

COACHING & KINESIOLOGY

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An analysis of the negative impact of the culture of achieving ‘simple ippons’ on international sporting performance: The case of Japanese elite judo

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Key words: Japanese judo culture, simple ippon, sport management theory, negative influence of culture on performance

Abstract

Problem. In this study, the influence of Japanese judo culture on international sporting performance was explored by conducting a longitudinal analysis of Japanese elite judo development from 1996 to 2012. Sport management research has revealed that although the influence of elite sporting culture on international performance can be not only positive but also negative, it is hard to find an empirical examination thereof for its negative impact.

Method. We, therefore, developed a theoretical framework in accordance with the research that has explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies. Using documentary analysis and supplementary information from interviews, we examined how the national Japanese elite judo team enacted on their interpretation of the culture of achieving simple ippons and how the culture in teams thwarted superior sporting performances.

Results and Conclusions. The results revealed that elite sporting culture does not always enhance sporting performances as well as the processes and conditions involved in national teams failing to control the influence of the culture.

Introduction

I was presumptuous, thinking that ‘Kosei Inoue’ must cleanly (simply) throw his opponents and win by ippon. [Sankei Newspaper on June 1, 2020]

This narrative is by Kosei Inoue, the gold medalist of men’s judo in the Sydney Olympics. He lost in the next Athen Games and reflects the pressure as the ideal Japanese judo athlete. The commentary suggests how to win a judo match is of immense value for national-level athletes in Japan. Using sport management theory, we describe how the value attached to achieving a simple ippon negatively influences sporting performance.

Sport management research has examined the influence of elite sporting culture on sporting performance.

Many studies have explored the positive impact of culture on international sporting performance. Research on the Sports Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success (SPLISS) has revealed the important role of nine policy factors [De Bosscher *et al.* 2006; empirical confirmation in De Bosscher *et al.* 2009a; De Bosscher *et al.* 2009b] and further confirmed that culture could be regarded as the 10th factor of these policy factors that lead to sporting success [Brouwers *et al.* 2015; Truyens *et al.* 2016; Mazzei 2015; Sotiriadou *et al.* 2014]. Furthermore, the similarity and convergence of elite sporting policies have been examined by Houlihan and Green [2008], Houlihan [2009] and Tan and Green [2008]. Furthermore, Park *et al.* [2016] explored the important role of culture on enhancing the effectiveness of multi-

ple sport policies in relation to sporting performance.

On the other hand, some literature paid attention to the negative effect on international performance. For example, Ashforth and Humphrey [1993] argued that the emotional violation of identity or ethics may lead to low productivity. Furthermore, Cunningham and Ahn [2018] proposed that organizational culture acts as a moderator between employee diversity and performance. Sotiriadou *et al.* [2014] further suggested that when the elite sporting culture causes conflict between a coach and athletes, sporting performance may be adversely affected. The value attached to achieving a simple ippon in national team has caused a conflict not only between the coach and athletes but also the athletes' affiliations. Specifically, the decision-makers of the national team wanted to let the athletes have more time for training techniques related to achieving simple ippon. However, no empirical research has been conducted on the negative influence of elite sporting culture on international performance.

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of elite sporting culture by exploring the process of how the Japanese elite judo team failed to control the impact of culture. Japanese elite judo development over 16 years, from 1996 until 2012, may be regarded as a valuable case for examination because of its cultural characteristics and changes in international sport performance. The following research question was formulated: How does elite sporting culture influence international sporting performance negatively? If so, how? This study crafted an analytic framework to complement the SPLISS model research and the research from the similarity and convergence of elite sporting policies. It explains that the technological and cultural advantage will be effective when the nation controls/enjoy the elite sporting culture on performance. The data employed in this study were obtained primarily from multiple literature sources and 7 semi-structured interviews conducted with stakeholder representatives.

The contribution of this study is three-fold. First, it examined negative influence empirically. Second, it shed light on how culture can constrain performance. Third, it revealed that elite sporting culture may not enhance superior sporting performances.

In this article, we first review the literature on the effect elite sporting culture has on international sport performance. According to the existing literature on the SPLISS model and the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies, we explore an analytical framework. Second, the research method employed is outlined. Third, an empirical analysis of the impact of the SPLISS nine policy factors, the role of culture on Japanese elite judo's performance and the reasons for the change of the cultural influences are expounded. Finally, we summarise the important implications arising from this study.

Theoretical background

In this section, the literature on the effect of elite sporting culture on international sport performance is reviewed.

Research on the impact of elite sporting culture on elite success

The elite sporting culture may be defined as 'an excellence culture in which all members of the team, namely, athletes, coaches, managers and scientists can interact with one another formally and informally' [Green, Oakley, 2001: 256; Oakley, Green, 2001: 93]. Furthermore, Green and Oakley [2001] explored the key factors associated with international sporting success and how these factors from former eastern bloc states have been employed by various western countries. In particular, they revealed the importance of elite sporting culture on success regarding 'the synergy benefits and excellence culture of multisport institute environments in which all aspects of elite support/provision work together' [Green, Oakley 2001: 259].

Subsequently, sport management research started to explore the influence of culture on elite sporting performance. Two groups of research have examined how culture influences national teams. The first has explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies. Houlihan and Green [2008] argued that although there was policy convergence between nations, variations in domestic policies existed because of their social, cultural and political specificities. Second, those who employed the SPLISS model have explored the causal relationship between particular policies including the culture and the outcomes of sport-specific national teams in general. For example, the elite sporting culture of the Australian canoe team drives their talent development process so as to realise more enhanced performances than other nations [Sotiriadou *et al.* 2014].

The two research groups have viewed the elite sporting culture's impact on international sporting performance as positive. First, the SPLISS model research group has argued that elite sporting culture works analogously as the nine pillars in the SPLISS model. The SPLISS model has classified elite sport policy into the following nine areas: financial support; integrated approaches to policy development; foundation and participation; talent identification and development; athletic and post-career support; training facilities; coaching provisions and development; (inter)national competitions and scientific research on sport [De Bosscher *et al.* 2006; De Bosscher *et al.* 2009a; De Bosscher *et al.* 2009b]. Elite sporting culture has been classified as the 10th area in an effort to deal with the efficiency and effectiveness of the elite sport system at a sport-specific level [Brouwers *et al.* 2015; Truyens *et al.* 2014; Mazzei 2015; Sotiriadou *et al.* 2014]. Thus, the elite sporting culture may be employed as the 10th pillar even though it is not considered by the SPLISS model group to have a profound influence on

performance, but as a mere aspect of the policy factors in the SPLISS model.

In contrast, the second research group, which has focused on the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies, posited that the cultural impact acts as one of the most influential factors in sporting performance. Houlihan [2013] revealed that commercial, political, social and cultural factors have an impact on the coordination of resources and operation of the organization to ensure set goals are realised. Furthermore, Tan and Green [2008] argued that although the various elite sport systems in China shared a high degree of similarity, their elite sport policies have been implemented differently because of their different political and cultural histories and traditions. Similarly, Park *et al.* [2016: 540] asserted that factors such as cultural patterns of sport [Digel, Fahrner 2006] as well as political and cultural histories and traditions of different countries might be aligned to the success of Korean archers. Furthermore, culture may enhance the effectiveness of multiple sport policies in the endeavour to realise sporting performance [Houlihan, Green 2008]. These studies have revealed that the success of sporting performance may be determined by the cultural impact of nations whose elite sport policies share a large degree of similarity. In other words, even nations with poor elite sport policies may enjoy enhanced performances because of the cultural impact. Therefore, the elite sporting culture may be regarded as a driver to improve the effectiveness of sports policies as well as superior performance.

Although the literature has revealed the positive effect of culture, there is a notion that at times, the influence of culture may not be positive. Ashforth and Humphrey [1993] argued that the emotional violation of identity or ethics may not lead to high sporting performances. Furthermore, Cunningham and Ahn [2018] postulated that culture may be a moderator between diversity and performance. Sotiriadou *et al.* [2014] revealed that the cultural diversity between foreign coaches and local athletes resulted in a conflict of values and/or tension, which may have had an adverse effect on sporting performance. One may deduce that there is a possibility that the dysfunction of the elite sporting culture may have a negative effect on national sporting performance even if the nation has sound SPLISS 9 policy factors and cultural factors. However, as noted previously, no research has examined the negative influence of elite sporting culture on international sporting performance.

In essence, although various studies have explored the positive impact of elite sporting culture on elite sporting success, no empirical research has been conducted on the negative influence of elite sporting culture on international sporting performance. Accordingly, this study endeavoured to answer this question: *does elite sporting culture influence international sport performance*

negatively? If so, how? In the next section, the analytical framework this study employed is elucidated.

Analytical framework

We shed light on the negative influence elite sporting culture has on international sporting performance by exploring how the Japanese elite judo team failed to control the influence of the culture. In so doing, we assumed that the actors' interpretation of the cultural effect on their activity was dependent on whether the effect was positive or negative.

Extant literature has yet to reveal how national teams interpret and deal with their cultural influence. Research on the SPLISS model has focused more on the impact of policy factors on sporting success rather than that of culture and in particular, its short-term impact because of the assumption that 'the macro-level factors cannot be changed by sports policies in the short term' [De Bosscher *et al.* 2006: 188]. Furthermore, although research on the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies has recognized the cultural impact on national teams, the focus of this research has been primarily on examining the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies in nations.

To determine the cultural influence on national teams' behaviour, it is imperative to integrate concepts on elite sporting culture and cultural impact. In this study, we assumed that an interpretation of the culture determines whether the cultural impact is positive or negative. Accordingly, we defined culture and cultural impact on behaviour as follows.

Definition of elite sporting culture. Concerning the level of the culture, this study defined that elite sporting culture appears in the recognition by members of a national sports team in a country, as the literature suggests. For example, Sotiriadou *et al.* [2014] explained that, Sprint Canoe's culture in Australia is recognized by the national team members. Also, Egilsson and Dolles' [2017] football study identified the layers of the national sporting culture, and one of the layers, called corporate culture, includes organizational values and , tradition. Following Egilsson and Dolles' [2017] notion, the elite sporting culture could be classified in the corporate culture layer because national teams produce sporting performances. Therefore, this study defines elite sporting culture as an organizational culture expressed in the national elite sports team.

Concerning the elements of the organizational culture, it comprises two components: beliefs and attitudes in the national elite team. Smith and Shilbury [2004: 136] noted that organizational culture refers to 'a collection of fundamental values and attitudes common to members of a social group, which subsequently set the behavioural standards or norms for all members.' For them, values or beliefs are similar concepts and could be a fundamental aspect of organizational culture among cultural

elements [Smith, Shilbury 2004]. Also, Schein [2004: 13, 176] asserted that values, in particular, are referred to as ‘the articulated, publicly announced principles and values that the group claims to be trying to achieve’ and added that ‘attitudes are about the expression of emotions’. Therefore, the elite sporting culture of a national sports team can be understood to be the national team’s values and attitudes.

Definition of cultural impact. In this study, cultural impact was viewed as the process of how organizational members interpret the belief. Furthermore, it motivates the members, facilitates coordination among them and subsequently improves productivity. The literature has posited that cultural impact refers to the influence of the national team’s belief on their attitude and behaviours [MacIntosh, Doherty 2007].

However, we need to think that the process of enactment results in actors, which creates a cultural impact to shed light on the dysfunction of the cultural influence. In other words, this study not only focused on the interpretation of the belief, but also the enactment of the members of a national team in one country. In addition, how enactment influences the effectiveness and efficiency of organizational activity was explored.

As the literature has revealed, producing excellent performances are constrained when technological and cultural advantages are not effective [Sotiriadou *et al.* 2014; Houlihan 2009]. Houlihan [2009: 56] added that the national team’s behaviour was constrained by institutional elements such as values, norms and beliefs. Although the latter reveals that the elite sporting culture may dysfunction, research has not been conducted to examine whether the dysfunction of elite sporting culture is related to the enactment by members of a national sports team and how this occurs. Therefore, we added a key concept to this, namely, the national team’s failure to perceive and interpret the enacted belief may constrain their attitude and actions. Skille and Chroni [2018: 323] noted that what actors perceived and interpreted about the culture can have an impact on their attitude and actions and thus, it may be feasible to state that actors’ interpretation of culture not only fosters but also constrains effective behaviour. Therefore, we employed this perspective to analyse how their technological and cultural advantages are ineffective.

Definition of international sporting performance. The success of international sporting performance can be defined in the absolute term in this study. According to [De Bosscher *et al.* 2008:218-219], the absolute success is refer to such as the total number of medals that a country wins during the Olympic Games or other championships. However, by this way, it could not reveal the quality of the medal such as gold, silver and bronze and that the value of medals in athletics may be different from the value in archery. Therefore, the authors also suggested a ‘points system that uses of a weighting system

to convert a nation’s medal haul into a points equivalent’ to show the relative value of medals. Nevertheless, this problem was originated from the overall comparison of medals won by nations’ sports in the Olympic Games or other championships. As to the intention of this study is to analyze a single elite sport of gold medals won by nations, it can avoid the problem of the account of medals quality. Therefore, we adopted only gold medals won by countries was for sporting success.

In essence, how the national team interprets their belief and how the team’s belief thwarts excellent sporting performances are imperative to examine the mechanism of cultural influence on sporting performance.

Method

We selected Japanese men’s elite judo to explore the empirical questions for the following three reasons. First, the Japanese men’s elite judo should be distinguished from Japanese women’s judo, because the latter ‘start and only the last decades have seen a levelling of opportunities and recognition for women’ [Miarka *et al.* 2011: 1017, 1025]. Therefore, the pressure emphasizing the standing techniques (*tachi-waza*) than ground techniques (*ne-waza*) as the traditional Japanese judo culture less evident in women’s elite judo than men’s elite judo. Second, although the Japanese men’s elite judo team dominated the medal tables at an international level for a long period, their performance declined dramatically between 2008 and 2012.

Third, reasons for the decline have revealed the possibility of a negative cultural impact on international sport performance in relation to the development of Japanese men’s elite judo. The ideology of scoring an ippon through using simple techniques with two gripping hands, such as one arm shoulder throw (*ippon-seoinage*) and major outer reaping (*osoto-gari*), is a distinguishing cultural feature in the Japanese elite judo team. This characteristic is inherited because Jigoro Kano (Kodokan judo founder) emphasized more standing techniques (*tachi-waza*) than ground techniques (*ne-waza*), which includes grappling techniques (*katame-waza*). He thought the standing posture is better to defend the sudden attack by the numbers of people in reality. Besides, he also ensured judo competition rules depended on scoring ippons. [Nagaki 2009: 5-6]. The gripping hand (*kumite*) was explained as manoeuvring for advantageous grips between two judoists before execution techniques [Kodokan 2000]. When a judoist grips an opponent’s uniform (*judogi*), the opponent may easily lose balance, and then he/she can execute any throwing technique. Traditionally, these techniques were included in a broad category of throwing techniques (*nage-waza*) in Kodokan judo [Nagaki 2008: 72, 75, 343-347; Nakamura *et al.* 2002: 22]. Moreover, these simple techniques achieving ippon winning

in an event were described as 'correctness judo' at that time [Nagaki 2009: 8-9].

However, this culturally unique phenomenon has encountered external challenges by the gradually increased idea of winning through hand techniques (*te-waza*) without gripping hands such as double leg reaping (*morote-gari*), dead tree drop (*kuchiki-taoshi*), scoop throw (*sukuinage*) or accumulating points in a match against other countries. The idea started to emerge after the introduction of the weight categories in Olympic Games and World Championships after 1960s. Thus, it led to the decreased appearance of the scoring an ippon through using simple techniques with two gripping hands in the competitions [Murata 2011: 415]. Subsequently, other nations have further shown their tendency to employ techniques involving elements from other fighting sports or local martial arts including wrestling, the Russian sambo and the Brazilian jiu-jitsu [Inoue 2016]. This is similar to the early development of Kodokan judo in Japan, as they learned techniques from other local martial arts and various jujutsu ryus. However, this movement stopped along with the development elite sport-oriented of judo in Japan after 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, in order to win medals by fostering pure judoists, who only practiced judo not for other martial arts [J2, Interview conducted on March 3, 2018; Nagaki 2009: 12]. Consequently, other nations' international events' performance gradually improved [Murata 2011: 512-513; Inoue 2016]. The research question and nature of the longitudinal analysis of past events resulted in us opting for a single-case design following Yin's [2014: 14] suggestion that 'it attempts to clarify the boundaries between the phenomenon and in a real-life context.'

Date collection. The data were collected from September 2017 to February 2020. We collected documents related to the development of Japanese elite judo. Table 1 presents the number of archives and specific contents that were reviewed and analysed. These documents were employed to identify preliminary information related to the case. Accordingly, operational definitions for the following three aspects were provided. First, decision-makers refer to the board members and the other members, especially those in the All Japan Judo Federation (AJJF) committee. The strengthening committee is primarily in charge of matters related to enhancing the performance of the national team. The organizational structure of AJJF reveals that while the board includes members such as the president, the strengthening committee comprises members such as the technical director, head coach and coaches of the national team's seven weight divisions [AJJF 2020].

Second, as noted previously, we employed MacIntosh and Doherty's [2007: 48] concept to define elite sporting culture. Accordingly, it comprises three culturally vital elements, namely, beliefs, attitudes and actions as well as the links among these elements. In particular, we

observed the belief by which the decision-makers debated on what was expected of the national team athletes in relation to performance in international competitions. The literature noted that the belief of scoring ippon in judo was perceived as an essential reflection of their organisational culture. The attitude was observed by the extent of the varying amount of annual news related to scoring an ippon. Finally, actions were noted by discerning decision-makers' decisions and the implementation thereof on improving athletic performance, and response to the changes in international judo. The changes in international judo can be referred to, for example, the rate expressed by the change in the percentage of the techniques employed by foreign national teams, International Judo Federation (IJF) rules and the tendency of reference judgement.

Third, we examined the development conditions of the nine policy factors by following the SPLISS model [De Bosscher *et al.* 2006]. For instance, regarding pillar 1, financial support involves the sport policy's inputs. Thus, we examined the changes in the federation's annual budget. In relation to pillar 3, foundation and participation, the author suggested a logical progression between it and pillar 4, talent identification and development system. Accordingly, pillar 3 was viewed as the population in an elite sport, which has an influence on talent identification for potential success. Consequently, we examined the registered population of the federation. With the outcome of these pillars of the SPLISS model, that is the international sporting performance, we examined the numbers of judo gold medals won by the national teams at the Olympic Games and World Championships. It can be recognised as one of methods to easily understand the absolute success of nations' single elite sport [De Bosscher *et al.* 2008: 217]. To shed light on the Japanese elite judo situations, we also gathered data relating to the emerging nations, including France, South Korea and Russia.

We conducted semi-structured interviews to supplement the documentary analysis. The interviewees' specific professional titles and furnished information in various periods are displayed in Table 1. This study firstly adopted purposive sampling. Based on this study's purpose, we selected the interviewees who had long-term and in depth experience in the AJJF and the national team or education system. This study also adopted the snowing ball sampling, allowing the firstly interviewed participants to introduce potential interviewees. By this way, it can avoid biases by the researchers' interpersonal relationship and gather more comprehensive data. Besides, before conducting the interviews, the interviewees pre-examined the sheets about the research outline and interview questions. Moreover, the collected data will be used anonymously which is confirmed with interviewees through self-made agreement. Totally, semi-structured

Table 1. Summary of data analysed.

	After Atlanta 1996 to Sydney 2000	After Sydney 2000 to Athens 2004	After Athens 2004 to Beijing 2008	After Beijing 2008 to London 2012	Total
<i>Interviews</i>					11 [†]
Councillor of AJJF (C1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	1
judo scholar (J2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	1
judo scholar (J3)	✓	✓	✓	✓	1
Junior team head coach (H4)		✓	✓	✓	1
A special member of strengthening committee (S5)		✓	✓	✓	1
Previous national team delegation (P6)		✓	✓	✓	1
Current national team coach (C7)		✓	✓	✓	1
Training partner in national team				✓	1
Student elite judokas			✓	✓	3 [^]
<i>Archival articles</i>					326 [#]
judo magazines	✓	✓	✓	✓	241
Academic articles	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
Budget reports (AJJF)		✓	✓	✓	20
Budget reports (other nations)	✓	✓	✓	✓	1
President's event greetings (domestic)	✓	✓	✓	✓	24
Academic report		✓	✓	✓	1
Information from websites		✓	✓	✓	2
Autobiographies	✓	✓			4
Yearbooks of AJJF	✓	✓	✓	✓	1
Rosters of AJJF	✓	✓	✓	✓	20
Academic books	✓	✓	✓	✓	1
TV programmes	✓	✓	✓	✓	2
Dissertations	✓			✓	2
Books of judo history	✓				2

*When we quoted from semi-structured interview data, we assigned each interview a number from 1 to 7 and used the prefix C to refer to a councillor of AJJF, J to refer judo scholar, etc.

[^]We also conducted 3 informal interviews with student elite judokas to confirm the meaning of specific terms in judo and to determine whether our analysed results reflected their experience.

[#]We analysed 326 documents of those we collected in depth.

interviews were conducted with 7 senior members of the AJJF. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. The interview guide was developed in accordance with information derived from the literature as well as our estimations for each question. One of the questions concerned whether the decision-makers had developed corresponding strategies to counter the changes in international judo throughout the world. The interviews were conducted in Japanese and audio-recorded. Thereafter, they were transcribed and discussed with field and academic specialists so as to develop valid coding. Content analysis and pattern matching were conducted, which were subsequently verified with the

preliminary findings from the documentary analysis [Yin 2014]. It is noteworthy that 4 of 11 interviews were conducted informally with 3 student elite judokas and an Olympic medallist's sparring partner to confirm our understanding of the meaning of specific judo terms and the case results whether it reflected their real life experience in Japanese judo world, and in particular in the national men's team. Although only 11 interviews were conducted, we are of the view that the data obtained were reliable because it confirmed the primary information derived from the documentary analysis. The findings are presented in the following section.

Findings

Our data collection and analysis of the case of the Japanese elite judo revealed five aspects. First, the performance of the Japanese elite judo men's team had declined between 2008 and 2012 in comparison to other nations. Second, the nine policy factors of the SPLISS model could not explain the decline. Third, the framework of the research group that explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies was more appropriate than the SPLISS model in explaining the team's success before 2008. Fourth, the team failed to control any cultural influence, which thwarted the team's performance. This could be regarded as a premise of the framework to explain the decline of the team between 2008 and 2012. Finally, the rise of foreign techniques in conjunction with three other triggers, namely, the other nations' enhanced performances, the past successes of the Japanese elite judo team and the change of preferred IJF rules enhanced the cultural impact so that it could not be controlled by the Japanese elite judo team.

The declined performance of the Japanese elite judo men's team

In comparison with the other nations, the Japanese elite judo men's team had enhanced performances from 1996 to 2008, but declined performances after 2008 and 2012. The men's gold medals won among the Japanese, Korean and French elite judo teams from 1996 to 2012 is depicted in Figure 1.

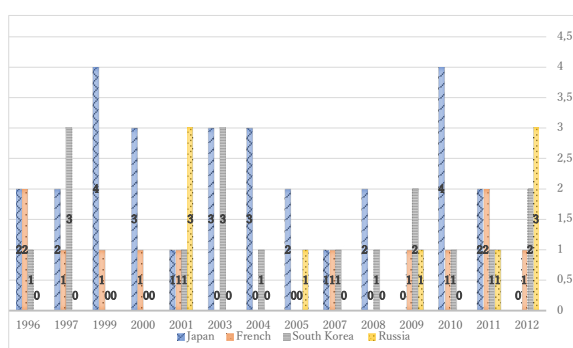


Figure 1. Gold medals won by the Japanese, French, South Korean and Russian male judo teams at the Olympic Games (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012) and World Judo Championships (1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011) [SR/Olympic Sport 2020].

The analysis revealed that the Japanese male judo team's gold medals at the Olympics from 1996 to 2000 averagely won 2.75. This followed 2.3 from 2001 to 2004. However, it declined to 1.6 after 2004 to 2008 and to 1.5 after 2008 until 2012. Despite this decline, on average, they still had a higher number gold medals won than the other nation after 2004 and 2008, in which French

was 0.3, South Korea was 0.6 and Russia was 0.3. Subsequently, after 2008 and 2012, the other three nations enjoyed an increase in their gold medals averagely won (French: 1.25, South Korea: 1.75, Russia: 0.25) and South Korea surpassed the Japanese team during this period. Furthermore, if the results from 2010 World Judo Championships did not take into account because of the change of participation rule in that event, which each country could send two athlete for each weight division and four athletes for the open-weight division. Then Japan had only won 0.6 after 2008 and 2012, which was far less than French's 1.3, South Korea and Russia's 1.7. In a nutshell, the performance of the Japanese team was declining and a failure after 2008 to 2012. In the next section, the reasons for the declining performance of the Japanese team are considered.

Reasons for the decline

Effect of nine policy factors on international Japanese judo performances

The SPLISS model posits that any nation whose nine policy factors are outstanding will perform better than nations with inferior policy factors.

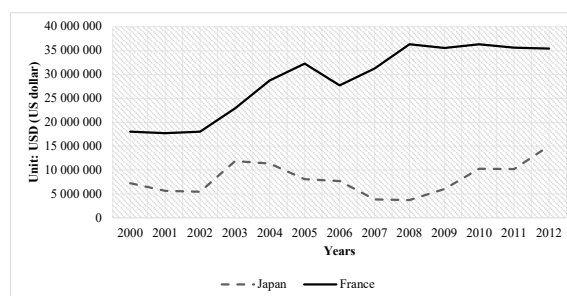


Figure 2. A comparison of the annual budgets of AJJF and the FFJ from 2000 to 2012.

Note: The amounts of funding are calculated by the historical exchange rate of January 1 each year.

Two facts in the Japanese elite judo team revealed that they did not have more enhanced SPLISS factors than the other nations from 2000 until 2012. Thus, their performances should have declined during the period in question. Yet they enjoyed the best results in the world from 1996 until 2008 as borne out by Figure 1. First, the Japanese elite judo team received less funding than the other nations such as France. The rationale for selecting France as the comparison nation was based on the country's performance and the completeness of data. Between 2008 and 2012, France was ranked third in relation to the share of gold medals among the top four nations, namely, Japan, Russia, France and South Korea (Figure 1). Although South Korea was ranked second in relation to the share of gold medals won from 2008 until 2012, the annual budget of the Korea Judo Association before 2015 could not be accessed from their official

Table 2. Continuity and change of the Japanese elite judo culture from 1996 to 2012

Period (performance)	1996–2008 (Success)	2008–2012 (Decline)
Elite judo culture	No change	
Belief	ippon winning through simple techniques	
Examples of decision-makers narratives: the AJJF president’s message before the domestic judo competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ‘...the hard practicing of techniques to achieve winning in the match has been gradually replaced by <u>the using low-level techniques to achieve ippon</u> such as accumulation of points in a match’ [AJJF, 1997]. – ‘our athletes dedicated to <u>implementing ippon winning</u> and led to excellent performance. This kind of judo and Japan as a judo founding nation has shown a good example and inspired the world’ [AJJF, 2000]. – ‘I want you (athletes) to be the model in Japan and overseas by showing the true marrow of conducting the respect for courtesy and <u>ippon winning with reasonable techniques</u> on this traditional cypress stage’ [AJJF, 2006]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ‘I expect that the athletes in this competition can completely understand the meaning of this event,... conduct the <u>ippon winning through reasonable techniques with two hands gripping...</u>’ [AJJF, 2012]. – ‘...I want you to be the model for the younger generation by which you should value the courtesy, <u>conduct the ippon winning</u> with dignified attitude, not puffed up by success undismayed by failure, and forget the opponent’s feeling’ [AJJF, 2015].

website. Furthermore, the staff data requirements were refused because of confidentiality issues. A comparison of the annual budgets of AJJF and French Judo Federation (FFJ) between 2002 and 2012 are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that the annual budget of AJJF increased from approximately 3.7 to 15 million US dollars between 2008 and 2012. However, this was still well below the average annual budget of approximately 35 million US dollars of FFJ during the same period.

Second, Japanese elite judo boasted fewer registered athletes than France. In Figure 3, the number of registered athletes in AJJF from 2003 until 2012 is depicted.

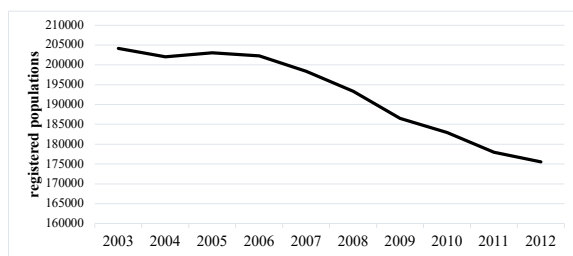


Figure 3. The registered members of AJJF from 2003 to 2012 [Sokabe 2018].

The decrease in registered athletes in AJJF from 2003 until 2012 is shown in Figure 3. However, Sokabe [2018] also reported that there were 576, 885 registered athletes in FFJ in 2017 in comparison to approximately 155,367 in AJJF; the latter number is comparable to that of FFJ in 1968. In essence, the AJJF had far fewer registered athletes than the FFJ between 2008 and 2012.

Therefore, one may deduce that the SPLISS model cannot be applied in this case. As noted previously, the SPLISS model indicated that nations whose nine policy factors were superior to those of other nations would enjoy enhanced performances. In comparison to the other nations, Japan did not have the most developed

SPLISS factors, and thus, they should have suffered a decline in performances from 1996 until 2008 as they did between 2008 and 2012. However, their performances were the best in the world during the former period. Consequently, the SPLISS model cannot be employed to explain the performances of the Japanese elite judo team. In the next section, the role of decision-makers’ belief in this success is discussed.

The role of belief: Reason for success from 1996 to 2008

The research group that has explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies posited that nations with a superior cultural influence on the development of the SPLISS nine factors would enjoy enhanced performances in comparison to those with an inferior cultural influence [e.g. Tan, Green 2008; Park *et al.* 2016].

The culture of Japanese elite judo has not changed. The change in decision-makers’ beliefs became evident between 1996 and 2012. The continuity and changes of Japanese elite judo culture from 1996 until 2012 are presented in Table 2.

An examination of Table 2 reveals that the decision-makers’ changed beliefs about scoring an ippon as a result of simple techniques was not evident between 1996 and 2012. The decision-makers’ narratives in various years showed that the different AJJF president’s address before domestic judo competitions displayed a continued belief in scoring an ippon through simple techniques. Because the belief represented an important aspect in the culture [Smith, Shilbury 2004], one could deduce that the Japanese judo culture did not change between 1996 and 2012.

Furthermore, the Japanese elite judo team had relatively more cultural advantages in comparison to the other nations. Nations such as France, South Korea, Georgia and Russia have started to develop their own judo cultures. The data revealed that the French are suc-

ceeding in creating their own judo culture. According to the TV programme *Judo Japan/France*, the French judoka have become champions with their own culture [NHK BS1 2012]. South Korea has gradually enjoyed success by viewing judo as an elite sport. A public relations staff member at the South Korea Judo Association explained that judo in South Korea is classified into two categories. The first is for recreation and the second is regarded as an elite sport whose principal goal is to win international events such as the Olympic Games [*Kindai Judo*, April 2009: 31]. However, during the period in question, Japan retained its strong judo culture. A spokesperson of the National French Scientific Research Center stated that although French judo has successfully developed their own judo culture, many French judoka have practiced judo in Japan and learned Budo spirit, which has resulted in their good performances at the Olympic Games [NHK BS1 2012].

In their unique culture, employing standing techniques has become the Japanese elite judo team's most common technique. They believe this has made their team's performances superior to those of other nations. The two types of techniques that non-Japanese and Japanese national judo teams have employed in international matches are presented in Table 3. First, hand techniques include techniques in which hands and/or arms are used to throw an opponent. Specifically, the hand techniques, for example: scoop throw (*sukui-nage*) and dead tree drop (*kuchiki-taoshi*), are those techniques with *no necessary* by two hands gripping still can throw opponent. Second, the foot techniques in which the use of the feet and/or legs play a central role may be classified as throwing techniques [Kodokan 2000; Judoinfo Online Dojo 2018]. Foot techniques are also classified as techniques *with* two hands gripping. Suganami *et al.* [2001: 16] noted that 61.4% of Japanese judo athletes use foot techniques; this is high in comparison to other techniques employed by both non-Japanese and Japanese athletes. Furthermore, the Japanese have regarded these simple techniques as beautiful. On March 28, 2009, a famous Japanese female judoka, Yamaguchi, noted in her blog that the Japanese are in pursuit of not only reasonable judo but also beautiful judo. She gave an example of the latter: although Kosei Inoue lost a match in an international event, the Japanese audience cheered him after his loss because his posture and simple techniques were perceived as beautiful. In contrast, Satoshi Ishi's win before the 2008 Olympic Games was controversial because he did not utilise foot techniques with two hands gripping to win. Instead, he accumulated penalties or points mainly to win the match.

In addition, in comparison to the Japanese team, the foreign teams had an increased percentage of winning by utilising techniques without two hands gripping. According to a judo scientific researcher's observations, the use of ippon to win through foot techniques with two hands gripping is not as evident as previously. In

contrast, hand techniques without two hands gripping became dominant in the 2008 Olympic Games [*Kindai Judo*, October 2008, 51]. In the 2012 Olympic Games, the Japanese executed efficient attacks with foot techniques, while the other nations did so through sutemi-waza [*Kindai Judo*, September 2013: 61]. Furthermore, the percentage of foreigners who utilised hand techniques and foot techniques to win was lower in comparison to the Japanese men's judo team between 2004 and 2012 [Adam, Sterkowicz-Przybycień 2018].

Table 3. The number of techniques used by non-Japanese and Japanese judo athletes in 35 games in the European 4 competitions (Paris, Austria, Hungarian, German Open) in 1999.

	Non-Japanese (%)	Japanese (%)
Hand Techniques	92 (37.1)	46 (20.2)
Foot Techniques	90 (36.3)	140 (61.4)
Other Techniques	66 (26.6)	42 (18.4)
Total	248 (100)	228 (100)

Source: Adopted from Suganami *et al.* [2001: 16].

The Japanese national judo team usually uses foot techniques with two hands gripping to ensure that non-Japanese judo athletes lose their balance in order to win or execute subsequent techniques to score an ippon. A freelance writer noted that the decision-makers instructed the Japanese national men's team at the London Olympic Games in 2012 to use foot techniques with two hands gripping [*Kindai Judo*, September 2012: 38].

One may conclude that the framework of the research group that explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies is more appropriate than the SPLISS model in this case. It suggests that cultural influence is more applicable than the development of the SPLISS nine factors to explain Japan's enhanced performance in comparison to that of other nations [e.g. Houlihan, Green 2008; Houlihan 2009; Tan, Green 2008; Park *et al.* 2016]. The Japanese elite judo case has revealed that using foot techniques with two gripping hands was a culturally led distinctive competence of the Japanese judo team. It helped them to achieve international sport success until 2008. Their development of the nine policy factors was not as superior as those of the other nations. Therefore, the framework is more appropriate in our case than the SPLISS model. However, it does not completely explain the Japanese elite judo team's performance between 2008 and 2012 because non-Japanese judo teams defeated them despite their stronger cultural influence. In the following section, how the changing impact of the belief influenced the Japanese elite judo team's performance is considered.

Changed impact of the belief on performance after 2008

As noted in our framework, cultural impact refers to the process of how organisational members interpret the belief. Furthermore, it motivates the members and

facilitates coordination among them before improving productivity. We are of the view that the process of the national team's enactments creates a cultural impact. In other words, the national team's failure to perceive and interpret the enacted elite sporting culture may constrain their attitude and actions [Skille, Chroni 2018]. In the case of Japanese elite judo, the decision-makers' interpretation of belief about scoring an ippon through simple techniques functioned as the cultural impact. This cultural constraint on performance resulted in an unintended consequence. Initially, it enhanced the decision-makers' attitude concerning winning by scoring an ippon as well as their pursuit to win this way. However, the team's enactment of the belief constrained their attitude and actions to respond such as to the changes in international judo, and their subsequent performances declined. The effect of belief on performance can be confirmed by examining the inverted relationship between belief and performance (Table 4). A study of Table 4 shows that a more concerted effort in relation to attitude and action in pursuing winning by scoring an ippon resulted in an adverse effect on performance.

Table 4. The changing impact of the belief on performance from 1996 to 2012.

	1996–2008	2008–2012
Belief	Simple ippon	Simple ippon
Attitude	ippon judo	<u>More emphasis</u> on ippon judo
Actions	– Pursue winning by ippon – Conduct enhancements of team performance – Respond to international judo change	– <u>More effort</u> on pursuing winning by ippon – Partly conduct enhancements of team performance – <u>Inadequate response to</u> international judo change
Performance	Good	Bad
Belief influence	Positive	Negative

In the initial period from 1996 to 2008, the belief in Japanese judo was winning by scoring ippons through simple techniques. However, the national teams' attitude on ippon judo became more vehement after 2008. The number of times mention was made annually from 2000 to 2012 of winning by ippon judo in the database of Asahi Shimbun, a representative newspaper in Japan, is illustrated in Figure 4.

The dotted line in the figure 4 reveals the trend in society of wanting to win by scoring ippons gradually became stronger. During the initial period, the decision-makers started to express concern about ippon judo. After 2008, Haruki Uemura, a decision-maker from AJJF, placed more emphasis on ippon judo after becoming a

member of the strengthening committee in the Japanese Olympic Committee [*Kindai Judo*, December 2008: 43]. His influence led to the decision-makers' increased emphasis on winning by ippons in AJJF after 2000. This emphasis peaked between 2008 and 2012. The attitude of the decision-makers resulted in the team's pursuit of winning by scoring ippons. This tactic worked for the team before 2008 when they successfully defeated other nations [*Kindai Judo*, January 2007: 37].

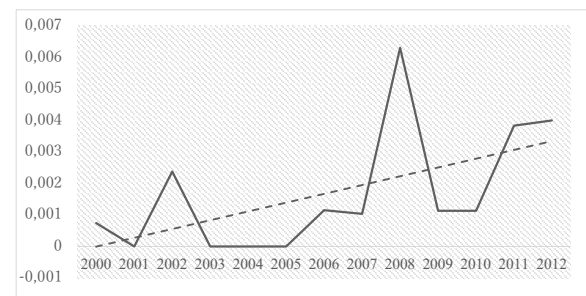


Figure 4. The number of times winning by ippon judo appeared in the news annually between 2000 and 2012 [SR/Olympic Sport 2020].

Note: The calculation formula is the total amount of annual news with the word judo divided by the total amount of annual news with the word ippon winning judo. The dotted line shows the development trend of the calculated results.

Despite the decision-makers' more pronounced emphasis on ippon judo after 2008, the team's performance declined. As elucidated in the next section, the techniques of foreign judo such as scoring ippons without two hands gripping and accumulating points in a match to win increased. Although the Japanese elite judo team regarded these techniques as sly, they were executed well to defeat the Japanese team after 2008. However, the decision-makers' attitude toward and subsequent greater emphasis on ippon judo did not elicit a response from the Japanese team to employ the technique. There was not enough evidence to judge whether being awarded ippons held advantages in matches even though they expended their efforts to win this way [Interview conducted with P6 and C7 on February 13, 2020]. Their attitude and actions were enhanced by the decision-makers' successful endeavours to win by ippon judo before 2008. Although there were signs that indicated a declined performance in the 2008 Olympic Games, the technical director still claimed, 'I am thinking that we must pursue the ippon winning' [*Kindai Judo*, October 2008: 21]. The decision-makers' attitude toward ippon judo and endeavours to win by scoring ippons led to the team's declined performance after 2008.

After 2008, this belief constrained the decision-makers' attitude. Furthermore, their actions in pursuing ippon judo thwarted their efforts toward producing the national team's athletic performance and in response to the changes in international judo regarding the follow-

ing four aspects.

First, the impact of the belief prevented the decision-makers from producing a sufficient response to the changes in international judo after 2008. Their beliefs resulted in them placing much emphasis on activities related to scoring ippons. Furthermore, the decision-makers were of the view that learning techniques from other techniques was not necessary. The technical director stated:

Now, we could see foreign judo that they used the techniques such as falling and turn over for accumulating points in a match. However, I do not consider that Japanese athletes should do the same as them. I think that Japanese athletes should thoroughly train the techniques that can achieve ippon to win the match [*Kindai Judo*, October 2005: 40].

Furthermore, they believed there was no need to alter their training patterns when up against foreign judo teams. The head coach emphasised scoring ippons in matches against foreign teams [*Kindai Judo*, December 2008: 45].

Second, the decision-makers' belief impeded them from employing scientific advice in the team after 2008. Between 1996 and 2008, the decision-makers applied scientific principles despite being influenced by their beliefs. For example, the head coach was of the view that ippon judo required tacit knowledge even though they acknowledged that scientific advice was needed for conditioning athletes. They further employed video and data analysis of opponents. However, they continued to pursue ippons because of their belief [Kanamaru, 2016]. However, because their belief was so convincing, in 2008 the new head coach, Shinichi Shinohara, began to think that tacit knowledge was more important than explicit knowledge [*Kindai Judo*, December 2008: 45]. Consequently, the decision-makers placed a great deal of emphasis on ippon judo even though they did not employ any scientific principles. They were of the view that science would not allow them to realise ideal techniques for ippon. However, they partly accepted the application of scientific advice between 2008 and 2012. An interview conducted with H4 revealed that the head coach prioritised ippon judo and refused to accept research data even though he believed videos of matches were useful [Interview conducted on February 28, 2018; *Kindai Judo*, December 2008: 45]. Furthermore, the head coach ceased conducting physical measurements on athletes' health [Kanamaru, 2016]. The head coach believed that winning by scoring ippons did not necessitate scientific support [Interview conducted with P6 and C7 on February 13, 2020].

Third, the decision-makers' belief influenced them to make significant changes to the coaching structure of the national team after 2008. The number of coaches in charge of the national team from 1996 until 2012 is displayed in Table 5. Between 1996 and 2008, approximately

five coaches were responsible for training the Olympians and senior level athletes. On the contrary, four national coaches trained both these groups separately after 2008. There may have been more national coaches for each level because the classes were conducted separately. The purpose of the changes to the coaching structure was to ensure each coach concentrated on taking care of the athletes in the particular level he/she was coaching.

Table 5. Number of coaches in charge of the national team during different periods

Level/Period	1996–2004	2004–2008	2008–2012
Delegation	5	6	4
Senior			4
Junior	2	3	4
Cadet			
Special coach	0	1	1

Source: Adapted from the series of yearbooks published by the AJJF from 1996 to 2012.

The head coach believed that this change would enable them to pursue winning by scoring ippons [Interview conducted on with P6 and C7 February 13, 2020]. The coach believed the athletes needed more supervision to pursue the ideal of ippon judo. However, it did not benefit the national team's training. Although there was only one head coach, the number of coaches increased from five to eight. The change resulted in poor communication between the head coach and the other coaches [Ono 2016: 132]. Furthermore, this structure also resulted in fewer opportunities for communication between the coaches who coached different levels; in particular, the delegation-level and senior level. The senior athletes and their coaches could not learn new techniques related to ippon from the delegation-level coaches because they concentrated on the delegation-level athletes [Kanamaru, 2016: 113].

Fourth, in addition to the change of the coaching structure of the national team, the belief also affected the decision-makers' distribution of athletes' training time. Ono [2016] asserted the team focused on balancing quality and quantity techniques training. However, they altered this idea and used quantity to improve the quality of techniques training so as to realise scoring ippons through standing techniques with two hands gripping. The head coach believed that the amount of training time was directly related to achieving ideal ippon winning [Kanamaru, 2016]. However, this change led to conflicts between the national team and the athletes' affiliations such as their universities and companies. The interviews conducted with P6 and C7 revealed that 'the national team had more training camps than before and the training manuals were very hard. The athletes could not afford the routines and tasks or even training in their affiliations' [Interview conducted on February 13, 2020].

In conclusion, our framework has effectively explained how the Japanese elite judo team performed

poorer than other nations after 2008. The framework posits that technological and cultural advantages are effective when a nation controls and enjoys the influence elite sporting culture has on performance [Sotiriadou *et al.* 2014; Houlihan 2009; Skille, Chroni 2018]. The case of Japanese elite judo has demonstrated that their declined performance after 2008 was because the team failed to control the cultural impact. The effect of the belief increased the team's attitude toward ippon judo and resulting actions even though their cultural advantage led to poor technological development. In the next section, the reasons the national team lost control of the cultural impact are considered.

Background of the change: process from environmental change to culture out of control

One may ask how the impact of culture got out of control. This is possibly because of the increase in sly techniques employed by non-Japanese judo teams as well as a further three triggers, namely, maximised threat of other nations' increased performance, past success of the Japanese national team and the preferable changes of the IJF rules.

The most influential reason was the increase in sly techniques in international judo competitions. The tendency of non-Japanese teams was to win by employing hand techniques without two hands gripping as well as accumulating points in international events after 1996. As noted previously, non-Japanese judo teams' use of hand techniques without two hands gripping is a cultural difference. Furthermore, their intention to employ tactics that involved accumulating points in matches to win was convincing. The president of AJJF stated, '...the hard practicing of techniques to achieve winning in the match has been gradually replaced by using low-level techniques to achieve ippon winning such as accumulation of points in a match' [AJJF 1997: 1].

The Japanese elite judo team has regarded these types of techniques as sly, which caused a violation of values in the team. P6 and C7 noted in their interviews that the Japanese athletes pursued scoring ippons in their matches even after their performances had started to decline before 2012. It was very difficult for the Japanese team to adapt to a new judo style that did not pursue the notion of scoring ippons to win international matches after 2012 [Interview conducted on February 13, 2020]. The Japanese athletes viewed the other teams as sly because they believed the way to win matches involved scoring ippons with foot techniques and two hands gripping [Interview conducted on February 13, 2020].

The appearance of sly techniques led the decision-makers to invest more resources into their beliefs related to ippon. The other three direct triggers that fostered the impact of culture beyond the control of the decision-makers are explained in the section that follows.

The three direct triggers related to the culture becoming out of control

Maximised threat

The increased performance of other nations threatened the Japanese judo men's team. Consequently, the Japanese elite judo decision-makers relied increasingly on their belief. Although the Japanese judo men's team performed better than the other nations in the 2008 Olympic Games, they were threatened by the performances of nations such as France, Russia and South Korea. As depicted in Figure 1, South Korea's share of gold medals increased by 14% from 2004 to 2008 and surpassed that of the Japanese team between 2008 and 2012 by 14%. Furthermore, although France did not win the most gold medals between 2004 and 2008, they retained their performances of that time and had an increase of 14% in gold medals between 2008 and 2012. One may deduce that the other nations' enhanced performances led to the Japanese elite judo decision-makers' further reliance on ippons to win matches [*Kindai Judo*, December 2008: 45].

Past successes

The Japanese elite judo team's past successes in international matches led to the decision-makers' over-reliance on ippons to win matches. The 2004 Olympic Games may be regarded as the best performance of the Japanese judo men's team between 1996 and 2012. The decision-makers announced that the 2004 victory was the result of ippon winning judo. After the 2004 Olympic Games, the technical director asserted, 'You could also say that the Japanese elite judo team has completed the 'ippon' judo in the Athens Olympic Games' [*Kindai Judo*, January 2007: 37]. After 2008, the technical director became the president of AJJF. Consequently, his attitude was influenced by his role in the team's performance [*Kindai Judo*, December 2008: 43]. Thus, the team's past successes ensured that Japanese elite judo decision-makers' believed in ippon judo.

Preferable rule changes

The Japanese elite judo team found the changes to the rules instituted by the IJF after the 2008 Olympic Games preferable. Accordingly, the decision-makers considered that they could employ ippons to win matches against foreign teams [*Kindai Judo*, December 2008: 45]. As noted previously, in 1974, the IJF introduced new judo competition rules, namely, Yuko and Koka. The latter could be described as introducing more ways to score during matches. This change resulted in the foreign judoka's higher tendency to use leg-grabbing techniques, which could also be described as hand techniques without two hands gripping, to win. However, because of the many criticisms of the changes, which related to judo becoming like wrestling, the IJF decided to ban the leg-grabbing techniques in January 2009 [Murata 2011: 512-513;

Kindai Judo, February 2010: 2]. Consequently, foreign judoka could no longer use leg-grabbing techniques in a match. The change, instead, allowed the Japanese elite judoka to realise ippon winning through foot techniques with two hands gripping [*Kindai Judo*, October 2010: 47]. These three triggers also ensured the Japanese elite judo decision-makers invested many more resources into the culture related to ippon winning.

Reasons for other countries' success

The other nations had enhanced developments in relation to one of the nine factors in comparison to Japan in overcoming the failed controlled cultural impact. The French judo team's development of the SPLISS nine factors was superior to that of Japan. Furthermore, between 2008 and 2012, their performance surpassed that of Japan between 2008 and 2012. As depicted in Figure 1, the FFJ's average annual budget was higher than that of AJJF during this period. Russia's development of the SPLISS nine factors was more enhanced than that of Japan. Because of the flexibility of their budget, their performances were superior to those of Japan between 2008 and 2012. Suzuki's [2017] interview with the head coach of the Russian national team revealed that Russia did not have a fixed budget in contrast to Japan. When they had extra needs, they are able to request additional funding from the government.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether elite sporting culture has a negative impact on international sporting performance. The results revealed three aspects: first, elite sporting culture does not always enhance sporting performance; second, the process that a national team fails to control the influence of the culture and third, conditions that a national team fails to control may influence the culture.

These findings enhanced the theory of the cultural impact on international sport performance. Research on the SPLISS model including that of Sotiriadou *et al.* [2014], Brouwers, *et al.* [2015] and Truyens *et al.* [2016] has shown that culture acts as the 10th pillar in conjunction with the other nine policy pillars to enhance sporting performance. However, our analysis revealed that this framework cannot be applied to the case of Japanese elite judo. Our findings showed that although the Japanese elite judo team performed better than other nations between 1996 and 2008, their nine policy factors of the SPLISS model were not well developed. Our analysis also confirmed the proposition regarding the cultural impact on sporting performance of the research group that explored similarity and convergence of elite sport policies. They argued that culture is a driver that improves the efficiency and effectiveness of sport policies

on international sporting performance [e.g. Houlihan, Green 2008; Houlihan 2009; Tan, Green 2008; Park *et al.* 2016]. Our case revealed that the Japanese team's good performance between 1996 and 2008 could be attributed to the team's culturally led distinctive competence. This competence enabled them to achieve international sport success until 2008 despite the fact that other nations' nine policy factors were better developed.

Furthermore, we found one premise for the SPLISS model and the framework of the research group that explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies. The Japanese judo team successfully won gold medals from 1996 to 2008 when the national team enjoyed the cultural impact. Although the effect of the belief played a role in the team's attitude toward ippon judo, the team did not go overboard on this. However, the Japanese team's performance between 2008 and 2012 stemmed from their failure to control the cultural impact. The effect of the belief increased the team's attitude toward ippon judo and subsequent actions even though this had an adverse effect on their performance. This suggests that a theoretical premise for the frameworks exists in which nations who successfully control or enjoy the influence of elite sporting culture on performance will have the effectiveness of the cultural advantages and technology.

The concept of path dependency substantiates our interpretation of the finding of the theoretical premise. Levi [1997: 28] stated that initial decisions are not altered because of particular institutional arrangements such as culture obstructing an easy reversal even if conditions have changed. In this respect, our case revealed that the environment change and the team's past success enhanced the impact of the decision-makers' belief, which strengthened their attitude and constrained their actions over a long period even after the team's performance had declined. In other words, their decision-making on elite athletes' development was path-dependent. The path dependence concept has been a key concept in the literature of the research group that explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies [Houlihan, Green, 2008]. Park *et al.* [2012] noted that South Korea's success over the previous 20 years enabled sport decision-makers to neglect the internal negative aspects of the elite sport system continually. Thus, the concept of path dependency may be beneficial in interpreting and generalising our findings

In relation to the cultural impact on international sporting performance, our findings have five implications for the literature. First, the decades should be analysed to confirm the impact of elite sporting culture. Extant research on the SPLISS model has mostly analysed a short period of the situation so as to examine the cultural and policy effect on elite success [e.g. Sotiriadou, *et al.*, 2014; Brouwers *et al.*, 2015; Truyens *et al.*, 2016]. However, we revealed the length of the analysis should be

decades to confirm its impact on performance. Accordingly, the organisational process of emergence, change and stability as well as the causality among the events will be better understood [Langley *et al.* 2013]. The concept of path dependency has been posited because ‘organisational paths start with efficient, or at least satisfying, decisions that may get frozen during the action and end up in a lock-in’ [Schreyögg, Sydow 2011: 8].

Second, more attention should be given to cultural impacts. The research conducted on the SPLISS model has attempted to view the cultural factors that work analogously as the nine pillars in the SPLISS model. However, we found that the role of elite sporting culture was more influential than the nine pillars as suggested by the research group that explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies [e.g. Houlihan, Green 2008; Houlihan 2009; Tan, Green 2008; Park, *et al.* 2016]. Our case has shown that the impact of the culture influenced not only resource allocation but also its implementation. Evidence of the cultural influence on resource allocation is apparent in other Japanese sports including basketball at university level. Miller [2011: 398] noted that the scientific approach could not displace the traditional approach over a long period and added that this constraint could be linked to the Japanese culture. Furthermore, the relationship between a manager’s recognition and resource allocation has often been discussed in the literature on management theory. Although the concept of recognition may vary from that of belief in this study, both concepts may be similar on a meta-theoretical level. Bower and Christensen [1996] explained that the primary reason for the organisational failure of producing good performances is the tendency of managers to invest resources in areas associated with their recognition instead of what has been objectively evaluated as more important.

Third, it is imperative when examining the impact of culture and policy on sporting performance to consider the assumption that the nation controls and enjoys the influence of elite sporting culture on performance. The literature on the SPLISS model and the research group that has explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies has focused on the effectiveness of technological and cultural advantage to improve international sporting performance. However, we identified the premise that the cultural impact should be controlled or enjoyed by the national team. This finding is in accordance with Skille and Chroni’s [2018] proposition that the failure of the national team in perceiving and interpreting the enacted elite sporting culture may thwart their actions.

Fourth, as the control of the cultural influence is important, this article first shed light on the direct triggers related to control. We have identified the conditions under which the national teams fail to control the influence of culture through the case. In particular, it is when international judo changes and with triggers such as past success of the team at that, the team’s culture could be

out of control. Although our findings correspond to Skill and Chroni’s [2018] investigation, they have not pointed out the environmental changes as triggering influence on the cultural impact. They revealed that conditions of cultural impact will be controlled when the team has ‘an endured and incorporated development orientation’, and ‘all members of the team share values and perform their roles accordingly, even with regard to the interaction among them’ [Skill, Chroni 2018: 329]. Therefore, our findings about environmental change as a trigger enhanced their work.

Fifth, sports policy research should pay more attention to the unintended consequences of the cultural impact on performance. The existing literature on sport management such as Cunningham [2009, 2011] and Cunningham and Ahn [2018] has noted the impact of the culture as a moderator on performance and argued that the cultural impact is unchangeable. However, we revealed that the relationship between culture and its impact could be changed from positive to negative. In our case, the Japanese elite judo culture had a positive influence on Japanese elite judo team’s performance. However, its impact became negative between 2008 and 2012.

Conclusion

In summary, our findings have enhanced our understanding of the theory of the cultural impact on international sport performance in four respects. First, SPLISS framework cannot be applied to the case of Japanese elite judo. Second, the framework of the research group that explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies is more appropriate than the SPLISS model in analysing Japanese elite judo case but for their success before 2008. Third, our framework not only has effectively explained how the success of Japanese elite Judo team before other nations, but also how they performed poorer than other nations after 2008. In other words, this study finds a premise for the SPLISS model and the framework of the research group that explored the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies. Fourth, and in this regard, the concept of path dependency is able to substantiate our interpretation of the finding of the theoretical premise.

Along with this discussion, this study showed five implications. First, the decades should be analysed to confirm the impact of elite sporting culture. Second, more attention should be given to cultural impacts. Third, it is imperative when examining the impact of culture and policy on sporting performance to consider the assumption that the nation controls and enjoys the influence of elite sporting culture on performance. Fourth, as the control of the cultural influence is important, this article first shed light on the direct triggers related to control. Fifth, sports policy research should pay more attention

to the unintended consequences of the cultural impact on performance.

It is noteworthy that this study has three limitations. First, the reliability of the findings could be further enhanced by extending the period of analysis. We revealed the negative impact of elite sporting culture on international sporting performance in relation to the process in which the Japanese elite judo team failed to control the influence of the culture. We are of the view that elite sporting culture does not always enhance sporting performance. However, this study could not demonstrate the entire situation because it focused on analysing the period from 1996 to 2012. Thus, the reliability of the research results may be limited. Consequently, we intend to extend the period of analysis from 2012 to 2020 as well as before 1996. Accordingly, more complete and beneficial insights about why different nations cannot retain their performance during different periods and, more importantly, how a national elite sports team's decline in performance as a result of their controlled culture may be provided.

Second, although we have shown the argument about the more influential role of cultural impacts on performance, more evidence is needed to enhance this argument. This study revealed that several evolving truths regarding the technological factors of Japanese elite judo, such as funding change of the federation, population condition and coaches' actions on scientific support. However, there is a possibility that the other facts related the technological factors also exerted influence on performance. From the perspective of the SPLISS model or the group researching the exploration of the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies, this study did not fully reveal the conditions related to their frameworks. For example, this study did not show evidence about conditions with regard to the change of athletic career support and facilities, which are important factors in the SPLISS model, or the framework from the research group regarding the exploration of the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies. Therefore, further investigation of these facts is needed to produce the exact theoretical contribution between the SPLISS model and the framework from the research group regarding the exploration of the similarity and convergence of elite sport policies.

Third, further discussion is needed to produce practical implications. The results have also changed our focus on the importance of the cultural effect on elite sporting performance, in particular, its negative effect. However, this study alone is not enough to reveal practical implications concerning the management of the cultural impact. We need to collect further evidence and analyse how the cultural impact was managed from different perspectives. Thus, it is recommended that future research should examine how the cultural effect can be better controlled and managed by the national team so as to enhance a national team's performance.

Sources

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Analiza negatywnego wpływu kultury osiągnięcia „prostych ipponów” na międzynarodowe wyniki sportowe: przypadek japońskiego elitarnego judo

Słowa kluczowe: japońska kultura judo, prosty ippon, teoria zarządzania sportem, negatywny wpływ kultury na wyniki

Streszczenie

Problem. W niniejszym badaniu zbadano wpływ japońskiej kultury judo na międzynarodowe wyniki sportowe, przeprowadzając długotrwałą analizę rozwoju japońskiego elitarnego judo w latach 1996-2012. Badania zarządzania sportem ujawniły, że chociaż wpływ elitarniej kultury sportowej na wyniki międzynarodowe może nie tylko być pozytywny, ale i negatywny, to trudno znaleźć empiryczne badania owego negatywnego wpływu.

Metoda. Autorzy opracowali ramy teoretyczne zgodnie z badaniami, w których zbadano podobieństwo i zbieżność elitarnych polityk sportowych. Korzystając z analizy dokumentacji i dodatkowych informacji z wywiadów, zbadano, w jaki sposób narodowa japońska elitarna drużyna judo przyjęła swoją interpretację kultury osiągnięcia prostych ipponów i jak kultura w zespołach udaremniła lepsze wyniki sportowe.

Wyniki i wnioski. Wyniki ujawniły, że elitarna kultura sportowa nie zawsze poprawia wyniki sportowe, a także procesy i warunki panujące w drużynach narodowych, które nie kontrolują wpływu kultury.