

**A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF
THE MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF KENDO
PRACTITIONERS IN SERBIA**

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ABSTRACT

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Kendo is a Japanese martial art that has been gaining interest over the past couple of decades and is considered as one of the most popular budo martial arts. The purpose of this study was to understand and explain what motivates highly skilled kendo practitioners to practice and compete, and how did their sources of motivation change throughout their kendo engagement. Phenomenological approach was used to look into the experiences of kendo practitioners in order to understand better their motivation behind this martial art. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight kendo practitioners from Serbia in their native language. Before data collection, a pilot study was conducted, and the researcher underwent a bracketing interview. Self-determination theory and achievement goal theory were used for explaining the results. The findings revealed that participants practise kendo to satisfy personal needs (e.g., need for sports activity, interest in Japanese culture, and past sports experience) driven by extrinsic sources of motivation (identified and integrated regulation). When the needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness were satisfied, participants were motivated to engage in kendo activity out of their choosing without pressure, hence practicing kendo out of pure enjoyment driven by intrinsic motives. This is explained with the fact that kendo is integrated into participants lives, acting as a great coping tool, promoting constant development and personal growth. Interestingly, younger kendo practitioners exhibited both ego and task objectives orientations emphasizing competition goals, while older and more experienced kendo practitioners are focused more on mastery goals. Findings of the present study give us an insight regarding motivation of kendo practitioners, and other martial arts practices across the world. These qualitative information is helpful to sensei's and sport professionals who want to work in this unique environment.

Keywords: motivation, interpretative phenomenological analysis, self-determination theory, achievement goal theory, kendo, interview.

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1 INTRODUCTION

*The purpose of practicing kendo is:
To mold the mind and body,
To cultivate a vigorous spirit,
And through correct and rigid training,
To strive for improvement in the art of Kendo,
To hold in esteem human courtesy and honor,
To associate with others with sincerity,
And to forever pursue the cultivation of oneself.
This will make one be able:
To love his/her country and society,
To contribute to the development of culture
And to promote peace and prosperity among all peoples. (All Japanese Kendo
Federation, 1975)*

The purpose of practicing kendo evidently demonstrates the multidimensionality of this martial art that emphasizes the holistic development of a human being, taking into account both mental and physical aspects. Kendo is a Japanese martial art, with a long and rich history deeply embedded in Japanese culture. This martial art is classified as a budo, which when translated means “Martial Way” or “Way of War”. Budo is a combination of the words bu meaning 'war' or 'martial'; and do meaning “path” or “way.” The term kendo literally means the “Way of a Sword”. In the name kendo, “ken” stands for “a sword” and “do” mean “the way” (Kiyota, 2002). Today, kendo is in a transition phase between being practised as a sport and martial arts. Many kendo practitioners would classify it as a sport while other still see it as a martial art. Regardless of these two kendo views, the core of kendo still has remained the same. Kendo is characterized by the usage of a sword (shinai) and armor (bogu) and it is practiced in a site called dojo. According to Draeger (1975), kendo is one of the most popular budo martial arts in the world. In support, Bennett (2012) stated that kendo is regarded as Japan’s most successful cultural export and despite limited practical applicability; kendo is the most widely practised of all traditional martial arts in Japan. This can be explained by the notion that kendo is regarded as one of the purest martial arts, and it has deep connections with Japan ancient history and samurais centuries ago.

Motivation in sport has been investigated in many different sports; triathlon (Waddel- Waddle-Smith, 2010), rugby (Hodge, 2014), football (Sarmiento, Carira, & Fonseca, 2008), handball (Sarrazin, Vallerand, Guillet, Pelletier, & Cury, 2002) and among athletes (Chantal, Guay, Dobрева-Martinova, & Vallerand, 1996; Mallett &

Hanrahan, 2002). However, there is a lack of research on motivation in kendo. According to Bennett (2012) kendo is studied in earnest by tens of millions of enthusiasts in every country and region of the world. However, in all this popularity, though boasting a long history, kendo has received little attention among scholars in the field of sports psychology (Sato, 2011). In support, Ko, Kim and Valacich (2010) said that there is little information regarding the motivation of martial art participants.

According to Kiyota (1995), kendo is a structured human activity carried out in leisure time for the purpose of recreating the human personality. Therefore, kendo participation is seen as a recreational thing, which people practise to satisfy their needs, and to achieve personal growth and development. These goals differ from people to people and from culture to culture. For instance, in Europe kendo is perceived mostly as a hobby, while in Japan kendo is regarded as a martial art with many faces. On another note, there are kendo practitioners in Europe who consider kendo as a sport. These practitioners pay plenty of attention on competitions on both national and international levels. The World Kendo Championships (WKC) are held every 3 years while the European Kendo Championships (EKC) are hosted almost every year. Next to that, there are numerous international tournaments around the Europe that are held annually (i.e. Hungary Cup, Belgrade Trophy, Alexandria, London Cup, Frankfurt Cup). Preparation for a competition is taken very seriously; kendo practitioners devote their time to practise every day to master their skills and to get both physically and mentally prepared. Those who practise kendo make no money from it unless they instruct students through affiliation with an institution which offers kendo as a part of its curriculum, or who operate a private kendo gym (Kiyota, 1995). Kiyota (1995) also stated that the original value of kendo is not economic: it enhances physical and mental growth. Drawing from this, it is not clear which motivational factors are in play for kendo practitioners who are competing and training.

The research conducted on motivation in sports is mainly focused on discovering the types of motivations (i.e. intrinsic, extrinsic) and only a couple of studies are focused on explaining the reasons that are behind this change. While the quantitative approach is thought to produce an answer to question “what”, for the present study qualitative inquiry offers better perspective in explaining and answering questions “why” and “how” did the motivation change. Sato (2011) stated that considering the growing popularity of kendo, the intensity of competition, and the

difficulty of mastering the various techniques, a greater understanding of the sport and particularly the experience of kendo practitioners is needed.

1.1 Researchers statement

The researcher of the study, Milan Dumić is an active kendo practitioner. He has been doing kendo for the past three years, currently holding 3rd kyu, with hopes that one day he will reach DAN rank.

As a kendo practitioner, ever since he started practicing, Milan has been interested in the motivation behind it, always puzzled with the question: why people choose to undergo harsh training regimes and commit their lives to this martial art. Kendo for him was from the very beginning intrinsically rewarding but as he progressed further he found that he also wanted to prove himself in front of the others, not only by participating in various tournaments, but by achieving personal progress along the way too, to be better than he was yesterday.

On his kendo path of development, he had the opportunity to practise in different European countries and experience different kendo cultures and settings, with the hope that he would find an answer to his question. His home club Makoto in Serbia marks the beginning of his kendo journey, it is the place where he made his first steps and where the question regarding motivation originates from. In Makoto, Milan experienced both good and bad moments and there he understood how challenging kendo can really be. Despite all challenges he continued to practise. His second club Ryutokai in Finland was quite a different kind of experience. There he discovered more relaxing and easy-going environment, and learned that kendo is so much more than just competitions. In Ryutokai he came in contact with different aspects of kendo. His third club, Shiten Dojo in Germany, was the place where he was tested both physically and mentally. During this time, Milan felt deeply connected with the people from the club. When he looked back at his experiences, the answer to his question was not getting any clearer. If anything, he was even more puzzled by the mystery that surrounds this phenomenon. It was because of these personal experiences and long and rich history that surrounds kendo; he therefore came up with the idea to conduct research regarding why people practice and compete this martial art in the first place.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the motivation of highly skilled kendo practitioners, to understand better their reasons and desires to practise and compete. Moreover, the study looked at the possible reasons that contributed to the change of motivation within kendo practitioners, which finally led to their staying in kendo.

1.3 Significance

Research on motivation in sport is extensive, but to the best of researcher knowledge the research field lacks in-depth qualitative study into motivational factors. This study took a phenomenological approach because the researcher was interested in participant's stories and experiences, and with the use of questionnaires the participants wouldn't have the liberty to share their stories. Exploring motivation in kendo should provide sports psychologists, practitioners, and coaches with a better understanding of what highly level kendo practitioners achieve, pursue and encounter during their participation in kendo. Results can provide useful insight on how to maintain kendo practitioner's motivation. Gill (2007) stated that in the field of sports psychology there has been increasing emphasis on the need for sport psychology consultants to be culturally competent in order to work with athletes from diverse cultural backgrounds. Kendo is unique in this sense because it is bursting with cultural factors, and sports psychologists have to take this into account when working with a kendo athlete. The study will also add research of the limited studies on kendo, especially motivation in kendo.

1.4 Kendo terminology

Kendo practitioners get to know different Japanese terms and words that are used as instructions and commands during trainings. While these terms are easily taught and explained during kendo sessions, they are not easily translated to English. With that in mind, the following list of terms with English interpretations was taken from the Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo (AJKF, 2000). This list will help readers to understand certain terms and expressions from kendo.

Bogu: Equipment and gear.

Budo: Martial arts.

Dō: (1) One of the pieces of kendo gear that covers the chest and stomach areas, (2) one of the striking zones, the ribs (usually the opponent's right side), (3) the particular kendo technique of striking the opponent's ribs.

Dojo: The site of training for kendo.

Encho: An extension of a match.

Ippon: Making a valid point (i.e., strike).

Kamae: Initial posture and stance.

Kata: Form.

Katana: Sword(s).

Kendoka: Kendo practitioner(s).

Kiai: A state of mind that is fully focused and energized.

Kihon: Basics.

Kote: (1) One piece of kendo gear that covers the hands and forearms, like gloves, (2) one of the striking zones, hands or forearms (usually right hand or forearm), (3) the particular technique of striking the opponent's hand or forearm.

Men: (1) One piece of kendo gear that covers the head, like a helmet, (2) one of the striking zones, the top of head, (3) the technique of striking the opponent's head.

Mejirushi: A strip of cloth (red or white).

Mokuso: The act of composing one's mind and spirit while calming down the breath in the seiza position.

Motodachi: The one who takes the role of instructor when a trainee is practicing.

Rei: (1) Courtesy, (2) bowing.

Reiho: Courtesy.

Samurai: Ancient Japanese warrior(s).

Seiza: To sit on one's heels with one's shins on the floor and back straight.

Seme: Putting the opponent off balance mentally and physically in order to prevent him/her from moving freely. There are various approaches for accomplishing seme.

Sensei: Instructor(s).

Shiai: A match.

Shiai-jo: The site of a tournament.

Shinai: Bamboo sword(s).

Shinpan: A referee

Sonkyo: Squatting position with the knees opened outward, holding the shinai around the belly button, and the upper body upright.

Tare: One piece of kendo gear that covers the lower abdominal area and the thigh, like a skirt.

Tsuba : A sword guard inserted between the hilt and blade region.

Tsuka: The hilt of a sword.

Tsuki: (1) One of the striking/thrusting zones, the throat, (2) the technique of thrusting towards the opponent's throat.

Waza: Technique(s).

Zanshin: Showing a body posture and state of mind after striking that demonstrates that one is alert and ready to respond instantly to any counterattacks.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to examine existing literature in kendo and motivation. To accomplish this purpose, topics that will be discussed are self-determination theory, achievement goal theory, the history of kendo, contemporary kendo, research conducted in kendo, and motivation in sports.

2.1 Self-determination theory

Motivational theories suggest that people commence and persist with behaviour because they believe that the behaviour will direct them to desired goals (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000, 2008) has gained a lot of popularity over the past 30 years and has served as a strong framework for studying human motivation and personality. Self-determination theory is concerned primarily with explicating the psychological processes that promote optimal functioning and health (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Mallett and Hanrahan (2002) stated that "the underlying assumption of SDT is that people are inherently and proactively motivated to master their social environment." SDT employs an organismic-dialectical meta-theory in which humans are assumed to be active, growth-oriented organisms that are naturally inclined toward the development of an organized coherence among the elements of their psychological makeup and between themselves and the social world (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to SDT, there are three types of basic psychological needs; for autonomy, for competence and for relatedness. The basic psychological need guides people toward more competent, vital, and socially integrated forms of behaviour that results in improvement of people's health and well-being. Competence is explained as an act to engage in optimal challenges and experience mastery. Autonomy is defined as having freedom and independence of choice over one's actions. Relatedness is to have a connection in one's social environment.

Following the SDT continuum, there are two particular sides of human motivation, autonomous and controlled (Deci & Ryan, 2008). On this continuum types of motivations changes based on individual goals and capabilities. There are three types of motivation; intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. The most desired motivational state is intrinsic. Intrinsically motivated means that a person is doing an activity driven by internal rewards. Deci and Ryan (2000) stated that intrinsic

motivation concerns active engagement with tasks that people find interesting and that, in turn, promote growth. They also explained that to be actively engaged and committed to a particular activity, the need for autonomy and competence must be fulfilled, hence a person will be intrinsically motivated. While the experience of competence and autonomy are considered as an essential for intrinsic motivation and interest, these needs for competence and autonomy do not provide a sufficient definition of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to Deci and Ryan (2000, p233) “intrinsically motivated activities are not necessarily directed at the satisfaction of these needs per se, and behaviours that are directed at the satisfaction of these needs are not necessarily intrinsically motivated.” They also stated, “intrinsically motivated behaviours are those that are freely engaged out of interest without the necessity of separable consequences, and, to be maintained, they require satisfaction of the needs for autonomy and competence” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p233).

The second is extrinsic motivation which refers to a behaviour that is controlled by external rewards such as, praise, money, and glory. Rather than being motivated by internal rewards, extrinsically motivated people focus more on the outcome. There are different types of extrinsic motivation on SDT continuum; external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. External regulation is the least autonomous type, where an individual is doing a particular activity to satisfy external demand or to receive a reward. Deci & Ryan (2000) pointed that in this type of extrinsic motivation, people behave to attain the desired consequence such as tangible rewards or to avoid punishment. Introjected regulation refers to individual doing a specific activity to avoid feeling guilty or shame for not attending the activity. Whereas with external regulation the control of behaviour comes from unforeseen consequences that are administered by others, with introjected regulation the unexpected consequences are applied by the individuals to themselves (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Introjected regulated behaviours are considered to be more internalized, but not self-determined. Identified regulation is consciously performing a particular task because it helps to reach a valued outcomes or goals. “Identification reflects a conscious valuing of a behavioural goal or regulation, such that the action is accepted or owned as personally important” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p72). Integrated regulation is the most autonomous of extrinsic motivation types. It “occurs when identified regulations are fully assimilated to the self, which means they have been evaluated and brought into

congruence with one's other values and needs" (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p73). Integrated regulation and intrinsic motivation behaviours tend to be similar. However, the difference is that integrated regulation is performed to attain some separable outcome, which places it in extrinsic motivation part of SDT continuum. Whereas intrinsically motivated behaviour is regarded as doing particular action or task for pure enjoyment.

Amotivation is the least desired motivation stated on SDT continuum. Deci & Ryan (2000) described this state in which people lack the intention to behave, which results in a lack of motivation. Amotivation is characterized by the lowest levels of self-determination. People are likely to be amotivated when they lack either a sense of efficacy or a feeling of control with respect to a desired outcome (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

2.2 Achievement goal theory

Achievement goals are competence-based aims that individuals want to achieve in the sport environment. There are two unique achievement goals, that individuals want to achieve based on their definition of personal competence: task and ego goals (Nicholls, 1984; Nicholls, 1989) or mastery and performance goals (Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Ego or performance orientation is characterized as an external, self-evaluative focus in which individual seeks to demonstrate and prove his abilities. Dweck (1986) explained that individual who is performance goal orientated constantly seeks to test his abilities, especially in relation to others. On another hand, mastery or task orientated individuals are less focus on the outcomes and their standing to others. Their main focus is to work to improve their competence and mastery, for example learning a new ability or expanding competence. Dweck (1986) said that ego directed goals involve attempts to gain positive or avoid negative judgment about one's abilities and task goals are concerned with improving abilities or acquiring new skills.

In his study, Nicholls (1989) proposed ego and task to be autonomous. This means that an individual can score high or low in both ego or task orientation, or high on one and low on another. However, there is a shortage of studies in the research field that could back up this "ambivalently" of goal orientations. Duda, Chi, Newton, Walling, and Catley (1995) utilized Self-Determination Theory, Hierarchical Model of Motivation, and Achievement Goal Theory to investigate the theoretical and empirical interdependencies between goal perspectives, success and intrinsic motivation in a sport setting. The findings revealed that a high task predisposition corresponds with higher

levels of intrinsic motivation and that a high ego predisposition was associated with decreased intrinsic motivation. In another study, Duda and Whitehead (1998) found that intrinsic reasons for participation are correlated with a task/mastery orientation and that extrinsic motives correspond to ego/performance orientation in sport. This was considered to be consistent with Duda et al., (1995) findings.

The understanding of certain sports situations (e.g., competition, training) by an individual and the perception of his abilities can be substantial factors regarding goal orientations. Isoard-Gauthier, Guillet-Descas, and Duda (2013) examined how the coach-created climate, perceived competence, achievement goals, and burnout interconnect. The participants of the study were 390 young French handball players who were part of an elite training centre. Interestingly, the finding showed that at the beginning of the season, an athlete who perceived an ego-involving climate and emphasized mastery avoidance goals has a high chance of experiencing burnout. On another note, athletes who perceived high task-involving climate and were focused on mastery had a smaller chance of experiencing burnout at the end of the season. Also, athletes with high competence, high score in both ego and task orientation, and high on avoidance goals but low on mastery avoidance goals were less likely to experience burnout.

Ntoumanis (2001) examined the empirical and theoretical link of Achievement Goal Theory and Self-Determination Theory. The aim of the study was “to show how different achievement criteria and perceived competence predict independently and in interaction different degrees of self-determination.” (Ntoumanis, 2001, p397). The finding showed that task orientation and perceived competence were positively linked to self-determined types of motivation. However, perceived competence was also related to predicting external regulation. Interestingly, connection between ego and task with introjected regulation was not found significant, but it was found with external regulation. Ntoumanis (2001) concluded “adaptive role of high task orientation in promoting self-determination in sport.”

In a recent study, Lochbaum, Çetinkalp, Graham, Wright, and Zazo (2016) reviewed 260 studies on task and ego orientation in competitive sport that used Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ) or the Perceptions of Success in Sport Questionnaire (POSQ). Next to that, they also tested the interdependence of the two

goal orientation. Their finding showed that ego and task goal orientations are “suitable” independent, which means that creating task and ego orientation groups as often found in the literature was an appropriate way in which to use the two orientations. However, they also found that TEOSQ and POSQ differ, and stated that the future researchers should be varying of this discovery. For instance, “from a practical standpoint, the POSQ literature would suggest endorsement of the ego goal orientation to develop elite athletes whereas the TEOSQ literature would not.” (Lochbaum et al., 2016).

2.3 The history of kendo

In this chapter, a short history of kendo will be disclosed. Over a vast period, kendo underwent many transitions; however, the roots of kendo are deeply embedded in Japanese culture. According to Sato (2011), kendo is a product of socio-cultural construction based on the politics, values and religions in Japan.

The origins of kendo go back more than 1,000 years (it was called Kenjutsu, Kenpo, Toujutsu, and Heiho) in the 10th century when nihonto (i.e., Japanese sword), which preceded shinai (i.e., bamboo sword) emerged. According to AJKF (2003), the origin of kendo seems to have coincided with the invention of nihonto. Moreover, the prevalence of Nihon to on the battlefield gradually increased until the beginning of the 17th century (AJKF, 2003). At this point, an ancient order named Samurai appeared. The word Samurai originated from the verb *saburano*, which means, “to serve” (Imamura & Nakazawa, 1992).

During Meiji Era (1868-1912) the Samurai class was disbanded, and the wearing of swords was prohibited. As a result, many Samurai lost their jobs and Kenjutsu declined dramatically (AJKF, 2003). Soon after that, in 1829, the Dai-Nippon Butoku-Kai (DNB; Greater Japan Society of Martial Virtue) was established as the national organization to promote Bujutsu including Kenjutsu (AJKF, 2003). At around the same time in 1899, “Bushido” was published in English which was considered a compilation of Samurai’s thoughts and philosophy. It was influential internationally.

After Japan’s defeat in WW II and its occupation by the Allied Powers, kendo was banned. According to Bennett (2012), this period was a dark one for kendo’s history; it was during this time that proprietorship of kendo was commandeered by the government to assist the war effort. Total state of control led to kendo’s prohibition

when Japan lost the war, as it was viewed as a dangerous tool for militarists and ultranationalists, and as having the potential to arouse undemocratic thoughts and behaviour (Bennett, 2012). Not until 1952 was the All Japan Federation (AJKF) established and in 1953 All-Japan championships started (AJKF, 2003). Kendo was revived as a “new democratic sport” freed from ideological control, with efforts to devise more rational rules to develop it as a modern sport (AJKF, 2003). It was returned to the curriculum of high schools in 1953, and junior high schools in 1957. Due to kendo’s international popularity, in 1970, International Kendo Federation was established with seventeen countries. Today FIK numbers over 50 countries. According to AJKF (2003), kendo has gained tremendous interest all around the world, and more and more international practitioners are joining the kendo world. In May 2015, the 16th WKC took place in Budokan in Tokyo Japan, the same location where the first World Kendo Championship took place.

2.4 Contemporary kendo

Modern kendo emerged after the Second World War as a “tool” to bring people up from the depression that followed it. Kendo was used to raise people’s morale and to save them from the cataclysm of the War. During this time, kendo was practised in secrecy, and it started to shift from its old ways of practicing towards competitions and sporting aspects in general. Sato (2011) stated that in the competitions, practitioners started focusing more on the sport aspect of kendo rather than on human development. It is due to this shift that kendo lost some practitioners who objected to its mere sport aspect. Craig (2004) pointed out that the main differences between old Japanese swordsmanship and contemporary kendo are the rules and sporting aspect.

Nowadays, kendo is regarded as both a competitive sport and a martial art. As a sport, kendo practitioners represent their dojo’s or clubs in individual and team tournaments. During training and fights, a kendo practitioner wears Hakama and Gi, and over that he wears bogu. Kiyota (2002), stated that the bogu, a set of light armor and the shinai and a split bamboo stick just under four feet long, represent essential parts of modern kendo equipment. Following this, the object in kendo fights and jigeiko is to deliver a strike or thrust with the shinai to prescribed targets on the bogu to win points/ippons (Kiyota, 2002). The bogu consisted out of four parts; the men (i.e., combined face mask and shoulder protectors), the kote (i.e., hand and forearm

protectors), the do (i.e., torso protector) and tare (i.e., groin and leg protectors). A kendo practitioner is awarded win an ippon only when he delivers a successful hit/thrust to the men, kote, do or tsuki (throat) accompanied by speed, force, accuracy, physical coordination and concentration (Kiyota, 2002). Sato (2011), explained that to win an ippon a practitioner must demonstrate strong spirit, appropriate body posture, proper execution of waza, strong kiai (i.e., a state of mind that is entirely focused and energized) and zanshin (i.e., showing a body posture and state of mind after striking that demonstrates that one is alert and ready to respond instantly to any counterattacks). All Japan Kendo Federation's rulebook called "The Regulation of Kendo Shiai and Shinpan" explains six criteria's that need to be met to win an ippon: (1) high spirit, (2) correct posture, (3) striking with a specific part of the shinai, (4) striking of a specified target point, (5) striking with the correct blade angle (hasuji), and (6) presence of zanshin. In kendo terminology making a valid strike is called yuko-datotsu. With kendo's specialized equipment and precisely defined rules, kendo fits the modern definition of a sport (Kiyota, 2002).

Kendo match (shiai) takes place in a square court called shiai-jo. Shiai-jo is nine to eleven meters long on a side. The competitors face each other with all their energy, yet with mutual respect, as expressed through rei-ho. In theory, the kendo should be similar to regular keiko, but a match is conducted with a great deal more formality, including a marked court, the presence of judges, a time limit, and the keeping of scores. Whether it is an individual or team competitions, two kendo practitioners compete at the time. Each of them wears a strip of cloth (mejirushi) on the back, one red and the other white colour. There are three referees (shin pan) on the court. Each judge holds two flags, one red and one white. All three referees are responsible for determining valid points (ippon) and prohibited acts. A valid point is signalled by raising the flag corresponding to the players' mejirushi who made the strike. At least two referees need to agree on the legitimate strike for a point to be awarded to the fighter. The winner is the player who scores two points first. If the match time expires and only one player scored a point, that player wins the match. In case that no points are made during the time of the match, an extension (encho) of the match is allowed. During encho, the first player to score a point wins the match.

2.5 Studies conducted in kendo

Kendo in the field of sport psychology has received little attention. Most of the studies that are done are primarily focused on the physical elements of kendo; influences of kendo training on Achilles tendon (Muraoka, Muramatsu, Kanosue, Fukunaga, & Kanehisa, 2005), eye movement and CNV resolution time during zanshin (Hamaguchi, Asada, Aramaki, & Kitagawa, 2014), changes in interpersonal distance made by expert players in kendo matches (Okumura, Kijima, Kadota, Yokoyama, Suzuki, & Yamamoto, 2012) and technical and tactical difference between male and female kendo practitioners (Nakamura, Takami, Nakano, Ito, Maekawa, & Tamura, 2014).

However, there are studies that are focusing on other aspect of kendo. For instance, Sato (2011) explored highly skilled kendo practitioners' experiences in kendo. He interviewed 9 participants of Japanese descent who lived in the United States. After completing the thematic analysis, seven major themes emerged: Kendo Components, Kendo as Competition, Kendo as Art, Relationship/Bond, The Way/Path, Values of Kendo, and World of Everyday Life. The finding of this study revealed that kendo has been perceived as a physically and mentally demanding martial art. Additionally, for the participants kendo meant both the pursuit of competitive achievements and the fulfilment of mastery standards (Sato, 2011). In the end, kendo has had everlasting effect on the practitioners, which shaped their lives.

In another study, kendo instructor's intended learning outcome (LO) was compared to the learning outcomes (LO) of rugby instructors (Bennett, 2013). The data was obtained through a questionnaire. The participants were 42 kendo and rugby coaches. The results showed that both kendo and rugby instructors had a similar way of imposing learning objectives on their athletes to promote character development. However, it was also discovered that kendo instructors used punishment (e.g., hitting unprotected areas of the body) as a way to train and impose the desired learning outcome. Bennett (2013) concluded that learning outcome (LO) should be focusing more on the "enjoyment" rather on "lifelong" participation in both kendo and rugby.

In the recent study, Dekšnytė (2013) investigated the experience of three highly skilled Finnish female kendo athletes within kendo setting. The goal was to explore how

a woman in contemporary (“conventionally masculine”) sport copes with balancing athletic and feminine identity, and to understand personal and social meanings of gender and sport. She found that kendo setting was suitable for exploring this problem since kendo is considered as “gender neutral.” Participants were asked to write a personal story based on a prompt statement “A woman in kendo” and to comment on other participant’s stories (Dekšnytė, 2013). The findings revealed that the perception of gender differences varied among the participants and that kendo was a suitable framework for facilitating non-gendered interactions through promotion of equality and respect (Dekšnytė, 2013). Dekšnytė (2013) pointed out that kendo setting might be of interest to those who are committed to creating bias-free sporting environment.

2.6 Motivation in sports

The research on motivation in sports has been the centre of attention for the past 30 years. This stands to reason considering that the Deci and Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory (1985) originated during that period and since then has gained a lot of approval from the research community. Today, the majority of research on motivation in sports adopted a qualitative approach to investigate participant’s motivation in various sports settings. However, there are some studies that utilized a quantitative design to explore and understand these motives from another perspective. Hence, this chapter will provide both qualitative and quantitative studies on motivation in sports.

Chantal, Guy, Dobreva-Martinova, and Vallerand (1996) investigated sports motivation in relation to performance and gender, with 98 Bulgarian top athletes (35 females and 63 males). Sports disciplines were skiing, tennis, boxing, figure skating, biathlon, and canoe. Data was collected using the Bulgarian version of the Sport Motivation Scale (Pelletier et al., 1995). It was hypothesized that the best performing athletes would show lower levels of intrinsic motivation and higher levels of non-self-determined extrinsic motivation and amotivation than less successful athletes. Results showed that in comparison with less successful athletes, the top performing athletes exhibited increased levels of non-self-determined forms of motivation (Chantal et al., 1996). In regards to gender difference, women showed increased levels of intrinsic motivation than men.

Mallett and Hanrahan (2004) conducted a study utilizing Self-Determination Theory, the Hierarchical Model of Motivation, and the Achievement Goal Theory to investigate the motivation of elite athletes. They interviewed ten track and field elite athletes (men and women) ranged between the ages of 22 and 34 years. All participants have been competing on an international level for an average of 7 years. The results of the qualitative analysis revealed three general themes; personal goals and achievement, strong self-belief and life revolving around track and field. Within the personal goals achievement theme, the participants were both motivated by both task and ego goals (Mallett & Hanrahan, 2004). The theme of strong self-belief, where athletes work to master their environment, was consistent with all three theories, (Mallett & Hanrahan, 2004, p. 196). The “life revolves around track and field” theme showed that track and field were participant’s life, and that they valued the role that track and field played in their personal development. Mallett & Hanrahan (2004) concluded that the accomplishment of goals enhances the perception of competence which, in turn, positively influences self-determined motivation.

In another study conducted on elite female triathletes, Waddle-Smith (2010) researched how motivation to train and compete was maintained at the elite level, using Self-Determination Theory, or more specifically the Basic Needs Theory. Eight participants were interviewed ranging in age from 31 to 46 years old. They were considered elite because they all competed in ITU draft-legal Olympic distance, Half-Ironman and/or Ironman triathlons for an average of twelve years (Waddle-Smith, 2010). The study discovered that overcoming different challenges, love of the sport togetherness and support enchanted participant’s motivation to persist in the sport. Within the challenges theme, different obstacles and situation served as a strong motivation to reach their set goals. The theme love of the sport, where all athletes exhibited a strong passion for the sport, devotion to the sport and enjoyed training and competitions while helping others and the sport itself to develop. The theme “togetherness” explained how support from family and friends contributed to their staying in the sport. However, half of the participants did not feel that having a connection with others athletes motivated them, while the other half made positive comments regarding this relationship with other athletes. The researcher concluded that the finding was in line with the Self-Determination Theory.

Jones, Mackay, and Peters (2006) investigated participant's motivation in martial arts using a 28-item adapted version of the Participation Motivation Questionnaire. Out of 300 questionnaires that were sent to 30 martial art clubs, 75 questionnaires from a total of 11 clubs was returned representing practitioners in Tai Chi, Karate, Kung fu, Aikido, Jeet Kune Do, British Free Fighting, Taekwon-Do and Jujitsu (Jones et al. 2006). The findings discovered the order of practitioner's motivation for doing martial arts was: "Affiliation", "Friendship", "Fitness", "Reward/status", "Competition", "Situational" and "Skill Development". Out of 7 factors, the four most important for participation motivations were Affiliation (e.g., liking the instructor), Fitness (e.g., staying in good physical shape), Skill Development and Friendship. Jones et al., (2006) stated these four motivational factors were similar to those in other sport, and also that "Rewards/status", "Situational" and "Competition" were less important. The researchers also concluded that practitioners who trained more than four hours per week were more motivated by the philosophical aspect of the martial arts than those who practiced less than four hours per week.

Concerned with the fact that the martial art industry is rapidly growing Ko, Kim, and Valacich (2010) investigated the motivation of martial art practitioners. The data collection took place during 2004 Battle of Columbus Martial Arts World Games IV, described as one of the most popular martial arts events in the US. The questionnaire was given to 307 participants practicing different types of martial arts (e.g., from competition-oriented martial arts such as Taekwondo and Judo to traditional art forms of martial arts such as Tai Chi). The results suggested that despite different types of martial art and competition orientation, there were three factors that influenced participant's motivation; fun, physical fitness, and aesthetics. This study was found to be consisted with several studies.

3 METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted by using qualitative approach to explore and explain the motivation of kendo practitioners in Serbia. To be more specific, a phenomenological approach was used to design the study to investigate the practitioner's motives behind this martial art. This chapter will briefly explain phenomenology, interpretative phenomenological analysis, and describe the participants, data collection, data analysis, and how trustworthiness was established.

3.1 Phenomenology

Moran (2000) stated that phenomenology is best understood as a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophising, which emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe phenomena, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner, in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer. In support, Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2006) stated that a phenomenological study aims to describe and interpret an experience by determining the meaning of the experience as perceived by the people who have participated in it. The central research question in a phenomenological study is often in the form: What is the meaning and essence of the lived experience of individual or group around a particular phenomenon?

Following the purpose of the study an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used as a most suitable for analysing and collecting the information. The primary goal of IPA researchers is to investigate how individuals make sense of their experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). IPA draws upon phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiographic to examine how people actively engage in interoperating the events, objects and individuals in their lives (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). The approach is phenomenological in that it involves detailed examination of the participant's life-world; it attempts to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual's perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The analytical process in IPA is often described in terms of a double hermeneutic or dual interpretation process, because firstly, the participants make meaning of their world and secondly, the researcher tries to decode that meaning - make sense of the

participants' meaning making (Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA relies on ideography, meaning that researchers focus on the particular rather than the universal (Smith, Harré, & Van Langenhove, 1995).

3.2 Participants

Pseudonym	Age	DAN (rank)	Years of kendo experience	Years on the national team	Tournaments
Clare	29	1	5	4	WKC 2012, EKC 2013,2014, 2016,
Helen	32	4	12	10	EKC 2004,2007,2008,2010, 2016 WKC 2006, 2012
Teresa	31	3	8	6	EKC 2010, 2016
Rafaela	32	4	11	2	EKC 2014, 2016 WKC 2015
Bruce	20	3	8	5	EKC 2011,2014, 2016 WKC 2015
Ed	30	1	6	2 (Broader selection)	Belgrade Trophy, Balkan Cup, National Championship
Brendon	37	4	15	10	EKC 2008,2010,2011,2013,2014 WKC 2012,2015
Mark	36	4	10	1	Athens Cup, National Championship

Table 1. Participants in the study

The number of participants in this study was eight, (n=8) and they ranged in age from 21-39 years. According to Turpin et al. (1997) the clinical psychology doctoral programmes in Britain recommend that having six to eight participants is appropriate for an IPA study. A description of the participants is shown in Table 1. Selection criteria for this study were Master ranks (DAN), national team experience and personal accomplishments in kendo. The majority of them competed in several World and European Kendo Championships while everyone participated in a variety of significant European Tournaments (Belgrade Trophy, Balkan Cup, Hungary Cup, Athlete's Cup). Participants are highly skilled kendo practitioners and they are considered highly skilled because they are holding Master Rank (DAN) in kendo.

For a kendo practitioner to obtain Master rank they need to invest plenty of time and practice into training, and after several years, they are allowed to take Master Rank examination. According to AFKJ, during an examination, candidate's needs to

demonstrate basic skill mastery, advanced techniques, mental stability during a fight, demonstrate different levels of katas, efficiency and rationality in the use of techniques and body movement. The purposive sampling was used to find and recruit participants. Next to the rank criterion, participants were also picked based on their personal accomplishments in kendo and years spent as a part of the national team. The research contacted the participants using social media and emails. They were provided with the detailed explanation of the purpose of the study, the process of data collection, and what was expected out of them. Participants were also informed that their anonymity and confidentiality will be assured with a consent form.

3.3 Interview guide

A semi-structured interview guide was developed by the researcher. The researcher's choice for using interviews is based on the belief that it will allow the sharing of practitioners' thoughts, detailed information, and experiences. In support, (Mallet & Hanrahan, 2004) the answers from the interviews would provide an in-depth understanding of these athletes' experiences, perceptions and feelings without the constraints of a questionnaire. Moreover, information on what motivates these practitioners and how their motivation changed over time may not have been identified with questionnaires.

Furthermore, by using semi-structured interviews, it will allow new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the participant says. Questions included athlete's background in kendo (e.g., "How did you get started doing kendo?"), motivation (e.g., "What reasons made you start practicing kendo? What motivates you now?"), social support (e.g., "what did other people close to you think about your involvement in kendo? What was their reaction?"), life skills (e.g., "Have kendo practice and competition brought changes in other parts of your life?"), and plans for the future (e.g., "Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years as a kendo practitioner?"). Furthermore, next to interview questions, the interview guide also consisted out of the questions which explored participants autonomy (e.g., "Have you ever felt pressure to continue competing/practicing?"), competence (e.g., "What gives you confidence to keep practicing kendo?"), relatedness (e.g., "How connected do you feel to the people you train/compete with?"), amotivation (e.g., "What is motivating, and what is not

motivating for you in kendo?”), and success (e.g., ” How would you define success in kendo?”).

Before data collection, a pilot study was conducted to determine whether the questions are appropriate for obtaining a sufficiently detailed description of the motivation of kendo practitioners and receive feedback from the pilot participant about the researcher’s interview skills (Thomas & Pollie, 2002). To ensure that the researcher will go into this with ”a neutral mind” a bracketing interview was done with an experienced researcher in qualitative methods. According to (Thomas & Pollio, 2002), the bracketing interview was used to determine researcher's personal biases and presuppositions about a certain domain.

3.4 Data collection

According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), the primary concern of IPA researchers is to elicit rich, detailed, and first-person accounts of experiences and phenomena under investigation. This “richness” was obtained by using semi-structured interviews. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) explained, that this type of interview allows the researcher and the participant to engage in a dialogue in real time. Additionally, they also give enough space and flexibility for original and unexpected issues to arise, which the researcher may investigate in more detail with further questions (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

The average duration of the interviews was 55 minutes during which participants answered demographic questions, signed the consent form and responded to the interview guide questions. The participants were explained the purpose of the study and that they could withdraw from it at any given moment without any excuse. To protect participants’ identity, pseudonyms were appointed, and used during data analysis, results and conclusion phase. The interviews were conducted in participants’ native language, to ensure that the participants won’t have any language barriers. The interview guide was made to explore the broad context of their motivations and reasons for participating in this martial art, next to their autonomy, competence, relatedness, and success. The researcher conducted all of the interviews face to face, except for one which was done through Skype. During transcription phase, it was discovered that the interview which was done through Skype was recorded faulty, and it had to be redone.

3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis was done using IPA guidelines, and according to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), it was recommended that the researchers totally immerse themselves in the data or in other words to try to step into the participants' shoes as far as possible. IPA aims at giving evidence of the participants' sense making of phenomena under investigation, and at the same time document, the researcher's sense making.

Upon finishing the data collection, the interviews were transcribed verbatim using the digital voice recorder VN-731PC. Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) stated that the process of member checking is a major step for establishing credibility, so after the interviews were transcribed they were emailed to each participant to check for accuracy and make any necessary changes and no corrections were made. Following the IPA guidelines, the transcripts were read multiple times for researcher to get familiar with the data and at the same time audio recordings were re-listened. This helps researchers immerse themselves in the data, recall the atmosphere of the interview, and the setting in which it was conducted (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Notes that were obtained during the interviews were used during data analysis to provide additional information. The data analysis was completed in an inductive fashion, despite having the theoretic framework. Transforming notes into themes was the next step that was done. Atlas.ti was used during the coding process. For each theme, a quote was provided accordingly. The last step in the analysis was seeking relationships and clustering the themes, after which the results were organized in the main themes and sub-themes.

3.6 Trustworthiness

When conducting a qualitative research using IPA a high level of trustworthiness is required to be established to have a high degree of validity and reliability of the results. In this study, it was determined in several ways. First, the researcher underwent a bracketing interview which was used to suspend any personal biases that he had about the topic. Additionally, the bracketing interview was essential during data analysis, so that the coding and themes would be done with a "neutral mind". Second, the debriefing was conducted with an expert in the field of qualitative research (Palmer, Burwitz, Smith, & Collins, 1999; Sparkes, 1998) regarding interview guide. Third, the

transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants so that they could, read, review or remove anything they found inaccurate. This process of member checking was an important step for establishing credibility (Amis, 2005; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Gratton & Jones, 2004). No corrections were made by any of the participants. Additional credibility was obtained through researchers' in-depth understanding of Kendo culture. Finally, the interviews were conducted in participant's native language to ensure that they could fully express themselves without any language barriers.

4 RESULTS

This chapter will present and explain the findings of the research. The purpose of the study was to understand what motivates kendo athletes to practice kendo and compete, and to explain how their motivation changed over time. Upon completing the analysis of the interviews, 298 meaning units were detected that were further grouped and categorized into major themes and sub-themes (Table 2). The final thematic structure contained four major themes, which are: *Reasons for Starting Kendo*, *Reasons for Doing Kendo*, *Reasons for Staying in Kendo* and *from Ego to Mastery*. All the major themes were interrelated and together with their sub-themes are presented and discussed individually in this chapter. To support each theme, representative quotes were selected for each of them. For each quote, pseudonyms were used to indicate which participant made the statement.

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Quotes
Reasons for starting kendo	Discovering kendo	<i>"I wanted to do it. I said, Lets go"</i>
	The need for sport activity	<i>"I was doing sports all my life"</i>
	Sensei	<i>"[Sensei] left a huge impression on me"</i>
	Kendo practitioners	<i>"Energy"</i>
Reasons for doing kendo	Constant development	<i>"Development never stops in kendo."</i>
	<i>"A part of me"</i>	<i>"I can't imagine my day without going to kendo..."</i>
	Teaching others	<i>"...teaching others gives me more pleasure than anything..."</i>
	Competition	<i>"EKC, top three (3)"</i>
Reasons for staying in kendo	Competition as a test	<i>"A good way to see where I am..."</i>
	Wearing bogu	<i>"Pain, the pain was real..."</i>
	Personal accomplishment	<i>"...I advanced very quickly. My first international competition was WKC"</i>
	Life skills	<i>"Kendo changed me, for the better...I am not the same person."</i>
	Meeting people through kendo	<i>"The number of people you meet by doing kendo is big..."</i>
	Love for kendo	<i>"Kendo you know...it is love."</i>
Kendo as a coping tool	<i>"I tend to find solutions after I finish"</i>	

	Experiencing kendo in Japan	<i>training...</i> <i>"I was surprised when I saw how relaxed the atmosphere was in the dojo"</i>
From ego to mastery	Ego orientation in Serbian kendo The case of Teresa	<i>"Here [Serbia] there plenty of egomaniacs ..."</i>

Table 2. Major Themes and Sub-Themes of the result

4.1 Reasons for starting kendo

The major theme *Reason for Starting Kendo* was comprised of four sub-themes, which are *Discovering Kendo*, *The Need for Sports*, *Sensei* and *Kendo Practitioners*.

Discovering kendo

Mark stated, "*Kendo is not very common over here [Serbia]*", which indicated that kendo is not widely recognized and popular in Serbia as it was the case in other European countries. According to participants, the only way to discover kendo in Serbia was through previous experience in martial arts or to know someone who was familiar with kendo. For instance, Bruce recalled how he initially learned about kendo:

[I found out about it] through a friend from elementary school. At one occasion, when we walked dogs together, he came to the park in gear, with a shinai [kendo sword], I think. No, in full gear. And I said something like "What was that?" He said "Kendo." I mixed it up with taekwondo, because people do that often. And that's it, I went to the first upcoming training session.

In addition to Bruce, several other participants shared a similar memory on how they found out about this martial art. Clare stated how she went to try kendo because her friend wanted to train it. "*I unexpectedly went with a friend who was already familiar with it.*" Teresa and Rafaela both indicated how they had a colleague at the university who wanted to train kendo. In Helen's case, her brother was the one who "*made*" her do kendo with the words, "*Come on, come, so that I could beat you up a little [laughter].*" Before kendo, Ed was practicing other kind of sport, until his friend invited him to try kendo together with him. In almost every participant story, the experience of how they started practicing kendo began through a friend or a close relative. The only

ones who were familiar with the martial art and had previous knowledge were Brendon and Mark. Regardless of their shared initial interest, both Mark and Brendon had a completely different initial motive to start practicing. Mark's interest was connected to his previous sports experience in martial arts and love for Japanese culture. His curiosity regarding Japanese long history and tradition, lead him to start doing kendo. *"Love and interest towards the Japanese culture. The desire to be as close as possible to those samurai, I wished to be one since I was young."* For Brendon, in addition to his previous sports experience in martial arts, he also had the desire to start a kendo club in his city. *"I wanted to do it. I said, let's go."*

The need for sport activity

The need for physical activity served as a foundation for all participant's initial interest. The reason behind this need originated from participants past sports experiences that they had in a variety of sports. Before kendo, Rafaela had years of experience in multiple sports, but she always wanted to practice some form of swordsmanship:

I always wanted to practice swordsmanship, but I wanted to do European fencing, and there was none of that in my hometown. There was karate, and I practiced karate for several years, and then stopped because I had asthma. Since then I always had a desire for martial arts sword fighting, and particularly that kind of sword fighting was cool to me.

Kendo and any other form of swordsmanship were not available in her hometown, so her options were limited. Finally, the opportunity came when she moved to another city to study at the University. Rafaela explained that she felt the need for extracurricular activity besides schoolwork to cope with everyday situations and kendo was a *"perfect fit"*:

I started to practice kendo because I wanted to start practicing any physical activity, which was "not really for girls." I know that when I was a kid, I was a tomboy. I like martial arts, I think karate was interesting to me, and I wanted that sword fighting. So those childhood aspirations, since I was 20 years old, it wasn't really... And I was at University and I should have maybe dedicated myself to it more,

according to my parents I ought to have focused on university more, but I think that I could have not endured it mentally, how I finished it and all, if it wasn't for kendo. I am a person who needs to focus on more than one thing. That act is a way of resting to me, and drawing something from other spheres of life. To me it is... I do not know, that is how I function.

In addition to Rafaela, three other participants had previously trained some form of martial arts (i.e. aikido, karate) while the other four were engaged in different kind of sports (i.e. tennis, volleyball, basketball). Before kendo, all participants were actively engaged in some form of physical activity, and the level of involvement varied from one participant to another. Seven participants explained that they needed sport in their daily life routine, and kendo sounded exotic and interesting enough to try it. Clare indicated this claim by saying, *"I needed sport in my life."* The only exception was Bruce, who started doing kendo out of curiosity, seeking new experiences.

Initial reason to start practicing kendo, to start with training, is unknown to me, and I don't believe I had any, it was just an act of curiosity and trying something new, and something that had to do with what I liked at that time, what I was interested in... samurai, anime, ninjas, Japan, and such things.

It was important to mention that there were personal factors for each participant that influenced their initial desire to try kendo, and those were interest in Japanese culture (*"I had always been attracted to the entire Japan and all that"*); facing a challenge (*"I thought I could never do something like that. So it was a big challenge for me to try something that I had seen for the first time in my life"*) and desire to explore (*"what kept me is that I liked kendo, things that people told me about kendo and things that I was able to see ad hoc"*).

Sensei

When we came for the first time, the sensei then was Sam. He left an immense impression on me because he presented kendo not only as a sport, but as a life philosophy, and since I was always into those Japanese arts, i.e. I had been practicing karate in high school for

several years and I was always attracted to that sort of thing. Therefore, I had always been attracted to the Japanese tradition, their life, and I was really enchanted with that country because they were totally specific and different from us. That is how he (Sensei) managed to present it, their philosophy, their way of living through kendo. I remained to see what that was all about, and that was it. – Clare

In kendo, sensei stands for teacher, instructor or master that guides and trains kendo practitioners. Sensei had a significant influence for the participants during the starting point of their kendo lives. Clare indicated how sensei had a huge influence on her decision to stay and practice. During the first practice, sensei presented kendo to Clare not only as a sport but also as a way of life. In addition, Ed used the words, “*a strong impression*” to emphasize the importance that sensei had on him, but unlike Clare he was more focused on the intensity of the training itself and not on kendo as a whole:

It was a really harsh training session, you know. And sensei was really in his element, in his element to really push people, but I did not recognize in that some things that were to happen later, which were negative and bad. Instead, I was like, now that’s a coach who knows how to lead people. He’s [sensei] like, demanding.

The participants had somewhat different first encounters with the sensei and some of them happened even before they stepped into the dojo. For Rafaela, her first contact with the sensei happened before she even entered the dojo, at the local Sports Fair, where kendo was promoted:

And then I came across sensei. And then sensei, who is a kendo coach, told quite a story there, almost cult-like. But somehow, I didn’t see it, I didn’t even see the presentation, I only saw the equipment, and I had it all in my head, what kendo exactly was. I don’t know how I had that picture from before.

Compared to the rest of the participants in the study, Bruce started doing kendo at a very early age (10 years old). He said that his first impressions regarding sensei and training were “*nothing special*” and “[sensei] showed me the basic stuff and how to hold a

sword, and that was it.” Later, he was able to form a bond with the sensei, which proved to be an important one for his kendo engagement.

Kendo practitioners

When Clare witnessed other kendo practitioners, she used the words “*energy*” and “*full bogu [practicing in full kendo equipment]*” to explain her first impression during that moment. She was amazed at what the other kendo practitioner demonstrated.

You’ve seen [others] in full gear with Men, Tara, Do, the whole Bogu gear. And that was specific, because they waved some sword and screamed. So, I was drawn to that energy and it was terrifically unique.

Like Clare, Ed also shared a similar story explaining how he was impressed with experienced kendo practitioners and the skills that they demonstrated. Ed was especially interested in what was happening between two fighters when they fight. He said, “*I found out very fast that in kendo, the story between two practitioners, that are fighting, was very important. I wanted to explore this relationship to see what was happening there.*” When Rafaela started kendo, she was lucky enough to be part of a big group of the beginners. The group was mostly consisted out of female practitioners, and this notion helped Rafaela not to feel like she was the only woman who was doing kendo. “*There were ten women, my age and older. And then the first cool thing that happened was that the majority of the beginners were older than me.*” Rafaela also shared that due to her stubbornness she managed to endure and overcome all the difficulties that she faced during the first period of her kendo live: “*I went to offer a shinai and everything after that was stubbornness. I had my nose broken in the second week of training and such, and I do not know, maybe because I was female, I was like nobody is going to tell me that kendo is not for women.*” Rafaela and Teresa both experience a certain level of resistance from other kendo practitioners for being females that wanted to do kendo, but in their cases, they found that highly motivational. Rafaela said that by practicing kendo she was in the position “*to crush gender stereotypes*”, and change how people looked at the notion of women practicing kendo up until that moment. In the end, Rafaela managed to set a foothold for her and other females who wanted do kendo in the club. She said, “*I mean, at the end I was very determined, and I felt superb.*”

Bruce explained his first time wearing a bogu with the words “*happiness*” and “*pain*” and recalled that he received a lot of “*beating*” during his early stage of his kendo life from older, more experienced kendo practitioners. He looked at these punishments as a “*lack of knowledge*” from experienced practitioners that were leading him at that time. To support this claim he stated:

I used to think that was how it [teaching] was done, and that everyone had to...that it was some sort of a ritual, that it was all a way of accomplishing better results. I think, to have a man become a better kendoka. That was actually just their ignorance.

On another hand, Mark was impressed with what he experienced and witnessed during his first competition. The experience brought a change of perspective regarding how he viewed martial arts up until that point. This was the moment where he realized the true meaning of martial arts by looking at other practitioner’s fight.

At the competition, I saw Pete. Pete had maybe 13, 14 years at the time, and that was the kyusha competition in Belgrade, and he beat John, who was a tall, grown man... But he didn't beat him, he wiped the floor with him. That left a really, really strong impression on me. Then I realized, it's truly a skill, not strength, speed and what not, but the skill that is so important.

Following his experience, he realized that being a kendo practitioner had a broader meaning, and it was exactly how Japanese people described it, as a truly holistic approach to human development.

4.2 Reasons for doing kendo

Kendo is similar to other martial arts in that it requires investing time and energy to reach a certain level of physical and mental development. Findings revealed that as the practitioners advanced their goals and motives changed. The major theme *Reason for Doing Kendo* consisted of five sub-themes: *Constant Development*, *A Part of Me*, *Transferring Knowledge*, *Competition*, and *Competition as a Test*.

Constant development

Rafaela stated, “*Development in kendo never stops.*” Development in kendo was a never-ending process that can serve as a strong motive throughout the entire kendo career. Mark supported this by saying;

There is no end goal in kendo, but instead constant development. So one cannot say that he came to the end of the road in kendo, and passed through the goal and that’s it. However, those are the small things [goals] that prove to you that you are advancing, which give you satisfaction.

Clare shared a similar story where she experienced “*difficult moments*” but at the same time, she saw a challenge in overcoming them. “*It was exceptionally hard, but knowing that, I am perhaps a person who, when she finds obstacles, loves to overcome them any way possible.*” She also indicated how those “*difficult moments*” made her want to stay in kendo because she saw herself in a new aspect; “*I liked it, and I wanted to advance. It was exceptionally fun, and here I was making myself stronger in a sport sense, and in a sort of a mental sense.*” Testing personal limits and expanding the comfort zone was perceived as big challenges for Clare, and Mark indicated that kendo is a kind of a martial art where you need to be ready to go outside of your comfort zone and step into unknown. Mark also explained how both physical and mental challenges’ “*fulfil him.*” He empathized the fighting in kendo and its uniqueness. “*There is a mental and a physical battle, it is very interesting and unique, particularly in kendo.* “

Helen, Mark, and Brendon perceived kendo as “*not a boring sport*” and, added that there was always something new to learn and discover. According to Mark, “*[Kendo] is always being shaped, something is always changing, and it cannot become boring, kendo cannot bore you. It holds my interest entirely.*” Besides not being boring, Brendon stated that kendo always provided him with inspiration and goals to reach.

What inspires you the most is that constant... the constant demands upon yourself. You have to give it your all non-stop, it does not matter if it is a victory at a competition, whether it is making a better display during practice or just simply... how I could explain it, non-stop! It [kendo] demands that you improve non-stop. It [kendo] asks you non-

stop to do a circle 2 seconds faster, a second faster, it's not monolithic. I have not felt some sort of boredom or whatever at any one-step in my kendo development. Of course, I felt obstacles, I felt them a thousand times like all others, I cannot say I am being fed up with it... I could actually say being fed up, but it is simply a period, which passes, and after that it absolutely opens... a new door opens.

Proof of constant development can also come in the form of kendo ranks, or in this case DANs. For Ed, the constant achievement to reach a higher DAN rank was something that will keep him in kendo for a long period and as a result, this influences his motivation substantially.

I think that what will keep me long-term is, I don't know; let's say that it's a striving towards a higher rank. And for achieving some deeper all-encompassing knowledge about kendo, something that I would be able to pass on in kendo.

Rafaela described the constant need for development as a part of her personality and that it fit her perfectly;

I think it's in my character to want to develop throughout my whole life, not in just one way. In many ways, as much as I can, and I believe that man lives as long as he learns. So I think that, because that's also one of the kendo's mottos, I think it greatly fits that aspect of me.

All participants in the study explained that they understood kendo as a lifelong experience because development in kendo never stops regardless of their rank and experience. Regarding kendo as a lifelong experience, Brendon said:

The concept of kendo is, the way of learning is very long. For example, I would say it is the same as education. If the education of a person lasts 18-20 years, 25 years, kendo demands such a long-term approach as well, long-term work, long-term training to reach a certain level. Someone is satisfied with finishing elementary school, someone is satisfied when they finish high school, someone is satisfied with a doctorate or I do not know what else. It is the same way in kendo, I keep finding some new challenges, some new demands I impose on

myself to fulfil, and it is simply terrifyingly tempting to keep finding those challenges non-stop and try to accomplish what is being asked. Now I don't know how far I will get, but I do not intend to stop. It's not said without reason that Kendo is a lifelong experience.

"A part of me"

When participants were asked about the meaning of kendo in their lives and how do they position it, several participants claimed kendo as *"a part of me."* For instance, Mark explained that he has other activities, but kendo gave him more satisfaction than all of these activities combined;

If we are talking about physical challenges, I still keep playing basketball and going to the gym. If we are talking about some mental [aspect], I don't know, I have my own things, I like to photograph, I like to photoshop, and I like something that will distract me. But the wholeness of it all in kendo is what attracts me. So, it's simply a thing which gives me more pleasure than all others, you know, so there is no specific motivation... it just gives me pleasure, it is a part of me. I don't know, I don't think about motivation much when I eat or such, kendo is a part of me.

Mark explained that specific motives to train kendo were unclear for him and kendo completely became a part of him. On the same note, Brendon explained that when he was introduced to kendo it was *"a love at first sight"*. From that point, he placed kendo very highly in his life.

I found myself in it [kendo], like when you simply find love, have a first child, it is somehow a given. I felt it the first time when I donned the bogu armor, despite it being smelly, I felt it and it is absolutely the same today as it was when I started. I've gone three months without training now, a little less than three months... and some nostalgia for kendo simply gripped me. I dreamt of kendo. I dreamt of some new battles, some new variants, I did not even know I was fighting, you understand, I was just dreaming. I was missing it, like when you dream about your child or girl or whatever.

Together with Mark and Brendon, Rafaela also said how kendo goes with who she is and that it added things to her personality that were missing.

It is literally a part of my personality and an aspect of my life. It really completes me. It is a sphere of my life, which, I believe, completes my entire personality and such. How could I say it, it means as much as my family, job, it's a part of my personality.

Kendo has integrated itself into participants' lives significantly. For instance, Clare said how she could not imagine her week ending without doing kendo. *"It is somehow an essential part of life. It just fills you; somehow I could not imagine not ending my week at practice."* Mark also indicated that he saw kendo as a way of living. *"Particularly in today's modern world, where people look strongly towards some material things and whatnot, kendo is the biggest spiritual wealth to me; it is soul food."*

Clare pointed how the dojo, despite being noisy during training sessions, represented a place of peace and tranquillity for her. She found *"beauty"* in spending most of her free time doing kendo instead of doing other things. *"I sacrificed other things, but for example I found a lot of beauty in spending more time there [dojo] than going out at night or some everyday thing I would organize with friends."* Helen stated that kendo was like *"a drug"* and that she needed it all the time.

I got addicted to it [kendo] and now I cannot do without it. No matter how long of a break I took, I was still there. If I made too long of a break, I would have dreams, I would dream of going to competitions, to a training session where I had no hakama and so on.

Helen pointed that she was struggling to incorporate kendo into her daily life. Kendo represented an integral part of her and while she was fully aware that in the future, it would be hard to balance kendo and other responsibilities, but her main goal will be to *"find a way"* and keep practicing;

It [kendo] is so deep in me that I think, it's hard currently and maybe it will be even worse when I get a job. I do not work at the moment, who knows when I will be, what I will do, how time intense it will be, but I must, I will find a way. I used to have conflicts with my husband, going so far, only so I could come and train. - Helen

Kendo evidently influenced each participant's life's to a great extent, and while for a few of them, it was challenging to explain what kind of meaning kendo held in their lives, each participant demonstrated a high level of integrated regulation by saying, that it was a part of them.

Teaching others

Guiding other kendo practitioners was a significant motivator for most participants. Mark, who is a sensei at his dojo, stated that helping new kendo practitioners develop was an important part of his kendo path. His primary focus was to develop a strong team spirit and raise the level of kendo in the dojo. *"My goal is to raise the level at the club, and I take it personally, even when I notice that someone has some sort of problems, I strongly involve myself in helping them."* In Brendon's case, he explained being a sensei as both *"terrifying"* and *"rewarding."* The role of a sensei came to Brendon unexpectedly, since he was not aware that other kendo practitioners would start treating him in that manner.

I am currently in some sort of a process of self-understanding, during which I never specifically understood that I left such an impression on some people, which I had been leading last year. It is not a sort of my modesty or I don't know what, but simply, ok, I am thankful for that, but I am surprised that they, that people reacted that way to me, in a way which they have, in a sense that they were satisfied with what I was doing. Really, surprising, and terrifying like. That's because, now, you have another motive to push yourself to some limits, your own. That's what's my next goal is at the moment.

The sensei role provided Brendon with new motives to train kendo. While being a sensei was a very demanding task, Brendon indicated that it can be rewarding:

It makes me very glad when I see someone profit from it all. I do not know, when I see someone I taught to earn a medal at the European championship, I would love it more than earning it myself. That would be better soul food to me, a different type of egoism, you could put it that way, you understand.

The reason why people look up to Brendon and consider him a sensei was his “*honest way*” of teaching and strong capabilities to transfer knowledge. Brendon stated that he was fully aware of his shortcomings as a sensei, but he tended not to hide them:

I do not hide what I do not know, and I think many people recognized that, particularly here [Serbia], and I think they like it, because I do not like to be insincere. Specifically, I think kendo, kendo is not an insincere art. Kendo is one entirely open skill of an entirely open heart. You cannot be good in kendo if you are not sincere and open, if you do not give your all.

According to Bruce, being a sensei was all about meeting the practitioners’ needs and creating a training session that was not too boring neither too hard for practitioners. Bruce, who became a sensei at a very young age, emphasized the importance of tailoring training to fit the practitioners’ needs, and how challenging it can be;

You are constantly making calculations, this much of this, that much of that. You cannot give them only one thing to do, you have to plan it, you have to have an idea. And especially when you are doing other things, then you have no time to plan all day about how the training in the evening will be, instead you make some sort of a base and then build on that base by looking at what others are lacking. Because you cannot know upfront who is lacking what. You have to see it individually, you have to individually see how, what, where, who, what they are lacking, what is their problem, and according to that you then make some sort of a collective training which will fit everyone, to compare everyone, and that is very hard.

Bruce also explained how being a sensei was not an easy task and that it often required giving on trainings more than when you are just a regular practitioner. He found it very challenging to balance his new role in the club with his responsibilities outside of the dojo. On another hand, Teresa and Helen both said that their interest in competitions significantly dropped and that they shifted their attentions to guide new female practitioners and to show them that kendo is more than “*just a competition*”. According to Teresa, many girls tended to quit kendo because they were pressured to become part of the national team and compete.

It unfortunately happens a lot that people will somehow leave it all because they have a feeling that if they are not in this story [competitive kendo], they maybe they should not be in kendo, which is wrong. Which is truly bad, because there are so many competitions and so many team competitions and so much fun that it really does not need to be 'painted' with that sort of pressure at all.

Teresa also explained that she felt fortunate to be in a position to help other girls and to show them that kendo is more than just being a part of the national team:

Currently I am glad that I can give those younger girls direction, and in a way protect them from those bad stories there; you need to do this, you need to do that. You don't need to bro, they are good enough, they are giving their all. Why would anyone need to do anything, or to stop coming, because it used to happen that people stopped training because the pressure was too big.

Competition

All of the participants in this study had been actively competing in tournaments at national and continental levels in Europe for a number of years. While the significance of competitions dropped over time, for several participants competitions still served as a strong source of motivation. Depending on their individual stage of kendo experience and level, their goals, and desires differed. Several participants said that their competition goals changed over the course of their kendo career while a few of them are still orientated towards achieving specific goals. For instance, Clare, who is a part of the Serbian national team, explained her competition goal, which was to make it to the top eight in the next European Kendo Championship;

Regarding European kendo, the goal for every kendoka, for every serious competitor, is to be at the top of European kendo, and that happens on European competitions. So my goal is the next year's European competition in Macedonia, where I would like to be among the first 8. That's why... the competition is really strong and the first eight are truly the best girls in Europe.

Despite the reward that she could potentially receive in case she reaches top eight, her main reason for competition was the experience: *“for me it is primarily to experience battles with the already famous female kendoka, so that... and to go as far as possible at the tournament.”* Together with Clare, Bruce also had an apparent competition goal, which was to make it to the top three in the European Kendo Championship in the next couple of years. He described the goal as *“giving maximum”* or personal best, which may or may not be enough to reach his goal.

To me it is somewhat of a fixation, to be the best I can in kendo, to bring myself to that, that particular, I can't say condition, but to that one preparedness, physical and mental, where I will do the best possible kendo I could do, and to have that kendo be good enough to overcome and reach those goals, like being a European champion.

While Ed did not have any specific competition goal, he indicated how he still was *“in the years”* where he can compete. *“I am of course motivated by competitive successes and achievements, because I am now in years in which I can compete and I can still physically progress.”* Brendon was the participant with the most years of kendo experience and he still perceived competition as a strong motivator; *“for me, competitions provide a great source of motivation.”* The difference between the less experienced and the more experienced competitors could clearly be detected in this statement. When Brendon is competing he emphasized winning, but not *“at any price”* which meant that he preferred winning while doing *“correct kendo”*, where as for the less experienced kendoka's, they would do everything just to win, even *“a bad execution of the technique.”* For Brendon, losing a kendo match can be quite motivating, and he explained that by comparing two last Kendo World Championships where he participated;

In 2012, I was in a group with a European, who got to the quarter-finals of the world championship and let me say that I lost by a hair. I beat the second one and that gave me a terrific motive to develop further. It gave me a signal that I could hold my own even against such a high rank, that I could absolutely hold my own even against such a truly experienced competitor. All the while I'm doing kendo which I love, the kind I love, I am so glad that I got to where I have, and now

the most recent world championship, considering that I participated only in individual battles, I did terribly because I lost to a guy I ought to not lose against. I beat an Austrian Japanese next, but that gave me motivation to... I concluded that I must... it gave me motivation, I told myself it could never happen again. In another sense it gave me motivation... you must not make and have such variations. After that you must play it how it is expected of you, to do it the way that is right and according to what you're worth.

Competition as a test

Competitions were considered as an integral part of kendo culture. People visited them for social reasons, to test their skills or to win. Interestingly, older participants with more years in kendo explained how the competition was a "*real test*" to see if something works or not. For instance, Teresa said how during the early stages of her kendo career, she emphasized winning all the time. When she was part of the team's competitions, she would be positioned as a number one due to her passion for fighting and the energy she possessed. Teresa said, "*Ahead of competitions it's psychedelic, every training, you know, anxiousness, did I progress, I did not, will I win, I will not win*", which describes how people around her, including her, felt prior to competition. Nowadays, she visits competitions for fun and to "*see where I am.*"

I go to competitions because it's fun, not because it's like my goal to win. It's a fact that everyone likes winning. Somehow, that is a different feeling. The same as how it's not cool when you lose, but I've been training for so long that it's not a problem anymore. I've been winning and losing long enough for it not to be such [a problem]... now it's the measuring of things, ok, let's see where I am. And when I go out with thoughts like that it's usually fair. I lose fairly to someone who is better; I fairly beat someone who was marginally weaker or was tired or whatever. Precisely because of those wins, losses, wins, losses, I came to a point where it's ok, let's see where I am.

Together with Teresa, several other participants explained the importance of the competition as a test. Mark indicates how they are not too important on a long run, but he sees them, as a very relevant because they are the place where one can demonstrate

his skills. *“It is not overly important but it is interesting from the aspect of testing at what level I am, how is my readiness.”* Like in any other sports, kendo competitions differed from training in many things but mainly in expectations, and level of pressure. Mark explained how these conditions affected him, *“the factors at competitions are a little specific, you need that fighting spirit and that was always interesting to me, how much I can switch into a different mental regime.”* Mark also explained how they differed from one another.

At training you're practicing a technique, it is not important what will happen. Only your form matters to you and whether you can do a particular cut or a particular technique. At a competition, vanity starts working, where you don't want... you don't allow to be beaten, and then it's very different. The tension in a person is bigger, in the body and in the head. And that is a sort of an exam, a test.

Both Rafaela and Ed enjoyed competitions primarily because they wanted to see where they stand against others and to improve their kendo.

I love to compete and face off against others. I always loved it... simply, I love to test myself constantly, to see where I am compared to others and compared to where I used to be and such, to constantly really test myself and others.

Rafaela described competitions as a place where she needs to defeat herself.

And it is hard to me and then I must beat myself when I go to those competitions and then it's important to me. It is not always pleasant, in fact, it's very unpleasant and a true challenge for me, but that's why I love it.

Helen, who took part in many competitions, explained how kendo is definitely not all about competitions. She stated, *“because of kendo I really like to compete, that is a really, really good thing, but kendo is not just competition. Kendo is something much deeper than that.”* Like the rest of participants in this study, she described competition as a favourable environment to test one's strength and capabilities against others, but she also explained that she could do kendo without competitions.

I would not say that I would not be practicing kendo without it [competition], far from it. I think I could do without it, because you can make it in your own head at every training session when you beat someone in jigeiko or something, but you know it's not necessary to me. While kendo itself, all around it, are necessary to me in life.

4.3 Reasons for staying in kendo

Motives and reasons for practicing kendo changed all the time and they never remained the same. In particular cases, participants could detect the moments or experiences that contributed to this change while others had different stories. The major theme *Reason for Staying in Kendo* consisted of seven sub-themes: *Putting Bogu*, *Accomplishment*, *Changes in Life*, *Meeting People through Kendo*, *Love for Kendo*, *Kendo as a Coping Tool* and *Experiencing Kendo in Japan*.

Wearing bogu

Kendo armor or bogu is as an essential part of kendoka's inventory. To start wearing bogu a practitioner must demonstrate adequate mastery of core competencies such as movement, understanding of terminology and particular sword technique. In certain countries, it is a pre-requirement for a practitioner to obtain the first rank in kyu system (5th Kyu for Serbia) before they are allowed to wear bogu. Wearing bogu demonstrated one's capability and understanding of basic kendo elements. This transition was considered as one of the most challenging ones, because people tended to quit kendo after experiencing training in bogu. *"People are generally afraid that once someone dons their protective gear and when those real hits come, that people will leave"* said Rafaela. Ed explained entering bogu as *"the most significant change"* in his kendo life. Ed recalled his first time putting bogu,

At the start when I put on the gear, it was... that was possibly the biggest change, because it was awfully hard. Because I had an old and heavy armor and all, and I was the slowest, the worst. Like, everybody already put on their Mens and I was fiddling with himo [string] like I was silly [laughs]

The sensei would shout at him for putting bogu on too slowly, yelling “*move it there and put the Men on so that others can start practising*” and “*practise at home*”. Ed viewed these situations as the way to progress and to become better kendoka:

And then I somehow started to understand that there was more sh*t there than I could swallow and overcome, and that it will do me better in the long run. And then it started to change as I got better, and then my motives changed, my appetites changed.

Wearing bogu meant that practitioner has not only obtained elementary skills in kendo but also that he became a part of his respected dojo. For instance, Clare explained how she felt when she entered bogu for the first time;

I will never forget the first time I put gear on, when I got it after some 6-7 months, maybe longer... and somehow it was, it cannot be described by words but simply it was this incredible feeling and I don't know, you became a part of the old crew.

Together with Clare few other participants experienced this moment as the most natural thing. Brendon recalled his first bogu moment and said;

When I put the armor on the first time, it was simply it. I found myself in judo, but not enough... this was simply it and I literally have no other comparisons, like when you meet the woman of your life like that.

Beginner practitioners can face difficulties when putting bogu on since it has to be conducted in a fast and correct way after “*mokuso [meditation]*” is over. For untrained hands, this can be a hard task and the standard practice is that someone with more experience would teach a new practitioner how to do it. Teresa experienced first bogu training at the seminar for advance practitioners. Putting bogu on has been particularly challenging for her since until that moment she never tried to put it on her own:

You go to a seminar where you have practice three times a day and you never were in full gear. A catastrophe. I was tying my Men, and I had an awful, huge Man, too heavy, from a Japanese donation, from those in the alliance. It was all coming off from me, and then Steve sensei

came, and tied my hachimaki, and Ben sensei came and tightened my Men. Goodbye circulation, it doesn't exist. Then he ties it and it is better in principle for him to tie it so it doesn't come off, but on the other hand, blood flow is gone, it's over.

After putting bogu, the next obstacle for new kendo practitioners was to survive kihon in bogu. At this moment, all things that the practitioner has acquired were put to test in a real combat situation in a dictated way. Helen said, "*no one is ready when kihon starts, and then you have to put on gear.*" When the training was done, Helen experienced the feeling of accomplishment, because she was able to survive the training.

That moment when practice ended and when I took my gear off, that was kinda the most remarkable to me in that period, it was hard, very, I mean physically hard. That was cool to me. I managed to endure the entire practice despite being exhausted to death, red, white, green [laugh]. After that, it was kinda cool.

Training in bogu was considered as physically challenging and demanding experience by all participants. Because of these characteristics, many people tended to quit kendo during this transition. Rafaela recalled enduring a lot of pain every time when she practiced in bogu; "*the pain was quite real.*" Rafaela perceived this pain as a rite of passage to become part of the dojo, similar to the one that Bruce explained as "*beating.*"

However, when it [practice] all ended, my hand was six sizes bigger from the hits. I stood like this [shows the hand] and took off the kota. And then Petra consoled me and lied, I understood she lied to me out of the kindest possible reason. "That is because you are not used to being hit on the hand," and I was actually doing it with Denis who was breaking off my kote's, breaking them off. My hand was 6 sizes bigger from swelling.

Although putting bogu on was viewed as a difficult transition, Rafaela said, "*in the end, I was ok. The pain was real, but I felt good.*"

Accomplishment

Participants' accomplishments served as a proof of their competence in kendo, which resulted in increased motivation. Clare experienced an *"increase"* in motivation when she saw how fast she could progress in kendo.

[motivation] grew when I saw how fast I could advance, since I started training and since I put gear on. Simply, I saw that it was absolutely something I found my way in very quickly, i.e. that it was going naturally.

For Clare, going up against stronger opponents during tournaments was a factor that contributed to this change;

when I started going to bigger tournaments and when I saw how much I could accomplish and how much I could hold my own against much more experienced fighters, I thought to myself, that really motivated me to strive daily to at least improve my level.

Competing and winning served as a testimony and proof to Clare, which in return gave her the motivation and the will to keep practicing kendo. Motivation changed all the time, and it depended on the goals that kendoka sets based on his kendo level and experience. Ed explained how even for people *"who looked like they had the same motives, they also experience the change."* After surviving the entering bogu experience, Ed's motivation and *"appetites"* grew as he progressed.

And then it started changing, as I was becoming better, my motives changed, appetites changed. What I wish, what my next goal will be and so on. Now I have 1st Dan and I am preparing for the second and the test will be in less than two weeks and I already see myself in some serious story, to stay there permanently.

On his journey to 1st DAN he experienced the moments when he wanted to quit kendo, but despite all the negative things Ed has experienced, he continued to practice.

There were periods when I had to take a break. But I don't know, I always had the desire and the motivation to come back. At no point did

I think that I did all I could and that I achieved all I could've and that I... at no point did I feel like that was it for me.

Life skills

Kendo as a martial art made a significant impact on all participants and according to them, it was a never-ending process. Many different aspects of kendo can be transferred to life outside of the dojo. For instance, Mark explained how he trained and taught his practitioners in the club to “*transfer things*” they have learned from the practice to life outside of dojo.

I usually tell people that the things we say at practice, techniques aside, techniques aren't important, but what they teach us, to transfer that to everyday life. Primarily that desire for the person to constantly progress... to constantly progress, to get stronger mentally and physically.

Kendo influenced practitioners' lives in several ways: accountability through winning and losing, enhanced socialization and communication skills and transferable work regime. Teresa stated that after practicing kendo for more than a decade, one thing that she realized was that kendo teaches a person the difference between winning and losing and how to be personally accountable. Teresa said;

You learn what victories and defeats are. You learn that, when you get something, you first learn how to get it. I initially thought that this one damaged me, or that the other one did not damage you. For example, you win, you win, and then you understand that, actually, every bit of progress was the consequence of harsh training. Every defeat was a consequence of something... It never happens on its own... Harsh training always pays off, slacking always shows. When something is not going well for you, you should not be ashamed to practice what you're not good at, you should instead work on what you're not good at. Sometimes you have to imitate something to make it work. And then you catch it, and it's like that in life as well. You're not good at this, hold on, did I work on that or not? Sometimes you don't succeed at something, it does not fly, I don't know, you don't get called back,

somehow... you learn that is ok. You learn, ok, what happened, happened we're going forward, it will happen another time or it won't happen another time. But you learn that it is all more or less a consequence of your doing. It is not terrifying and it is not super-best-in-the-world what happened to you, but it did. You are the one who worked for it. That is, that is kendo, that is good with kendo.

Kendo was regarded as a highly social activity by several participants, where meeting new kendo practitioners often were considered a normal occurrence. Having strong communication skills will make a kendo practitioner more approachable to others but at the same time, this experience will help him to practice and use these skills. In Brendon's case, he said that by practicing kendo he was able to improve his relationship with his family. *"Relationship with parents, absolutely, relationship with wife, relationship with a child the most, it changed them a lot."* In Helens case, prior to kendo, her socializing skills were low and she had a problem communicating with others, but kendo changed that:

In school I was very... socializing was a weak spot to me... I had a few friends but generally, school and socializing in school was always harder for me. And then I started kendo, whether through kendo, whether it was because I was good at it, it went well for me from the start, I somehow socialized more easily and went to those competitions, seminars, and that changed my life path.

Rafaela and Clare said that certain aspects of kendo training (e.g., work regime), could be used, and transferred to a different setting, for instance, the workplace:

I transferred that way of working to my job for example, because I had the motivation to advance when I saw how I was doing and that was somehow... I built and improved myself and I did the same regarding my work later. So I got a more serious job in my field, I somehow became, I somehow had a similar approach to goals as in kendo, so I drew that from it. So I carried that way of working to the job as well. - Clare

Mark explained how he managed to use the work regime from kendo to fight his on-going medical condition. Kendo gave him the strength to endure his health condition:

From the time when I was little I put great importance to physical preparedness, I was always a sporty type, but with my illness I often lose bodyweight. So at one moment I had 58kg, and that's why I say that kendo helped me there, i.e. to have self-confidence and also to have that work ethic, to go back. So I was always... of course it's normal for a person to have moments of weakness but after some time, when I come to my senses, then it's always fully mental strength and going to recovery. I always had a goal even when I joined the national team... at the start of the year I was in a hospital, but I was stuck for a longer time and my goal was not only recovery, but also to join the national team. And then through that goal and through those, everything that kendo taught me, through that mental strength, I managed to carry on.

Meeting people through kendo

You have the opportunity to come for the same goal of learning something new, to compete and to simply finish, talk about other mighty subjects, about life and get to know each other and make a lot of friends that way, because there are a lot of other things which might be mutually interesting. So if you leave, you will have an exceptionally good number of friends remaining there because of kendo. I already have years-long friends that I met there solely because I've done kendo, and they are absolutely irreplaceable to me now. So that's it, a way of meeting people through kendo... what kendo made possible to me as well was travelling, and the possibility to see new countries outside of Serbia, that is also the result of kendo, so that's it. - Clare

Together with Clare, the rest of the participants stated how meeting a variety of people in kendo influenced their motivation and desire to practice. They felt this kind of relationship was essential and influential throughout their kendo engagement. For instance, Brendon explained that like in any other sports there are those who could

influence your motivation to become better and strive for improvement and that at the same time there are those who could demotivate you:

First of all, there are people who, among other things, motivate you to learn, and there are people who simply, like everywhere, like when you go play basketball in the park, you see someone... heey bro let's go for a coffee... it's the same thing, you understand what I want to say.

Several participants explained how meeting people in kendo became "*an everyday occurrence*" and that over time they got used to this kind of situations. Whether that was a competition or training, Clare stated that she was always around people that served as great motivators. "*They [Kendo practitioners] really represent that important factor, the ones because of who I stay there, why I practice kendo. So that's important to my motivation as well.*" On the same note, Bruce indicated how other kendo practitioners could influence your desire to travel and compete to/in other countries:

Every time there is a new competition abroad, I know more and more people there, and that is a very good feeling. You go somewhere in the middle of nowhere, you come to some hall and you know everyone man, "what's up man", "what's new", "how's it going." It's simple, that's a motivator by itself in a way, you want to go to a competition abroad, not just for the competition, but to see the people, to go for a drink with them, to hear what's new with them, to simply... friendships are acquired there.

According to Ed, not everyone that he encountered in kendo had positively influenced his motivation. He was aware that he didn't get to choose with whom he would practice, but he accepted that as a part of life.

It's the same for the people you don't like, because at the end of it all, you cannot make everything up to preference in life. You gotta swallow a lot of bitter pills, to eat a lot of c*ap, there will be a lot of people you don't like there, but fuck it that's life.

Brendon shared a similar opinion on this, but he added that, like in life outside of dojo he couldn't be friends with everyone:

To get something out of a battle with someone, out of practicing with someone, from the training, I do not know, you have to fit each other in terms of character in kendo. It is the same as it is in society, you can be a great friend with someone, you can be just a friend with someone else, and not be able to stand someone else. It's the same in kendo.

Practicing kendo allowed the participants to form bonds or "*relationships*" with people with whom they practiced and competed. Brendon shared that during kendo training, people could "*much better learn the character of a man*". Bruce used the word "*masks*" to empathize how kendo practitioners thought that by wearing bogu they could hide their personality.

You do spend a lot of time with those people, you cannot be closed, you cannot pretend all the time. You can create some masks, but not in martial arts. You create a mask; it will be very visible once you put on gear. When you put on the gear all masks are off, that's the trick.

In addition to what Bruce said, Brendon stated, "*you can get to know a man solely through his kendo, you can absolutely know him, know what he is like, all traits of his character, all his negative traits, you can meet through kendo.*" This type of relationship that was formed between two fighters tended to be more honest and sincere in many ways than in other life situations. For instance, Brendon stated,

I think that you create, that you can create a much sincerer relationship with someone than in some other way. One thing, another thing, it means you are becoming a friend both with a child of 12, 13 years and with a guy that's 60 who's older than my dad.

Kendo allowed Brendon to meet a variety of people from different parts of the world:

Bonding, socializing, are very, very important to kendo. That dispersion of people that you communicate with is much larger than in some real life considering they come from different branches, from various spheres, various countries, sides of the world, a bit of everything, it's not like it's in life, you are still in your own circle, university, job, and you are in contact with a lot fewer people. On the other hand, usually all who practice kendo will either help you come to

them, or offer you a place to stay or give you something, the relations are like that, the start of the relation is much different than when you start communicating and socializing with someone. It is purer, sincerer and more honest.

Bruce and Clare both stated that it was because of this type of relationships and openness that surrounded kendo, people were more willing to offer help to other practitioners. Brendon recalled his trip to Japan, and how he got help from a kendo practitioner who he only met once:

I saw some Japanese... For two training sessions he coached me, and I went to Japan in 2012. My gear did not arrive, nothing came on the plane. They could not manage to secure my gear and the people from the air company said that my gear would arrive in 10 days, and my seminar was ending in around 10 days. I was panicking. I wrote that Japanese a message on Facebook: 'Please, I came to Japan, I did not get my gear, do you have any gear?' The gear was there by the time the first train he took arrived, when he picked up the gear from a dojo 400km away and came to Kitamoto, left me the gear, and came to have a drink, after that he came to see me so that we could say goodbye to each other.

Love for kendo

"And why did I stay? Because I started loving kendo, and because I see myself practicing kendo my whole life, and because it makes me happy." Other than Rafaela, four other participants explained how their love for kendo contributed to their kendo experience and that kendo held a special meaning in their lives. Brendon compared his love for kendo with the love that man has for his child:

When you have a child, when you first see it, it's not the same as when you first see the baby of someone else... It is nice when you see your sister's and I don't know who else's, that is all great, that is all beautiful, but when you see your child, it takes your heart, you understand. That is how I feel about kendo.

The love for kendo developed over time for each participant, and as Bruce and Clare explained it was unavoidable. “*So many years I’ve been training, and after so many years I just started loving people in kendo and I always liked that philosophy that kendo brought with itself*” (Bruce).

Kendo as a coping tool

For the majority of the participants, kendo served as a coping tool. During the training, participants explained how they tended to find solutions to their present problems in their lives. Rafaela initially thought that kendo training was the place where she could “*blow off some steam*” and “*release negativity*”, but as she progressed, she realized that training was the place where you needed to be mindful and focused. Brendon used the term “*mental therapy*” to describe kendo as a coping tool:

It represents an extraordinary mental therapy, in a sense that whatever problem I had, no matter what misfortune or I don’t know what, at practice I could either find a solution or somehow relax everything, because I start looking at anything in life differently. Whatever is happening around me or in my close surrounding.

Several other participants explained that by the end of the training session, they “*somehow*” manage to find a solution do their problems. As Helen explained, the reason for that was unknown, but she believed that it had to do with being physically exhausted after training. Teresa and Clare both stated that kendo helped them to take a personal reflection during training. This allowed them to observe their behaviour and emotions, or in other words, become more mindful.

Experiencing kendo in Japan

Bruce changed the way he practiced kendo after experiencing kendo in Japan. The primary discovery for him was the understanding of his limits by working with kendo practitioners from the Tokyo Police.

I was always somehow hard on myself, I did not train enough, I did not do this I did not do that. And then I realized some things you just cannot do above your capabilities and you gotta see how you can adapt them to your life.

Bruce realized that the kendo environment was indisputably different from the one in Serbia and that kendo in Japanese was trained at a higher level. He indicated that no matter how hard you trained, the kendo in Serbia would never be developed enough as it was in Japan.

Here [Serbia] you do not have it, you cannot do it like that. No, you will never be like them, no matter how hard you tried here and tried to create the conditions, that is very hard.

This both motivated and demotivated him at the same time, but this experience also made him realize what was required to be the best kendoka that he could possibly be:

It motivated me because somehow, I'm telling you, I'm a fighter and I want to see it through. And on the other hand, it depressed me because I saw how it all actually looked and you know, you are a little down after that. And it is simply clear that you can never be like that, because such an environment doesn't exist here. If you could go there and live and train with them, like they train, then you could.

Thus, Bruce decided to transfer the things he acquired from his time in Japan and to give his "*personal best*" to reach his competition goal.

Now it's somehow more a goal to get the most out of myself. To be good with what I have, to be correct, to be sharp. To have my kendo resemble what the Japanese do as much as possible to... actually what they do, that is true kendo, that is what's in the core, what we saw in the police HQ. When I saw that I realized several things and now it's simply my goal to strive towards that. And with that, if I get there then the results will be visible. The results themselves will be doable, to become a European champion.

4.4 From ego to mastery

The major theme *from Ego to Mastery* was consisted of two sub-themes, which are *Ego Orientation in Serbia* and *The Case of Teresa*.

Ego orientation in Serbian kendo

Kendo practitioners in Serbia trained kendo for various reasons. As Helen explained, *“there are people who have entirely different motives... reasons, what’s it giving them, what does kendo mean to them.”* These reasons were based on personal achievements, which in the case of Serbian practitioners were mostly focused on achieving a victory over others and to be the best. To continue, Helen also stated, *“first of all, it [Kendo] feeds the egos of many. That is the only thing I can specify as some negative side of kendo. There are many egomaniacs, especially in our kendo.”* Helen perceived this ego oriented environment as a negative effect because she considered that it was not in the spirit of kendo and that the real essence of kendo could not be seen. Also, Mark compared the Japanese and Serbian kendo environment saying:

In Japan, if a man is the best in a dojo, he will change a dojo because there is no more challenge, there is nothing to push him to train harder, to progress further, to improve his kendo. And over here, those guys are mostly content with that, they come to practice, beat everyone, and that’s their venting tool. That’s something I don’t like, that one sporty part, some western vanity.

Brendon had a similar story, but he was focused more on the kendo in general and not only in Serbia.

I think that kendo, up until maybe 6 DAN, carries a large problem called ego. You will do everything for a victory, even if it was some ugly technique, something that is not in the spirit of kendo. The more you develop, the more you become aware that this is not it, and that such a victory is not sweet

According to Mark, kendo in Serbia was influenced by the *“Western values system”* where medals and tournaments were emphasized over personal development while Brendon said that kendo was definitively commercialized and that the spirit of budo was not well preserved but by looking at some well-known European kendo practitioners that were not entirely accurate.

It is also a bit commercialized in a sense, that essence of budo is not very well preserved, it is a bit stained. You could say that happens in

kendo but... I used to think that it also happened in kendo, however when I look at, for example, Ted or Luke, the European champions, when I look at the Japanese, when you look at Koreans, it is correct that on some level they have some true kendo values ingrained in them.

Few participants defined kendo as more than competition and training. For instance, Ed explained that kendo in Japan is “*something more, more deeper*”, and that “*kendo has many faces*.” He used the word sensei as an example, to demonstrate the depth that represented in Japanese culture:

Over there, because of the culture itself and because of the understanding of the word sensei, where sensei is not just someone who holds practice sessions. Sensei is someone who is in a way responsible for you. Someone who guides you, who gave himself a goal to create something better than yourself from you.

Competitions and medals were just one of the aspects of kendo. Bruce, who experienced kendo environment in Japan, said that kendo practitioners in Japan always strive for improvement and that medals matter very little:

There are no [psychological] issues there at all, they don't have issues with one another, with the rest. They do it the best they can, as best as they individually can. Simply they always trained to be better than themselves and then he trains to be better than himself, not to be better than another. Now, what kind of a measure is that, to be better than yourself. That does not mean, I don't know, if you could not beat this guy yesterday, you can beat him now. That is a measure of whether you have improved and he has not. I think that, in some ways, it goes back to whether you can be better than another, but they don't look at it that way. They do not look at it that way.

The case of Teresa

When Teresa was asked to explain how and when the change did from ego to task orientation happened, she explained that there were many factors and reasons that contributed to this shift. She began practicing kendo “*as a hobby*”, and during that

period kendo did not hold any significant meaning to her. After she endured hard training and experienced difficult moments, she realized that it was more than just “a hobby.”

It is physically tough because practice is not easy and it is not exactly entertainment, because you have to make yourself after a practice, after a tough practice, to come back again despite knowing it will be hard.

She shared an example of what she meant by difficult moments during training saying, “for 30 minutes we do kakari [a kendo drill].” Her main motivation was to become strong and get closer to the people in her dojo. “I wanted to get closer to those people, not in a sense to be a part of them, but to not be so weak compared to others.” After a period of time, she started to compete as a part of her dojo, and with that, new motives came. She said;

Later when you come or end up in one of those stories, then your motivation is to give it your best and to go to a competition. For yourself, you know, since if you were chosen, you give your best.

During this period, she would also experience the feeling of guilt if she were not giving her best “I had feelings of guilt when I worked and could not make it to all practice sessions. Somehow, you feel you are not there physically. You have not given your maximum.” After this period was over, Teresa started to focus more on the kendo itself, the execution of the skills and how everything looked.

And then the ideas come, like these old folks, I want my Men to be pretty. And then I started, as I started to change it, to not have kendo be just attack, attack, attack, and then on one side maybe that fell apart in a competitive sense, but I moved on to the other side, to do pretty kendo. How what I’m doing works like.

In Teresa’s case, kendo went from being just a hobby to a very significant activity that shaped her to be a person that she was today.

5 DISSCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the findings of the study and connect it to the previous research, implications, recommendations for practitioners and future researcher, and conclusion. The purpose of the study was to explore and understand the motivation of highly skilled kendo practitioners, to better understand their reasons and desires to practise and compete. Additionally, the study also explores the possible reasons that contributed to the change of motivation within the kendo practitioners, which finally led to their staying in kendo.

5.1 Reasons for starting and reasons for doing kendo

The findings in the study revealed that participant's motivation changed from the period when they started practicing kendo until now. By utilizing SDT it is evident that participant's motivation shifted from extrinsic to intrinsic sources of motivation, and by using AGT, it is discovered that younger participants tended to be more ego orientated than their older colleagues. Interestingly, task orientation is present within both younger and older kendo practitioners. The findings also revealed that intrinsically motivated practitioners are at the same time mastery orientated, due to task orientation properties to facilities autonomy behaviour. This discovery is in accordance with Ntoumanis's (2001) study.

Reasons for starting Kendo. The major theme *Reasons for Stating Kendo* represents the factors that made the participants in the study start doing kendo. The majority of these factors are considered as external motives (i.e. a friend, a sensei, need for sport), engaging in an activity as a mean to an end and not for its sake. However, these extrinsic motives are positioned on the autonomous part of SDT continuum (identified regulation and integrated regulation). All participants stated that a friend played an important factor in their discovering of kendo. Next to friends, a sensei is also perceived as someone who influenced participant's interest in kendo, by guiding them and at the same time serving as a role model. Sato (2011) stated that sensei serves as a role model to kendo practitioners, and that is has a lasting impact on their kendo lives and experience. Even though, extrinsically motivation has been considered as a less desired type of motivation, Deci and Ryan (2000) stated that extrinsically motivated individuals can perform actions with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of

the value or utility of the task. For instance, it was discovered that participant's past sport experience and interest in Japanese culture served as important reasons for their kendo engagement. From previous sports experiences, several participants inherited the desire and the need to be constantly involved in some form of physical activity. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), extrinsic motivation can vary significantly in the level to which it is autonomous. Participants at the beginning of their kendo engagement demonstrated a more autonomous type of extrinsic motivation because of their personal beliefs and a freedom of choice to start practicing this martial art to satisfy their needs.

Reasons for doing Kendo. The major theme *Reasons for Doing Kendo* represents the present motives for practicing kendo. According to SDT, the majority of participants exhibited a high level of intrinsic motivation. Participants practiced kendo for pure enjoyment and satisfaction. Deci and Ryan (1985) stated that when the needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are satisfied, behaviours that may not have been initially intrinsically motivated are 'taken in' and internalized to become more autonomously regulated. In the study, participants came to appreciate the value of kendo and wanted to take part in it because they considered kendo as part of themselves. Several kendo practitioners explained that it is hard for them to imagine their lives without kendo. Kendo also gave participants a chance to constantly develop and to evolve both physically and mentally. Fun, enjoyment and love for kendo are also regarded as important factors that fuelled participant's motivation for kendo. These findings are found to be consistent in several studies that investigated motivation in sport (Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010; Mallet & Hanrahan, 2004; Jones, Mackay, & Peters, 2006).

Kendo practitioner's goal orientation. Interestingly, it is found that as participant's motivation changed from extrinsic to intrinsic, so did their goal orientation. This finding is consistent with the study that researched connections between SDT and AGT (Ntoumanis, 2001). This is evident in the case of the several older kendo practitioners that placed less emphasize on the outcomes of the competitions and focused more on the experience of the competitions. Since competitions are not as important as they used to be, these practitioners dedicate their time in the dojo to improve their kendo ("to be better than yesterday"), and imparting knowledge to younger practitioners. On another hand, Bruce and Clare who demonstrated specific competition orientation goals (e.g., Top 3 in the Europe competition) exhibited a high level of ego orientation together with

the mastery orientation. This shift in ego and task orientation can clearly be seen in Teresa's case, which is picked as an individual experience. Teresa started practicing kendo out of curiosity and desire for physical activity. Kendo for her was nothing more than a hobby. At the beginning her goal was to prove herself in front of the others by actively participating in various competitions. She also experienced internal pressure whenever she missed practice because of her high expectations. Over time as the significance of competitions changed so did her goals. As Teresa matured, she shifted her attention to improving her kendo skills and training other kendo practitioners in her dojo.

Ego orientation environment in Serbia. There has been an ongoing debate amongst kendo practitioners whether kendo should be regarded as a sport or a martial art. Findings of the study indicate that kendo practice could differ from culture to culture. Theeboom and De Knop (1999) stated that martial arts that are trained in the West cannot be characterized by a clear and uninformed concept. Hence, Theeboom, De Knop and, Wylleman (1995) described three approaches to martial art practice in the West; (1) traditional (harmony between internal and external elements), (2) efficiency (application of the techniques in a fight) and (3) sporting (regarding martial arts as a sport). In Europe, due to significant influence of the western sports culture, kendo is mostly viewed as a sport, especially in the eyes of younger kendo practitioners. In Japan, kendo is a martial art with many faces, and a sporting aspect is certainly one of them. In their study Theeboom, Dong, and Vertonghen (2012) pointed out that the primary focus for martial arts in Asia is in the maturing process of the activity itself, where competitive aspect of it (winning or losing) is merely treated as a by-product, whereas, Westerners are focused more on the competitive side of martial arts and strive for a quick rank advancement. Regardless of these different views kendo is first and foremost a martial art that emphasizes the holistic development of a human being that can be regarded as a sport. It was discovered that kendo in Serbia is significantly influenced by the western sports values where winning medals and practicing kendo as a sport is encouraged. This ego orientated environment can be explained with the deficit of kendo experts (sensei's) who possess a high DAN rank. Due to this fact, it is believed that the "real" values of kendo are not conveyed entirely. However, the finding also revealed that ego environment is in a stage of transformation and that there are practitioners who follow the way of kendo teaching from Japan. By looking at what

motivates practitioners in the study, we can clearly see the other side of kendo; “personal development”, “teaching others”, “life skills”, “kendo as a coping tool”, and “competitions as a test” are found to be the main reasons why participants in the study do kendo.

5.2 Reasons for staying in kendo

The major theme *Reasons for Staying in Kendo* represents the factors that contributed to participants staying in Kendo. Following Basic Psychological Needs, three universal needs for competence, for autonomy and for relatedness are satisfied, which led to increase in participant’s motivation and finally staying in kendo. Deci and Ryan (1994) stated that people are inherently motivated to feel connected to others within the social setting (relatedness), to function effectively in sport setting (competence), and to feel a sense of personal initiative while doing an activity (autonomy).

Autonomy. High level of perceived autonomy is found within all participants in the study. Findings also revealed that participants practice kendo without any external pressure. When participants were asked about the levels of autonomy that they perceive, all participants in the study answered that it was their personal choice to practice kendo. “*It was always my choice, and it still is.*” During the first period participants practiced kendo in a more controlled way, but later as they reached higher rank (e.g., DAN), they became more autonomous. Teresa explained that once a kendoka reaches DAN rank, people stop telling him what to do, and it will be up to an individual to correct and improve his kendo. In that way, participant’s way of learning kendo becomes less controlled and more autonomous.

Competence. As practitioners advance in kendo, various situations serve as a proof of competence. For instance, several participants perceived their first bogu experience as an important factor during the early stage of their kendo development. Receiving a bogu meant that practitioners acquired basic kendo mastery and that his skills are developed enough to start working on advanced kendo practice. Wearing bogu is explained as a challenging transition since training becomes more rigorous from that point on. The participants regard this experience as a testimony to their kendo skills, which increased their self-confidence and desire to practice. Next to wearing bogu, personal achievements are also regarded as an important factor. For instance, Clare felt an

increase in motivation after having an even battle against stronger opponents. That served her as proof that she can go against more experienced fighters than herself.

Relatedness. Feeling connected with people with whom practitioner in the study trains is regarded as a crucial part of kendo. Few kendo practitioners described how feeling connected, and the sense of belongingness with other people during the early stage of kendo development was an important factor. This is found to be in line with Sato's (2011) findings, in which he used the term "Big Family" to describe how participants from his study perceived strong bonds with people from the dojo. In the later stage, few participants reported that this relationship is still present but not crucial for their motivation since they discovered themselves in kendo, and they didn't perceive the support from others as an important factor. However, the majority of them described that meeting people through kendo meant experiencing both good and bad moments. Additionally, the relationship with sensei is the most important one in the dojo. Several participants explained that having a good feedback from sensei was important for their self-confidence and grasping competence. However, few participants reported that the absence of positive feedback could also have negative influence on their self-belief.

Changes in life. Throughout the course of each career, kendo becomes an integrated part of participant's lives. This fact can be explained by several factors. First, all participants described their deep love and connection for kendo, and how much kendo influenced their lives. As Mark explained, kendo gave him more pleasure and satisfaction than all his other hobbies combined. Secondly, kendo served as a great coping tool. For Clare, it is a place of peace and tranquillity, a place where she could clear her mind from any external and internal troubles. Finally, participants discovered how to implement skills from kendo in their everyday life. Kendo taught them how to step out of their comfort zones, how to improve communication at workplace, fight an impossible battle and discover themselves.

5.3 Implications of the study and future research

The study could be enhanced and improved in several ways. During the data analysis, several themes which were not related to the purpose of the present study were discovered that could potentially serve as a direction for future research. One theme was related to the drop-out rate of kendo practitioners and the reasons for quitting kendo. Kendo is described as both mentally and physically demanding sport; hence it would be

desirable to understand the other side of the coin, the reasons why people quit kendo. Secondly, sensei's role in fostering motivational climate was found to be an important aspect for practitioner's staying in kendo. Since sensei serves as a role model and plays a pivotal role in participant's development, researchers could focus their investigation on this unique relationship. Finally, the findings of the study could only be applied to kendo practitioners in Serbian. To better understand how "Western" countries perceive and understand kendo, more similar studies are needed to be conducted with bigger sample size from other nations using different research approach.

Interestingly, kendo environment is a unique setting to carry out research since it is bursting with various cultural and social factors. This study only shows us how kendo is practiced and understood in one country. Hence it would be interesting to see and compare how this martial art is practiced in other nations. Obtaining that information would help future sport professionals and sports psychologists in creating a positive and thriving environment that would help increase sports participation.

5.4 Limitations

There are several limitations in the study. First, the data was collected in participant's native language (Serbian language) to ensure that they can tell stories without any restrictions. However, the quotes that were used had to be translated in English and during this process some information could have been lost, and it was challenging to keep the context intact during translation. Second, the coding of the data was entirely done by the researcher of the study. The possibility of adding the second coder would ensure the even stronger validity of the study, but since there was no time, only one person did the coding. Finally, the researcher underwent a bracketing interview to ensure that the data collection and analysis is done with unbiased mind. However, it is impossible to dispel entirely any assumptions that the researcher had regarding kendo in Serbia. More similar studies are needed to ensure that the findings are valid and trustworthy.

5.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the motivational factors of highly skilled kendo practitioners, to better understand their reasons and desire to practice and compete. Moreover, the study also focused on detecting the possible

reasons that contributed to the change of motivation within kendo practitioners, which finally led to their staying in kendo. By utilizing SDT, it is discovered that participant's motivation has changed from the period when they started until now. Initially, participants engaged kendo activity to satisfy their personal needs (e.g., need for sports activity, interest in Japanese culture, and past sports experience). The participants were mainly driven by extrinsic sources of motivation (identified and integrated regulation). When the needs for competence, for autonomy and for relatedness were satisfied, participants were motivated to engage in kendo activity out of their choosing without pressure, hence practicing kendo out of pure enjoyment driven by intrinsic motives. This was explained with the fact that kendo was integrated fully into participants lives, acting as a strong coping tool, promoting constant development and personal growth. To continue, as practitioner's motivation changed so did their goal orientation. It was discovered that younger practitioners exhibited both ego and task goals orientations, while older and more experienced kendo practitioners are focused more on mastery. To the best of researcher's knowledge, this type of research is the first of the kind so the results should only be treated as preliminary. More similar studies are needed in order to understand the motivation behind kendo. Gaining this knowledge would contribute to promoting kendo and other martial arts practice across the world.

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APPENDIX A

Demographic Information

Age:

Years participating in kendo:

DAN (i.e. degree):

Kendo club:

Gender:

Frequency of practicing kendo:

National team:

Tournaments:

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

My name is Milan Dumić, and I am presently a student of Sport and Exercise Psychology at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, currently working on a master thesis project with the aim to explore and investigate motivation in kendo. The purpose of this study is to investigate the motivation of kendoka and reasons why they practice and compete. To accomplish this goal, I am inviting You to participate in an interview in order to gather more information about your involvement in this martial art. You will be asked to answer questions in as much details as possible. The interview should take about 30-60 minutes to complete. I will be using a voice recorder to obtain an accurate account of your story. This will allow me to identify the key themes associated with your motivation to practice and compete. You may also refuse to respond to any question you do not want to answer. There is no compensation for participating in this study.

You may also be asked to take part in a second interview; in case I detect some points that need further clarification or if the data is not informative enough. The interviews will be done in Serbian language in order to secure that the participant can express himself adequately in his native language, and later on they will be translated to English. The participant may review the translation if they request it.

The information in the study will be kept confidential. A pseudonym will be used as a substitute for your name to protect your identity. The data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time without having to explain the reasons. In case you choose to withdraw at any moment during the interview or data analysis, you may also request to have all information related to you destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will remain confidential.

The information obtained in the study will be used to write a master thesis, and relevant finding may be published in scientific journals or presented at conferences, however, your identity will be treated confidentially.

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I have read the above information and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand I will be given a copy of this form for my records.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____