

# Personality profile, stress coping styles and self-image of karate competitors with different attitudes towards meditation

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**Key words:** karate, personality profiles, stress coping styles, self-knowledge

## Summary

**Introduction.** The contemporary karate competition has been divided into multiple schools and styles. Karate styles differ in terms of techniques and karate schools, and the attitudes towards the course, methods and goals of training. The karate of nowadays is quite different from the karate practised many years ago.

The goal of this paper is to analyse personality profiles, stress coping styles and self-knowledge in karate competitors with different attitudes towards meditation.

**Material and methods.** The sample comprised 115 karate trainees at different level of advancement from different regions of Poland.

**Results and Conclusions.** The results of the studies presented in this paper indicate that the individuals who are able to concentrate on themselves for a while turn out to be more peaceful, self-disciplined and able to control their emotions and reach the desired goal. Conversely, the individuals who consider meditation unimportant, lack these traits. Therefore, it seems justifiable to indicate the importance of motivation during training and to encourage karatekas to motivate during each session.

## Introduction

The contemporary karate competition has been divided into multiple schools and styles. Karate styles differ in terms of techniques and karate schools, and the attitudes towards the course, methods and goals of training. The karate of nowadays is quite different from the karate practised many years ago. The results obtained by Ronald D. Sylvio i Wolfgang Pindur (1969) in American karate competitors indicate that the values accepted in one culture (Buddhist philosophy dominating in martial arts) are not easily adapted in another culture. American competitors do not always treat karate as the art of self-defence. Thus, they frequently forget about the philosophy of karate, paying more attention to combat forms. Presently, karate can be divided into traditional and sport karate. In traditional karate forms, understood as „fist art”, the competitors tend to shape their personality through hard work in order to overcome their weaknesses [1]. Also the spiritual aspect of karate is stressed in this attitude; karate is not regarded a fighting technique, but art, thanks to which the competitors develop their minds and spirits [2]. Karate competitors fight with no negative feelings towards

their rivals. The ritual, symbols and gestures referring to old Japanese traditions are important. The traditional karate puts emphasis on the development of the weakest features. Conversely, in sports karate, the most important is development of skills, the results, effect and the competition [1]. Here, tradition does not play an important role. Sports karate is the response to the natural need of self-confirmation in a form of competition. The traditional school of karate, namely free fighting, involving attack initiation was forbidden and emphasis was placed on kata or formal exercise (fight without an opponent) and defence-attack technique development [3], according to the idea of the so called final blow. This blow is defined as a technique which is sufficient to pacify the attacker. It is the final blow in the fight unifying the entire body power to concentrate on the target.

Gichin Funakoshi, the creator of karate claims that „karate dies when it begins to be a sport”, and also said ma „there are no contests in karate”. His most important theses are „Karate is not the art of aggression” or „Karate never strikes first”.

Cynarski [4] notices that the goals of karate training have changed. The utilitarian and educative goals as well as self-

perfection gave way to sport competition. This is connected with the necessity of adjusting training methods to athletic competition convention. Traditional karate employed methods contributing to concentration improvement or overcoming weaknesses as well as endurance, fist and hand conditioning and the tests for blow force. Combat training was combined with meditation. Primary combat sports developed skills that frequently decided of life and death. Similar principles are still observed by some schools; other schools have changed the goals and the core of training preparing the trainees for competitions.

Karate training should begin and end with meditation (in many schools this is limited to minimum or not included) – sitting several minutes in za-zen position with eyes closed. Meditation brings about calmness and lets us forget about everyday life. The moment of meditation at the beginning of training lets the trainee concentrate on the future and move away the thoughts to minimize distraction. Attention is mainly focused on breathing and the trainee is concentrated on „here and now” and becomes more conscious of his/her body [5,6,7]. After training, meditation enables brief analysis of the training session and the return to everyday activities.

The goal of this paper is to analyse personality profiles, stress coping styles and self-knowledge in karate competitors with different attitudes towards meditation.

## Material and methods

The sample comprised 115 karate trainees at different level of advancement from different regions of Poland.

The following measuring devices were used:

- 1) R. B. Cattell Personality Questionnaire (16 PF Fifth Ed.). Polish Edition by M. Plop (UG). Original M. T. Russell, D. L. Karol (1994).
- 2) CISS Questionnaire by N. S. Endler and J. D. A. Parker. Polish Edition by (2005).
- 3) Adjective Questionnaire by ACL H. G. Gough and A. B. Heilbrun (1965, 1980). (Version from 1980 (after: Juros, Oleś. 1993) containing 37 scales divided in to 5 groups).
- 4) Survey – questions pertaining to demographic data and the data concerning different aspects of functioning during training sessions, including the prevalence of meditation during karate training and the attitudes towards meditation.

The following questions were posed:

- Do the trainees attitudes towards meditation affect their personality profiles, self- image and stress coping techniques?

## Results

Below are presented the results of Cattell 16 PF Questionnaire, adjective ACL test and stress coping styles in the karate competitors with different attitudes towards meditation.

### Personality profiles of karate competitors with different attitudes towards meditation

The only personality-related factor, obtained from Cattell16PF Questionnaire, that differed in the studied cohorts was emotional tension. The individuals who thought that meditation was unimportant were more likely to express anxiety and easily lost their tempers. Conversely, the subjects who considered meditation important were rarely frustrated, more patient and calmer. This might be due to the fact that the difference was the result of the acquired ability to relax and cope with problems through meditation.

### Stress coping styles in individuals with different attitudes towards meditation

Next, the results obtained from the individuals with different attitudes towards meditation were studied using CISS Questionnaire measuring.

The individuals who thought that meditation was important were more likely to cope with stress successfully through „task performance”. They did not tend to avoid problems, looking for contacts with other people and more often discussing their problems with them.

Avoidance may be part of adaptation process in order not to face stress until an individual is capable to face it employing a task-oriented style.

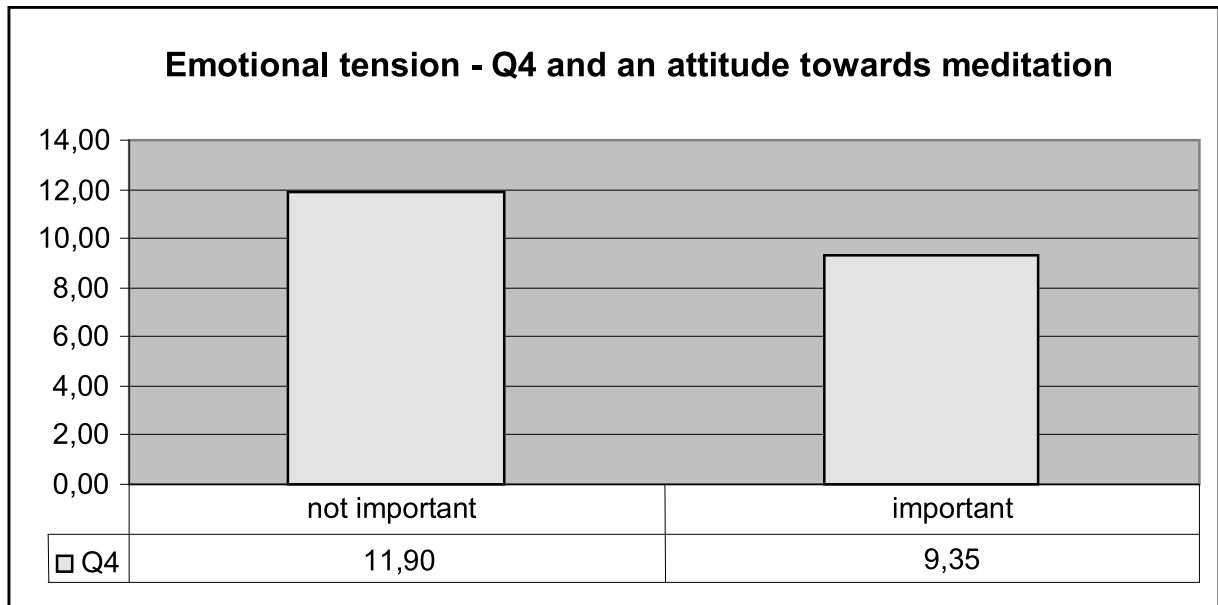
### Self knowledge in individuals with different attitudes towards meditation

Below are presented the difference in self-image in the karate competitors regarding meditation important or unimportant.

These subjects who believed that meditation was important gained higher scores in the following scales: Fav (the number of positive adjectives), Ord (need of order), Int (need of

Tab. 1. Significant differences in Cattell 16 PF Questionnaire in individuals with different attitudes towards meditation

Meditation	Not important N=66		Important N=49		p
	M	SD	M	SD	
Q4	11.90	4.54	9.35	4.77	0.05

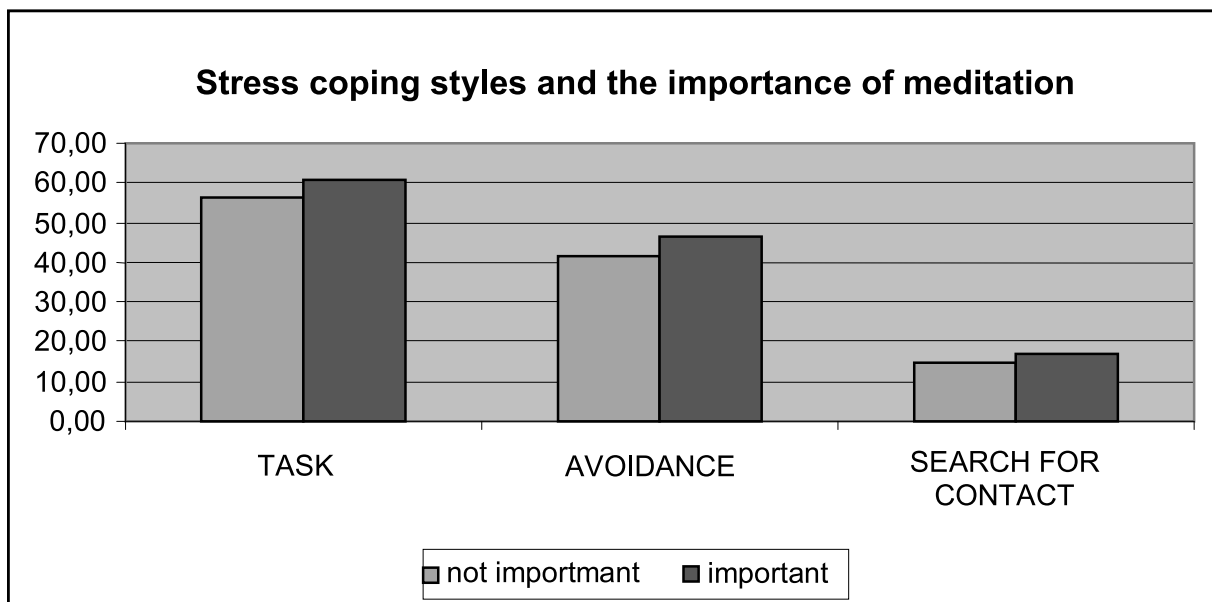


Y axis – raw data

Fig. 1. Differences in Q4 scale – emotional tension in individuals considering meditation important

Tab. 2. Significant differences in stress coping styles obtained from CISS Questionnaire in individuals with different attitudes towards meditation

Meditation	Not important N=66		Important N=49		p
	M	SD	M	SD	
Task	56.52	7.72	60.86	8.27	0.01
Avoidance	41.82	8,71	46.59	10.92	0.05
Search for contact	14.95	3.44	17.21	4.09	0.01



Y axis - score obtained from the test

Fig. 2. Significant differences in stress coping styles, obtained from CISS Questionnaire in individuals with different attitudes towards meditation

understanding oneself and other people), P-Adj (personal adaptation scale), MLS (Military Leadership Scale), A (Transactional Analysis Scale– adults); NP (Nurturing Parent) and the A-4 scale, referring to the features typical for the so called researcher type. Lower scores in turn, were obtained in the following scales: Agg (need of aggression), CP (Critical Parent), AC (Adapted Child) and A1 (high originality behaviour, low intelligence) – the scale describing the so called actor type. Such persons try to make a good impression on others, work and behave to please them. They are perceived as serious, good mannered people, although sometimes lacking vivacity and spontaneity. They usually are peaceful and tactful. They understand other people's needs, are fond of their companionship and are rather protective. They are more diligent. They are well-organized and orderly with better self-discipline. They do not like rivalry, treating others as rivals and conflicts. They try to understand their own and other people's behaviours. They are more optimistic, respect other people's requirements, are hard working, concentrated on their duties and purposeful. They are less critical and less likely to find faults. They are better adapted to the reality and make more logical decisions. Their behaviours are more rarely self-limiting, they act less and are rather types of scientists, having a more analytical approach towards problems.

Conversely, the persons who regard motivation unimportant, tend to be individualists and are characterised by a more sceptical approach, witty joking, original style, although they sometimes experience moments of anxiety and dejection. Moreover, they are more impulsive and have low self-control. They may tend to object and have difficulties in meeting one's expectations in interpersonal relations. They are more argumentative and their behaviours are often defensive. They are less purposeful, not so well-organized, and their behaviours are changeable and reckless. They are, however, more lively,

quickly reacting and impulsive. They less understand themselves and other people. They enjoy rivalry, fighting and winning. They more seldom concentrate on their own duties and work planning. They more often criticise and interdict. Sometimes, their behaviours and beliefs are self-limiting. Higher scores obtained in A1 scale, referring to high originality and low intelligence prove that these karatekas are characterised by a more theatrical behaviour.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Analysis of the results obtained from different opinion polls let us conclude that the individuals regarding motivation unimportant tend to be impatient as they have to wait, are more often anxious and touchy. They are individualists with a high level of scepticism, original lifestyle and way of thinking. Albeit, they frequently experience states of anxiety and dejection. They are more impulsive less control their behaviours and tend to object. These karatekas are more argumentative and their behaviours are often defensive. They are less purposeful and their behaviours – rather changeable and reckless. They less understand themselves and other people. They enjoy rivalry, fighting and winning. They more seldom concentrate on their own duties and work planning. They more often criticise and interdict. Sometimes, their behaviours and beliefs are self-limiting. They are „actors” whose behaviour is theatrical.

Conversely, the persons regarding meditation important are more frequently relaxed, patient and less likely to experience frustration. This may be due to their acquired ability to relax and cope with problems through meditation. Moreover, these persons are more oriented to cope with stress through task performance. They do not avoid facing problems, but rather plan how to solve them. At the same time, they use some avoidance techniques and, first of all, discuss their problems

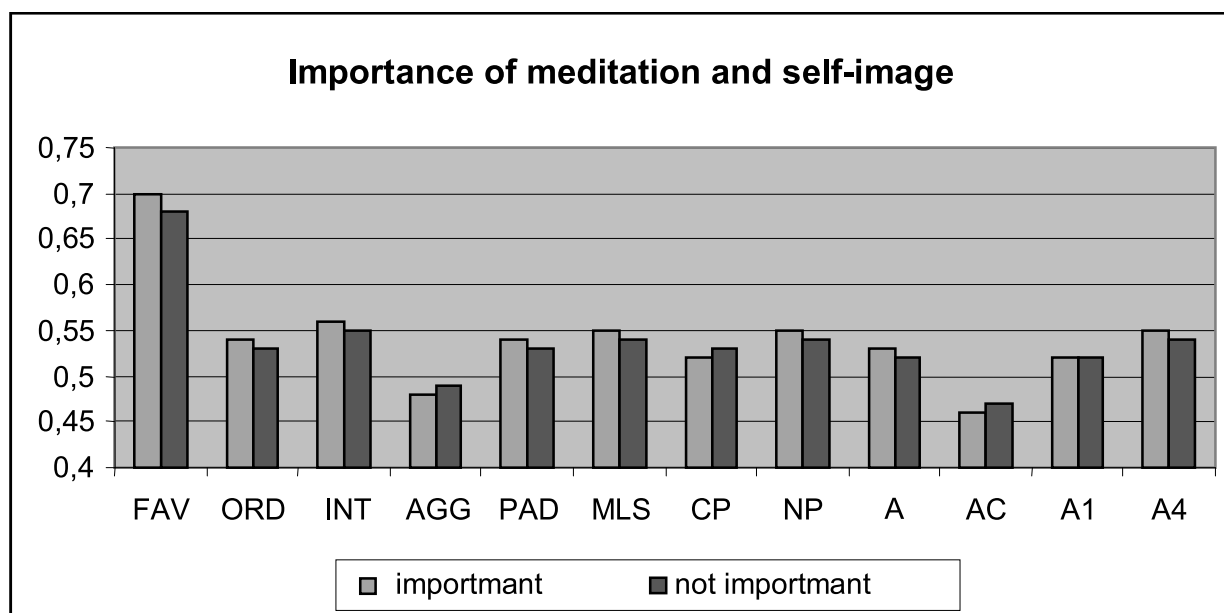


Fig. 3. Self image of individuals with different attitudes towards meditation

with others. Engagement in avoidance activities may be adaptive in case of temporary isolation from stress until they are able to face the problem and employ a task-oriented stress coping style.

The karatekas who appreciate the importance of motivation may be described as individuals who try to make good impressions on others and do what others think is wise to do. They are perceived as serious, well-mannered people, although sometimes lacking liveliness and spontaneity. They are peaceful and tactful. They understand other people's needs, are fond of their companionship and are rather protective. They are more diligent. They are well-organized and orderly with better self-discipline. They try to understand their

own and other people's behaviours. They do not like rivalry and conflicts. They are more optimistic, respect other people's requirements, are hard working, concentrated on their duties. They are less critical and less likely to find faults. They are better adapted to the reality and make more logical decisions.

The results of the studies presented in this paper indicate that the individuals who are able to concentrate on themselves for a while turn out to be more peaceful, self-disciplined and able to control their emotions and reach the desired goal. Conversely, the individuals who consider meditation unimportant, lack these traits. Therefore, it seems justifiable to indicate the importance of motivation during training and to encourage karatekas to motivate during each session.

Tab. 3. Self image of individuals with different attitudes towards meditation

Meditation	Important		Not important		p
	M	SD	M	SD	
N	49		66		
FAV	0.70	0.03	0.68	0.05	0.02
ORD	0.54	0.02	0.53	0.03	0.01
INT	0.56	0.03	0.55	0.02	0.008
AGG	0.48	0.02	0.49	0.03	0.002
P-Adj	0.54	0.02	0.53	0.02	0.04
MLS	0.55	0.03	0.54	0.03	0.002
CP	0.52	0.02	0.53	0.02	0.04
NP	0.55	0.03	0.54	0.03	0.006
A	0.53	0.03	0.52	0.03	0.02
AC	0.46	0.03	0.47	0.03	0.009
A1	0.52	0.01	0.52	0.01	0.01
A4	0.55	0.02	0.54	0.02	0.03

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