

**5<sup>th</sup> CPSYC 2017**  
**5<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Clinical and Counselling  
Psychology**

**SPORTSPERSONSHIP IN MARTIAL ARTS**

Lucia Monacis (a)\*, Silvana Miceli (b), Valeria de Palo (c), Pasquale Chianura (d),  
Maria Sinatra (e)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Department of Humanities, University of Foggia, via Arpi 176, Foggia, Italy, [lucia.monacis@unifg.it](mailto:lucia.monacis@unifg.it)

(b) Department of Psychological, Pedagogical, and Educational Sciences, University of Palermo, Viale delle Scienze,  
Ed. 15, Palermo, Italy, [silvana.miceli56@unipa.it](mailto:silvana.miceli56@unipa.it)

(c) Department of Humanities, University of Foggia, Via Arpi 176, Foggia, Italy, [valeria.depalo@unifg.it](mailto:valeria.depalo@unifg.it)

(d) Metafora Institute of Psychotherapy, Via Dante 142, Bari, Italy, [pasqualechianura@libero.it](mailto:pasqualechianura@libero.it)

(e) Department of Educational Sciences, Psychology, Communication, University of Bari, via Crisanzio, 42, Bari,  
Italy, [maria.sinatra@uniba.it](mailto:maria.sinatra@uniba.it)

***Abstract***

Studies on psychological outcomes related to individual differences have increased showing contradictory results, especially in martial arts. The difficulty to provide conclusive evidence for the psychological outcomes of martial arts practice and to determine if and to what extent martial arts trainings explain the above mentioned effects needs a more in-depth analysis of those dispositional aspects which can impact adaptive behaviors in terms of sportspersonship. Since no studies on sportspersonship and goal orientations has been carried out in the specific context of martial arts, the current research aimed at examining the role of goal orientations and trait aggressiveness as predictors of sportspersonship. A cross-sectional study was conducted. 389 Italian martial artists ( $M_{age} = 29.60$ ,  $SD = 9.22$ ) completed a questionnaire composed of four sections: a socio-anagraphic section, the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientations Scale, the Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire, and the Aggression Questionnaire. Descriptive and casual analyses were applied to data. The expected hypotheses were generally confirmed. Results suggested that ego orientation and trait aggressiveness negatively predicted sportspersonship, whereas task orientation positively predicted a sportspersonship attitude. In sum, this research contributed to a better identification of the dispositional factors which prevent antisocial behaviors, especially in the context of martial arts.

© 2017 Published by Future Academy [www.FutureAcademy.org.UK](http://www.FutureAcademy.org.UK)

**Keywords:** Dispositional factors; Sportspersonship; Trait aggressiveness; Goal orientations.



## 1. Introduction

In the last decades psychological research on martial arts has provided contradictory results concerning their benefits (Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2010). According to Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura, 1973), the exposure to hostility in martial arts training increases hostile acts and violent behaviours. This perspective was supported by some empirical findings which confirmed the positive association between martial arts and higher inclinations towards aggressiveness (Edressen & Olweus, 2005; Reynes & Lorant, 2002a, 2002b). Conversely, negative associations were found between color-belt levels in Karate and Taekwondo and levels of aggressive fantasy (Skelton, Glynn, & Berta, 1991), as well as between length of training and hostility scores (Daniels & Thornton, 1990; Kurian, Caterino, & Kulhavy, 1993; Nosanchuk, 1981). Researchers have also focused on the comparison between personality traits and performance levels of martial arts athletes. While Richman and Rehberg (1986) demonstrated the positive impact of performance levels on personality traits, McGowan and Miller (1989) referred that successful levels of performance increased anger in terms of the energy needed to win a competition. More recent results have confirmed the important role of success in martial arts thanks to its positive effects on personality traits, such as self-esteem, self-confidence, personal growth, wellbeing, etc. (Focht, Bouchard, & Murphey, 2000; Kuan & Roy, 2007; Lakes & Hoyt, 2004; Stey & Roux, 2009; Wargo, Spurrison, Thorne, & Henley, 2007).

The difficulty to provide conclusive evidence for the psychological outcomes of martial arts practice and to determine if and to what extent martial arts trainings explain the above mentioned effects (Guivernau & Duda, 2002; Kavussanu & Ntoumanis, 2003; Miller, Roberts, & Ommundsen, 2005; Ommundsen, Roberts, Lemyre, & Treasure, 2003), needs a more in-depth analysis of those dispositional aspects which can impact adaptive behaviors in terms of sportpersonship. Such individual characteristics can theoretically involve not only dispositional goal orientations, namely task and ego orientations, but also personality traits, such as trait aggressiveness.

The relationship between dispositional goal orientations and sportpersonship has been widely analyzed (e.g., Bortoli, Messina, Zorba, & Robazza, 2012; Jing-Horng Lu, & Hsu, 2015; Monacis, de Palo, & Sinatra, 2014), supporting the assumption that task orientation is associated with high level of sportsmanship, enjoyment, and effort in sport participation, whereas ego orientation is linked to performance impairment and higher levels of trait and state anxiety.

## 2. Problem Statement

However, no study on sportpersonship and goal orientations has been carried out in the specific context of martial arts. Actually, motivational orientations have been investigated in relation to martial artists' performance and fun (King & Williams, 1997) or to the type of martial arts (Gernigon & Le Bars, 2000). As for as trait aggressiveness is concerned, to our knowledge only one cross-sectional study in martial arts has showed negative associations between sportpersonship and trait aggressiveness within a causal model including other determinants strictly related to motivational dispositions, i.e., task/ego orientation and self-determined motivation (Monacis, de Palo, & Sinatra, 2015).

### **3. Research Questions**

In light of these two contrasting views, the current research intended to support the positive aspect of martial arts practice by providing findings which confirm the negative association between higher inclinations towards aggressiveness, ego oriented motivation, and sportpersonship behaviours.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Consequently, the main purpose of the current study was to provide further empirical evidence for the potential value of martial arts in promoting personal growth and prosocial attitudes. Indeed, following Dorak's (2015) suggestion that both sportsmanlike and unsportsmanlike behaviours would require certain personality traits, this research analyzed in depth the impact of motivational dispositions and trait aggressiveness on sportpersonship. It was expected that sportpersonship was predicted negatively by ego orientation and trait aggressiveness and positively by task orientation.

### **5. Research Methods**

#### **5.1. Sample**

The sample consisted initially of 389 Italian athletes. 23 of them did not complete the questionnaire, thus the final sample consisted of 366 martial artists ( $M_{\text{age}} = 29.60$ ,  $SD = 9.22$ ; 325 males). 67.5% took part in competitions. 9.3% of athletes competed in the junior category (under 18), 49.7% in the adult category (19 to 30 years), 15.0% in the master category (from 31 to 35 years), and 26.0% in the senior category (of 36 years and older).

#### **5.2. Procedure and instruments**

After the written consent form was signed, the participants completed voluntarily the questionnaire before the training session with the presence of the authors, who explained that the questionnaire was anonymous and that personal data would be disclosed or used only for research purpose. The variables considered for analyses were goal orientations, trait aggressiveness and sportpersonship. The following instruments were used:

- The Italian version of the Task and Ego Orientation Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ; Duda, 1989; Bortoli & Robazza, 2005), composed of 13 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = completely agree), contains two subscales assessing task ( $\alpha = .83$ ) and ego orientation ( $\alpha = .74$ ).
- The Multidimensional Sportpersonship Orientation Scale (MSOS; Vallerand, Brière, Blanchard, & Provencher, 1997), translated into Italian following the parallel back-translation procedure, is composed by 25 items rated on a Likert scale 5 points (1 = not correspond at all, 5 = correspond exactly). The instrument measures 5 dimensions: respect for social conventions, respect for rules and the sports authorities, respect for the commitment toward sport participation, respect for opponents, and negative approach toward sport participation. A global sportpersonship index was calculated by recoding scores on the negative approach

toward sport participation subscale, and then adding the mean score of each subscale (Vallerand & Losier, 1994). The internal reliability of the index was acceptable with  $\alpha = .72$ .

- The short version of the Aggression Questionnaire (Bryant & Smith, 2001) is designed to assess the dimensions of aggression (physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility). The questionnaire, translated into Italian, consists of 12 items rated on a response scale of 5 points (1 = completely false, 5 = completely true). For the statistical analyses it was considered the total score with a Cronbach's alpha of .80.

## 6. Findings

Means and standard deviations of the scores are reported in Table 1

**Table 01.** Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the total sample and the gender groups

	Total (N = 366)	Men (N = 325)	Women (N = 41)
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
1. Task Orientation	31.02 (3.82)	30.98 (3.86)	31.37 (3.50)
2. Ego Orientation	12.24 (3.99)	12.17 (4.05)	12.78 (3.55)
3. Sportspersonship	20.13 (2.05)	20.15 (2.04)	19.99 (2.14)
4. Aggressiveness	24.00 (7.33)	23.99 (7.58)	24.05 (5.04)

In order to examine gender effect on the variables of interest, t-test was performed. Data showed no significant differences ( $p > .05$ ) in scores between males and females. Bivariate correlations coefficients are showed in Table 2. Results indicated that sportspersonship was associated negatively with aggressiveness and ego orientation and positively with task orientation.

**Table 02.** Bivariate correlations between the variables

	1	2	3	4
1. Task Orientation	-			
2. Ego Orientation	.08	-		
3. Sportspersonship	.44**	-.24**	-	
4. Aggressiveness	-.08	.29**	-.32**	-

(\*)  $p < .05$ ; (\*\*)  $p < .01$

Causal relationships were examined by hierarchical regression analysis with sportspersonship as dependent variable and the other constructs as independent variables. The criteria for entering variables into the regression model were based on the  $r$  coefficients: the first predictor with the largest correlation was task orientation (step 1), the second predictor with the next highest shared variance was aggressiveness (step 2), and the last was ego orientation (step 3). The first step accounted for 20% of variance ( $Adj R^2 = .194$ ), the second for 28% of variance ( $Adj R^2 = .272$ ), and the third for 32% of variance ( $Adj R^2 = .313$ ). Both aggressiveness and ego orientation significantly increased the predicted

variance,  $Adj R^2$  change = .080 and  $Adj R^2$  change = .043, respectively. Sportspersonship was predicted positively by task orientation ( $\beta = .44$ ) and negatively by aggressiveness ( $\beta = -.28$ ) and ego orientation ( $\beta = -.22$ ).

## 7. Conclusion

The present study was designed to examine the antecedents of the sportspersonship with a particular attention to dispositional factors, namely motivational orientations and trait aggressiveness, in the specific context of martial arts. The expected hypotheses were generally confirmed. Correlations revealed that higher is the tendency to focus on personal improvement and to perceive success as a product of effort and persistence, greater the level of sportspersonship. In contrast, higher is the athletes' tendency to focus on winning and to perceive success as a competence relative to others, as well as higher is the level of trait aggressiveness, lower are the sportspersonship orientations. These findings are consistent with the relative scientific literature dealing with the above mentioned relationships in different sports domains (Kavussanu, 2007; Lee, Whitehead, Ntoumanis, & Hatzigeorgiadis, 2008; Lemyre, Roberts, & Ommundsen, 2002), except for martial arts.

A noteworthy result of the current study was the higher predictive power of aggressiveness compared to ego orientation in negatively impacting sportspersonship, as it can be noted in the change of the adjusted  $R^2$  values. One possible explanation may be due to the positive association between martial arts, considered a setting in which there is a relatively high base rate of physical aggression, and a higher inclination towards aggressiveness (Edressen & Olweus, 2005; Reynes & Lorant, 2002a, 2002b, 2004). That is, trait-aggressive individuals display more hostile tendencies in their perceptions of interpersonal relations and, thus, less respect for rules, authorities, and opponents than ego-oriented athletes who, in any case, show a few enthusiasm in sport participation, compare themselves with others, and use traps or deception during a competition, implementing antisocial behaviors.

However, based on the beta coefficients, task orientation resulted the most influential positive factor predicting prosocial sport behaviors. That is, in judging their level of ability on the basis of the their own standards and in exerting high levels of efforts demonstrating high levels of persistence and a scarce fear of failure, task-oriented athletes exhibit positive attitudes toward sport participation in terms of respect for rules, authorities and opponents.

In conclusion, following the request of many researchers who insist on the need to analyze those dispositional aspects able to transform martial arts into an effective tool for preventing antisocial attitudes (Guivernau & Duda, 2002; Kavussanu & Ntoumanis, 2003, Miller, Roberts, & Ommundsen, 2005; Ommundsen, Roberts, Lemyre, & Treasure, 2003; Zivin et al., 2001), this study motivates future research in this direction.

Some limitations must be noted. First, the unbalanced sample in terms of gender, which is overwhelmingly male, did not allow the generalization of the results. This limitation is mainly due to the type of sport characterized by limited female practitioners. Second, as self-report measures are affected by social desirability biases, they should be combined with more objective instruments. In addition, the order in which the questionnaires are presented should be more sophisticated to prevent possible effects

of scale format (Duffy, 2003). Besides these indications, further research should take into account the age category (juniors, adults, seniors, etc.) as well.

## References

- Bandura, A. (1973). *Aggression: A social learning analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall
- Bortoli, L., Messina, G., Zorba, M., & Robazza, C. (2012). Contextual and individual influences on antisocial behavior and psychobiosocial states of youth soccer players. *Psychology of Sports and Exercise*, 13(4), 397-406.
- Bortoli, L., & Robazza, C. (2005). Italian version of the Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 100, 43-50.
- Bredemeier, B. J (1988). The Moral of Youth Sport Story. In E. W. Brown & C. F. Branta (Eds.), *Competitive Sports for Children and Youth* (pp. 285-296). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Bryant, F. B., & Smith, B. D. (2001). Refining the architecture of aggression: A measurement model of the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 35(2), 138-167.
- Carpenter, P. J., & Yates, B. (1997). Relationship between achievement goals and the perceived purposes of soccer for semiprofessional and amateur players. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 19, 302-311.
- Castillo, I., Balaguer, I. & Duda, J. L. (2002). Las perspectivas de meta de los adolescentes en el contexto deportivo. *Psicothema*, 14(2), 280-287.
- Daniels, K., & Thornton, E. (1990). An analysis of the relationship between hostility and training in the martial arts. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 8, 95-101.
- Daniels, K., & Thornton, E. (1992). Length of training, hostility and the martial arts: a comparison with other sporting groups. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 26, 118-120.
- Dorak, F. (2015). The Relationship between Personality and Sportpersonship Orientations. *Anthropologist*, 19(3), 597-601.
- Duda, J. L. (1989). Relationship between task and ego orientation and the perceived purpose of sport among high school athletes. *Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 11, 318-335.
- Duda, J. L., Olson, L. K., & Templin, T. J. (1991). The relationship of task and ego orientation to sportsmanship attitudes and the perceived legitimacy of injurious acts. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 62, 79-87.
- Duffy, B. (2003). Response order effects – how do people read? *International Journal of Market Research*, 45(4), 457-466.
- Dunn, J. G. H., & Dunn, J. C. (1999). Goal orientations, perceptions of aggression, and sportpersonship in elite male youth ice hockey players. *The Sport Psychologist*, 13, 183-200.
- Endresen, I. M., & Olweus, D. (2005). Participation in power sports and antisocial involvement in preadolescent and adolescent boys. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46(5), 468-478.
- Focht, B. C., Bouchard, L. J., & Murphey, M. (2000). Influence of martial arts training on the perception of experimentally induced pressure pain and selected psychological responses. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 23, 232-244.
- Gernigon, C., & Le Bars, H. (2000). Achievement goals in aikido and judo: a comparative study among beginner and experienced practitioners. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 12(2), 168-179.
- Georgiadis, M. M., Biddle, S. J. H., & Chatzisarantis, N. L. D. (2001). The mediating role of self determination in the relationship between goal orientations and physical self worth in Greek exercisers. *European Journal of Sport Sciences*, 1, 1-9
- Guivernau, M., & Duda, J. L. (1994). Psychometric properties of a Spanish version of the Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ) and Beliefs about the Causes of Success Inventory. *Revista de Psicología del Deporte*, 5, 31-51.
- Jing-Hong Lu, F., & Hsu, Y. (2015). The interaction between paternalistic leadership and achievement goals in predicting athletes' sportpersonship. *Kineziologija*, 47(1), 115-122.
- Kavussanu, M. (2007). Morality in sport. In S. Jowett & D. E. Lavallee (Eds.), *Social psychology in sport* (pp. 265-278). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

- Kavussanu, M., & Ntoumanis, N. (2003). Participation in sport and moral functioning: Does ego orientation mediate their relationship? *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 25(4), 1-18.
- King, L. A., & Williams, T. A. (1997). Goal orientation and performance in martial arts. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, 20(4), 397-412.
- Kuan, G., & Roy, J. (2007). Goal profiles, mental toughness and its influence performance outcomes among Wunchu athletes. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*, 6, 28-33.
- Kurian, M., Caterino, L. C., & Kulhavy, R. W. (1993). Personality characteristics and duration of ATA Taekwondo. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 76, 363-366.
- Lakes, K. D., & Hoyt, W. T. (2004). Promoting self-regulation through school-based martial arts training. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 25(3), 283-302.
- Lamarre, B. W., & Nosanchuk, T. A. (1999). Judo - the gentle way: A replication of studies on martial arts and aggression. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 88, 992-996.
- Lee, M. J., Whitehead, J., Ntoumanis, N., & Hatzigeorgiadis, A. (2008). Relationships between values, achievement orientations, and attitudes in youth sport. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 30, 588-610.
- Lemyre, P.-N., Roberts, G., & Ommundsen, Y. (2002). Achievement goal orientations, perceived ability, and sportpersonship in youth soccer. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 14, 120-136.
- McGowan, R. W., & Miller, M. J. (1989). Differences in mood states between successful and less successful karate participants. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 68, 505-506.
- Miller, B. W., Roberts, G. C., & Ommundsen, Y. (2005). Effect of perceived motivational climate on moral functioning, team moral atmosphere perceptions, and the legitimacy of intentionally injurious acts among competitive youth football players. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 6, 461-477.
- Monacis, L., Palo, V. D., & Sinatra, M. (2014). Sportpersonship behaviours: an exploratory investigation of antecedents. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 45(3), 231-245.
- Monacis, L., de Palo, V., & Sinatra, M. (2015). Factores motivacionales relacionados con la agresividad en las artes marciales. *Revista de psicología del deporte*, 24(1), 163-169.
- Nosanchuk, T. A. (1981). The way of the warrior: the effects of traditional martial arts training on aggressiveness. *Human Relations*, 34, 435-444.
- Ommundsen, Y., Roberts, G. C., Lemyre, P. N., & Treasure, D. (2003). Perceived motivational climate in male youth soccer: Relations to social-moral functioning, sportpersonship and team norm perceptions. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 25, 397-413.
- Reynes, E., & Lorant, J. (2002a). Effect of traditional judo training on aggressiveness among young boys. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 94(1), 21-25.
- Reynes, E., & Lorant, J. (2002b). Karate and aggressiveness among eight-year-old boys. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 94(3), 1041-1042.
- Reynes, E., & Lorant, J. (2004). Competitive martial arts and aggressiveness: a 2-yr. longitudinal study among young boys. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 98, 103-115.
- Richman, C. L., & Rehberg, H. (1986). The development of self-esteem through the martial arts. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 17, 234-239.
- Roberts, G. C., Treasure, D. C., & Kavussanu, M. (1996). The orthogonality of achievement goals: Beliefs about success and satisfaction in sport. *The Sport Psychologist*, 10, 398-408.
- Shields, D. L., & Bredemeier, B. L. (1995). *Character development and physical activity*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Skelton, D. L., Glynn, M. A., & Berta, S. M. (1991). Aggressive behaviour as a function of taekwondo ranking. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 72, 179-182.
- Steyn, B., & Roux, S. (2009). Aggression and psychological well-being of adolescent taekwondo participants in comparison with hockey participants and non-sport group. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 15(1), 32-43.
- Vallerand, R. J., Brière, N. M., Blanchard, C., & Provencher, P. (1997). Development and validation of the multidimensional sportpersonship orientation scale. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 8, 89-101.

- Vallerand, R. J., & Losier, G. F. (1994). Self determined motivation and sportsmanship orientations: An assessment of their temporal relationship. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 16, 229-245.
- Vertonghen, J., & Theeboom, M. (2010). The social-psychological outcomes of martial arts practise among youth: A review. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*, 9, 528-537.
- Wargo, M., Spirrisson, C., Thorne, M., & Henley, T. (2007). Personality characteristics of martial artists. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 35(3), 399-408.
- Zivin, G., Hassan, N. R., DePaula, G. F., Monti, D. A., Harlan, C., Hossain, K. D., & Patterson, K. (2001). An effective approach to violence prevention: traditional martial arts in middle school. *Adolescence*, 36(143), 443-459.