

Anxiety in Martial Arts and Combat Sports – A Systematic Literature Review

Dinah Kretschmer¹, Peter Kuhn¹

¹Universität Bayreuth

Keywords: Anxiety, martial arts, combat sports, systematic review

Introduction

Anxiety is an important emotion when it comes to fighting. It might lead to aggression when we feel threatened. Anxiety can also arise before or during a fight when fighting is practiced as a martial art or combat sport (MACS) (Hartmann, 2017). Another perspective is to look at the practice of MACS as a way to overcome social anxiety (Schmidt, 2016). This study is a systematic literature review of the available literature about anxiety in the context of MACS. The goal is to provide an overview of the topics prospected in the literature, to find common elements and differences, questions asked and explanation approaches.

Method

A systematic literature review was conducted. In a first step the German sports literature database BISP-SURF was searched for literature about anxiety. From those ca. 2500 texts 70 were identified to have content concerning MACS. It was possible to further analyse 60 of these texts. Additionally, Google Scholar (GS) was searched as a basis for comparison with the BISP-SURF database results.

Results

Anxiety is the main topic or part of the research questions in 42 of the studies. About half of the texts were written from a sports psychology perspective. Most of the studies are empirical. The study methods vary from psychological test with interventions (14) to reviews (2). The studies are mainly about wrestling (17), judo (16), and karate (11). Around two thirds of the texts are written with a focus on MACS practitioners. GS provides a highly differentiated picture of studies with many times more results for anxiety and different MACS.

Discussion

A wide range of studies regarding the research methods and questions about anxiety and MACS can be found at the BISP-SURF database. Most studies discuss wrestling, judo, and karate. Other martial arts and combat sports are seldomly or not mentioned. GS can be used as a database to search especially for other MACS.

Literature

Hartmann, Heidi. (2017). "Du bist alleine im Ring und keiner kann dir helfen ...": Boxerinnen über die Bedeutsamkeit der physischen und psychischen Anforderungen. In G. Sobiech und S. Günter (Eds.), *Sport & Gender – (inter)nationale sportsoziologische Geschlechterforschung* (pp. 223–233). Wiesbaden: Springer.

Schmidt, Birte. (2016). Escima als Medium in der bewegungstherapeutischen Arbeit in der Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie. In H. Deimel & T. Thimme (Eds.), *Bewegungs- und Sporttherapie bei psychischen Erkrankungen des Kindes- und Jugendalters* (pp. 206-2015). Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag.