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Parental Expectations of School Karate Players in Sri Lanka: Martial Arts Philosophy or Sport Competitiveness.



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Abstract

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This thesis explored parents' expectations regarding their children's karate training, specifically whether they expect their children to train in karate as a sport or a martial art. The commissioning party for the research was the Old Antonian Karate Club, which trains students at St. Anthony's College in Kandy, Sri Lanka. The coaches and the author believed parents might not understand the difference between sports karate and traditional martial arts. Therefore, the study aimed to investigate whether this belief is true.

A quantitative research method was used, and data were collected from 84 respondents. The analysis was divided into four parts: the demographic background of the players, the parents' knowledge about the difference between sports karate and martial arts, their expectations from karate training, and whether there is a relationship between parental knowledge and expectations.

The results showed that most parents understand that sports karate and martial arts are different forms. They also knew their children were being trained in sports karate at school. Finally, the study found no clear relationship between parents' knowledge and their expectations.

Since this study was limited to the Kandy district, it remains unclear whether parental expectations differ in other parts of the country. Therefore, the author suggests that a nationwide survey would help gain a complete understanding of the topic.

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1 Introduction

Japan has many traditional martial arts with strong cultural roots. Among them, Karate is the most popular and is practiced worldwide. Sri Lanka is not an exception. More than 600,000 students practice Karate in 10,300 primary and secondary schools (The National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka, 2023). According to Wijesundera et al. (n.d.), there are 4 million students between the ages of 5 and 17 in Sri Lanka. This means that about 15% of school children in the country are learning Karate. This number shows how popular Karate is among school children in Sri Lanka.

Delpitiya (2023) confirms that children in Sri Lanka often do not have the freedom to choose what they want to do. This applies not only to school subjects but also to sports and other activities. Parents usually decide which school their children go to, what subjects they study, and what activities they do. The question is: what do parents expect when they make these decisions?

The purpose of this study is to find out whether parents' expectations are met when they choose Karate for their children.

1.1 Commissioning party

The organization that requested this study is the Old Antonian Karate Club, which is based at St. Anthony's College in Kandy, Sri Lanka. St. Anthony's College was founded by Reverend Father Felice Zoppi in 1854. Today, the school has about 2,700 students, from Grade 1 (primary) to Grade 13 (high school) (St. Anthony's College, Kandy, n.d.).

In Sri Lanka, former students are often involved in helping their old schools. St. Anthony's College is also supported by its former students through the St. Anthony's College Old Boys' Association, which is a legally registered organization (MUJEEB, 2021). This association has several branches, each focusing on a specific area. The Old Antonian Karate Club is one of these branches. It was started in 2017 to bring back Karate as a sport at the college.

At present, the club trains 30 active Karate students aged between 7 and 18 years. These students compete at different levels, including club, district, provincial, and national levels.

The target group for this study is the parents of the Karate students who train at the Old Antonian Karate Club. At the club, students learn Karate as a sport. It is important to note that teaching Karate as a martial art is not allowed in Sri Lankan primary and secondary schools.

The purpose of this study is to find out if the training given by the club, matches what the parents expect. Parents may have different expectations. Some may want their children to learn Karate as a martial art, while others may see it as a sport. By understanding these expectations, the club can either adjust its training methods or explain to parents the limits of what the club can offer.

1.2 Karate in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a small island, but it is a very sporty nation where more than a hundred structured and unstructured sports are played. Officially, the government manages 57 sports in the country (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, 2024). Among many combat sports such as Wushu, Judo, and Muay Thai, Karate is the most popular in Sri Lanka. One clear sign of this is that 600,000 school children which is equivalent for 15% of school children population is Sri Lanka practice Karate as a sport (Wijesundera et al., n.d.).

The main organization that manages Sports Karate in Sri Lanka is the Sri Lanka Karate Do Federation, which is affiliated with the World Karate Federation (Karlova , 2019). There are also provincial federations that operate under the Sri Lanka Karate Do Federation, as well as district-level federations under the provincial ones.

To receive support from these federations and to take part in competitions organized by them, Karate clubs must be registered under the Sri Lanka Karate Do Federation. All these federations are supervised by the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs (Ministry of Youth & Sports, n.d.).

In addition, the Sri Lanka School Karate Do Federation, which works under the Ministry of Education, is responsible for promoting and improving Karate at the school level (Sri Lanka School' s Karate Do Association Official Website, 2025).

1.3 Research aims, purpose and questions.

1.3.1 The research purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand what parents expect when they choose Karate for their school-aged children in Sri Lanka. It looks at why parents want their children to do Karate and whether these expectations are based on their understanding of the difference between martial arts philosophy (like discipline and respect) and sport competitiveness (like winning and being the best). The study also tries to find out if parents' expectations are related to their knowledge, or if their expectations are not connected to what they know about Karate.

1.3.2 The research aim

The aim of this study is to understand how parents see the role of Karate in their children's development, focusing on whether they view it as a martial art or as a sport. By exploring parental views and expectations, this research will provide insights that can help guide decisions related to training practices, coaching, and policies.

If parents expect their children to train in Karate as a sport, little change may be needed, as the training is already based on sports Karate. However, if parents want their children to focus on Karate as a martial art, decision-makers may face a bigger challenge in balancing these expectations with the current training approach. The process of how to balance these expectations is not part of this study.

1.3.3 Research questions

This study will explore the following three research questions, which aim to understand parental expectations and their impact on children's Karate training in Sri Lanka.

Q.1 Do parents in Sri Lanka distinguish between the martial arts philosophy and sports competitiveness in Karate?

Hypothesis H1: Karlova (2019) revealed that 75% of Sri Lankan Karate practitioners expect to train Karate as a self-defense skill, while Sri Lanka is dominated by Sports Karate over traditional Karate. This leads to a thinking that there is a confusion on the ideology of what kind of Karate training exist in Sri Lanka over the expectations. Therefore, in this thesis, it was assumed that parents of Sri Lankan school Karate players are not aware that Karate can be trained as a martial art as well as a sport.

Q.2 What are the primary expectations of parents regarding their children's participation in school Karate in Sri Lanka?

Hypothesis H2 : . De Silva (2022) reported that in 2015, there were 10,739 reported cases of child abuse. The number of cases reported has declined to 8,327 in 2020 however it is justifiable to assume that there could be many more cases that were not reported. Having such a situation it is fair by a parent to give his/her child a self-defense training. Therefore, in this thesis it is assumed that the parents of school karate players expect their children to learn Karate as a martial art.

Q.3 Are parental expectations influenced by their knowledge of Karate?

Hypothesis H3: This is a logical expression rather than academic literature. If a parent thinks that Karate can be taught only as a martial art, then they will expect his child to learn Karate as a martial art. If the parent knows that Karate also can be trained as a sport, still he may want his child to train as a martial art if he feels that it will bring the child some protection. Therefore, in this study it was assumed that parental expectation will be influenced by the parent's knowledge of Karate.

2 The evolution of Karate: Martial art to sport

2.1 Understanding Karate

Karate is a traditional Japanese martial art that has spread around the world, with many changes over time. It is estimated that about 100 million people practice Karate in 192 countries (Clark, 2021). The English translation of the Japanese word *Karate* is “empty hand.” The founder of the world’s most popular Karate style, *Shotokan*, later added the word “*Do*”, which means “way” or “path.” With this addition, the term became *Karate-Do*, giving it a deeper meaning—*a way of life or a life philosophy* (Messaoud, 2016).

Although there are many definitions of Karate, the author believes the best explanation comes from Nakayama (1977) in his book *Best Karate: Volume 5*. He defines Karate-Do as "an empty-handed art of self-defense in which the arms and legs are systematically trained to control an enemy attacking by surprise, showing strength as if using a real weapon. Karate-Do is also an exercise that teaches the practitioner (karateka) to master all body movements such as bending, jumping, and balancing by learning to move the body and limbs in all directions freely and evenly."

There are many styles of Karate such as Goju Ryu, Shito Ryu, Shoto Kan, Kenshi Kan and Kyokushin but they all share common basic principles. Shotokan, which was the very first Karate style started around 1910, and is the most well-known style and has been practiced for over 100 years. (Kordi et al., 2009)

2.2 Invention of Karate

Even though there is no clear literature and there are many arguments, still many believe that Karate was invented in Okinawa. The background for this belief is that it is an island that close to China and the possibility of flowing the knowledge of Chinese Martial arts to Okinawa. The knowledge flow was caused by two factors one is that the Japanese merchants and crews visited China frequently and learned Chinese martial art during their stays and the second factor is the migration of Chinese families in 1300. (Kordi et al., 2009)

Martial arts knowledge came from China and was developed in Okinawa. It was called Okinawa-Te. Farmers used farming tools as weapons, but when weapons were banned, people created a system of fighting without weapons, using only empty hands. This may be one reason why it was called "Empty Hand" or "Karate." Over time, this fighting system developed into different styles with different focuses. In the Naha area, a strong and heavy fighting style developed. In the Shuri area, a soft and fast style was created. A student named Gichin Funakoshi learned both styles from two master's and created a new style called *Shotokan*. "Shoto" was Gichin Funakoshi's nickname, and "Kan" means hall or house. For this reason, Gichin Funakoshi is still considered the father of traditional Karate. (Kordi et al., 2009)

2.3 Internationalization of karate

Karate began to spread around the world after World War II. It was introduced to Western countries mainly through Japanese students who moved abroad, especially to the United States, and through American military personnel who had served in Japan. In the early 1950s, many Japanese masters visited Western countries to introduce and promote Karate.

The first international Karate event was held in France in 1963, called the European Karate Congress. Later, in 1966, the first international Karate championship took place, titled the "European Karate Championship." In 1970, Ryoichi Sasakawa, the president of the Japan Karate Association, visited France and signed an agreement with the European Karate Congress to create the World Union of Karate-do Organizations (WUKO). The first world championship was held that same year in Tokyo. In 1993, WUKO changed its name to the World Karate Federation (WKF) (Kordi et al., 2009).

There is no detailed literature on how the early championships were conducted, but it is believed that they were based on traditional Karate techniques and methods. Today, the World Karate Federation focuses on developing Karate as a sport. This goal is supported by four main objectives stated in the "WKF Strategic Plan Implementation – Period 2024–2025" (WKF Strategic Plan, 2022).

The four objectives were to encourage the athlete's progression and sports training, achieve results according to sporting merit, promote the participation of National Federations (NFs) in

sports, and highlight the sporting interest of the Continental Championships. (WKF Strategic Plan, 2022).

2.4 Karate belt system

Unlike many other countries, Japanese martial arts always carry a belt system. The belt system starts from the 9th Kyu and rises up to the 1st Kyu, which means the 9th Kyu is the lowest. After 9th Kyu, it starts with Dan grading, which flows from 1st Dan to 3rd Dan. After these stages, the belt will be awarded for various achievements. For the Kyu grade, the belt will have different colours. Regarding the colours of the belts for the Kyu grades, there will be some variations between the karate schools, but for Dan it is always black (refer to Appendix 5 1(1)).(Lin, 2017)

The belt system has many advantages. The belt system helps identify each practitioner's skill level so the teacher can group them accordingly and set the standards or training accordingly. From the practitioner's point of view, he can feel his development, set goals, and be motivated. The belt system also allowed for the structure of the training system. For example, until 2nd Kyu, a practitioner can be graded within 3 months or 6 months, depending on the development. But when practitioners reach 2nd kyu/they must train for at least one year before facing the next grading test. Similarly, when you are in black belt 1st grade, the practitioner must train for 2 years before earning the black belt 2nd grade and then train 3 years before gaining the 3rd grade.(Lin, 2017)

2.5 The three elements in Karate training

Kihon, Kata, and Kumite are the three main parts of Karate training that every student must learn and master. These parts are practiced separately, but they are closely connected. If any one of them is missing, it can affect the development of the skills needed to become a good Karateka (Karate practitioner). Training usually starts with Kihon, which teaches basic techniques and their combinations. The second part is Kata, where students perform a set sequence of movements that show theoretical techniques. The final part is Kumite, which is free sparring (Grupp, 2009).

This order: Kihon, Kata, and Kumite, is followed in daily practice. However, the amount of time spent on each part can change depending on the student's skill level and the goal of the training (Grupp, 2009).

2.5.1 Kihon

Kihon means the basic techniques in Karate. The number of these techniques can range from 70 to almost 300, depending on the style. These techniques are taught step by step and practiced many times, even by advanced students, to improve accuracy and quick reaction. The main purpose of Kihon is to build a strong base for fighting by learning important movements like stances, punches, blocks, kicks, throws, and pressure point techniques. It helps to make the body a useful tool for self-defense (Pawel et al., 2016). Grupp (2005) also stresses that Kihon training is the most important part of Karate because it builds the foundation.

Kihon training has two parts: basic training done alone and basic training done with a partner. In solo training, the student repeats one technique while standing still, in a stance, or uses a combination of movements. Once the student becomes confident at this level, they move to partner training. In this stage, one person attacks and the other defends. These can be single or combined techniques. In partner training, the attack is always explained before practice. (Grupp, 2005)

2.5.2 Kata

Kata, which means "form," includes techniques from different martial arts styles. In Kata, the athlete moves in many directions. It is not just a performance, but it represents a fight against one or more invisible opponents. Different martial arts schools have different numbers of Kata, and they may use different names for them. (Doria et al., 2009).

P Piepiora et al. (2016) supported this idea by explaining that Kata is a fixed sequence of Karate movements performed without an opponent. It includes blocks, strikes, and kicks, and was the main part of training before *Kumite* (sparring) became more common. Piepiora et al. (2016) also quote H. Nishiyama, who said, "Kata is the essence of Karate," because all techniques come from

it. Traditional masters created Kata based on their real fighting experiences, which gives each form deep meaning and importance.

Kata training involves both physical technique and mental discipline. A practitioner of kata must bring their body and mind together while demonstrating humility and confidence. Every kata starts with a block and then moves in a predetermined rhythm. Kata practice improves concentration, comprehension of opponents, and even life-improving discoveries. (Piepiora et al., 2016)

Mastery of kata reflects a high level of skill, and depending on the Karate style, it can be practiced solo or with a partner, sometimes using weapons. Each *kata* has its own rhythm, timing, and level of difficulty. (Pawel et al., 2016)

2.5.3 Kumite

Grupp (2005) states that the core meaning of any martial art is to self-defense in a situation of conflict which is not an exception for Karate. Piepiora et al., (2016) describes Kumite as a practice of applying offensive and defensive techniques learned from *kata* in real-time situations. The connection between *kata* and *kumite* is very strong; poor understanding or incorrect execution of kata techniques can limit progress in kumite. Improvement in one depends on the other, and they should not be treated separately (Piepiora et al., 2016)

Before a Karateka is ready for full sparring, they must go through months of preparation. These early exercises focus on developing effective attack and defense skills, as well as full control over punches. (Pawel et al., 2016)

2.6 Karate as a martial arts philosophy

Messaoud (2016) explained that martial arts include moral values, technical skills, and training methods to prepare practitioners for fighting or war. Later, Messaoud (2015) added that, because of the influence of Zen Buddhism, which appeared in the twelfth century, the violent techniques of war training were changed into Budo, meaning "the way of the warrior."

Zen Buddhism is one major influencer in Karate which still prominent among the Karate practitioners. One major characteristic visible due to the influence of Zen Buddhism is the strict hierarchy which is not common in most of other sports. Karate has a clear organization, including a grading system and the important role of the instructor, known as the Sensei or Shihan. In addition, Karate teaches discipline, respect, and the need for lifelong practice to truly master the art. Therefore, traditional Karate cannot be considered just as physical development but as a development in oneself character. (Grupp, 2009)

Since the Okinawa era, all Karate practitioners were expected to follow a moral code. These rules were called Dojo Kun, and they still exist today in different forms. Every Karate student, or Karateka, was required to follow these guidelines. Master Sakugawa documented the first written version of Dojo Kun in the early 1800s, which consists of 5 codes. (Grupp, 2009)

The first code was “ Improve your character”. This code is based on the fact that Karate is not only a physical activity but also a way to build character and inner strength. It teaches discipline, focus, and confidence, especially to beginners and young students. Through repeated practice of basic techniques, students begin to develop a strong spirit and mental resilience. This fighting spirit is not only useful in Karate but also helps in everyday life, such as facing personal problems, family issues, or stress in work and school. Karate training promotes self-control, respect, and peace of mind. With time and dedication, students gain lifelong values that help them overcome challenges both inside and outside the dojo. (Pawel Adam Piepiora & Piepiora, 2016)

The second code was “Maintain clean way of living” which stands for being loyal. In martial arts, this value comes from samurai traditions and the influence of Confucianism. Students must be loyal to their master and the dojo, just as samurai were loyal to their lords. Loyalty means following the master’s path with respect and commitment. Today, it may seem unusual for a master to share deep knowledge with a student who might leave easily. That is why the student must show loyalty over time. In return, the master passes down wisdom and experience. This bond between master and student is important for true learning in martial arts. (Pawel Adam Piepiora & Piepiora, 2016)

“Develop the sense of striving” is the third code. This code reminds, that Karate is based on effort, with full dedication and commitment needed to achieve mastery. Success, including winning championships, is not possible without hard work from the students. The desire to learn must be

genuine, not just for show. A student who shows serious effort and commitment will be noticed by the master. In return, the master will be more willing to share knowledge and spend time teaching that student. This strong effort is not only important for competition but also for personal growth and understanding of the art. True progress in Karate depends on hard work and sincere dedication. (Pawel Adam Piepiora & Piepiora, 2016)

Etiquette is a key part of Karate. This fact was emphasized by the fourth code, “Respect others”. Respect for others is important in both Japanese and Okinawan culture, and it is a core value in martial arts. Gichin Funakoshi said that Karate begins and ends with etiquette. He believed that without courtesy, there can be no dojo. This reflects the formal nature of Japanese society, where people show respect by bowing—in training, at home, or at work. Dojo etiquette is clearly defined. Bowing properly shows respect for what one is doing and where they are. Respect should be shown to everyone: masters, parents, teachers, the law, the dead, and nature. (Pawel Adam Piepiora & Piepiora, 2016)

The last code “Refrain from violence behaviour” simply says that Karate is only for self defence. The key principle here is control. A well-trained fighter has great strength and a strong spirit, but it is unfair to use this power against someone untrained. The true spirit of Karate teaches that knowledge should only be used for justice and self-defense. A person with strong character can walk away from a fight because they have emotional control and inner peace. They do not need to prove themselves in public. Winning without fighting means no one gets hurt, and there are no regrets. However, this idea can be hard for some students to understand, especially due to their environment or mindset. (Pawel Adam Piepiora & Piepiora, 2016)

These five rules clearly show that traditional Karate is not about fighting, but about avoiding it.

Later, in the 1900s, Master Gichin Funakoshi updated the moral code for his school by creating 20 rules. These rules emphasize that Karate is mainly about keeping peace, both inside a person and with others. The 20 rules are quoted below. (Pawel Adam Piepiora & Piepiora, 2016)

When studied carefully, 3 segments in the 20 rules can be observed. The first segment focuses on foundational principles and inner values that are, Karate begins and ends with bowing, there is no first strike in karate, Karate stands on the side of justice, first know yourself, then know others mentality is more important than technique the heart must be set free calamity springs from

carelessness karate goes beyond the dojo, Karate is a lifelong pursuit and apply the way of karate to all things – therein lies its beauty.

The second segment focuses on strategy, practice, and real-life application. The appropriate rules are Karate is like boiling water – without heat, it returns to its tepid state, do not think of winning – think, rather, of not losing, make adjustments according to your opponent, the outcome of a battle depends on how one handles emptiness and fullness (weakness and strength), think of hands and feet as swords, when you step beyond your own gate, you face a million enemies, and formal stances are for beginners; later, one stands naturally.

The third segment emphasized Technical Mastery and Mindful Practice. The rules relevant to this ideology are perform prescribed sets of techniques exactly – actual combat is another matter, do not forget the employment or withdrawal of power, the extension or contraction of the body, and the swift or leisurely application of technique and the last rule was be constantly mindful, diligent, and resourceful in your pursuit of the way.

2.7 Karate as a sport of competitiveness

Karate has undergone many changes from its origins to the present day. The most significant transformation was the development of Karate as a sport. The sport version focuses on winning competitions according to established rules. These rules were designed to minimize the risk of accidents and injuries as sport evolved. (Messaoud, 2016)

Sports karate is governed by the World Karate Federation (WKF), which sets the rules, standards, and regulations, and is responsible for organizing major international events such as the World Karate Championships. World Karate Federation is recognized by the International Olympic Committee (Clark, 2021) and operates through five continental federations (World Karate Federation, 2014). It represents around 10 million members from 188 countries.

The sport form of karate is referred to as “sports karate.” Unlike the modern martial art form, sports karate is based on a light-contact system, also known as the "skin-touch" system. The key difference between full-contact and light-contact karate lies in the level of control during attacks. In sports karate, techniques must be controlled and withdrawn immediately upon making contact

with the opponent's skin. Speed and agility are prioritized in sports karate, whereas modern martial arts place more emphasis on power.

There are two main competitive disciplines in karate: kata and kumite. In kata, athletes perform a sequence of movements in a fixed pattern to be evaluated and scored. Kumite is a sparring event where points are awarded for well-executed techniques (Clark, 2021). At the beginning of their careers, athletes are typically trained and compete in both kata and kumite. However, as they progress to elite levels, most specialize in one discipline due to the distinct technical and physical demands of each (Doria et al., 2009).

This trend of specialization reveals an underlying concern: that sports karate may be diminishing the deeper spirit of traditional martial arts. Messaoud (2016) supports this perspective, stating, "In order to unveil the confusion and mystery surrounding these two terms, philosophers of martial arts state that the axiology of martial arts is completely different from the axiology of sport. The aim of sports is to increase performance, to break scores and win competitions, whereas martial arts' purpose is to improve the psychophysical personality of the human being."

2.7.1 Kata as a sport event

Kata competition takes place in both individual and team formats. Team matches consist of three-member teams, which must be either all male or all females. Individual matches are held separately for men and women, with each competitor performing solo. In the finals of the team kata competition, the two finalist teams perform a kata of their choice from an approved list. Following this, they present a bunkai; a demonstration of the practical application of the kata techniques. The bunkai demonstration must be completed within five minutes. The use of traditional weapons, additional equipment, or non-standard apparel is strictly prohibited. The kata must be performed with skill and must clearly demonstrate an understanding of the traditional principles it embodies. (Kordi et al., 2009a)

When assessing a performance, judges evaluate the performance according to 7 criterias. They are, how realistic and clear demonstration of the kata's meaning (bunkai) (this criteria is applicable only for team Kata), understanding of the techniques being applied, Timing, rhythm, speed, balance, and power focus , proper use of breathing to support , correct focus of attention and

mental concentration, accurate stances, with adequate leg tension and feet flat on the floor and Correct form according to the style being performed.

The number of kata required for each competitor depends on the total number of participants and can be up to five. Previously, kata competitions were judged by five referees using a flag system. However, since the beginning of 2019, official kata competitions have adopted a scoring system evaluated by seven judges. In this system, after the performance, each judge gives his/her scores to the athlete, considering technical performance and athletic performance, ranging from 5 to 10 points. The highest two and lowest two scores are discarded. The remaining scores are averaged to derive the final score. (Billala & Priyanka, 2022)

2.7.2 Kumite as a sport event

Unlike in other combat sports, In Karate Kumite athletes engage in ritualized rather than actual combat. Although the competitions involve non-contact fighting and symbolic techniques, athletes must demonstrate the potential power behind their movements. Each technique is executed with precision and control, simulating real combat while stopping short of causing injury to the opponent. Kumite matches last 3 minutes for senior male athletes and 2 minutes for senior female, cadet, and junior divisions. In the event of a tie, the match is extended by one additional minute, during which the first athlete to score a valid technique is declared the winner. If the tie remains unresolved, the outcome is determined by a panel of judges. (Doria et al., 2009)

Kumite competition is divided into individual, and team matches. Individual matches can be categorized by weight divisions or open categories. Male teams consist of seven members, with five competing in each round. Female teams consist of four members, with three competing per round. In kumite, attacks are restricted to specific target areas: the head, face, neck, abdomen, chest, back, and sides. Sweeping and projection techniques are permitted. However, open-hand techniques to the face are prohibited due to the risk of injury, particularly to the eyes. (Kordi et al., 2009)

A technique scores when it is directed to a valid target area and fulfills the following criteria: good form, sporting attitude, vigorous application, awareness, good timing, and correct distance. According to the rules, contact must be controlled at all times. A valid technique typically involves

no contact or light contact—such as a punch or kick landing between skin touch and 2–5 cm from the face. No contact to the throat is allowed, though a properly controlled, non-contact technique can still score. Slightly stronger contact is permitted to the body, provided it remains below the injury threshold. (Kordi et al., 2009)

3 Perceptions of practicing karate

Why does someone choose to practice karate? What do they hope to gain from such training? Karate can be practiced either as a sport or as a martial art. However, if the practitioner's expectations do not align with what they experience or receive, their journey may be short-lived. Messaoud (2015) points out that the perception and reception of martial arts training can vary significantly across countries and cultures. For instance, Karlova (2019) found that 71% of Sri Lankan karate practitioners train with the goal of acquiring self-defence skills, while only 17% aim to build a career in sports. However, based on the author's knowledge, there are very few places in Sri Lanka that offer karate training in its traditional martial art form. This suggests a gap between the expectations of many practitioners and the actual opportunities available to them.

3.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs remains one of the most widely recognized models of motivation, despite being introduced in 1943. The model was refined over a period of more than ten years, with the final version published in 1954 in Maslow's book *Motivation and Personality* (Ghaleb, 2024). Maslow categorized human needs in a structured hierarchy, each level representing a different type of motivation. Like many other motivational theories, Maslow proposed that human needs can be classified. However, unlike others, he arranged these needs in hierarchical order. The hierarchy begins with physiological needs at the base, followed by safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs, and finally, self-actualization at the top. (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976)

Karadencheva (2025) explains that every organization needs to understand its stakeholders, especially the reason why they are connected to the organization. This idea of "why" is explained using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which is shown as a pyramid. It begins with basic physical needs at the bottom and moves up to higher psychological needs. When an organization understands which level each stakeholder belongs to, it can provide better and more effective services to meet their needs.

The author believes that it is practically possible to evaluate whether a product or service fits into one of the stages in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. A product or service will usually fit into at least one stage, but in some cases, it may relate to several stages, depending on the consumer's expectations. In this section, we will discuss how each level of these needs is connected to Karate training.



Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976)

3.1.1 Physiological needs

These are the most basic human needs that are essential for survival. A person always tries to meet these needs first in life. If these needs are not met, the person may face difficulties in surviving. Examples of basic needs include food, shelter, sleep, warmth, and clothing. (Huang, 2024)

Thus, Karate training cannot be categorized as a basic need.

3.1.2 Safety needs

Huang (2024) explains that once basic needs are satisfied, people begin to seek safety and security in their lives. For example, a homeless person sleeping on the street may not be concerned about safety if their basic needs, such as food or sleep, are not yet met. People look for safety because they want a stable and predictable environment. Examples of safety needs include good health, job security, a peaceful environment, and financial stability. Many individuals join trade unions due to the fear of losing their jobs or facing work-related challenges. In this

context, training in karate as a martial art can also be seen as a way to fulfill the need for personal safety.

3.1.3 Belonging needs

Humans are naturally social beings who seek acceptance, connection, and love. These needs are related to the feeling of belonging and forming relationships with others. This is one reason why people join social clubs and groups. A person may choose to join a karate club because it provides a sense of belonging. This is especially true when karate is practiced as a sport, where teamwork, group activities, and shared goals help build strong social connections. (Huang, 2024)

3.1.4 Esteem needs

As per Huang (2024) once a person's need for belonging is fulfilled, they begin to seek recognition, esteem, and respect. Meeting these needs gives a person a sense of self-worth and accomplishment. This is one reason why athletes compete to achieve success and be recognized. For example, a sportsperson who wins a national award gains respect and status from others in the country. In karate, achieving higher belt levels also brings recognition and respect, both within the dojo and the wider community. Therefore, someone who trains in karate as a sport is likely doing so, at least in part, to fulfill their esteem needs.

3.1.5 Self-actualization

Self-actualization is the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It is the process of becoming the best version of oneself. According to Maslow, only a small percentage of people reach this level because it requires continuous personal growth and self-improvement. Self-actualization represents the fulfillment of one's full potential, but it is highly subjective and varies from person to person. For example, one individual may view becoming a millionaire as their form of self-actualization, while another may see it as becoming the best primary school teacher. (Huang, 2024)

With regard to the experience of the author, in the context of karate, self-actualization can also take different forms. One practitioner may aim to reach the black belt and feel fulfilled upon achieving it. Another may set higher goals, such as earning a 3rd or 5th-degree black belt. For some, self-actualization might come from the decision to stop competing, feeling that they have accomplished enough in their journey. In each case, the sense of fulfillment depends on the individual's personal values and goals.

3.2 Parental Expectations

De Silva et al. (2022) stated that parents are a key motivational factor for children to participate in sports. As explained in Section 1, in Sri Lanka, many important decisions about a child's life such as which school they attend, what subjects they study, their future career goals, and extracurricular activities are often made by parents. Therefore, there must be a reason why a parent would choose karate for their child instead of another sport. For example, St. Anthony's College offers training in 17 different sports. Why would parents prefer karate over the other 16 options? Kothari (2004) explains that, globally, parents often influence their children to take part in organized sports. Parents may have different expectations for doing so, depending on their goals or beliefs about the benefits of sport.

Since playing a sport is not a basic need for survival, the first level of Maslow's hierarchy; physiological needs do not apply in this context.

However, the second level, safety needs might be relevant. De Silva (2022) reported that in 2015, there were 10,739 reported cases of child abuse, which declined to 8,327 cases in 2020. Still, many cases may go unreported. Further Karlova (2019) have found 75% of karate players expect to train Karate as a martial art which is closely related to self-defense. Based on this, we can assume that some parents may encourage their children to train in karate to improve their safety and self-defense skills.

But what about the next two levels of Maslow's hierarchy belonging and esteem needs? Could these also influence parents' decisions? Answering this is difficult due to the limited research available. However, based on the author's experience, Sri Lankan's parents often view their

children's participation in sports as a source of pride. Additionally, there is often internal competition among sports teams within schools for recognition.

In general, it is easy to understand why someone wears a replica sports T-shirt. This is common in many sports, not just Karate. People wear it to show they belong to a sport or a community. Gulløy (2024) supports this idea by explaining that different sports cultures create different types of belonging. Buyrukoglu et al. (2024) add that a sense of belonging is personal, meaning each child may feel it differently. Some may feel connected through sports, while others may prefer focusing on studies. The feeling of belonging also depends on how much a child feels accepted and supported by the group. Children want to be loved, accepted, and respected at school.

According to the author's experience in Sri Lanka, sport specialization starts early in Grade 1 (age 6) (see Appendix 4 1(1)). Not every child gets the chance to represent the school in sports. However, in Karate competitions, events are divided by age, belt level, and weight class (see Appendix 4 1(1)). This system allows more students to take part. In addition, many club matches are organized in Sri Lanka with no limit on the number of participants, giving every child a chance to compete. Therefore, Karate can be a good choice for parents who want their child to belong to a school sports team.

Another reason a parent might choose Karate as a sport for their child is to help build esteem. Çağlar et al. (2024) confirms that any sport can improve a player's self-esteem. While being part of a school team creates a sense of belonging, winning brings a feeling of pride and confidence. Based on the author's experience, in many Sri Lankan schools, winners of sports events are announced during the weekly assembly, and students receive awards as a sign of appreciation. Most schools also hold an annual "Colours Night" to celebrate students who have achieved success in sports (Royal College, Sri Lanka, 2021). Students who do well in sports may also receive further recognition when selecting school leaders. Therefore, it can be assumed that some parents encourage their child to do Karate because of the recognition and respect their child might receive.

4 Research method

4.1 Quantitative or qualitative?

The first challenge a researcher faces at the stage of research method is whether the research should be quantitative or qualitative. Selecting appropriate method has a greater influence in the later stages in the research such as data collection, analysis, and conclusions. (Mrabti & Alaoui, 2024)

Kothari (2004) briefs that quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount. It applies to phenomena when it requires to explain as an amount or a quantity. On the other hand, qualitative research helps to explain phenomena relating to or involving quality or nature.

Even though these two have significant differences between the two, some researchers will still need a combination of quantitative and qualitative approach which calls "mixed method".

The qualitative method is suitable when the research aims to explore cultural dynamics, personal meanings, and complex social interactions. Common tools for data collection include in-depth interviews, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and discourse analysis. This approach is especially useful in exploratory studies that seek a deep understanding of social experiences. A major strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide detailed and context-specific analysis. However, its main weakness is the vulnerability in generalizing the findings to larger populations. (Mrabti & Alaou, 2025)

In contrast, the quantitative method focuses on numbers and statistical explanations. Its main strength is the ability to generalize findings from a sample to a larger population. Quantitative methods also allow researchers to study patterns and make predictions. Unlike qualitative methods, quantitative research enables validation of data, which helps identify potential bias. It can also reveal possible relationships between variables. Statistical tools are used to describe and analyze the data. The most common method of data collection in quantitative research is the use of close-ended questionnaires. (Mrabti & Alaou, 2025)

This research aims to examine the relationship between parents' knowledge of karate and their expectations regarding what their children gain from karate training. By analyzing the sample data, the study seeks to generate generalizable findings about the wider population. Therefore, the quantitative method is the most appropriate approach for this research.

4.2 Research process

In September 2024, the process of the thesis starts with submitting the subject analysis. The thesis plan was finalized in December 2024 which helped to determine the target group, questioner as well as the move forward plan. The target group was the parents of Sri Lankan school pupils who train karate at their schools.

The questioner was refined after the thesis plan (refer annexure 1 1 /4 to 1 4/4) and the distribution started on 25th January 2025. The questionnaire was sent to the parents through the coaches of their children and being the 1st quarter of the year is the busiest period in Sri Lankan schools 2 months window was given for the responses. The responses were collected anonymously.

4.3 Research instrument

This research used a quantitative method, so a structured, closed-ended questionnaire was needed. Although there are many free tools available—such as Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, and Typeform—this study used <https://new.webpolsurveys.com/> as recommended by the university. This tool was chosen because it allows the data to be directly linked to PSPP for analysis.

The questionnaire had 14 questions, using both True/False and Likert-scale formats. These were divided into three sections:

The first section consists of four questions, numbered 1 to 4. This section collects the demographic details of the players. To be precise, the age of the children, total training duration, current belt (or grade), and gender were collected. This data helps to understand the background of each participant.

The 2nd section focuses on parents' Beliefs and Knowledge and consists of questions 5 to 9. Questions 5 and 6 were Likert-scale items that asked about parents' views on whether karate should be taught as a martial art or a sport. These questions were designed with opposite ideas to check if the parents understood them clearly. A negative relationship between the two responses would suggest good understanding and reliability. Question 7 was a True/False question about parents' knowledge of what type of training is legally allowed in schools. Questions 8 and 9 were also True/False and tested parents' knowledge about the official management of karate in Sri Lanka.

The last section helps to understand parents' views on training and expectations, and is equipped with questions 10 to 14. This final section included Likert-scale questions to understand how parents see their child's karate training and what they expect from it. Question 10 asked if the child trains karate as a martial art. Question 11 asked if the parent believes that getting higher belts improves self-defense skills. If a parent agrees with one, they should also agree with the other unless there is some confusion. Similarly, Question 12 asked if karate is seen as a sport, and Question 13 asked if higher belts helped the child in competitions. These two responses should also be consistent. The last question, Question 14, asked if the parent encourages the child to join competitions to improve sport-specific skills. A parent who agrees with Questions 12 and 13 would likely also agree with this one.

4.4 Sampling method

The population of this study was the parents of Sri Lankan school Karate players. The National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka (2023) estimated number of school Karate players in Sri Lanka is 600,000. Liyanage (2019) has found in her research that 56% of families are having 1 to 2 children and another 30% of families have 3 children averaging 2.32 child per family. Therefore, if we assume all the children in a given family trains Karate then the number of families can be estimated as is formula helps to derive the number 258.620 which is the size of the population.

Convenience sampling was chosen as the sampling method for this study. Kothari (2004) defines convenience sampling as "When population elements are selected for inclusion in the sample based on the ease of access, it can be called convenience sampling." This method was used to select the sports clubs that participated in the research. The author shared the questionnaire with

clubs that had a close relationship with him. The coaches of these clubs then shared the questionnaire with the parents of the children who were members. However, participation in the study was completely voluntary.

The questionnaire was distributed on 25th January 2025 via WhatsApp. Since this period is typically very busy for schools in Sri Lanka, a two-month response window was provided to allow enough time for participation. The goal was to collect 100 responses, and a total of 84 responses were received.

4.5 Data analysis

After collecting data from the responses of the sample, the next step is to conduct a statistical analysis, which will help to identify patterns in the data and to determine how specific variables influence other variables. Islam (2020) defines data analysis as a “process of cleaning, transforming, and modeling data to discover helpful information for business decision-making”. Data alone does not convey any meaning or message unless it is extracted, analyzed, and presented (Islam, 2020).

A data set collected through a quantitative method consists of numerical values or values that can be converted to numerical values and can be analyzed using statistical tools (Williamson & Johanson, 2013). Therefore, the data analysis of this study will be conducted using statistical tools. The process of statistical Analysis is data collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation (Islam, 2020).

Descriptive analysis will be employed in this research, as defined by Islam (2020). Descriptive analysis examines either the full dataset or a sample of it. For continuous data, it displays the average (mean) and the extent of variation (standard deviation). For categorical data, it gives the number of cases (frequency) and the percentage of each category.

Bar charts generated through frequency tables have been used as descriptive Analysis which helped to summarize and illustrate the basic features of data. It offers a simple indication of the data. In some cases, it also allowed linking patterns through logical thinking. And Pearson’s

correlation coefficient has been used to analyze statistical dependence. The statistical analysis has been done with help of GNU pspp 2.0.0-g4c33fd.

5 Results

This part of the study used descriptive analysis, and the results are presented in four sections. The first section analyzes the demographic details of the children participating in karate. The second section focuses on parental ideologies and general attitudes toward karate. The third section examines parents' perspectives on their own children's karate training. Finally, the fourth section explores whether there is a relationship between parents' knowledge about karate and their expectations for their children's training.

5.1 Demography of the players

Under demographic analysis, the first aspect examined is age distribution (Figure 2). 26 (31%) respondents are having children of age 5 / 6 years which is the largest age group. When looking at the overall distribution, it can be observed that 67 (80%) parents are having between 5 and 10 years old.

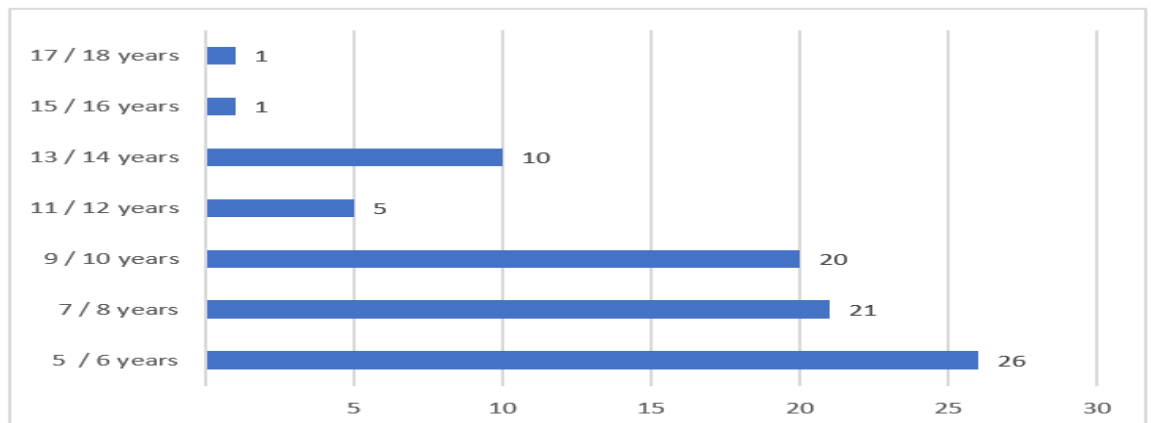


Figure 2. Age distribution of the players

The second aspect examined is gender distribution among the players (Figure 3). 57 parents (68%) have boys, and 27 parents (32%) have girls in the family.

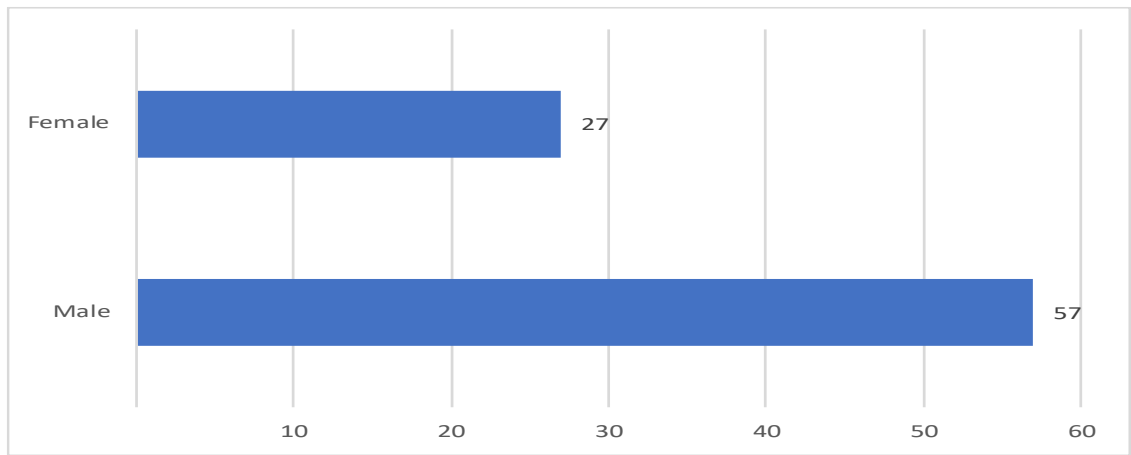


Figure 3. Gender distribution

The length of training was also examined to help us understand players' experience levels (Figure 4). It is logical to think that parents have better knowledge when the child has been trained for longer. The majority, 39 parents (46%), have children training for 2 to 3 years, indicating moderate experience. Overall, 73 parents (87%) have children (who have been trained for 3 years or less, showing that most participants are still in the early stages of their karate journey.

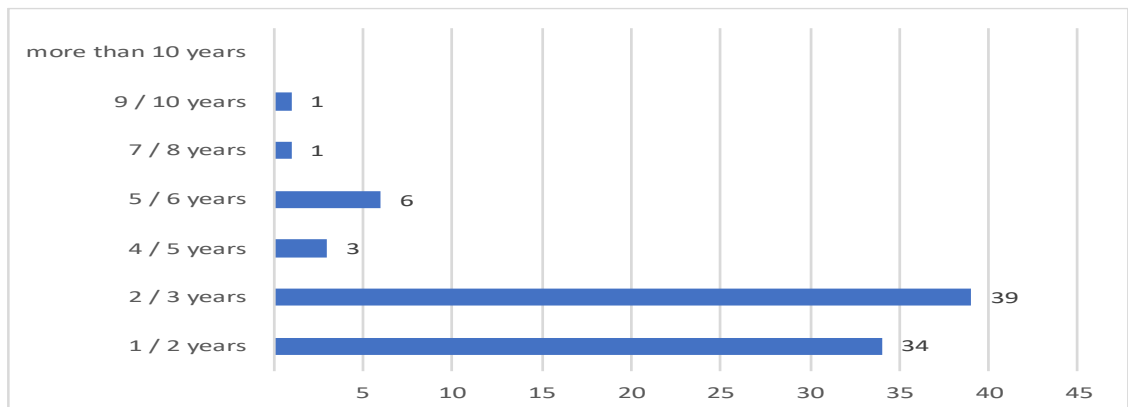


Figure 4. Length of training.

The players' grade level should logically correlate with the length of the training. The majority, 45 (54%), have children with lower grades of 9th, 8th, and 7th Kyu (Figure 5). 9th Kyu is the lowest ranking, and 1st Kyu is the highest rank just before the Black belt (Refer Appendix 5 1(1)). Overall, 76 parents (91%) have children who hold owner grading (9th Kyu to 4th Kyu), which is consistent with their relatively short training periods.

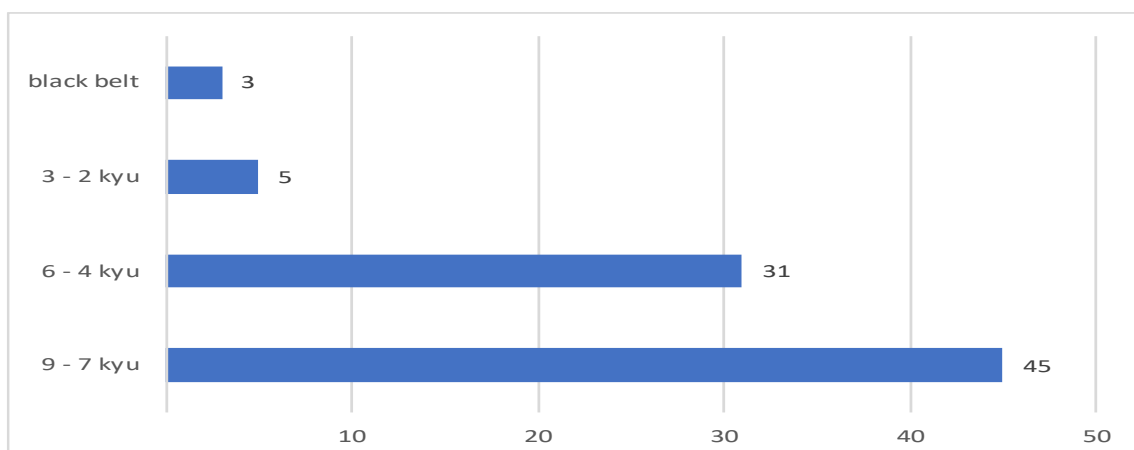


Figure 5. Grads of the players

5.2 Parental ideology toward Karate

Parental ideology toward karate refers to parents' beliefs, values, and assumptions about karate and its role in their child's life. This ideology can influence parents' choice of karate over other sports or activities for their children and what they expect the child to gain from it.

The first idea explored under this section was: "I think Karate can be trained only as a martial art." This statement is incorrect, as Karate can be practiced as a martial art and a sport (Figure 6). According to the responses, 31 parents (37%) disagreed, and 18 (21%) strongly disagreed with the statement. This means 49 (58%) parents rejected the idea, showing they correctly understand Karate. However, 30 parents (36%) agreed with the statement, indicating that many parents still hold a misconception or inaccurate ideology about Karate.

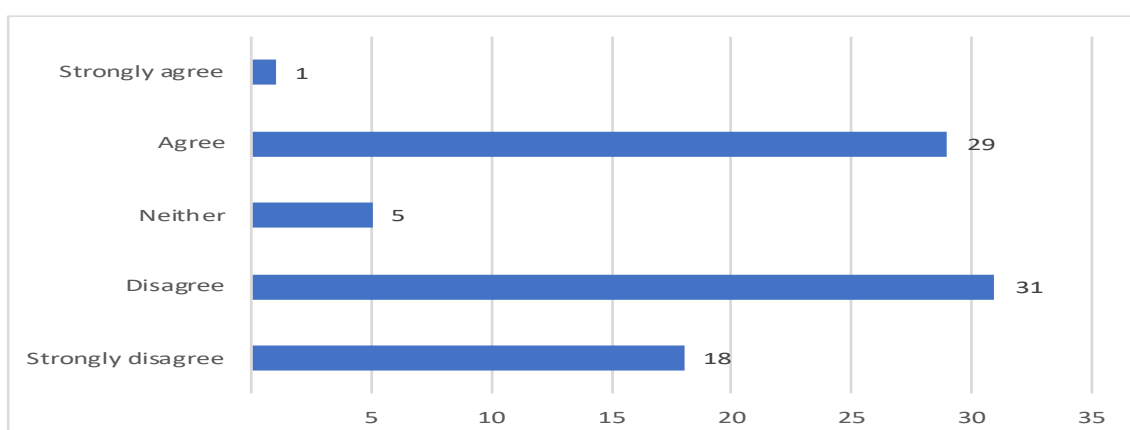


Figure 6. Responses to the question "I think Karate can be trained only as a martial art."

Secondly, the opposite of the previous statement was tested. Parents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: “Karate can be practiced as a sport too,” which is true (Figure 7). 58 parents (69%) agreed, and another 8 (10%) strongly agreed. This means that 66 parents (79%) supported the idea that Karate can be trained as a sport. These results reinforce the findings from the previous question, showing that a majority of parents understand the dual nature of Karate.

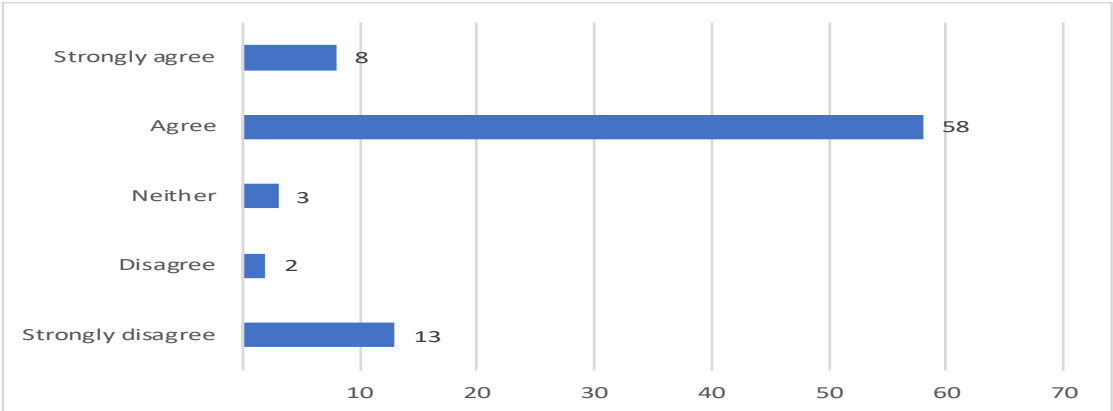


Figure 7. Responses to the question “Karate can be practiced as a sport too,”

The following ideology tested was whether parents would accept or reject the statement: “At schools, Karate is taught only as a sport,” which is true (Figure 8). A majority, 75 parents (89%), accepted this statement. This suggests that most parents are aware of the type of Karate training their children receive at school, and they understand it is focused on the sport form rather than traditional martial arts.

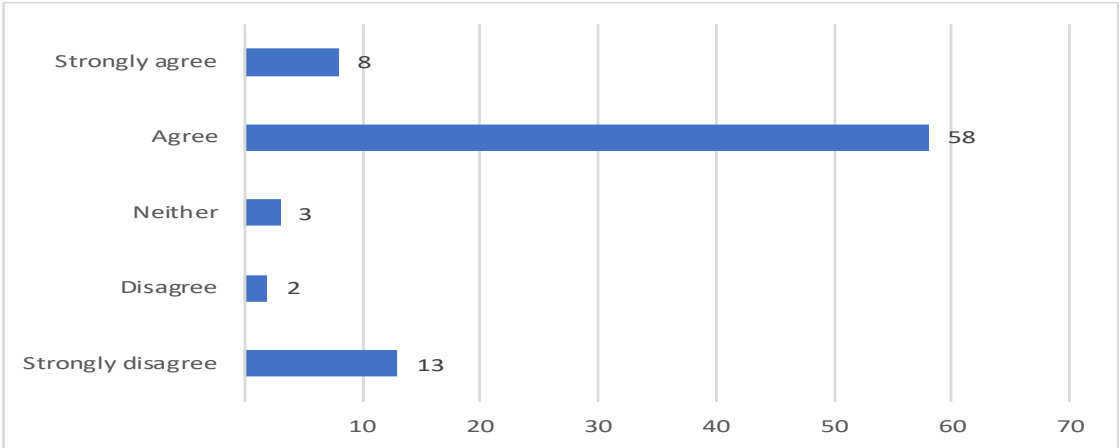


Figure 8. Responses to the question “Karate is taught only as a sport at schools.”

The following two questions aim to test parents' knowledge of how Karate is officially governed in Sri Lanka. Parents were asked to agree or disagree with the following two factual statements:

1. Sri Lanka Karate Do Federation ONLY accepts Karate as a sport.
2. Sri Lanka Karate Do Federation is the highest authority that manages Karate in Sri Lanka.

68 parents (81%) agreed with the first statement (Figure 9), and 83 (99%) agreed with the second statement (Figure 10). These findings indicate that most parents correctly understand how Karate is officially managed in Sri Lanka, reinforcing that their overall ideology about Karate is accurate.

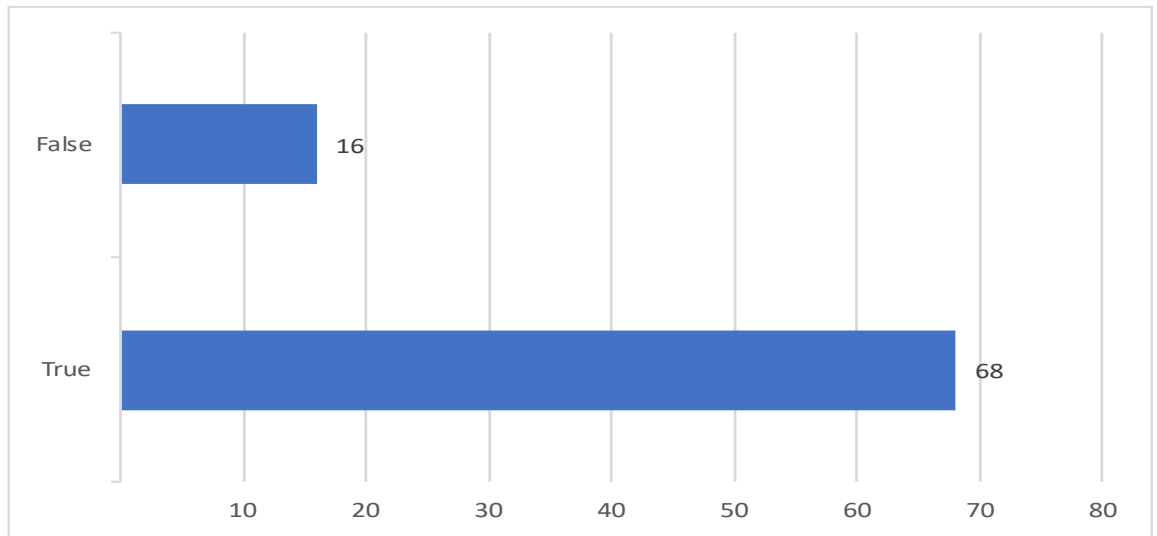


Figure 9. Responses to the question “Sri Lanka Karate Do Federation ONLY accepts Karate as a sport”

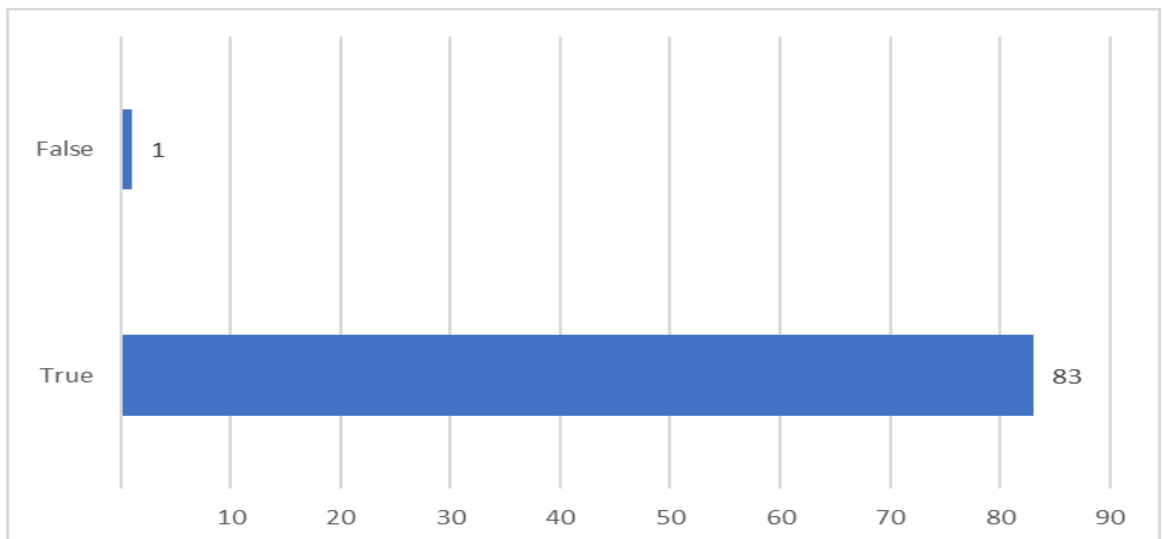


Figure 10. Responses to the question “Sri Lanka Karate Do Federation is the highest authority that manages Karate in Sri Lanka”

5.3 Parental ideology regarding their children's Karate training

Under this section, the first statement tested was: "I think my child trains karate as a martial art" (Figure 11.) The results of this statement contradict the findings from Section 5.2 (Figure 10). This is because, in schools, karate is taught only as a sport, making the statement incorrect. However, 60 (71%) parents agreed with it. A possible reason for this contradiction could be that some parents misunderstood the question.

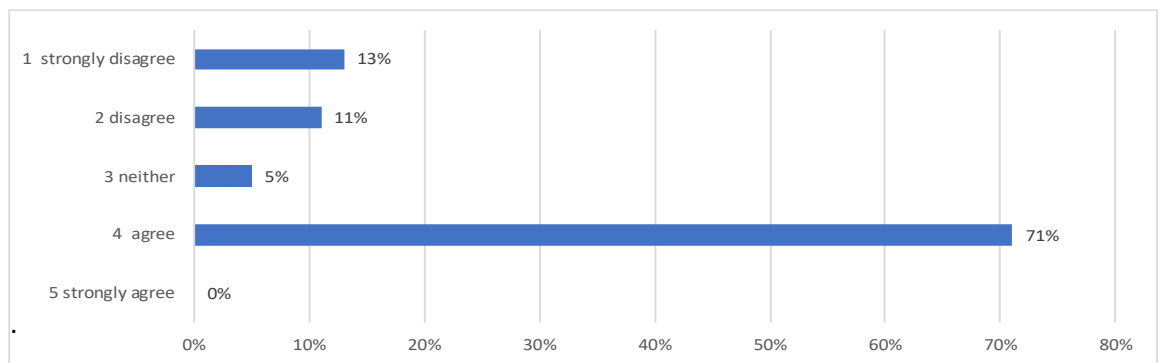


Figure 11. Responses to the question: "I think my child trains in karate as a martial art."

The next question validates the previous question by checking whether the parents' idea of getting higher ranks is going to improve the child's self-defense skills (Figure 12). As the last question had favorable responses, logically, this question, "I want my child to achieve higher grades because it helps improve his self-defense skills," should also have favorable responses. 65 (77%) parents agreed with the statement, which aligned with the previous question.

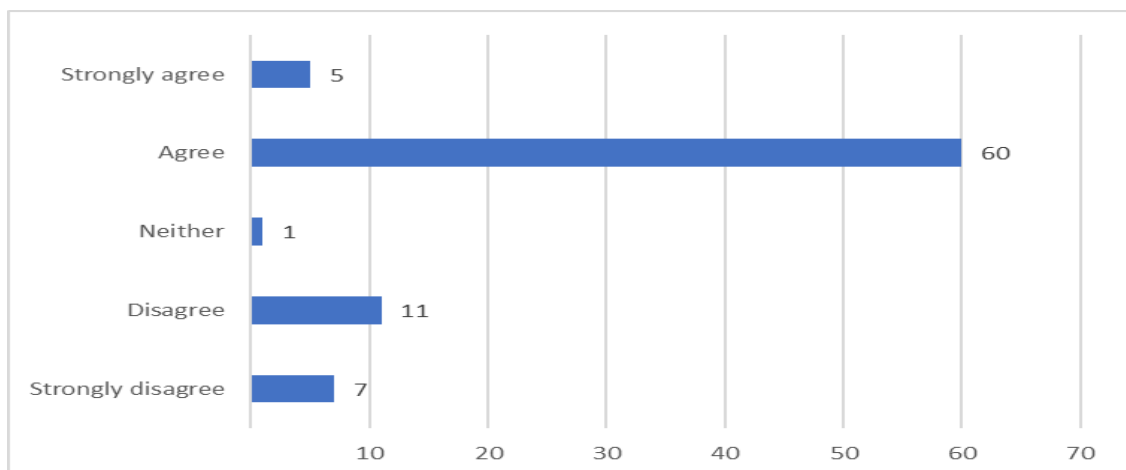


Figure 12. Responses to the question: I want my child to achieve higher grades because it helps him to improve his self-defense skills

The following and final three statements were designed to test the opposite idea of the previous statement. The first statement was, “I think my child is practicing karate as a sport.” The second statement was, “I want my child to achieve higher grades because it will help him compete in championships.” The third statement was, “I encourage my child to compete in karate tournaments.”

The first statement is factually correct, as karate is taught as a sport in schools. In addition, achieving higher grades and participating in competitions are essential for a child to succeed in their karate career. Therefore, the second and third statements are also considered valid.

For the first statement, 68 (81%) parents agreed (Figure 13). This result contradicts the earlier statement “I think my child trains karate as a martial art”, but it perfectly aligns with all the findings in Section 5.2,

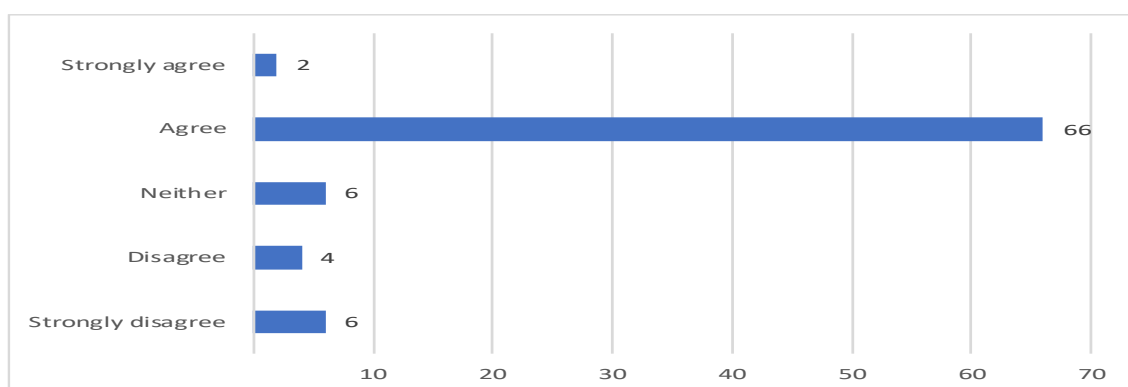


Figure 13. Responses to the question “I think my child is practicing karate as a sport”

The second statement received 72 (86%) favorable responses (Figure 14), which perfectly aligned with the findings of the last question.

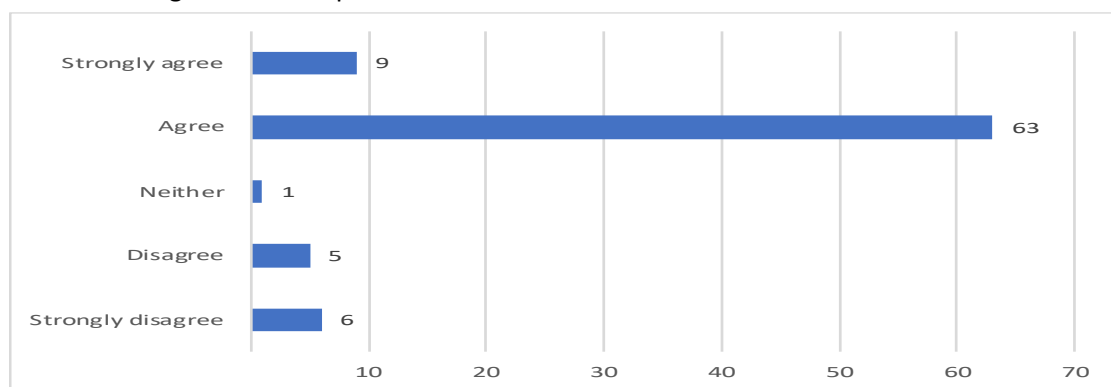


Figure 14. Responses to the question “I want my child to achieve higher grades because it will help him compete in championships”

The last statement also received strong positive feedback from parents, with 77 (91%) agreeing (Figure 15). Participation in competitions is vital in karate and any sport, as it helps players improve their skills through real experience. This result confirms that parents clearly understand the value of competition in their child's development. It also reinforces the findings discussed in Section 5.2 and the results from the two previous questions.

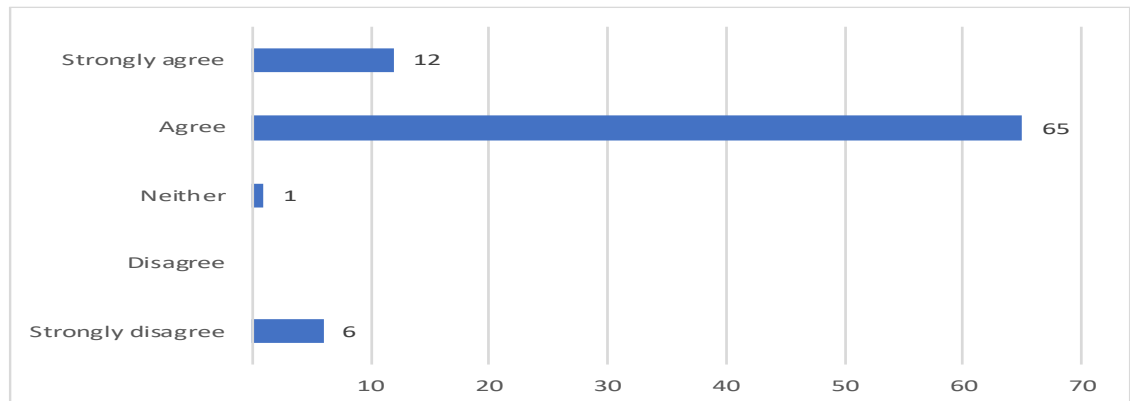


Figure 15. Responses to the question “Encourage my child to compete in Karate tournaments”

5.4 Impact of parental knowledge of karate on their expectations regarding their child’s Karate training

The author has selected possible pairs of questions that logically should have a relationship. Then, Pearson's correlation was tested using PSPP statistical software.

The first set of questions were “ I think Karate can be trained only as a martial art” (Q5) and “I think my child trains in karate as a martial art” (Q10). It is very logical to assume that when a parent thinks that Karate can be trained only as a martial art, the same parent thinks that the child trains Karate as a martial art. Pearson’s correlation value shows -0.17, which indicates there is a very minimal correlation between these two variables (Refer Appendix 6 1(1)).

The second set has three questions, which are “I think Karate can be learned as a sport too” (Q6), “ I think my child is practicing karate as a sport” (Q12), and “I think my child trains in karate as a martial art” (Q10). This question pair is similar to the first pair, but the parent thinks that karate can be trained as a sport, too. Therefore, it is logical for him to think his child is either training as a martial art or a sport. Therefore, question number 6 was tested with both questions 10 and 12,

yielding correlation values of -0.110 and 0.057, indicating very minimal correlation. (Refer to Appendix 6 1(1).)

The third set of questions consists of question “ I think Karate can be trained only as a martial art” (Q5), and “I want my child to achieve higher grades because it helps him to improve his self-defense skills” (Q11). It is a logical expression that when a child trains in Karate as a martial art, the parent assumes that the child will develop their self-defending skills over time. However, Pearson's correlation value is only -.007, indicating no correlation between the two variables.

The fourth pair consists of “I think my child is practicing karate as a sport “(Q12), and “I want my child to achieve higher grades because it will help him compete in championships” (Q13). It is logical to assume that if a child trains in Karate as a sport, their competitive skills will develop over time. Pearson’s correlation value is 0.236, indicating a slight correlation between the parents' ideologies.

The last set consists of three questions which are “At schools Karate is taught only as a sport” (Q7), “I think my child trains in karate as a martial art.” (Q10), and “I think my child is practicing karate as a sport” (Q12). Based on the responses to question 7, most parents know that Karate is taught as a sport at school. Therefore, it is logical to assume that Question number 10 will have a negative correlation and Question number 12 will have a positive correlation. However, based on Pearson’s correlation values 0.062 and -0.042, there is no correlation between the variables.

All five variable sets show a minor correlation, which we can even take as a zero correlation. Therefore, we can come to the conclusion that parents' knowledge of Karate does not influence their expectations of children’s training.

6 Discussion

This thesis aims to examine parents' knowledge regarding Karate training, what they expect from the karate training their children receive, and whether parents' knowledge influences their expectations. The research aimed to answer three research questions and test the validity of three respective hypotheses.

The first four questions have been used to obtain a general idea of the population's children. Although they do not directly contribute to the research questions, they give a message to the commissioning party. 80% of the children below 10 years are also in the lower belt groups. This shows a negative trend in the participation of elderly children. Secondly, 91% of the children are below 4th kyu, which means a huge drop from the lower grades. Therefore, it is vital to have a study to find out the reason for the dropout.

The second first five questions (from question 5 to 9) explored the parents' understanding of the two primary forms of karate, sports and traditional, and how karate training is governed in Sri Lanka. Five questions were included in the questionnaire to test this hypothesis. Questions 5 and 6 test parents' knowledge regarding the existing forms of Karate, namely as a martial art and a sport. These 2 questions were designed with opposite ideas to check if the parents understood them clearly. Therefore, if the parents clearly know the two forms, each question should be voted on in the opposite relationship. The findings confirmed that most parents know that Karate is not only a martial art but can also be trained as a sport. The 7th question directly checks whether parents know that Karate can be taught only as a sport at schools, and it has been proved that parents are aware of this fact. The 8th and 9th questions tested the parents' knowledge of how Karate is governed in Sri Lanka. 8th question: check whether parents know the appropriate authority, and 9th question checks whether parents understand that the respective authority only accepts Karate as a sport. Most parents have responded correctly. The findings of this section confirm that parents of Sri Lankan school karate players have good knowledge of karate and its form of sport competition. Therefore, the 1st Hypothesis (H1) is rejected.

The second research question focused on the parents' views and expectations of what their children gain through karate training. Another 5 questions (from questions 10 to 14) were included in the questionnaire to explore this section. Questions 10 and 11 are directly interrelated. If a

parent responds positively to question 10, they logically have to react positively for question 11. If not, the respective responses seemed to be biased or misunderstood. Question 10 directly asked whether the parent thinks that the child is gaining martial arts skills, and the next question asked whether the parent trusts that reaching a higher grade level will improve the self-defense skills. Most of the parents responded positively to both questions, indicating that they understood the inter-relationship between them. Which means most of the parents think the child is having martial arts training, which contradicts the responses of 1st section as well as the next three questions. This could be due to the incorrect articulation of the question. Question 12 directly asked whether the parent thinks that the child is having a sport-specific training, and most of the parents have responded positively. Factually, this is true and aligned with the findings of 1st section of the questionnaire. Also, this indicates that the responses to questions 10 and 11 are questionable. The following two questions check parents' ideas on how having higher grades helps in competitions and their concept of having many competitions to improve sports-specific skills. The responses were positive and supported the responses to question 12. Even though the findings of questions 10 and 11 support Hypothesis 2 (H2), considering the parents' knowledge and the responses received for questions 12,13, and 14, we can reject H2.

The third research question explores the relationship between parents' knowledge of karate and their expectations regarding their children's karate training. Pearson's correlation calculation has been used to check whether there is any significant relationship. As presented in section 5.4, the analysis found no statistically significant relationship between these two variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that parental expectations are not influenced by their knowledge of karate. This results in rejection H3.

6.1 Ethics

This research followed the ethical guidelines the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) provided. Ethical issues were carefully considered at every study stage to ensure responsible research practices were followed. It has been assured that the respondents are not forced to respond, but autonomy was given on whether to respond. Furthermore, all the responses are anonymous, so no personal data was collected. The research questionnaire was in both English and Sinhala (the local language of Sri Lanka), ensuring that the respondents fully know what they

are responding to. Further, the author used Grammarly.com to check the plagiarism level and make grammar corrections in the article.

6.2 Competence development

The author has improved his skills in researching, analyzing, and organizing data from various sources. This project also provided an opportunity to critically apply the knowledge gained at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences through critical thinking, self-reflection, and literature review. The project motivated the author to explore a deeper understanding of the chosen sport. Although he has been involved in the chosen sport for a long time, the project allowed him to discover many new insights. This project has assisted to refresh and deepen his knowledge in the history of Karate, its globalization process, traditional training system Overall, this experience has been valuable for academic and personal growth, strengthening the author's ability to connect theory with practice.

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7 Conclusion

7.1 Reliability

Reliability in research data analysis refers to the consistency and stability of the measurement instruments or data over time. Perrotta and Gnatiuk (2023) explain the term “reliability” as the repeatability of a test to produce similar results. More simply, the term “reliability” can be explained as the possibility of obtaining the same results when the study is conducted under similar conditions.

The author believes that question number 10 could have been written more clearly, as it seems to have confused the respondents. This is because the results from this question do not match the other findings. The author also thinks a question should have been directly asked about the parents' expectations, which would have helped get better results.

Further, the data was collected during the busiest time of Sri Lankan schools so that the responses may have been rushed, causing negligence. Further, as the questionnaire was delivered to the respondents through the coaches of children, they may ask for explanations of the questions from the coaches in case they do not know the exact answer. For example, if the respondent does not know whether the Sri Lanka Karate Do Federation accepts Karate only as a sport or as a martial art, then he or she will check it with the coach. In such an incident, the response received will not reflect the correct data. The author has gestured that this situation is possible when looking at specific patterns. For example, 89% of parents agreed that Karate is taught as a sport at schools, but then 71% of parents say that they think the child is training in Karate as a martial art, which is a severe contradiction.

7.2 Validity

Kothari (2004) defines validity as the extent to which a test measures what it is meant to measure. The aim of this research was to explore parents' awareness of Karate and their ideology about their children's learning through Karate. The data was collected through a structured, closed-

ended questionnaire. When using a quantitative-based questionnaire, the questions can be designed in correlating pairs where the same question will be asked from two different angles, where the responder should respond positively to one question and negatively to the other. For example, question 5 asks whether Karate can be trained only as a martial art, and question 6 asks whether Karate can be trained as a sport. If a person rejects the 5th question, then he or she should agree on the 6th question. A similar method, but in a different approach, was used in questions 3 and 4. In question 3, the duration of the training and in question 4, the current belt group of the child were measured. The belt group should be low when there is a shorter training period.

Validity can be measured in a survey by comparing Likert scale questions in positive and negative directions. When validity is good, there must be a strong correlation

This study helped to challenge the common belief that parents are unaware of what their children gain from karate training. The author and the commissioning party initially believed that parents did not understand the difference between the martial arts aspect of karate and its sports aspect. However, the research showed that parents of Sri Lankan school karate athletes know the difference between the philosophical side of martial arts and the sporting side of karate. It also revealed that parents know their children are training in karate as a sport. As mentioned in Section 6.1, if question number 10 had been more clearly written, the data analysis would have been more accurate. Nevertheless, the author suggests a nationwide study would provide deeper insight into this topic.

7.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has given valuable insights into the commissioning part as planned. This research explored parents' awareness in Karate and the expectation of their children's involvement in karate, focusing on the difference between its martial arts philosophy and its sporting aspect. This study helped to challenge the common belief of the author and coaches that parents do not possess general knowledge about Karate and are unaware of what their children gain from karate training. Both the author and the commissioning party initially believed that parents did not understand the difference between the martial arts aspect of karate and its sports

aspect. However, the research showed that parents of Sri Lankan school karate athletes are well aware of the difference between the philosophical side of martial arts and the sporting side of karate and the Sri Lankan governing body. It also revealed that parents know their children are training in karate as a sport.

A step beyond the scope of the research, the research also alarms about the high dropout rate of players and age imbalance in the sport. It is a general fact that in individual sports, there are a higher number of children of lower age, and there will be a drop with time, so there will be a lower number of players of higher age. This research shows there are only 2 players who are over 15 years old, while 82 children are below 15 years old. Similarly, there are only 3 black belts while 81 are below the black belt. Specifically, 76 students are lower than 3rd Kyu, with only 4 more steps to obtain the black belt.

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Appendices

Parental Expectations of School Karate Players in Sri Lanka

Mandatory questions are marked with an asterisk (*)

ඔබේ දරුවාගේ වයස අවුරුදු කීයද?
(What is the age of your child in years) *

- 5 / 6 years
- 7 / 8 years
- 9 / 10 years
- 11 / 12 years
- 13 / 14 years
- 15 / 16 years
- 17 / 18 years

ස්ත්‍රී පුරුෂ භාවය
(Gender of your child) *

- පිරිමි (Male)
- ගැහැණු (Female)

ඔබේ දරුවා කොපමණ කාලයක් පුහුණු වෙතවාද?
(How long your child has being training ?) *

- 1 / 2 years
- 2 / 3 years
- 4 / 5 years
- 5 / 6 years
- 7 / 8 years
- 9 / 10 years
- more than 10 years

දරුවාගේ වත්මන් ශ්‍රේණිය කුමක්ද?
(What is the current grade of the child) *

- 9 - 7 kyu
- 6 - 4 kyu
- 3 - 2 kyu
- black belt

මම හිතන්නේ කරාවේ පුහුණු කරන්න පුළුවන් සටන් කලාවක් විදියට විතරයි.
(I think Karate can be trained only as a martial art.) *

- 1- දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ නොවේ / strongly disagree
- 2- එකඟ නොවේ / disagree
- 3- දන්නේ නැහැ / neither
- 4- එකඟ වේ / agree
- 5- දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ වේ / Strongly agree

මම හිතන්නේ කරාවේ ක්‍රීඩාවක් විදියටත් ඉගෙන ගන්න පුළුවන්
(I think Karate can be learned as a sport too) *

- 1- දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ නොවේ / strongly disagree
- 2- එකඟ නොවේ / disagree
- 3- දන්නේ නැහැ / neither
- 4- එකඟ වේ / agree
- 5- දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ වේ / Strongly agree

පාසල්වල කරාවේ උගන්වන්නේ ක්‍රීඩාවක් ලෙස පමණයි
(At schools Karate is taught only as a sport) *

- ඔව් / true
- නෑ / false

ශ්‍රී ලංකා කරාවේ දෝ සම්මේලනය කරාවේ ක්‍රීඩාවක් ලෙස පමණක් පිළිගනී

(Sri Lanka Karate Do Federation ONLY accept Karate as a sport) *

- ඔව් / true
- නෑ / false

ශ්‍රී ලංකා කරාතේ දෝ සම්මේලනය යනු ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ කරාතේ කළමනාකරණය කරන ඉහළම අධිකාරියයි

(Sri Lanka Karate Do Federation is the highest authority that manage Karate in Sri Lanka) *

- ඔව් / true
- නෑ / false

මම හිතන්නේ මගේ දරුවා කරාවේ සටන් කලාවක් ලෙස පුහුණු කරනවා.

(I think my child trains karate as a martial art.) *

- 1 - දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ නොවේ / strongly disagree
- 2 - එකඟ නොවේ / disagree
- 3 - දන්නේ නැහැ / neither
- 4 - එකඟ වේ / agree
- 5 - දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ වේ / Strongly agree

මට අවශ්‍ය මගේ දරුවා උසස් ශ්‍රේණි ලබා ගැනීමට එය ඔහුගේ ආන්මාරක්ෂක කුසලතා වැඩි දියුණු කිරීමට උපකාරී වන බැවිනි

(I want my child to achieve higher grades because it helps him to improve his self-defense skills) *

- 1 - එකඟ නොවේ / disagree
- 2 - දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ නොවේ / strongly disagree
- 3 - neither
- 4 - එකඟ වේ / agree
- 5 - දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ වේ / strongly agree

මම හිතන්නේ මගේ දරුවා ක්‍රීඩාවක් ලෙස කරාටේ පුහුණු වෙනවා.
(I think my child is practicing karate as a sport) *

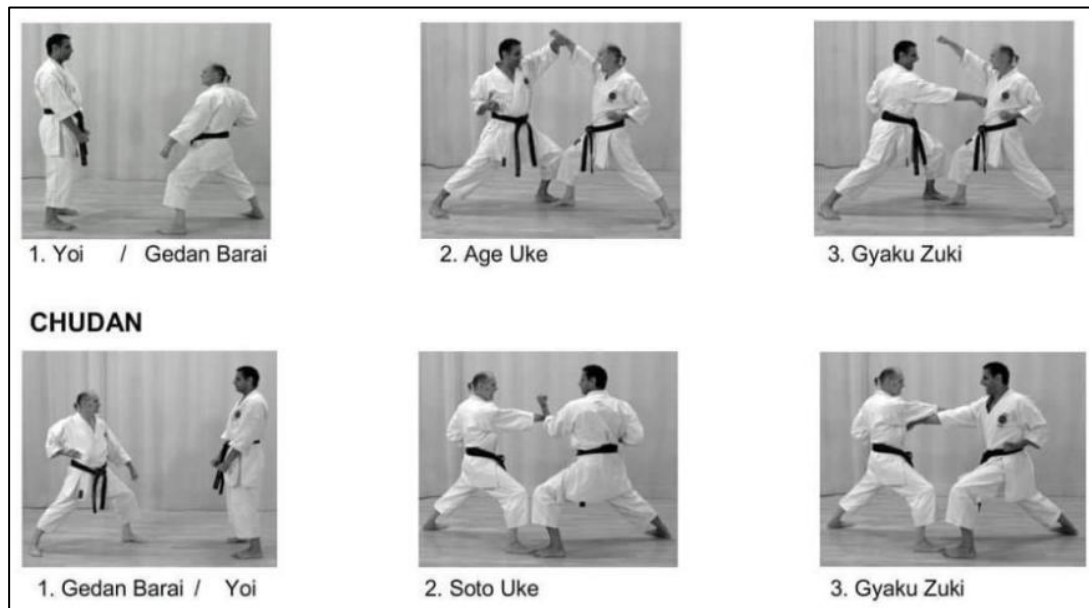
- 1 - දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ නොවේ / strongly disagree
- 2 - එකඟ නොවේ / disagree
- 3 - දන්නේ නැහැ / neither
- 4 - එකඟ වේ / agree
- 5 - දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ වේ / strongly agree

මට මගේ දරුවා ඉහළ ශ්‍රේණි ලබා ගැනීමට අවශ්‍යයි, මන්ද එය ඔහුට ශූරතාවලී සඳහා තරඟ කිරීමට උපකාරී වනු ඇත.
(I want my child to achieve higher grades, because it will help him compete in championships.) *

- 1 - දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ නොවේ / strongly disagree
- 2 - එකඟ නොවේ / disagree
- 3 - neither
- 4 - එකඟ වේ / disagree
- 5 - දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ වේ / strongly agree

මම මගේ දරුවා කරාටේ තරඟාවලී වලට ඉදිරිපත් වෙන්න උනන්දු කරනවා.
(I encourage my child to compete in Karate tournaments.) *

- 1 - දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ නොවේ / strongly disagree
- 2 - එකඟ නොවේ / disagree
- 3 - දන්නේ නැහැ / neither
- 4 - එකඟ වේ / agree
- 5 - දැඩි ලෙස එකඟ වේ / strongly agree



Appendix 2 1(1) : Kihon Kumite. Upper row: Face punch / upper block / counterattack











Lower row: Chest punch / inner block / counterattack

Source: <https://karatedo.com.vn/21-don-kihon-ippon-kumite-trong-karate.html>

ශ්‍රී ලංකා භාසල් කරාතේ කනිෂ්ඨ ගුරුතාවලිය - 2025

Sub - Junior Kata Event - Female					
උප කනිෂ්ඨ කාතා ඉසව්ව - බාලිකා					
Event No (කර්ම අංක)	Birth Year (උපන් වර්ෂය)	Level (මට්ටම)	Event (කර්මය)	Age Group (වයස් කාණ්ඩය)	Kyu Category (Kyu ප්‍රේණිය)
21	2019	Level 1	බාලක කාතා	අවු 07 හේ පහළ	10, 9, 8 Kyu
22	2019	Level 2	බාලක කාතා	අවු 07 හේ පහළ	7, 6 Kyu
23	2018	Level 1	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 08 හේ පහළ	10, 9, 8 Kyu
24	2018	Level 2	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 08 හේ පහළ	7, 6 Kyu
25	2017	Level 1	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 09 හේ පහළ	10, 9, 8 Kyu
26	2017	Level 2	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 09 හේ පහළ	7, 6 Kyu
27	2017	Level 3	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 09 හේ පහළ	5, 4 Kyu
28	2016	Level 1	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 10 හේ පහළ	10, 9, 8 Kyu
29	2016	Level 2	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 10 හේ පහළ	7, 6 Kyu
30	2016	Level 3	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 10 හේ පහළ	5, 4 Kyu
31	2016	Level 4	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 10 හේ පහළ	3, 2, 1 Kyu
32	2015	Level 1	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 11 හේ පහළ	10, 9, 8 Kyu
33	2015	Level 2	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 11 හේ පහළ	7, 6 Kyu
34	2015	Level 3	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 11 හේ පහළ	5, 4 Kyu
35	2015	Level 4	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 11 හේ පහළ	3, 2, 1 Kyu
36	2014	Level 1	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 12 හේ පහළ	10, 9, 8 Kyu
37	2014	Level 2	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 12 හේ පහළ	7, 6 Kyu
38	2014	Level 3	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 12 හේ පහළ	5, 4 Kyu
39	2014	Level 4	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 12 හේ පහළ	3, 2, 1 Kyu
40	2014	Level 5	බාලිකා කාතා	අවු 12 හේ පහළ	කලු පරි
41	කාණ්ඩායම් කාතා බාලක			අවු 12 හේ පහළ	ඊටහෙ
42	කාණ්ඩායම් කාතා බාලිකා			අවු 12 හේ පහළ	ඊටහෙ

Appendix 4 1(1): Part of the event breakdown in Sri Lanka National Sub Junior Championship

BELT	COLOUR	RANK
BEGINNER		
	White	9th kyu
	Yellow	8th kyu
	Orange	7th kyu
INTERMEDIATE		
	Green	6th kyu
	Purple	5th kyu
	Purple	4th kyu
ADVANCED		
	Brown	3rd kyu
	Brown	2nd kyu
	Brown	1st kyu
	Black	Shodan

Appendix 5 1(1). Grading /ranking system in Karate

Source: <https://thekaratetwins.com/the-ranks-of-shotokan-karate-belt-colors/>

Correlations

		RANK of question_5	RANK of question_6	RANK of question_7	RANK of question_10	RANK of question_11	RANK of question_12	RANK of question_13
RANK of question_5	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.095	.136	-.147	-.007	.143	.177
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.388	.216	.182	.948	.195	.108
	N	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
RANK of question_6	Pearson Correlation	.095	1.000	.073	-.110	.069	.103	.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.388		.510	.318	.531	.350	.606
	N	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
RANK of question_7	Pearson Correlation	.136	.073	1.000	.062	.100	-.042	-.119
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.216	.510		.576	.366	.704	.280
	N	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
RANK of question_10	Pearson Correlation	-.147	-.110	.062	1.000	.348	.011	.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.182	.318	.576		.001	.923	.717
	N	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
RANK of question_11	Pearson Correlation	-.007	.069	.100	.348	1.000	-.094	.264
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.948	.531	.366	.001		.396	.015
	N	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
RANK of question_12	Pearson Correlation	.143	.103	-.042	.011	-.094	1.000	.236
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.195	.350	.704	.923	.396		.031
	N	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
RANK of question_13	Pearson Correlation	.177	.057	-.119	.040	.264	.236	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.108	.606	.280	.717	.015	.031	
	N	84	84	84	84	84	84	84

Appendix 6 1(1) Pearson correlation table