

# Differences in Attitudes Towards Combat Sports between Male and Female Primary School Pupils

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## Summary

The aim of this study is to determine differences in attitudes towards combat sports between female and male primary school pupils. Based on the sample of male pupils (n=118) and female pupils (n=98) attending the seventh and eighth grade of primary school, a survey was conducted using the combat sports attitude scale consisting of 20 items. The results achieved by the canonical discriminant analysis indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the attitudes towards combat sports expressed by male and female pupils. Male pupils displayed a positive attitude towards combat sports, while the female pupils exhibited negative preferences. The results of this study can contribute to better combat sports involvement in the physical education curriculum for primary and secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Key words: **Teaching process, curriculum, combat sports**

## Introduction

Combat sports are of great importance to the educational system, because first and foremost individuals achieve "mind and body" harmony, steady physical development along with the development of ethical principles and behavioural norms. However, once we analyse the educational system presented as Curriculum Framework for primary schools in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014), we can notice that combat sports are scarcely present in the framework curricula, i.e. one teaching unit per sixth, seventh and eighth grade primary school.

This is inadequate if the pupils are to get familiar with the educational components of combat sports but also in considering what the legal consequences are, and how enforcing physical violence outside schools threatens the integrity of each individual. Because of this fact, male and female pupils develop their attitudes towards combat sports based on their own personal experience affected by the outside factors. Under the definition, attitude represents a settled way of thinking or feeling about something (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014), Hogg and Vaughan (2005) define attitudes as a relatively established structure of cognitive and emotional processes and behaviours related to some processes and behaviours, or a relatively enduring adopted belief, feeling and behaviour towards societal significant objects, events and symbols. Allport (1935)

defined attitude as a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, having a direct and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. From the stated definitions it becomes obvious that male and female pupils cannot acquire enough experience through physical education classes, and that they form their attitudes from different experiences. Prišlin (1991) indicates an existence of complex connection between attitudes and behaviours, but the individuals positive attitudes towards sport do not reflect in the same manner as does their participation in sport activities. Differences begin to appear between what people do and what they think. Regarding this, it is very important to confirm the connection between the pupils' attitudes towards combat sports, especially the influence of educational process' exerted on the pupils' attitudes, because combat sports play a very important role in the development of younger generations. Tomik (2007) conducted a study in differences between attitudes of sport school attendants, and those who are not active members of these schools. The obtained results indicated that there are differences in attitudes of stated subjects, specifically that the sport club members have a positive attitude about sport and physical education, unlike those who are not members and who do not share their positive attitude regarding the same variables.

Busch, Bosnar, Sertić and Prot (1999) conducted an analysis of attitudes towards combat sports using a sample of 39 female teachers and 31 male teachers in primary schools in Zagreb. The results indicated that female teachers had a significantly lower positive attitude towards combat sports as opposed to male teachers, which fits the gender stereotypes.

Studies of attitudes in different age and gender categories are very interesting, especially those studies conducted on those participating in an educational process.

This fact has been confirmed in the study conducted by Biletić et al. (2008) with an aim to establish attitudes, along with developing interest towards classes and teaching units of physical and health education. They applied the questionnaire based on the sample of 610 female and male pupils from fifth to eight grades. Acquired data indicated that female and male pupils both share positive attitude towards physical and health education classes in primary school (59,5%), and that on the level of 0,05 significance there are no statistically significant differences between the attitudes of female and male pupils. The study results demonstrate that combat sports are hated by 6, 2%, not liked by 13, 7%, feeling indifferent by 14, 0%, liked by 19, 6%, and adored by 46, 6% of pupils. It becomes quite evident that the measurability of attitudes is very simple and efficient and that it is applicable in the educational process.

Rogowska and Kuśnierz (2013) conducted a study on attitudes towards combat sports and martial arts for non training persons and to separate factors which might affect these attitudes. The questionnaire regarding combat sports and martial arts attitudes consisted of three components: cognitive component, emotional component and behavioural component. The results indicated that 53 % of women perceived brutality as a dominant feature of combat sports and martial arts which serves as a predictor of a negative attitude towards them.

Jagić et al. (2005) have conducted a study based on a sample of 130 subjects, out of the total number of subjects, 60 of them belonged to those attending fifth grade primary school, while 70 belonged to the sixth grade primary school in Zagreb. To fulfil the study requirements the pupils were tested using a questionnaire consisting of three questions: 1. Do you like to exercise? 2. Which sport do you like the most? 3. Which do you prefer, individual or team sports? Fifth grade female pupils like basketball (21%) and volleyball (21%) while fifth grade male pupils like football the most (28%) and judo (24%). Differences have been noted amongst female and male pupils from the sixth grade in primary school "Braća Radić". The sixth grade female pupils like basketball the most (25%) and volleyball (25%), while sixth grade male pupils like football the most (37%) and judo (29%). The differences in sport selection amongst male and female pupils can be prescribed to gender specific aspects of education.

It is important to note that the family plays a significant role when it comes to forming the attitudes towards sport in general, especially the relations within the family, confirmed in the study conducted by Sunko (2008), analysing whether or not there are significant differences in the atti-

tudes of parents of primary school pupils, comparing family relations within the subject group who have attended the teaching program for parenthood (Group 1) and parents of primary school pupils who do not have any experience in supplementary classes for parenthood (Group 2). The dominating ones include: favouring the inter partners relations over parent-child relations, dishonest father family role, an inclination towards transferring responsibility for parenting mistakes, disregarding the influence of negative pattern in parenting behaviour, a strong need for an external child control, passive parent-child relationship, bad communication pattern with children who are keeping secrets. Statistically significant changes in attitudes of group 1 demonstrate the father role in the family, responsibility for personal actions and authoritative parenting styles.

Jagiełło and Dornowski (2011) conducted a study on attitudes towards martial arts using a sample of 225 students attending sport and physical education at a Sport Academy in Gdanjski. The study affirmed that 95% of students stressed high values of martial arts and its use and that it should be included in the education system for children and youth. Students have likewise stressed that the process should be led by educated teachers who will be actively involved in the realisation of teaching curricula.

We are of the opinion that the violence amongst youth, perceived as a form of bad communication, would be reduced if the staff educated in the field of sport and physical education was assigned additional number of classes in the curriculum, thus gaining the ability to control the aggressive behaviours with the help of educational and organisational qualities of combat sports. The best application would be through the educational system and active participation in different sport clubs, whose educational system already contains the segments of martial arts. Due to this, the aim of this study is represented through establishing differences in the attitudes among male and female pupils who are active participants in the primary education process directed at combat sports.

## Methods

### Sample

The sample of this study was based on primary school pupils in Mostar (N=216), including male and female pupils attending 7 – 8 grade, in total 10 classes. Total number of male subjects was comprised of (n=118) pupils, and (n=99) female pupils from primary schools: "Bijelo Polje", "Zalik", "Vrapčići" and "Sedma Osnovna škola" in Mostar.

### Sample of Variables

The sample of variables was based on the analysis of male and female pupil attitudes according to 20 items used to establish the attitudes towards combat sports, or to be more specific towards combat sports represented in the Olympic Games (Judo, Box, Wrestling, and Tae Kwon Do) based on the combat sports scale developed by the au-

thors (Sertić, Prot, Bosnar, 1999). The following represent the combat sports attitudes:

Attitude 1 – I would never train combat sports, not even if it was the only sport available

Attitude 2 – I really do not understand people who enjoy fighting each other.

Attitude 3 – I hate combat sports.

Attitude 4 – Overpowering the opponent using my own strengths and skills, brings me great pleasure

Attitude 5 – Combat sports are not much more dangerous than other sports.

Attitude 6 – Combat sports should be banned because they promote violence amongst people.

Attitude 7 – Athletes who train combat sports are aggressive.

Attitude 8 – I enjoy watching a good combat sport match.

Attitude 9 – Combat sports should be excluded from the Olympic Games and it is not appropriate to include any other new combat sport at the Olympic Games.

Attitude 10 – Combat sports are boring.

Attitude 11 – I would never allow my child to train combat sports.

Attitude 12 – I dream of becoming a somebody in the world of combat sports.

Attitude 13 – It is very nice to witness a good throwing performance in combat sports.

Attitude 14 – A man's character is build and developed through fighting.

Attitude 15 – Our civilisation would not be complete without combat sports.

Attitude 16 – I am not attracted to combat sports because there is a risk of hurting the other person.

Attitude 17 – Only savages can choose to train combat sports.

Attitude 18 – "Fighting spirit" is a noble characteristic of humankind.

Attitude 19 – Nothing can justify violence expressed through combat sports.

Attitude 20 – There should be more combat sport on TV.

The survey was anonymous. Pupils rated attitudes according to the Likert Scale from 1 to 5, more specifically Grade 1 - Completely disagree, Grade 2 - Mostly disagree, Grade 3 - Agree and disagree, Grade 4 - Mostly agree and Grade 5 - Completely agree.

### Data analysis method

For determining the validity of the rating scale, i.e. rating instruments The Attitudes towards combat sports, were calculated with the help of Cronbach's/alpha coefficient (Čolakhodžić and Rađo, 2011). The procedure of canonical discriminant analysis was applied on a multivariate level so as to define those variables which best discriminate male and female students. Structural coefficients higher or equal to .30, are considered relevant to the interpretation of results of the discriminant analysis and will be taken into account (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). All the statistical parameters will be processed by the Statistical software package SPSS 22.0 IBM.

## Results

Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Table 1) indicates good reliability and internal consistency scale for male pupils at .820. Likewise, Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicates a good reliability and internal consistency scale for female pupils at .908, demonstrating an even greater Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability if compared to male students. The obtained data are mostly concordant with reliability of the measuring instrument as claimed by the authors Prot, Bosnar and Sertić (1999), The Combat Sports Scale has a good internal consistency in which case Cronbach's/alpha coefficient adds up to .849 for the boys and according to the Sertić, Prot and Bosnar study (1999) .874 for the girls, in which case it can be stated that the scale of attitudes designed for combat sports is acceptable for this type of study.

Table 1. Reliability of the measurement scale with male and female primary school students.

MALE		FEMALE	
Cronbach's alpha coefficient	.825	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	.908

Using the canonical discriminant analysis for the area of combat sports attitudes based on a sample of male and female primary school pupils (Table 2), the existence of statistically significant difference has been established in the form of one isolated discriminant function which makes these two subject groups significantly different (Sig. < .001). Canonical correlation coefficient as well as Wilks' lambda indicates a fine group discriminant. A first discriminant function greatly discriminates, which explains 100% variance within discriminative area.

The structure of discriminant function is likewise bipolar. The positive projections onto the first isolated discriminant function are determined by variables which in the position of groups' centroids have a positive value (.740), and they belong to the pupils defined by the following attitudes: Attitude 8 - I enjoy watching a good match in combat sports (.724), Attitude 20 - There should be more combat sports on TV (.720), Attitude 13 - It is very nice to witness a good throwing performance in combat sports. (.443), Attitude 12 - I dream of becoming a *somebody* in the world of combat sports. (.368), Attitude 4 - Overpowering the opponent using my own strengths and skills, brings me great pleasure (.330) and Attitude 18 - "Fighting spirit" is a noble characteristic of humankind (.325).

The negative projections onto the first isolated discriminant function are determined by variables which in the position of groups' centroids have a negative value (-.882), and they belong to the pupils defined by the following attitudes: Attitude 10 - Combat sports are boring (-.453), Attitude 6 - Combat sports should be banned because they promote violence among people (-.433), Attitude 9 - Combat sports should be excluded from the Olympic Games and it is not appropriate to include any other new combat sport at the

Olympic Games (-.410), Attitude 16 - I am not attracted to combat sports because there is a risk of hurting the other person (-.410), Attitude 11- I would never allow my child to train combat sports (-.350).

Table 2. The structure of discriminant function coefficient in attitudes among male and female pupils towards combat sports.

	Function
	1
Attitude 8	.724*
Attitude 20	.720*
Attitude 10	-.453*
Attitude 13	.443*
Attitude 6	-.433*
Attitude 9	-.410*
Attitude 16	-.410*
Attitude 12	.368*
Attitude 11	-.350*
Attitude 4	.330*
Attitude 18	.325*
Attitude 3	-.297
Attitude 14	.260
Attitude 1	-.260
Attitude 15	.246
Attitude 2	-.244
Attitude 19	-.205
Attitude 17	-.169
Attitude 5	.149
Attitude 7	-.092
Eigenvalue	.659
% of Variance	100.0
Canonical correlation	.630
Wilks' Lambda	.603
Chi-square	103.768
df	20
Sig.	.000
Centroids - Male	.740
Centroids - Female	-.882

## Discussion

The aim of this study is represented in determining differences in attitudes towards combat sports between male and female pupils of primary schools in Mostar. This study indicated differences in attitudes towards combat sports between the two generations of male and female pupils in which case the results demonstrate that female students display negative attitude towards combat sports amongst the entire generation of primary school pupils.

Likewise, the results of this study are in concordance with the previous studies which analysed the differences between genders of different education levels (Bosnar, Sertić, Prot, 1999), based on the analyses conducted using female and male pupils from fifth to eighth grades. It was concluded that female pupils have a significantly lower positive attitude towards combat sports when compared to male pupils. Similar with the study conducted by Radić (2003), concluding that there are differences in attitudes towards combat sports between female and male students attending Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb.

Metric characteristics of the scale presenting attitudes towards combat sports amongst boys attending higher grades in primary school are confirmed and the stated scale of combat sports corresponds to this age. It is likewise applicable in the study based on the sample of 194 boys from Zagreb School (Prot, Bosnar and Sertić, 1999). The results indicated that pupils placed high on scale those variables which defined their attitude towards observing a good match on TV, or attending it, indicating that there are more interested in external observation than active participation in combat sports.

Differences between genders have been determined analysing the attitudes towards combat sports (Bosnar, Sertić and Prot, 1999; Busch et al., 1999), stating that we are dealing with sports which according to the before mentioned stereotypes could be "assigned to men". Study conducted by Šafarić et al. (2005) indicated that the relations between genders, professional interests and knowledge about sport are complicated.

According to Bosnar, Sertić and Prot (1999) the stereotypes are those that hinder the development of sport and they as such must be ignored by forming positive attitudes for both genders towards all sports, including combat sports.

Individual positive attitudes towards sport do not equally reflect their participation in sport activities, therefore differences between what people think and what people do present themselves (Doupona, 2001). The result provided by eleven negative and nine positive statements have demonstrated very interesting data which specify that the boys carry within themselves an ignited "fighting spirit", they are ambitious towards practicing combat sports, but apparently they are not given an opportunity to achieve that, confirmed by the claim "I dream of becoming a *somebody* in the world of combat sports". It is evident that "Combat sports" are insufficiently presented on the media, clearly indicating the wish expressed by the pupils to inform them-

selves about the topic, representing a perfect opportunity to influence the attitudes of boys through education.

Opposed to male pupils, who share a positive attitude towards combat sports, the situation with female pupils is completely different. Their attitudes are of a dominantly negative character which proves the hypothesis that female students share a negative attitude towards combat sports. Apart from being boring and violent, female pupils consider that combat sports should be excluded from the Olympic Games. All of this indicates that female pupils do not possess enough information regarding combat sports, which can be brought into a connection with the boys' statements claiming to have noticed that there are not enough combat sports in television programs, and that it should be something to develop upon in the future. Likewise, curriculum for physical and health education does not provide adequate space for the both groups to receive enough education and personal experience in combat sports, even if it is perceived as „the game“. Statements of female pupils that they would never allow their child to train combat sports, clearly indicates the lack of information and practical experience regarding combat sports inside and outside of schools.

Low correlations between variables from the first discriminant function are prescribed to these variables which in essence demonstrate whether or not male and female pupils disagree with these claims, which are of a negative character. The following are the variables described above: Attitude 1 – I would never train combat sports, not even if it was the only sport available; Attitude 2 – I really do not understand people who enjoy fighting each other; Attitude 3 – I hate combat sports; Attitude 5 – Combat sports are not much more dangerous than other sports; Attitude 7 – Athletes who train combat sports are aggressive; Attitude 14 – A man's character is build and developed through fighting.; Attitude 15 – Our civilisation would not be complete without combat sports; Attitude 17 – Only savages can choose to train combat sports; Attitude 19 – Nothing can justify violence expressed through combat sports.

Cynarski, Kuśnierz and Witkowski (2012) conducted a study by which they wanted to analyse and describe the interdependence between knowledge and attitudes towards combat sports, and the second aim was to evaluate how young people attending junior high school and middle school perceive combat sports in south of Poland placing an emphasis on the aspect of perceived value and the dangers that relate to: 1 ) the evaluation of influence of martial arts practice is independent of the gender of the subjects, 2 ) the evaluation of the influence of martial arts practice is independent of the age of the subjects, 3 ) attitudes towards martial arts depend (proportionally) on the subjects knowledge, and 4 ) the evaluation of martial arts values depends on the subject's level of knowledge (on martial arts). The results have shown that the level of knowledge on combat sports is inadequate as a part of physical education of high school students. It is evident that some knowledge on combat sports is present in the higher levels of education, indicating the need for an active participation in instructing the students on combat sports and their values.

Sertić, Segedi and Vučak (2009) conducted a study on a sample of 98 female students of the Faculty of Kinesiology related to the attitude towards self defence, taking into consideration the female students who have attended classes in that course and analysing whether the attitude changed through the years spent on the Faculty, i.e. if there is a statistically significant difference amongst them. The subjects were divided into four groups (depending on the year of study) who attended the self-defence courses in the first study year within the scope of the subject Combat sports. The results of the discriminant analysis have not indicated towards statistically significant differences amongst them and so the differences in the attitudes towards self defence between the female students attending different study years were not confirmed.

What has been confirmed is that the female students place great value on the knowledge which they have acquired during the course, and so they perceive self defence as a skill which is of great use to women nowadays.

Milinović et al. (2009) conducted studies whether or not there are statistically significant differences in attitudes towards self defence amongst students of the Faculty of Economy in Zagreb, students who have been attacked physically and those who were not. The attitudes were evaluated with the help of questionnaire consisting out of 11 statements and 4 questions, and using the discriminant analysis with an aim to establish whether or not there are statistically significant differences amongst them. The results indicated that the students have a positive attitude towards self defence and that most of them have thought about enrolling in some self defence programmes. According to the results of discriminant analysis of two subject groups based on the variables of the questionnaire about the self defence attitudes, one can conclude that there are different opinions and attitudes towards self defence considering the physical attack. These facts should find their place in the physical and health education curriculum, likewise introduce and apply the self defence techniques while providing a proper training for the teachers who are to conduct them.

Yano et al. (2007) conducted a study on how the judo classes affect students' social status, aggression and pleasure, after attending classes for 15 weeks. The results of the study indicated that the judo classes increase social status, and that it does not change students' aggression. Students are satisfied with the judo class much more than with some other sport discipline. Likewise it was concluded that the stated judo program was suitable to be practiced as students' free activities. Evidently the study on attitudes towards combat sports gives adequate answers relating to the attitudes of subjects of different gender and age. For this reason it is very important to take these information into account very seriously, because the B&H contestants of both genders win the shiniest medals specifically in combat sports at all competition levels, which represents the ground for better inclusion of combat sports in the teaching process.

Based on everything stated so far, combat sports can be viewed from several aspects, which can quite efficiently be adjusted to the needs of each individual during education, regardless of gender. Based on the results of this study, a need for active participation in the educational system of Bosnia and Herzegovina presents itself, and it is directed at strengthening general positive attitude towards combat sport.

## Conclusion

Differences in attitudes towards combat sports between male and female pupils can be explained through an inadequate Framework Curriculum for the primary schools in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and improper education of pupils by teachers of sport and physical education. We would especially like to emphasise the negative impact by the media portraying combat sports in a negative, i.e. violent way, but also because there is insufficient or 'nonexistent' media coverage of Olympic combat sports on television programmes. However, this study provides us with the foundation for a new and better start so as to legally and adequately impale combat sports in the curriculum, thus allowing the teachers and pupils to get better acquainted with combat sports in a completely different way than they are portrayed. Making combat sports popular should be based on spreading the knowledge about combat sports, within practical and theoretical context, so that young people regardless of gender could overcome certain prejudices about combat sports.

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