

Are martial arts and combat sports a school for life? Relationships between sport attitudes and quality of life (intermediate results)

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1. Introduction

Quality of Life (QoL) is an indicator of health status and represents a multidimensional psychological construct describing multidimensional wellbeing (Erhart, et al., 2009). There are evidences that sport and physical activity promote QoL (WHO, 2013) and that enables the development of values in young people (Whitehead, Telfer, & Lambert, 2013). Complementarily, martial arts and combat sports (MA&CS) are well known as practices with potential to develop personal and social values in its practitioners (Yonezawa, 2010; Cynarski, 2012, 2014), with psychological (Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2010) and health benefits (Woodward, 2009). The purposes of this study are: (1) explore the associations between Sport Attitudes (SA) and QoL of adolescent's athletes; (2) account the differences between gender and age; and, (3) compare the differences of SA and QoL between sample groups.

2. Methodology

Web-based Portuguese validated questionnaires were used to assess SA (SAQ – Sport Attitudes Questionnaire; Gonçalves, Silva, Chatzisarantis, Lee, & Cruz, 2006) and QoL (KidSCREEN-27; Gaspar & Matos, 2008). SAQ is divided in four dimensions: pro-social – commitment and convention; and, anti-social – cheating and gamesmanship. KidSCREEN-27 is composed by five dimensions: physical wellbeing (PHW); psychological wellbeing (PSW); parent relations and autonomy; social support and peers (SSP); and, school (SCH). Athletes answered after notification by their coaches and investigation group request. Sample comprised 334 athletes (167 boys) of all the respondents ($M=14,72\pm 1,20$; range: 12-17 years). Three different groups were defined: MA&CS – 68 (42 boys); Team Sports (TS) – 188 (87 boys); and, Individual Sports (IS) – 71 (36 boys). Most of MA&CS group was composed essentially with karate (72%) and judo (15%) athletes. The majority of TS group was composed with basketball (30%), football (29%), volleyball (28%) and water polo (8%) athletes. The IS group was composed with canoeing (31%), kayak (16%), athletics (10%) and swimming (9%) athletes. All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 21. Pearson correlations, independent-sample t-test and, analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted and post hoc multiple comparisons (LSD and Dunnett C) were applied to compare all groups of participants with each other.

3. Results

The MA&CS group presented only negative correlations between cheating ($r=-.301$, $n=68$, $p=.013$), gamesmanship ($r=-.285$, $n=68$, $p=.019$) and QoL SSP. Furthermore, commitment showed positive

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correlations between QoL PHW, SSP and, SCH ($p=.020$ to $p=.011$). Age showed no significant associations, and there were no gender differences in any dimension of QoL or SA. Considering TS and IS group together there were: no significant associations between negative dimensions of SA and QoL; positive associations between all positive dimensions of SA and QoL ($p=.009$ to $p<.001$); negative correlations with age and all dimensions of QoL, except for PHW ($p=.049$ to $p<.001$); and no correlations with age and SA. Boys report more PHW ($t=4.194$, $df=257$, $p<.001$) and PSW ($t=2.656$, $df=257$, $p=.008$), but report also more cheating ($t=2.108$, $df=216.323$, $p=.036$) and gamesmanship ($t=2.141$, $df=235.988$, $p=.033$). Comparing the three sample groups we found that: MACS is lower in gamesmanship and convention than TS; MA&CS is lower in QoL SSP than TS; and MA&CS do not have significant differences with IS on SA and QoL.

4. Discussion and conclusion

MA&CS athletes' data suggests that the negative correlations between negative SA and social support and peer QoL reflects the true nature of MA&CS training – “*train with, not against*”. On the other hand, the non MA&CS group results on the relation of QoL and positive/negative attitude, suggests the idea that sports could be a school of life. Furthermore, MA&CS group progression with age and the differences by gender are quite different from the non MA&CS group, which follows the world trend (Erhart, et al., 2009), and that leads us to propose that MA&CS can help to curb this trend.

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