed consent form that stated the participant was participating voluntarily in the study; parental consent was sought for respondents under 18 years old. Prior to the onset of the study and its data collection, the researchers received approval of the Department of Education in Angeles City, Pampanga, Philippines.

Instruments used

Cultural appreciation of martial arts questionnaire (CAMAS) was used to measure cultural appreciation of martial arts in terms of cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness [Malmo 2013]. Participants in the current study answered a 20-item questionnaire that indicates the degree of agreement or disagreement with the items. The questionnaire provided responses on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In this study, the reliability of each of the three factors based on Cronbach’s alpha was 0.962, 0.918 and 0.873, respectively.

Participants’ perceived physical competence was analyzed using the Physical Self-Perception Profile [Fox, Corbin 1989]. The students responded to each item using a five- point Osgood-scale from “*I’m among the best when it comes to athletic ability*” (1) to “*I’m not among the best when it comes to athletic ability*” (5) (scale scores reversed in analyses). The scale consisted of five items, which were adapted to Arnis (e.g., “*I am among the best when it comes to Arnis.*”). Higher values reflected higher perceived physical competence. The internal consistency of this subscale for the present sample was satisfactory ($\alpha=.89$).

Data analysis

The researchers utilized descriptive and correlation statistical treatments in the data analyses. Mean ratings were computed for the descriptive analyses. Also, Pearson Chi-square was computed to test the relationship between perceived physical competence and cultural appreciation. Statistical Treatment for Social Science Package (SPSS) version 17 was used for the computation of data.

Table 1. Mean and descriptive ratings of perceived physical competence and cultural appreciation dimension

Variables	Mean	Description
Perceived physical competence	2.99	Moderate
Cultural knowledge	4.55	Moderately High
Cultural awareness	4.94	Moderately High
Cultural sensitivity	4.77	Moderately High

Table 2. Relationship between the cultural appreciation and perceived physical competence of the respondents

Variables	Pearson Chi-Square	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Perceived physical competence and cultural knowledge	77.7914	0.000*	Reject Ho	Associated
Perceived physical competence and cultural awareness	48.8788	0.002*	Reject Ho	Associated
Perceived physical competence and cultural sensitivity	51.0007	0.001*	Reject Ho	Associated

*p-value<0.05 level of significance

Results

Perceived Physical Competence

Table 1 shows the participants' perceived physical competence in Arnis. As shown in the table, all items received a moderate result (Mean=2.99), implying that the participants share a common inference in regards to their physical competence towards Arnis.

Cultural Appreciation

Cultural appreciation scores are presented in Table 1. As presented in the table, the participants' cultural appreciation ratings in terms of cultural knowledge (Mean=4.55), cultural awareness (Mean=4.94) and cultural sensitivity (Mean=4.77) were moderately high.

Relationship of cultural appreciation and competence level

Table 2 shows the relationship between cultural appreciation and perceived physical competence. The table shows the participants' perceived physical competence was associated with cultural knowledge (p-value=0.000), cultural awareness (p-value=0.002) and cultural sensitivity (p-value=0.001).

Discussion

Arnis has been integrated in the Philippine school system not only for cultural preservation but also for the development of the physical competency of the students via a form of physical fitness. Like other physical activities or sports, Arnis will be appreciated and practiced more if students have the necessary physical competence to perform, which is a concept established by the achievement goal theory. Goal theory refers to one's beliefs about the ability to be successful in an achievement domain [Ferrer-Caja, Weiss 2000]. Students who have higher perceived physical competence are more

engaged in doing an activity [Granero-Gallegos *et al.* 2012; Martin *et al.* 2016]. In the present study, findings revealed that the Philippine participants' perceived physical perception in Arnis is at a moderate level or a mediocre level, which was surprising considering that Arnis is the national martial art of the Philippines. This result only shows that the participants have a low sense of personal competence when practicing Arnis. Similarly, Rutkowska and Klimczak [2012] found moderate levels of competence in their study; however, the participants in that study were involved in various martial arts which were not included mandatorily in their school curriculum.

Cultural appreciation in this study focused on the perceived attitude towards, and awareness, cultivation, implementation or integration of, the understanding of customary beliefs, social forms, shared attitudes, values, goals, practices, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group as measured by the Cultural Appreciation of Martial Arts Scale (CAMAS) as defined in the study by Malcolm [2013: 3]. Results showed that the Filipino students surveyed have a moderately high cultural appreciation of their national martial arts. This finding is a good indicator that participants are aware of the value of Arnis as part of their cultural heritage.

The current study found out that the perceived physical competence is associated with cultural appreciation of Arnis. This association indicates that the higher the perceived physical competence score are, the higher scores in cultural appreciation are as well. Aware of the established relationship, the researchers recommend that to enhance physical competence in Arnis, more practice time should be devoted during class hours to improve and maintain the physical competence of the students. Likewise, teachers should undergo continuous development training to be competent to teach the style of Arnis indigenous to their locality to preserve its cultural value without losing its uniqueness. Moreover, the Department of Education should initiate sports

training programs through junior high school schools to advocate the sport, for advancement of skills and promotion of culture.

Furthermore, sufficient facilities and equipment should be provided for the promotion of the game. Likewise, to promote cultural appreciation, researchers suggest that school authorities come up with school activities and community programs to educate the people on the importance of Arnis in the Philippine culture. It is of paramount importance that students be oriented on the historical value of Arnis as a combat art against invaders in the past and cultural heritage that defines national identity.

Conclusion

This study examined the cultural appreciation of and perceived physical competence of Filipino students on the traditional martial art of Arnis. It also explored the relationship between the participants' cultural appreciation and the competence level. Results of a survey examined participants' cultural appreciation and perceived physical competence levels revealed that they have a moderate level of perceived physical competence and a moderately high level of cultural appreciation regarding Arnis. Cultural appreciation is associated with a perceived physical competence in Arnis. In view of the results, the practice of Arnis should be strongly promoted and included in higher education curriculums to strengthen cultural appreciation and enhance physical competence. In the new physical education curriculum for senior high school and in the college level, Arnis is currently only an optional subject matter and not given a strong emphasis. Hence, Arnis, as the Philippine national martial art that students are mandated by law to practice, should be mandatorily included as part of both curriculums. Thus, a future study on Arnis that may include a larger population is warranted in order to explore the different issues and concerns regarding the promotion of Arnis as a national martial art.

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Uznanie dla kultury i fizyczne kompetencje Filipińskich gimnazjalistów w sztuce walki Arnis

Słowa kluczowe: Filipińczycy, walka na kije, rodzimy, sport narodowy, walka

Abstrakt

Problem. Celem badania była analiza postrzeganych przez uczestników fizycznych kompetencji i poziomu uznania dla kultury filipińskiej sztuki walki Arnis.

Metoda. W niniejszym przekrojowym badaniu dotyczącym sztuki walki Arnis przyjęto kwestionariusz *Fizycznego Samopstrzegania* Foxa i Corbina (1989) oraz *Oceny Kulturowej* (2013) w *Dziedzinie Sztuk Walki* (CAMAS). Kwestionariusz został wypełniony przez gimnazjalistów $n = 233$ ($n = 105$ mężczyzn, $n = 128$ kobiet) w wieku 13-16 lat, którzy zgłosili do udziału się na ochotnika. Przeprowadzone zostały analizy opisowe i korelacyjne. Wyniki i wnioski. Badania wykazały, że poziom postrzeganych kompetencji fizycznych adeptów Arnis był umiarkowany, podczas gdy poziom uznania dla kultury był umiarkowanie wysoki. Wyniki pokazały również istotną zależność pomiędzy postrzeganym poziomem kompetencji fizycznych a kulturową oceną uczestników w odniesieniu do Arnis.