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## **COMBAT SPORTS MOST WILLINGLY PRACTISED BY CADETS AND PRISON OFFICERS<sup>1</sup>**

*Operations other than war* have for years belonged to the most important tasks performed by soldiers in many armies of the world. A basic task included in these missions is suppression of conflicts, using relatively moderate measures, and fulfilment of mediatory functions. Actually, they consist, first of all, in performing police tasks in conflict zones (Johansson 1992, Lohwasser 1993, Terelak, Truszczyński 1997). Performing peace mission by the army entails threat of direct attack on soldiers. Therefore, they should be prepared to act under conditions requiring self-dependence, with a limited possibility of using their own weapons (submachine guns, pistol, etc.). Then, direct fight (hand to hand fighting) is the only rational or possible solution.

On the other hand, many young people are interested in combat sports. It is not surprising – numerous reports on show favourable effect of sports and martial arts on human personality (Connold 1982; Konzak, Boudreau 1984; Richman, Rehberg 1986; Trulson 1986; Park 1995; Dąbrowski et al. 1996; Kalina 1997). Combat sports are very popular, even among the youth with a minor degree mental handicap – the survey has shown that in this population (n=377) combat sports are placed on the second position among boys and on ninth position among girls (Bartoszewicz 1988). Some methodological and scientific papers show great potential of utilising combat sports in physical and moral education of children and youth (Rudman 1979; Hartman 1987; Kalina, Jagiełło 2000).

The main goal of the study was to answer the following questions:

- to what extent are cadets and prison officers interested in combat sports?
- what combat sports are preferred by cadets and prison officers?

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<sup>1</sup> The study was performed as a part of the research project at The J. Piąsudski Academy of Physical Education Warsaw, granted by the Research Committee in 1999-2001.

## Methods

The authors used their own questionnaire for the survey (two questionnaires were worked out, one for men practising combat sports, the other one for the remaining population). Each questionnaire is made up of 15 questions. For statistical analysis of the data a significance test of independent proportions was used.

## Material

The subjects were 266 cadets aged 19-26 (including average age of those practising combat sports 20.77, and others 20.75); 253 prison officers aged 21-35 (including average age of those practising combat sports- 28.74 and others 28.8) and the controls – Polish youth (n=962) aged 13-21 from different parts of Poland (including average age of those practising combat sports- 15.7 and others 15.29).

## Results

Combat sports are practised by 43.6 % of cadets and only 10.67 % of prison officers. This difference is statistically significant (significance level 0.01) and 22.66 % of young people from different parts of Poland (Fig.1). The difference in proportions between the cadets and the controls is also statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

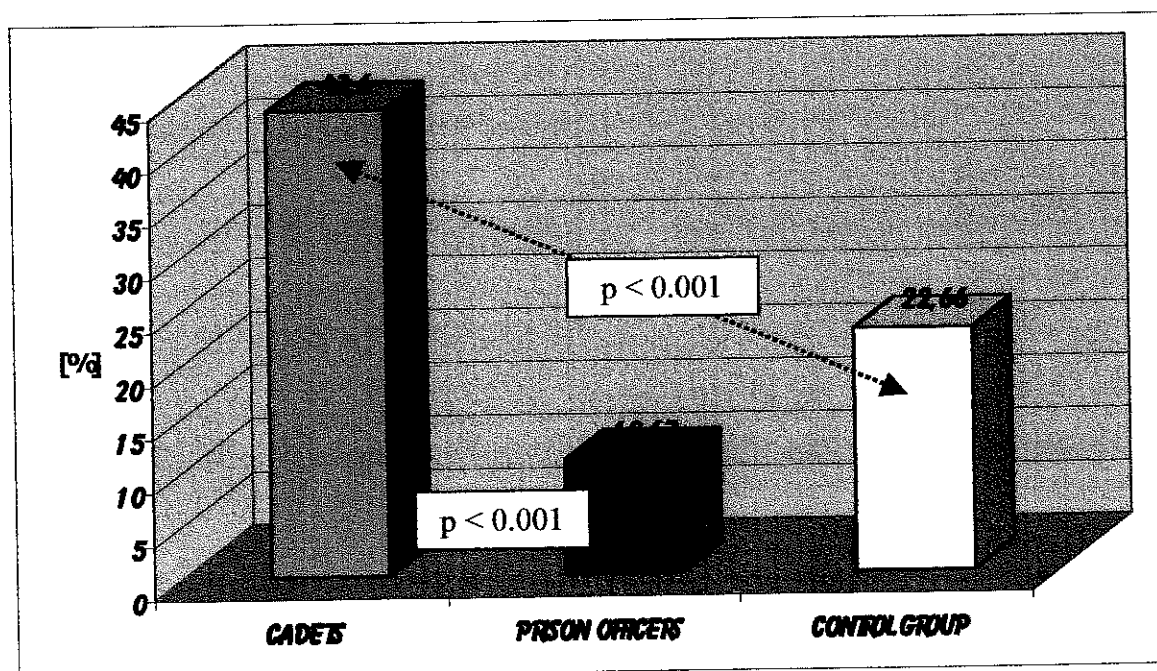


Fig.1. Proportions of cadets and prison officers practising combat sports (compared with Polish youth)

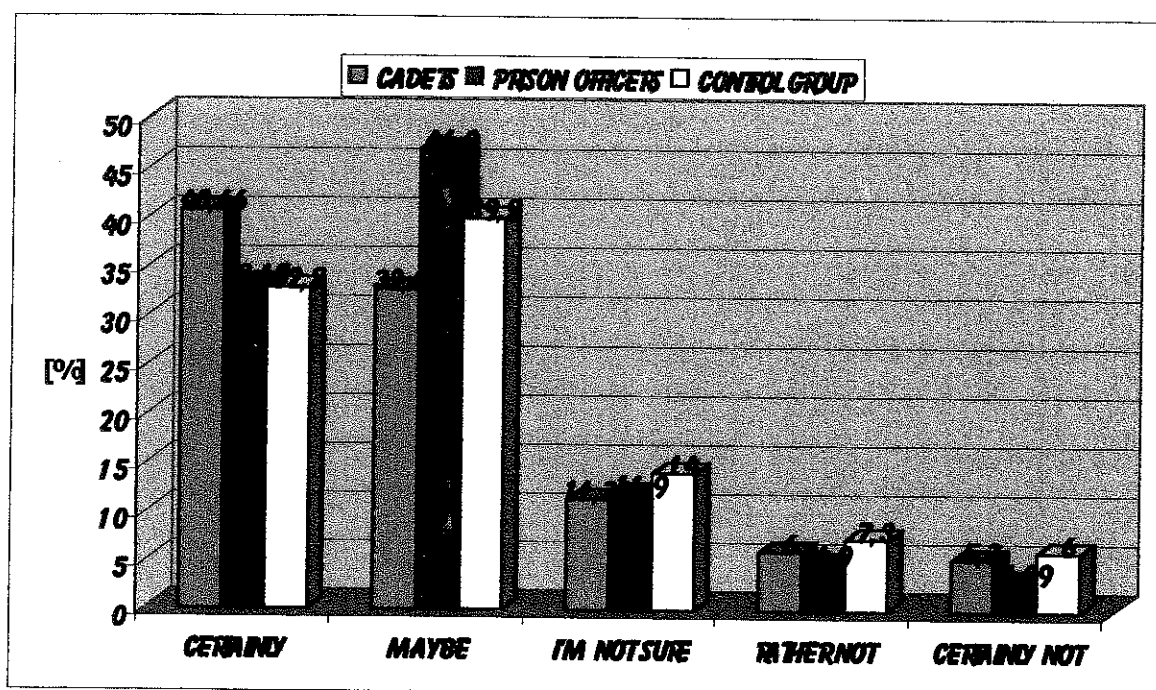


Fig.2. Readiness to practise combat sports in people who do not train them

The survey shows that 40.66% of cadets and 33.18% of prison officers are ready to practise combat sports if they have such an opportunity (Fig.2). A similar proportion of people eager to practise combat sports has been noted in the controls (32.8%). A relatively small group of cadets (5.3%) and prison officers (3.09%) report being *unwilling to start combat sports training*. Among Polish youth, there are 6% of such people (the sample population is certainly smaller – 4.6%). The proportion of young people unwilling to start combat sports training is similar in the populations under study. The results suggest significant interest in combat sports in each group under study: cadets – 77.44%, prison officers – 82.33%, youth – 78.89%.

The most popular combat sport is karate (Fig.3) as it is practised by 46.55% of cadets, 29.6% of prison officers and over 30% of youth. Judo is practised by 25.92% of prison officers, 20.68% of cadets and over 17% of youth. Wrestling is fairly popular among young people (23%) but not among cadets (5.17%) and prison officers (0%) practising combat sports. Kick boxing is fairly popular among cadets (10.34%) and prison officers (25.9%).

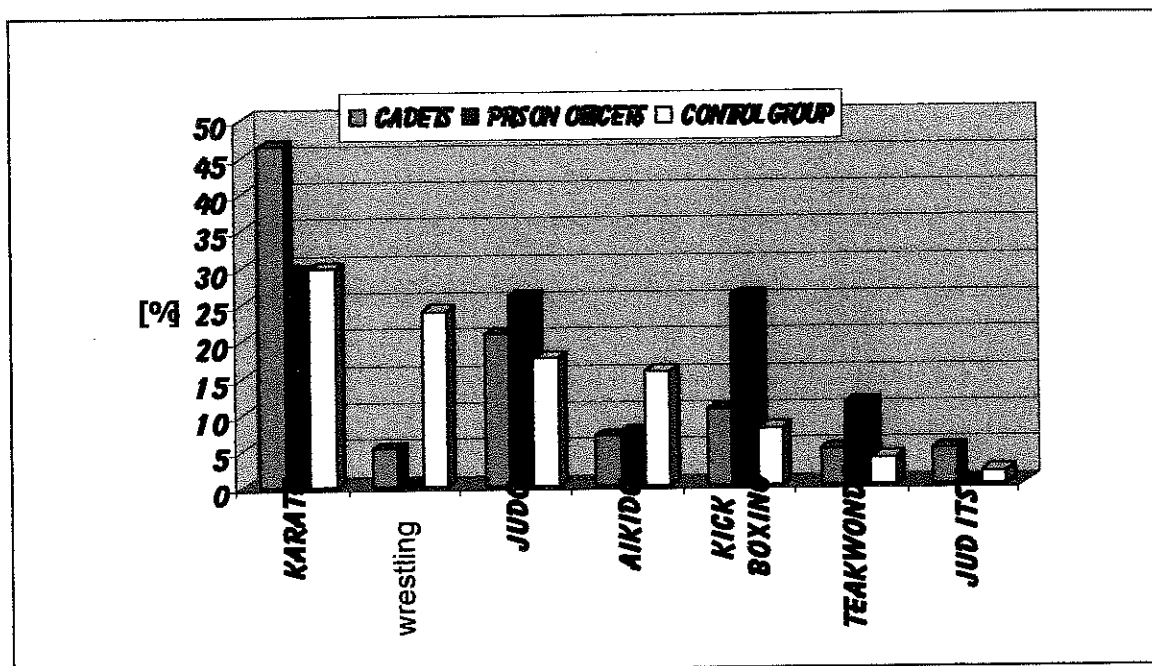


Fig. 3. Interest in combat sports in cadets prisons officers and Polish youth

### Discussion

The results indicate that combat sports are both popular among the people whose profession requires fighting skills (cadets and prison officers) and youth attending different schools (from primary school pupils to students). There are relatively few people uninterested in practising combat sports (5% of the total), therefore two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, combat sports are associated by the majority of people with self-defence training (education to survive). Secondly, it is necessary to enable the youth, ready to join the army, police prison service etc. practising combat sports. We can also think that - defence training is insufficient in the armed forces, prison service etc. Over 1/3 of the surveyed belonging to these formations report readiness to practise combat sports. The results suggest that there are no conditions for such training in training centres and regional units.

The results of these studies explicitly indicate that combat sports are an attractive form of physical activity for different social groups. The results of experiments discussed and diagnostic studies however, suggest caution in carrying out combat sports training. Lack of trainers' competence may result in enhancement of aggression and fear, worsening of interpersonal and social relations, etc. (Trulson 1986; Kalina 1997). On the other hand however, a highly

favourable effect is possible – diminution of aggression and fear, improvement in interpersonal and social relations, etc. (Trulson 1986; Park 1995, Dąbrowski et al. 1996, Kalina 1997). Recent studies of a large sample population (n = 1281) indicate that people practising combat sports more often respect fair play both during sport and non – sport confrontations (Kalina et al. 1999).

### Conclusions

1. A high percentage of cadet and prison officer population as well as Polish youth are interested in combat sports.
2. Karate is the most popular sport among cadets and prison officers. Interest in other combat sports differentiates significantly the social groups under study.

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### Abstract

The aim of presented research: 1) to what extent are cadets and prison officers interested in combat sports; 2) what sports are preferred by cadets and prison officers. 266 cadets (age 19-26), 253 prison officers (age 21-35) served as experimental group, control group consisted of 962 (age 13-21). It was conducted survey research. Combat sports train 53,7% cadets, and only 10,67% prison officers. 30%cadets and 30% prison officers are strongly convinced to train combat sports if they would have possibilities to do it. On the other hand 22,66% polish youth from cities and country train combat sport and 32,8% do not have such possibilities. Karate is most popular combat sports in Poland (46,5% cadets: 29,6% prison officers, and above 30% youth), next one is judo (20,6% cadets; 25,9% prison officers, above 17%). In author's opinion it is necessary to create conditions to develop combat sports among polish youth from whom lots of them can be employed in army, police, prison service etc. A combat sport seems to be basic form of physical activity for that kind of people.