

Personality of the karatekas versus kumite sport fight systems (*in view of the karate culture as the regulator of this interdependence*)*

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Summary

Background. The aim of the research is to determine whether the karate culture is a regulator of relationship between an acceptable level of violence in different kumite systems and competitors' personality traits.

Material and methods. In order to conduct the research five samples were taken. Each sample consisted of deliberately chosen thirty seniors – men aged from 18 to 39; they came from four systems of kumite sportsmanship – Shotokan, Kyokushin, Oyama, Shidokan – and from a group of orienteering runners. In order to conduct the research the Personality Inventory Five Factor Model was used. The Social Approval Questionnaire (SAQ) was used in order to verify the reliability of the respondents. The test analysis was performed using Statistica 10's statistical methods.

Results. The results of the research indicate that karatekas of different systems of kumite with different levels of violence do not stand out with superlative personality traits compared to non-contact sports athletes and non-training male population. Karatekas are characterized by indexes similar to orienteering runners (athletes in other disciplines).

Conclusions. The karatekas of different systems of kumite with different levels of violence do not stand out with superlative personality traits, compared to non-contact sports athletes and non-training male population.

Introduction

In the field of physical culture – generally speaking – the personality issues are raised when one describes and explains inter-individual features of psychophysical and behavioural characteristics of training people or people that are pursuing the aims of physical culture, from the position of the organizing personnel, teachers and educators [1]. To sum up, the aim of personality theory is to organize and explain the ways of thinking, feeling, and behaviour. The theoretical background of the research of personality in sport were often the traits theories, also called the dispositional theories [2].

There is now good evidence that athletic success and participation in physical activity can be predicted by personality traits [3]. Personality itself can influence many aspects of sport performance and behaviour, some of which may well be out of the athlete's cognitive control [4]. A consensus has emerged

among trait theorists regarding a five-factor model of personality in sport sciences [5,6,7,8,9].

The traits theory may be very useful in diagnosing the psychological image of individual athletes. Owing to this fact a sport psychologist can recognize the difficulties which a person has to deal with. Diagnosing personality involves performing a series of personality tests and creating an image of both the weak and strong sides of a contestant / a competitor [10, 11, 12]. For example, one can say that only weakness of a promising athlete is low motivation for achievements or the anxiety associated with competition. Such information can be particularly valuable for a trainer who will lead such a contestant in an appropriate manner.

According to tests results it can be said that there are differences between athletes and non-athletes [1,8,9,13,14]. Athletes were more independent and objective; athletes are marked by the lower level of anxiety than non-athletes [15]. The team

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sports' contestants were characterized by a higher level of anxiety and extroversion than individual sports athletes [16,17].

The intentional dominance proved to be particularly effective in distinguishing athletes in various disciplines [18,19]. These authors have proved that the extroversion, dependence on the group and emotional stability are responsible for differences in physical fitness in 29%. It indicates that the personality can be an important determinant of success in sport.

The degree to which an athlete presents one of the traits outlined in Five Factor Model can determine their sporting performance. The athletes compared with the individuals who don't practice sport are more extravert and more emotionally balanced – they are marked by low neuroticism [20]. Namely, the contestants were low neurotic, on average open to experiences and conciliatory, highly extravert and agreeable [21, 22]. It has been shown that the athletes differ from the average population and the amateurs with their low neuroticism, high extroversion and conscientiousness. The medalists athletes differ from the rest with their extremely low neuroticism [12,22, 23,24,25].

The study results show that differences in personality traits depending on the sport discipline may actually be present. The persons training combat sports are characterized by higher activity, extroversion and neuroticism than the team sport contestants [26,27]. Female athletes in combat sports are more active and lively than their counterparts practicing other sports [28]. Athletes practicing martial arts are characterized by greater endurance, liveliness, activity and extroversion than the team sport contestants [29].

The competition in martial arts is marked by the individual nature. There is a direct, physical contact with an opponent. There is a substantial risk of trauma and injuries. All these things increase the stimulating value of the examined activity. Moreover, a direct contact with a rival rarely takes place in team sport games. The whole team bears the responsibility. The more changeable nature and intensity of effort takes place during the training and competition. This form of activity is less stimulating than the previously described.

Karate is now one of the most popular martial arts in the world. The reason for this is the fact that karate can be trained by everyone, regardless of age, sex, somatic composition, mental and motor development. Karate appeals to everyone. Everybody can find here something interesting: an effective self-defense, sport competition, as well as a form of recreation and rehabilitation. Then, there are the moral values stemming from the philosophy of karate. All these aspects contribute to the fact that the students of karate (karatekas) can be described as people of the karate culture.

The karate culture has a positive effect on physical and mental sphere of people. One can distinguish special features of karate culture which constitute the specific psychosocial climate – a system of hierarchy of kyu and dan degrees, emotional approach to training, discipline, respect for authority and traditional values, codes of ethics, terminology, philosophy, hygienic indications, meditation exercises and high physical fitness of those who train. People from the area of karate cul-

ture practice karate as a method of self-realization. Their overall objective is to develop and improve their lives by continuous 'spiritual' and physical-improvement. They are characterized by diligence, perseverance and consistency in the pursuit of success, respect for moral norms, self-control and mental strength.

The aim of this research is to determine whether karate culture is a regulator of relationship between an acceptable level of violence in different kumite systems and contestants' personality traits. Reflections on karate culture provide an opportunity to present the psychological profile of people practicing karate. The values and ideals of karate culture should shape the psyche of people practicing karate regardless of the training goals – self-improvement, sport competition, self-defense or recreation. Namely, karate-athletes (kumite contestants) and other students of 'empty hands' art as the people of karate culture should stand out with the superlative indexes of personality in relation to other athletes and population. If we assume that the cultural values of karate are the regulator of interdependence between the acceptable levels of violence in different kumite systems, a karateka should be characterized by personality that is above the average, 'ideal' or 'model' in the light of social norms and values (described and measured in terms of Five Factor Model): low neuroticism and high extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness (see figure 1). Modern karatekas are mainly active athletes. It cannot be ruled that their psyche and behavior are more strongly determined by the requirements and specific values of sportsmanship than 'pure' cultural ideals of karate.

If sport is a regulator of interdependence between kumite systems and their ethical, aesthetic, social, political and anthropological values, the karatekas should have been characterized by a personality (see figure 2) similar to athletes in other disciplines (less 'excellent' than it would appear of the postulated values of karate culture).

The hypothesis assumes that the karatekas shaped their personality under the influence of sports lifestyle or the karate culture. The hypothesis does not verify whether the persons training karate chose a specific style of karate to suit their personality traits. In general: the purpose of the conducted research was trying to verify the competing predictions derived from two opposing, general hypotheses. The first one assumes that the psyche and behaviour of modern karatekas are strictly subordinated to and in accordance with the traditional system of ideals and values of the karate culture; the second – that the psyche and behaviour of modern karatekas are more strongly associated with the specifics of standards and requirements set by the necessity of undertaking competitive sports (and not the karate culture). At the purely empirical level, the goal of the study was to answer the question whether the personality profiles of modern karatekas turn out to be more similar to the hypothetical profiles derived from the hypothesis of subordination of the karate culture's values or the profiles derived from the hypothesis of subordination to the requirements of competitive sports.

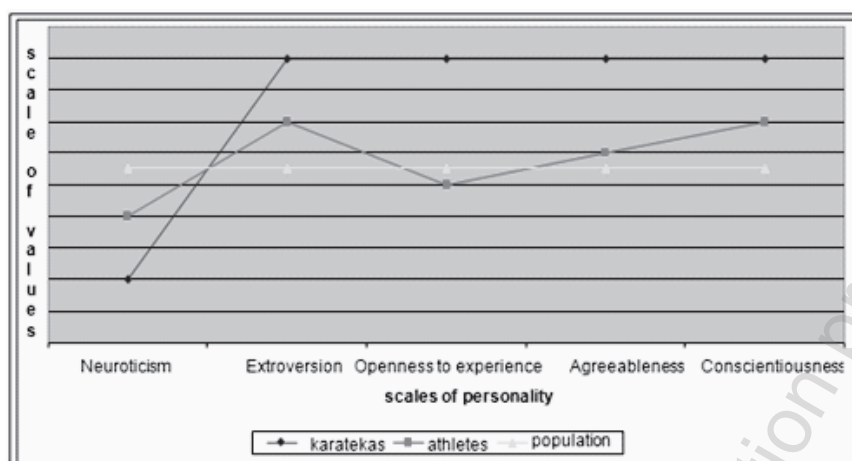


Figure 1. The personality of karate athletes in relation to the population – option 1
Source: own study

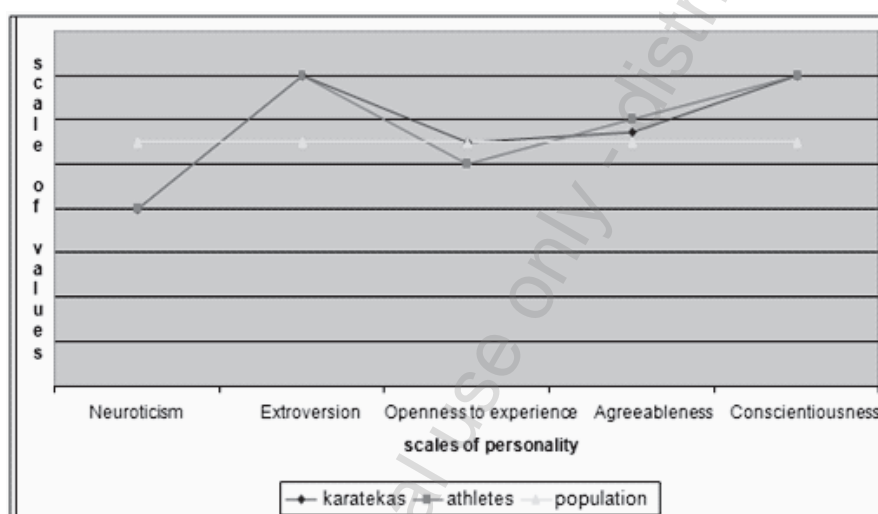


Figure 2. The personality of karate athletes in relation to the population – option 2
Source: own study

Material and methods

In order to conduct the research the Personality Inventory Five Factor Model [30] was used. The Social Approval Questionnaire (SAQ) [31] was used in order to verify the reliability of the respondents. The test analysis was performed using Statistica 10's statistical methods (using the analysis of variance as the primary method). The one-group T-student test and post-hoc tests were also used to compare the personality traits of respondents in the data samples with average figures of the population. Among many styles of karate practiced in Poland, four most developed and well-known styles of karate in the country were chosen deliberately to the research. They represent different systems of kumite sportsmanship: from the style that limits contact to the greatest extent – Shotokan (semi-contact), through the contact systems – kyokushin (knock-down), Oyama (full contact), to the system with minimal reduc-

tion of combat rules – Shidokan (mix fighting). The contestants of the mentioned styles, as opposed to other styles practiced in Poland, have achieved significant results at national and international events such as the European and World Championships. Each sample consisted of deliberately chosen thirty seniors $n=30$ – men aged from 18 to 39 (the average age of the respondents – 27.7). Most of the contestants are at the level of a master, i.e. they have black belts and a significant competition internship. Among them, there are current or former members of the national senior team of each style. In addition, the obtained results were compared with the results of orienteering competitors ($n=30$ – men aged 18-39, contestants with significant sports achievements), as the representatives of some other sport (non-contact sport); and compared with the average scores of men – non-training population derived from the research conducted by the Personality Inventory Five Factor Model's authors.

Results

The correlations of the results in the Personality Inventory Five Factor Model test in relation to SAQ are not significant. Data are not dependent on SAQ questionnaire. They are not exposed to public approval.

Neuroticism

There weren't any significant differences in the level of neuroticism among athletes who practice different styles of karate (see figure 3). The level of karatekas' neuroticism was (in absolute values) lower than the level of neuroticism of orienteering runners; significantly lower in the case of representatives of karate shotokan ($p < 0.021$), kyokushin ($p < 0.026$) and karate shidokan ($p < 0.008$). Contestants of Oyama karate were only marked by a tendency ($p > 0.059$) for such a difference. It has been also found that all karatekas were significantly less neurotic (shotokan $p < 0.000002$, kyokushin $p < 0.00005$, Oyama $p < 0.0003$, Shidokan $p < 0.0001$) than the average non-training male population. There weren't such trends between the orienteering runners and the population.

Extroversion

Only kyokushin's karatekas were significantly more extrovert ($p < 0.025$) than the competitors of Oyama karate. Moreover, the athletes of shotokan ($p < 0.0002$), kyokushin ($p < 0.000005$) shidokan ($p < 0.00004$) and orienteering running ($p < 0.044$) demonstrated a significantly higher extroversion than the average extroversion of the non-training male population. This statistically significant difference was not showed by the contestants of Oyama karate.

Openness to experience

The karatekas and orienteering runners did not significantly differ from each other. In addition, only athletes of kyokushin

karate ($p < 0.007$) and orienteering running ($p < 0.0004$) were characterized by significantly lower score than the average level of openness to experience of the non-training male population.

Agreeableness

Contestants of karate shidokan were significantly more agreeable than orienteering runners ($p < 0.032$) and the average non-training male population ($p < 0.001$). Other statistically significant difference was not found.

Conscientiousness

The karatekas of different styles and the orienteering runners did not differ significantly from each other in a conscientiousness scale. On the other hand, each group of athletes differed significantly (greater conscientiousness) from the average level of conscientiousness in non-training male population (shotokan $p < 0.00003$, kyokushin $p < 0.00006$, Oyama $p < 0.00006$, shidokan $p < 0.000003$, orienteering runners $p < 0.00003$).

The next step in the procedure

The next step in the procedure was to compare the results of all karate styles (shotokan, kyokushin, Oyama, shidokan as one sample) with the orienteering runners and with the average results of the non-training male population. The analysis (see figure 4) has demonstrated that the karatekas were significantly less neurotic than the orienteering runners ($p < 0.0000001$). The average non-training male population ($p < 0.0000001$) was relevantly more extrovert ($p < 0.0000001$) than the average non-training male population, significantly more open to experience than orienteering runners ($p < 0.0004$). Less than the average non-training male population ($p < 0.002$) was relevantly more agreeable than the orienteering runners ($p < 0.001$) and the average non-training men population ($p < 0.0004$), significantly more conscientious ($p < 0.0000001$) than the average non-training male population.

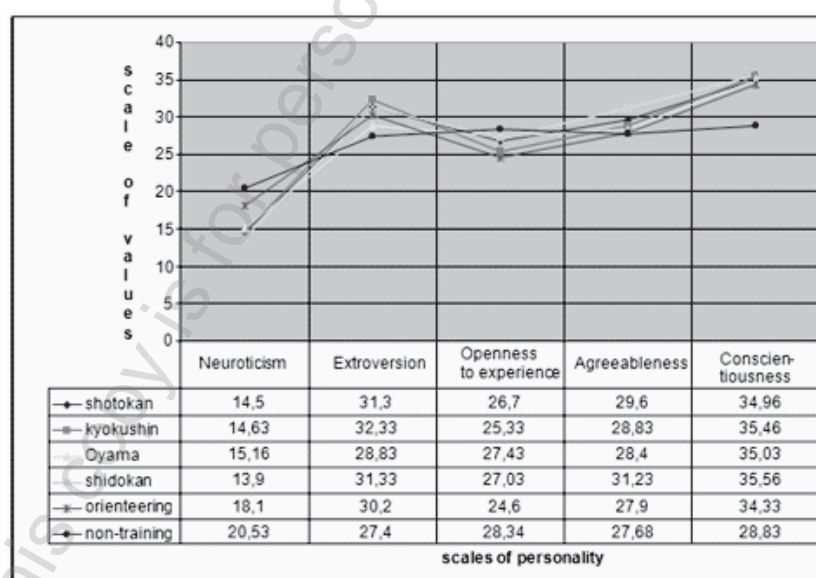


Figure 3. The summary analysis of the results of all samples in the scales of NEO-FFI personality
Source: own study

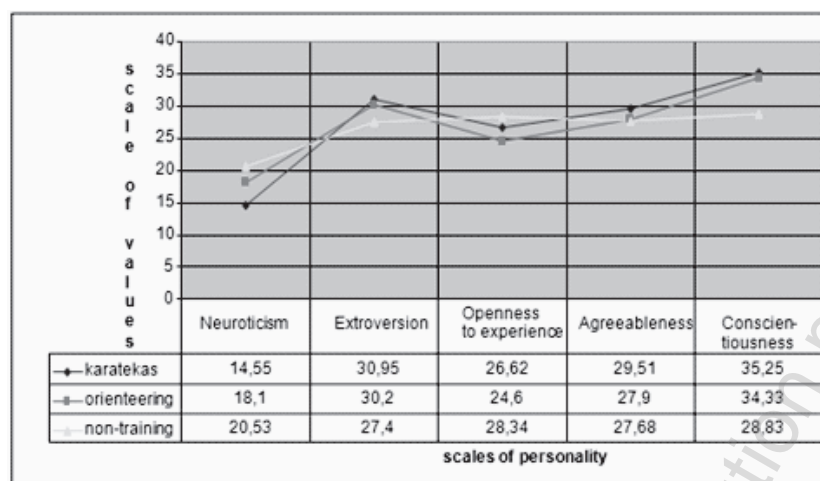


Figure 4. The summary analysis of the results of all karatekas, the orienteering runners and the non-training population in the scales of the NEO-FFI personality

Source: own study

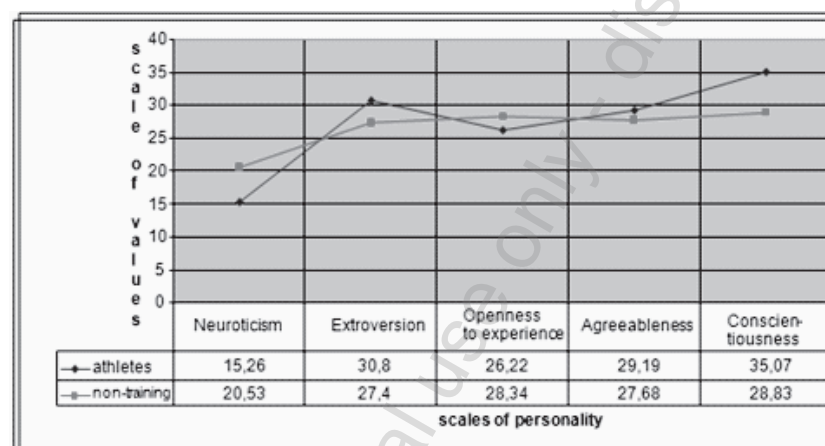


Figure 5. The comparison of analyzed results of all the athletes with the non-training population in the scales of NEO-FFI personality

Source: own study

The personality analysis in the form of sten scores has shown that karatekas were on average neurotic (4 stens), highly extravert (7 stens), on average open to experience (5 stens), on average agreeable (6 stens), highly conscientious (7 stens). The orienteering runners have shown only the conscientiousness (7 stens) at the high level (the other scales with the average result). The average indexes of the non-training male population of any sport are within the average range at all scales (5.5 stens).

In addition, the data of the athletes (the karatekas and the orienteering runners as one sample) were compared with the indexes of the average non-training male population (see figure 5). The athletes were significantly less neurotic ($p < 0.0000002$), more extravert ($p < 0.0000003$), less open to experience ($p < 0.00002$), more agreeable ($p < 0.001$) and more conscientious ($p < 0,00000001$) than the average non-training male population.

Discussion

The karatekas of different systems of kumite with different levels of violence do not stand out with superlative personality traits, compared to non-contact sports athletes and non-training male population. The karatekas are characterized by indexes that are similar to the orienteering runners. Taking into account the existing results of research of personality in sport, one can state that the obtained results of the conducted research confirm the possibility of the existence of differences between athletes and non-training population in a low level of neuroticism and a high level of extroversion and conscientiousness. Other personality traits are dependent on the sport discipline. Therefore, it can be assumed that sports activity is a regulator of the interdependence between an acceptable level of violence in different kumite systems.

The impact of culture on people training karate did not have reference to the karate-athletes, kumite-athletes. The study rather confirms the supposition that the psychological profile of students of karate-do is different from the profile of karate-athletes. The results obtained in this study suggest quite clearly that the personality characteristics of outstanding Polish karatekas fighting in different kumite systems are actually very similar to personality characteristics of contestants practicing other sports [1,8,9,13,14]. Concurrently, they are not the same as the characteristics of the 'statistical non-training young man' (the population). The karatekas, in the same way as other athletes, compared with 'a statistical non-training young man', are less neurotic, more extravert and more conscientious. To sum up: the results of the research argue for the thesis that personality profile of a karateka, regardless of practiced kumite system, is the typical profile for an athlete – the contestant, and it is not the one that would be expected when accepting the assumption about a fully effective impact of the system of values of the karate culture.

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Conclusion

1. The practice of different karate styles that are characterized by different kumite rules, not differentiates athletes in terms of their personality traits.
2. Kumite sport competition has an effect on personality of karatekas. The sportsmanship principles of various kumite systems shape the contestants' personality. The contestants of different karate styles have a similar personality: the personality traits of karate athletes are on the same level regardless of the kumite's competition system; karatekas are marked by the same (in neuroticism, extroversion and conscientiousness scales) personality in relation to the representatives of other sport disciplines (orienteering runners) and different to the untrained population.

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