

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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# Education to bravery – contemporary understanding and comparing bravery among adepts of selected martial arts

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### Abstract

Background. the contemporary perspective of martial arts as a process of education to values necessitates, in a way, a revision of the category of bravery, which is often confined by adepts of the martial arts solely to the concept of courage. The Polish social pedagogue Aleksander Kaminski, in his publication “The Birth of Bravery”, points out that the category of bravery should be seen as a fundamental energy in the service of moral values. In view of this, the question arises as to how to shape attitudes towards bravery among young people so that they meet the challenges of the modern world?

Problem and Aim. the main objective of the research will be to describe how contemporary adepts of selected martial arts interpret and give meaning to the category of bravery. As the main problem of the research, I assumed the question: What significance does the value of bravery have for adepts of selected martial arts?

Methods. the strategy used in addressing the research questions will be quantitative research. The main test method was a diagnostic survey. Within this method, I use a questionnaire survey addressed to practitioners of selected martial arts (*judo*, *aikido*, *karate*). I will present the results of the research in the form of descriptive statistics, (comparison of averages and percentages).

Conclusion. the obtained research results show that each of the studied groups interprets courage slightly differently. However, the greatest importance of bravery among the martial arts studied is shown by the adepts of *Aikido*.

### Introduction

Education as a complex process of both external influences and internal transformations of the personality aimed at preparing the individual for life [Sliwerski 2012], is an important element of the practice of Far Eastern martial arts [Cynarski 2012a]. Not only martial arts masters [Mifune 2004; Kano 2005], but also philosophers and educators [Kowalczyk 2010; Ohsawa 2011; Cynarski 2012b; Stevens 2013; Kozdras 2018] have written about the education of values through martial arts. The contemporary perspective of martial arts as a process of education to values necessitates, in a way, a revision of the category of bravery, which is often confined by adepts of the martial arts solely to the concept of courage. The Polish social pedagogue Aleksander Kaminski, in his publication “*The Birth of Bravery*”, points out that the category of bravery should be seen as a fundamental energy in the service of moral values. At the same time, he explains that open societies have different ideals and

views, but for these to exist in people’s everyday lives, brave people must be involved. Bravery is, in his view, the foundation of character, and therefore only people with character can build a better world [Kaminski 1958]. Brave people are sought after in martial arts education; in view of this, the question arises as to how to shape attitudes towards bravery among young people so that they meet the challenges of the modern world? Today, engaging in selected martial arts activities has various sources of motivation. For some, it is a desire to improve oneself, including being brave; for others, it will be a space for sports competition. There are reasons to argue that the attitude to sports competition in the world of martial arts is different - from affirmation, through tolerance, to complete rejection [Cynarski 2022], and it is the approach to the sportsmanship of this activity that can significantly determine the importance of bravery by adepts of individual martial arts. It is this context that constitutes the main aim of the research, which involves describing and comparing how modern adepts of selected

martial arts interpret and what meaning they give to the category of bravery.

**Material and methods**

The study group consisted of a total of 81 (59 men and 22 women) adepts representing *aikido*, *karate* and *judo* with an average age of 22 years and an average training experience of 12 years. The adepts surveyed were from the municipality of Opole in the Opole Province. Their level of sportsmanship dictated the choice of three specific martial arts. It was assumed that among the studied groups, *judo* represents the highest level of sportsmanship (all respondents declared participation in the sports competition); *karate* - the average (some of the respondents undertook sports competitions, some practiced traditional karate, in which sports competitions are not undertaken). The assumption regarding the group of *karate* adepts is based on this research results, which show that the form of practicing karate (sports, traditional) does not differentiate the values and moral principles adopted by adepts of this martial art [Tomas, Saragoca 2018]. Finally *Aikido* a martial art without sporting competition (representatives of this group declared that they do not undertake the form of aikido proposed by Kenji Tomiki - the creator of *Shodokan aikido*). A random group selection technique was used to select the study group. In addition, the size of the group representing two key characteristics of the study (at least five years of participation in a particular martial arts class and age - at least 12 years) was estimated. The region's total population was determined to include approximately 150 active class participants. Table 1 shows the detailed characteristics of the martial arts representatives studied (*aikido*, *karate*, *judo*).

**Table 1.** Detailed characteristics of the studied groups.

	Aikido	Karate	Judo	Total Score
Number of adepts	21	30	30	81
Male	17	20	22	59
Female	4	10	8	22
Average age	30	24	18	22
Average of training experience	13	11	11	12
Degree with dan/kyu	9 DAN/ 21 KYU	11 DAN 10 KYU	6 DAN / 24 KYU	26 DAN/ 55 KYU

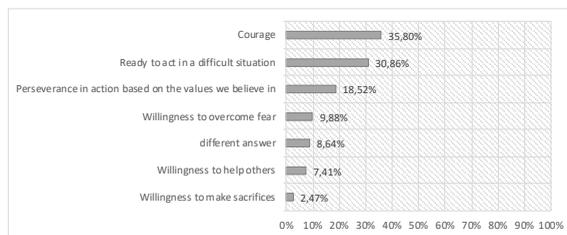
[source: own study]

As the main problem of the research I assumed the question: What significance does the value of bravery have for adepts of selected martial arts? I have included the following questions among the specific problems: How do martial arts students define the category of bravery? What manifestations of human courage can constitute,

in the opinion of martial arts adepts, human bravery? What differences exist in the understanding of bravery among the martial arts students surveyed? The strategy to address the research questions adopted was quantitative research. However, I must point out that in the case of the first detailed problem, I also made a qualitative analysis (triangulation method). The main test method was a diagnostic survey. The questionnaire itself consisted of nine questions; of which the first was an open-ended question and the other eight were semi-open questions with a five-point Likert scale applied (range: strongly agree - 4,3-5, agree - 3,5-4,2, neutral - 2,7-3,4, disagree - 1,9-2,6, strongly disagree 1-1,8). I present the results of the research in the form of descriptive statistics, (percentages, and comparison of averages using – one-way ANOVA).

**Results**

All respondents interpreted the category of bravery as a synonym for courage, which was interpreted by practitioners of each martial art in three ways: firstly, the willingness to act in difficult, unfamiliar situations; secondly, the perseverance to follow accepted values; thirdly, the willingness to overcome fear.



**Fig. 1.** Definition of bravery in the opinion of martial arts practitioners. [source: own study]

The data in Figure One show that simply defining the category of bravery is not a problem for individual adepts of the selected martial arts. Differences in the interpretation of this concept can be seen through a qualitative analysis of the word cloud that was generated from the statements of the surveyed martial arts adepts.



**Fig. 2.** Cloud of words, that defines the concept of bravery, by the studied martial arts adepts. [source: own study]

From the figure above, it is easy to see that *judo* adepts perceive courage as the willingness to make decisions in difficult situations; from the perspective of *karate* adepts, courage is seen as the willingness to take on challenges to overcome fear; while *aikido* adepts see courage as the willingness to make sacrifices.

The key similarity in the understanding of the category of bravery among the surveyed representatives of the martial arts can be seen by analysing the indications concerning what, in their opinion, distinguishes brave people. The consensus among the surveyed adepts in eight different categories relates to the belief that the key to courageous people is their behaviour in difficult and dangerous situations.

**Table 2.** Concordance in assessing of what distinguishes brave people.

Categories of responses	martial arts	average	standard deviation	N	range on a Likert scale
Their way of behaving in difficult / dangerous situations	<b>Aikido</b>	4,57	0,68	21	strongly agree
	<b>Judo</b>	4,67	0,48	30	strongly agree
	<b>Karate</b>	4,33	1,18	30	strongly agree

[source: own study]

The highest average score on this indicator was obtained by *judo* practitioners and the lowest by *karate* adepts. Despite the differences in mean scores, one-way ANOVA analysis of variance (Table 3) showed no statistically significant differences between the study groups.

**Table 3.** One-way ANOVA analysis for strongly recognized features distinguishing a brave person.

One-way ANOVA	Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	Relevance	
Their way of behaving in difficult / dangerous situations	Between groups	1,75	2	0,87	1,21	0,305
	Inside groups	56,48	78	0,72		
	Sum	58,22	80			

\*Critical values of F for the 0.05 significance level: 3.11

[source: own study]

Since brave people are distinguished by the way they behave in difficult situations, it was also possible to examine the specific behaviours that respondents are willing to attribute to brave people. Survey respondents agreed on four of the ten response categories that characterised brave people’s behaviour. On a Likert scale, each group received an average score and there was solid agreement among respondents, indicating that a brave person is someone who: stands up for other people and the causes that are important to them; is always ready to take action in the face of adversity; does not give up when tired; and cares for friends in need. Among the above-mentioned response categories, the highest aver-

age score was obtained in the last category, the overall statistics of which are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** The most characteristic behaviors characterizing brave people in the opinion of the respondents.

Categories of responses	martial arts	average	standard deviation	N	range on a Likert scale
They don’t leave their friends in need	<b>Aikido</b>	4,62	0,74	21	strongly agree
	<b>Judo</b>	4,60	1,00	30	strongly agree
	<b>Karate</b>	4,67	0,61	30	strongly agree

[source: own study]

The data in Table Four clearly shows that martial arts adepts associate the category of courage specifically with the desire to help people with whom they have a special bond. It should be noted here that the above aspect takes on a different meaning when we look at the following response category. It shows that only the *Aikido* group strongly approved of the category of selfless help. *Karate* respondents only agreed with this statement, while *Judo* respondents considered impartiality towards the category of selfless assistance to be a characteristic of the behaviour of courageous people.

**Table 5.** One-way ANOVA for strongly recognized behavior patterns of brave people.

One-way ANOVA	Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	significance	
They don’t leave their friends in need	Between groups	0,07	2	0,03	0,05	0,948
	Inside groups	50,82	78	0,065		
	Sum	50,89	80			

\*Critical values of F for the 0.05 significance level: 3.11

[source: own study]

When the means obtained were compared (Table 5), a one-way ANOVA test of variance showed no statistically significant differences, indicating that the interpretation of the concept of bravery is similar in the category of describing the behaviour of a brave person as being willing to help their loved ones.

**Table 6.** Differences in the opinions of the surveyed respondents on the distinguishing features of brave people.

Categories of responses	martial arts	average	standard deviation	N	range on a Likert scale
Their willingness to take risks	<b>Aikido</b>	3,52	1,25	21	neutral
	<b>Judo</b>	4,10	0,92	30	agre
	<b>Karate</b>	4,37	0,89	30	strongly agree

[source: own study]

It is essential that the research conducted shows the differences between the adepts of the selected martial arts studied. The first point to highlight is the differences in perceptions of the characteristics that distinguish brave

people. A statistically significant difference was the belief that brave people are willing to take risks.

The results presented in Table 6 show that only the *Aikido* adepts group was neutral to the assessment that risk-taking is associated with being a brave person. This may be related to their greater awareness of the boundary between bravery and bravado.

One-way ANOVA analysis of variance (Table 7) indicated that the F-ratio was 4.40, showing a statistically significant difference between groups in the response category related to understanding the relationship between risk-taking and bravery. This has important implications for the following indicator, where respondents were asked to determine the extent to which they agreed that a brave person is characterised by behaviour in which one acts for pleasure regardless of risk.

**Table 7.** One-way ANOVA for the identified features that distinguish a brave person.

One-way ANOVA	Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	significance
Between groups	8,90	2	4,45	4,40	,015
Inside groups	78,90	78	1,01		
Sum	87,80	80			

\*Critical values of F for the 0.05 significance level: 3.11  
[source: own study]

**Table 8.** Differences in opinions of adepts of martial arts on the behavior that distinguishes brave people.

Categories of responses	martial arts	average	standard deviation	N	range on Likert scale
Regardless of the threat, they act for pleasure	<b>Aikido</b>	1,52	0,81	21	strongly disagree
	<b>Judo</b>	2,83	1,26	30	neutral
	<b>Karate</b>	2,47	1,22	30	disagree

[source: own study]

The results (Table 8) show that only the *aikido* group strongly disagreed with this response category; the *karate* group disagreed, while the *judo* group was neutral.

**Table 9.** One-way ANOVA for recognized difference behavior patterns of brave people.

One-way ANOVA	Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	significance
Between groups	21,75	2	10,87	8,24	0,001
Inside groups	102,87	78	1,32		
Sum	124,62	80			

\*Critical values of F for the 0.05 significance level: 3.11  
[source: own study]

A one-way ANOVA (Table 9), showed that the F-ratio was 8.24, indicating a statistically significant difference between the groups.

Another difference is seen in the responding adepts' interpretation of the type of courage critical to the success of the martial art they practice. Of the five categories identified, one appeared to distinguish the groups studied.

**Table 10.** A necessary type of bravery in the practiced martial art.

Categories of responses	martial arts	average	standard deviation	N	range on Likert scale
Bravery expressed through courageous decisions in combat	<b>Aikido</b>	3,71	1,15	21	agree
	<b>Judo</b>	4,60	0,67	30	strongly agree
	<b>Karate</b>	4,47	0,78	30	strongly agree

[source: own study]

The data in Table 10 show that both *judo* and *karate* groups strongly agreed that bravery, expressed as courageous decisions during combat, is crucial to their martial art.

**Table 11.** One-way ANOVA for necessary type of bravery in the practiced martial art.

One-way ANOVA	Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	significance
Between groups	10,70	2	5,35	7,33	0,001
Inside groups	56,95	78	0,73		
Sum	67,65	80			

\*Critical values of F for the 0.05 significance level: 3.11  
[source: own study]

One-way ANOVA analysis of variance (Table 11) showed that the F-ratio was 7.33, confirming statistically significant differences between the study groups in this response category, indicating a significant difference between the athletic *judo* and *karate* groups and the non-competitive *aikido* group.

The indication of the strong belief by the *judo* and *karate* group that a useful form of bravery for their fight is to make courageous decisions in their fighting is also reflected in the indication of the critical qualities that matter to these adepts of the martial arts under study in terms of achieving success in the martial art they practice.

The results in Table 12 show that from the perspective of practitioners of sport martial arts (*judo* and *karate*), courage ranked fourth and third, respectively, in the hierarchy of the most desirable qualities. However, moral courage in relation to success in each martial art is not particularly well recognised by the groups surveyed, ranking only 10th among *aikido* students, 11th among *judo* students and 13th among *karate* students.

## Discussion

Considering the results obtained and referring to the theory concerning the context of value education through martial arts [Martinkova, Parry, Vagner, 2019], it should be acknowledged that the researched *aikido*, *judo* and *karate* adepts describe bravery following the accepted theory, albeit in a slightly different way. Their answers also testify to a good understanding of the ethics of Budo, which is directly related to the virtuous life, and its a sign of a moral dignity, respect for others and readiness to act selflessly for the common good [Cynarski 2012c]. Referring to Aleksander Kaminski's theoretical reflections on courage, the empirical data obtained suggest that the practitioners of the selected martial arts studied correspond to his assumptions in defining the value of courage. They comply with Aleksander Kaminski's concept of courage by emphasising in their answers the importance of a particular activity and associating it with recognised values.

The beliefs of the martial arts adepts studied need to be assessed differently as to whether the value of courage is useful in the martial arts they represent, which corresponds to the results of research on the differentiation of moral attitudes by people practicing martial arts for recreational purposes and people practicing combat sports focused on competition [Kostorz, Sas-Nowosielski 2021]. The results show that sport martial arts adepts do not consider the category of bravery important for gaining benefits. In this case, bravery is replaced by the category of courage, which may lead to a blurring of the

line between courage and bravery. This is evidenced by the higher risk-taking reported by *judo* and *karate* practitioners, as well as risk-taking for pleasure.

This answers the main problem of the adopted research question, which was: what is the value of bravery for the adepts of the selected martial arts? Using a five-point rating scale (very important, important, neutral, unimportant, unnecessary), it can be concluded that for the *aikido* group, the value of courage as defined by Aleksander Kaminski would be - important, for the *judo* group - neutral and for the *karate* group - neutral.

## Conclusions

The knowledge of the value of bravery seems to be sufficiently broad for all the groups studied (*aikido*, *judo*, *karate*). However, it is worth considering how to improve the externalisation of this knowledge in the form of concrete actions. The key, of course, is action that enables moral bravery to be expressed in the everyday lives of all martial arts adepts, following the basic premise of becoming a better person through self-development, rather than focusing on the need to be a better fighter. In this context, the working methods of coaches should also be examined, as they may not spend enough time internalising socially desirable values when improving their students. Perhaps the category of bravery can be a basis for the realisation of Alexander Kaminski's belief that bravery can be a fundamental force in the service of moral values through the joint solution of

**Table 12.** Key features in the context of achieving success in practiced martial art.

Lp.	AIKIDO		JUDO		KARATE	
	DESIRED FEATURES	AVERAGE on Likert scale	DESIRED FEATURES	AVERAGE on Likert scale	DESIRED FEATURES	AVERAGE on Likert scale
1	Regularity	4,81	Endurance	4,83	Speed	4,90
2	Technical efficiency	4,67	Regularity	4,80	Endurance	4,90
3	Responsibility	4,52	Technical efficiency	4,77	<b>Courage</b>	<b>4,60</b>
4	Patience	4,52	<b>Courage</b>	<b>4,77</b>	Power	4,53
5	Kindness to others	4,29	Speed	4,53	Regularity	4,50
6	Endurance	4,24	Power	4,50	Creativity	4,27
7	Creativity	3,95	Suppleness	4,33	Technical efficiency	4,13
8	Speed	3,76	Creativity	4,13	Patience	4,03
9	Kindness	3,71	Patience	4,10	Kindness	3,73
10	<b>Moral bravery</b>	<b>3,67</b>	Responsibility	4,00	Suppleness	3,70
11	<b>Courage</b>	<b>3,62</b>	<b>Moral bravery</b>	<b>3,90</b>	Righteousness	3,70
12	Suppleness	3,52	Righteousness	3,60	Responsibility	3,47
13	Righteousness	3,52	Restraint	2,90	<b>Moral bravery</b>	3,47
14	Modesty	3,52	Kindness	2,83	Kindness to others	3,47
15	Restraint	2,95	Kindness to others	2,83	Restraint	3,27
16	Power	2,14	Modesty	2,67	Modesty	3,20

\* range: strongly agree - 4,3-5, agree - 3,5-4,2, neutral - 2,7-3,4, disagree - 1,9-2,6, strongly disagree 1-1,8

[source: own study]

moral dilemmas, meditation, concrete social tasks and contact with high culture. This, in turn, can contribute to more effective efforts to orient martial arts practice towards the various manifestations of human bravery, as expressed in bravery, energy, enterprise and resourcefulness in everyday life.

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## Edukacja do dzielności – współczesne rozumienie i porównanie kategorii dzielności przez adeptów wybranych sztuk walki

**Słowa kluczowe:** wychowanie do wartości, pedagogika sportu, dzielność, sztuki walki i sporty walki

### Streszczenie

Wprowadzenie. współczesne spojrzenie przez sztuki walki na proces wychowania do wartości, wymusza niejako rewizję kategorii dzielności, którą adepci sztuk walki często ograniczają wyłącznie do pojęcia odwagi. Polski pedagog społeczny Aleksander Kamiński w swojej publikacji „*Narodziny dzielności*” wskazuje, że kategorię dzielności należy postrzegać jako fundamentalną energię w służbie wartościom moralnym. W związku z tym pojawia się pytanie, jak kształtować postawy dzielności wśród młodych ludzi, aby sprościli oni wyzwaniom współczesnego świata? By móc odpowiedzieć na tak postawione pytanie w pierwszej kolejności istotne staje się opisanie tego, jak współcześni adepci wybranych sztuk walki interpretują i jakie nadają znaczenie kategorii dzielności.

Problem i cel badań. głównym celem badań było zbadanie i porównanie tego w jaki sposób interpretowana jest kategoria dzielności przez adeptów takich sztuk walki jak: *aikido*, *karate*, *judo*. Jako problem główny badań przyjąłem pytanie: *Jakie znaczenie dla adeptów wybranych sztuk walki ma wartość dzielności?*

Metodologia. strategią odpowiedzi na przyjęte problemy badawcze, były badania o charakterze ilościowym. Główną metodą badawczą jaką się posłużyłem był sondaż diagnostyczny. W ramach tej metody wykorzystałem kwestionariusz ankiety, skierowany do adeptów wybranych sztuk walki (*judo*, *aikido*, *karate*). Wyniki badań przedstawiam w postaci statystyki opisowej (porównanie średnich i procenty).

Wyniki. z uzyskanych wyników badań wynika, że każda z badanych grup nieco inaczej interpretuje dzielność, jednak największe znaczenie tej kategorii w procesie wychowania przez sztuki walki, nadają adepci *Aikido*.