

International Journal of Health Science

KARATE FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

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Abstract: This article is extracted from the master's thesis entitled "The Martial Art Karate: beyond the fight in Manaus/AM", and aims to present Karate as a form of martial art that provides improvements in the quality of life of its practitioner. The research is qualitative in nature and is associated with the author's professional experience as a Sensei with a 5th dan Karate degree. It is known that the practice of martial arts brings physical, social and psychological benefits, based on the knowledge of physiology, sociology and psychology. It provides the practitioner with changes in behavior and improvements in social relationships; physical health related to strength and endurance; strengthening the bone and muscular structure; in the field of psychomotricity, the development of cognitive and visuomotor skills, emotional balance with self-control of instincts, in short, general improvement in health that provides longevity with quality of life.

Keywords: Karate; Health; Quality of life; Self-control.

THE LIFE CYCLE AND ITS CONDITIONS

All of us human beings know that we will die, as this fact is part of the natural trajectory of human life on earth: being born, growing up, aging and dying. This cycle is a reality and the journey are a little longer for some than for others. But it's finitude that no one likes to think about.

In the course of the civilizing process, medicine, through its health professionals, the discovery of new medicines, the use of technology, gradually advances with new scientific discoveries finding mechanisms to increase the longevity of human beings. In the field of public security, protection mechanisms studied and applied by the State to protect the population, while in the personal field, each person also uses means to acquire personal

defense, health, aiming to distance themselves from death and increase their life span, with the health benefits that practicing physical activity, especially Karate, provides.

To think about the finiteness of life is discomfort for humans. In this context, Elias (2001) tells us that death is a problem for the living. The dead have no problems. Among the many creatures that die on Earth, death constitutes, thanks to its symbolic meaning, a problem only for human beings. The author emphasizes that although they share birth, illness, youth, maturity, old age and death with animals, only they can predict their own end, being aware that it can occur at any time and taking special precautions – such as individuals and as groups – to protect themselves against the threat of annihilation. Elias (2001, p. 10).

Elias (2001) also warns us that death is a threat of annihilation and a problem for living human beings, and highlights that one of the causes of it is disease and, consequently, old age.

When reading Norbert Elias (1980), we see that the concept of figuration refers to the relationships of functional interdependence that human beings live with each other. When we shift this concept to the elderly, in the context of a productive society, we identify that this being, as he ages, becomes marginalized from certain figurations, in other words, he becomes, what Elias (2001), calls dying.

For Le Breton (2011, p. 224) when talking about the absolute alterity of the elderly, when he addresses the issue stating that "old age is today this 'gray continent' delimiting an indecisive, somewhat lunar population, lost in Modernity" and highlights:

Time is not in experience and memory. He is not in a deteriorated body either. The elderly person slowly slips out of the symbolic field, transgressing the central values of modernity: youth, seduction, vitality, work. She is the incarnation of the repressed. A

reminder of the precariousness and fragility of the human condition, it is the very face of absolute otherness. Intolerable image of aging that affects all things in a society that worships youth and no longer knows how to symbolize the fact of getting old or dying. The work of aging evokes a death that progresses in the silence of the aging of cells without it being possible to prevent it. Le Breton (2011, p. 224).

The author addresses the “aging dilemma” which, as it arrives and advances, increases the alienation of the elderly from the symbolic environment of contemporary society that emphasizes youth at the expense of old age.

HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE WITH KARATE PRACTICE

However, these same human beings have used different mechanisms to hinder the onset of degenerative diseases, delay or make the approach of old age, or at least its characteristics, as difficult as possible, due to the “fear” of the end of life. One of these mechanisms is behavior change, with the option of practicing sports such as martial Karate. This sporting modality involves the practice of physical exercises involving resistance, strength, flexibility and relaxation, to return the body to its normal functional state after strenuous exercise.

It follows the modality, obedience to its rules of conduct, which are fundamental in social relationships, accompanied by considered philosophical reflections that contribute to harmonizing and leaving the body in a state of balance.

Regarding eating habits, all martial art practitioners are led by their masters to stop eating products that are potentially harmful to health, such as processed foods, and to adopt healthier habits, with the aim of providing them with various benefits, including which are related to psychomotricity, healthy longevity and quality of life.

Almeida (2012, p. 15) comments that common sense appropriated this object in order to summarize improvements or a high standard of well-being in people's lives, whether economic, social or emotional. However, the area of knowledge in quality of life is in a phase of identity construction. Sometimes they identify it in relation to health, sometimes housing, leisure, physical activity and eating habits, but the fact is that this way of knowing states that all these factors lead to a positive perception of well-being.

Almeida also comments that understanding quality of life deals with numerous fields of human knowledge, biological, social, political, economic, medical, among others, in a constant interrelationship. And he highlights that:

It is noted that the title implies that quality of life depends on individual actions to be transformed, as it conveys the idea that the subject can change their habits and, therefore, improve their standard of well-being and live better. Furthermore, it states that well-being and quality of life are synonymous or that, at least, one influences the other. [...] In summary, in a careless reading of the topic, it is possible to conclude that not all subjects have quality of life, and that it is necessary to try to obtain it. And this is the main message conveyed in the media. Almeida (2012, pp. 15/16).

In the same context, Pinto (2018, p. 83/84), states that the practice of Karate, as a sport and its rules of behavior at the table, not only in terms of good manners and body postures, but also in terms of dietary rules, knowing what to consume and healthy eating practices constitute fundamental tools for the integral development of the individual, to achieve longevity with a better quality of life. Even though we know that the act of eating was culturally constructed, contemporary science helps us change this behavior.

In this context, Baumann (2010, pp. 37/38)

tells us that “when we begin to belong to new social groups we have the need to adapt to their habitus – the customs and norms of conduct [...]”

Furthermore, addressing the benefits that sport can provide to the practitioner, as one of the tools for improving quality of life, Almeida (2012, pp.108/109), assures us that “it is necessary to consider not only its physiological benefits, but also seek to meet other levels of human demands such as relationships, well-being and self-esteem. The practice of sport presents itself as one of these possibilities, as sport is a social phenomenon and influences the relationship between participants”.

In relation to the benefits generated from the practice of martial arts, Cartaxo (2013, pp. 172/173) states that the martial artist is one who seeks the quality of technique and Karate, like Judo, Taekwondo and Aikido are struggles that have philosophy as a way of educating. The author highlights the benefits of combat games in physical education as “cognitive improvement and development; the affectionate relationship between colleagues; global motor coordination; interaction with the group; knowing how to deal with the fear of fighting; improving concentration; self-control and self-esteem; and mutual respect.”

Karate training provides the practitioner with a physically prepared body and its constant practice generates a harmonious harmony between the physical and the psychic, both in Kihon (basic training), in Kumitê (technical fighting), and in Kata (form; imaginary fighting).

In this context, Pinto (2018) highlights that:

In Kata training (form, imaginary fight), in addition to the athlete developing psychomotor skills of balance, laterality, strength, resistance, dissociation of movements, it also contributes as an auxiliary tool in the formal movements of attacks, defenses and counterattacks and,

at the end of its execution, ends in the same place as it began. These are gestures, exhaustive movements performed moments with muscular tension and moments with relaxed muscles in tune with breathing. This provides muscle tone and consequent physical fitness to the Karateka, improving the impact force with the speed of movements (kimê) – factors of fundamental importance in Karate. (PINTO, 2018, p. 84).

As benefits generated from the regular practice of Karate, especially Kata, Molari (2003) assures that “scientific evidence reports that the development of physical fitness increases longevity, eliminating risk factors such as hypertension, obesity and a sedentary lifestyle, generating health and a greater quality of life”. The author states that the regular practice of Karate Kata provides us with several benefits and also highlights that:

By practicing Kata, 3 to 5 times a week in Karate classes, individuals improve their physical fitness levels, and their classification in relation to usual physical activity, changing their category from inactive to moderately active, or to active, or for very active [...]. This way, each component of health-related physical fitness can be developed, as mentioned, through the practice of Kata 3 to 5 times a week, in Karate classes [...]. Another health perspective that the practice of activities related to Karate provides, specifically Kata, is the contribution to the activity of daily life in a group of elderly people [...]. (MOLARI, 2003/2004, p.25).

Empirical knowledge shows us that the exercises and practice of Karate generate resistance and flexibility throughout the body, which provides the Karateka with ease in applying blows, repeatedly with energy savings (muscle tone), during training, reducing physical tiredness or exhaustion.

What we stated above agrees with what Molari (2003/2004) asserts, when he highlights that:

Regarding the development of martial art,

in particular Karate, flexibility helps in the development of techniques for the good progress of the art, as a kizami zuki attack (punch with the hand in front), mawashi gueri (circular kick), or uramawashi gueri (reverse spinning kick) would be impossible without the efficiency of flexibility. Furthermore, flexibility contributes to energy savings and improves the development of other motor skills and abilities (agility, strength, speed). (MOLARI, 2003/2004, p. 26).

Highlighting the above defended by Molari, the example in Figure 1, uramawashi-gueri demonstration, highlights the need for skills such as speed, strength, flexibility, balance, self-control of the foot strike, which is an attack that is difficult to execute and master.



Figure 1: Demonstration ura mawashi-geri – the author.

Source: author's collection

In Karate, more precisely in Kata training, exactly what Oliveira (2015, p. 42) highlights occurs when he states that “global coordination and experimentation lead the child to acquire dissociation of movements. This means that it must be able to perform multiple movements at the same time, with each limb performing a different activity, maintaining the unity of the gesture [...]”.

Bringing this reality to Karate, we can mention, as an example, the execution of Kata Chinto (combatant from the east; flamingo on stone), of Okinawan origin from Shuri and Naha, practiced by black belts of various

styles.

In this context, according to Pinto, (2018) highlights that:

Kata Chinto is characterized by the speed of its strikes and, mainly, its different movements and functions performed simultaneously, including, in one of the passages, with the body supported by just one of the legs, while the raised foot is at knee height. opposite, in the position (nami-ashi-dachi), when executing at the same time, the defense with the closed hand against an attack at stomach height (ken-guedan-barai-uke) forward, and mid-height defense (ken- chudan-soto-uke) backwards. Then he executes another double movement with different functions, that is, a defense with the cleaver with his closed hand (tsuiken-chudan-soto-uke) and at the same time with a kick (kizami-gueri) forward with the foot that was raised in front. It must be noted, therefore, that these are units of gestures that are difficult to execute effectively, but that stimulate the development of global coordination, balance and the acquisition of dissociation of movements. (PINTO, 2018, p. 147)

As it can be seen, in figure 2, the demonstration of Kata Chinto, exactly at the point where simultaneous, different movements occur and with different functions – movement dissociation, that is, another benefit for the Karateka's health, related to development psychomotor function, your ability to concentrate, pay attention and locate yourself in time and space.



Figure 2: Demonstration of dual and simultaneous defense with different functions

Source: author's collection – the author in the center.

In order for the body to be able to perform movements of this nature, it is necessary that it is initially prepared with behavioral change and discipline, for the practice of physical exercises, technical training, balance and breathing training and repeated training of the Chinto kata itself. times, including with his Bunkai (demonstration of the kata technique), in parallel with a healthy diet, promoting quality of life.

As Carper (2015, pp. 279/280) assures us, “never doubt the power of activity to prevent your brain from being captured by the pathology and symptoms of dementia. There is a mountain of research that proves this [...] Eating to have a better chance of avoiding memory impairment and dementia means making a very conscious choice.”

In this context, illustrating other benefits that physical exercise provides to the practitioner, Abramoff (2017), who addresses issues related to preventive medicine, assures us that, in addition to the issue of continued health care, heredity contributes to only 25% of deaths premature births, while lifestyle – poor diet, smoking, stress, uncontrolled blood pressure and cholesterol, use of alcohol and drugs, risky sexual practices, sedentary lifestyle or not using a seat belt – is responsible for more than 63%. And it draws our attention to the practice of prevention in healthcare to

have longevity with quality of life.

The author warns us about the signs of healthy aging, among other activities, and highlights the need to maintain regular physical activity; cultivate healthy nutritional habits and weight control; do not smoke or abuse alcohol. And he points out “The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 80% of heart disease and strokes, 80% of type 2 diabetes cases and 40% of cancer cases could be prevented if we did just three things: stop smoking, follow a healthy diet and maintain good physical shape. Abramoff (2017, p. 29)”.

For this last suggestion, the practice of Karate is an indication of sporting activity that seeks balance of mind and body on the journey of the life cycle and its longevity.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Considering the carrying out of this study, supported by theoretical support, we understand that quality of life is common in the daily life of our contemporary society, inserted in popular language to indicate different meanings, connotations, although still without a definition of its meaning, but it does not understand only physical and psychological health, but also factors such as good social relationships at home, in educational environments, in work and in the environment of sports practices, which directly or indirectly affect the quality of life of human beings.

In this context, as can be seen, the practice of the martial art Karate has been embraced by society as a socio-sporting activity that provides health and, therefore, an alternative to finding health with quality of life. As an institutionalized and Olympic sport, it is also an important socializing instrument, a social phenomenon that benefits its practitioners by modifying their habits and customs, with behaviors appropriate to good practices in

society, with discipline also in acquiring new eating habits, as a result of the need of having a healthy body to be able to keep up with the pace of daily training and the growth of technical level in official competitions.

With the adaptation of the practicing athlete, Karateka, to this system, other benefits are consequences, that is, in the field of health, physical and mental preparation, while in the social field, new relationships during socio-sporting and environmental activities in tournaments and championships. And, for the elderly Karateka, healthy aging with greater willingness and less interdependence to carry out their daily activities with quality of life. This way, we clarify what we propose, highlighting the reasons for the effective transformation of Karate.

Thus, based on the evidence presented, we consider that Karate is governed by disciplinary principles and standards of conduct, which directs its practitioners to good manners of coexistence in society, which are elements of the Western civilizing process that has spread over martial arts.

Among other benefits, Karate promotes social inclusion and encourages individuals to achieve physical and psychological health from youth to old age, which generates quality of life.

From the perspective of the Western civilizing process, Karate went from being a martial art of war to an Olympic sport, contributing directly to those who practice it and to social organization in terms of order and discipline.

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