

A LEVEL OF ASSURANCE OF SELF-DEFENCE INSTRUCTORS FOR WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC GROUPS

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Abstract

The number of attacks on people with different types of special needs worldwide is growing. It causes the increasing request for self-defence courses created for a group of people with disabilities. Most self-defence systems dealing with specific groups focus on women or elderly people. People with disabilities are least included. The aim of this research was to find how self-defence instructors feel prepared to work with specific groups, including people with disabilities. This research involved 65 respondents (52 men and 13 women). Self-assessment of the ability and willingness to lead, communicate or organise self-defence courses for individual groups with special needs or willingness to integrate these people into regular self-defence lessons were evaluated by a created questionnaire. Results showed that self-defence instructors are most concerned about working with people with mental impairments and do not feel well trained or prepared to work with specific groups, except for self-defence of women, children, and seniors. For improvement, self-defence instructors require a level of self-assurance for working with people with special needs. This will require targeted education aimed at working with people with disabilities.

Keywords: competence, combatives, specific groups

Introduction

The number of people with specific disabilities is increasing due to the ageing population, the increased incidence of chronic diseases and the improvement of the disability assessment methodology. About 15% of the world's population lives with some form of disability, of whom 2-4% has significant difficulties in functioning. This is 5% more than the estimation of WHO from the 1970s. (World Health Organization & Bank, 2011).

Awareness of inclusive education is also increasing, as confirmed by the actions of some organisations. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) promotes the full integration of persons with disabilities in societies (Finkelhor & Asdigian, 1996; United Nations, 2006). The CRPD references the importance of international development in addressing the rights of persons with disabilities.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2017) clearly states that disability cannot be a reason or criteria for lack of access to development programming and the realisation of human rights. We can recognise the focus on the safety of people with disabilities in the Agenda goals.

Nowadays, people with special needs have better access to various activities than in the past. Despite these efforts, we are witnessing that people with special needs are all too often victims of crime (Finkelhor & Asdigian, 1996; Kane, 2008; Bones, 2013; Čírtková, 2014; Skotáková, 2021). We consider it very importantly to examine the risk of attack or conflict resolution knowledge by people with special needs.

The abuse of people with disabilities is sometimes gendered and disability-specific. Women are abused by carers through controlling finances, withholding medication and limiting access to aids and equipment. They also experience domestic and family violence and sexual assault at higher rates than women without disabilities (Woodlock et al. 2014, Hughes, 2012). Collier (2006) examines people with speech disorders. The results show that the risk of abuse is exacerbated if people have little or no functional speech and no means to report abuses when they occur. More than 90% of women with severe communication disorders, for instance, suffer abuse.

The results of Nosek et al's (2001) research indicated a need for the development of disability-sensitive abuse screening instruments and the development and testing of interventions to assist women with disabilities in recognising abuse, protecting themselves in abusive situations, and removing themselves from potentially abusive relationships and situations. This is supported by research by Tomsa et al. (2021) which shows details of abuse according to a type of handicap with one in three adults with an intellectual disability suffering sexual abuse in adulthood.

There are many theories as to why people with disabilities are at increased risk of victimisation. The work of Meier and Miethe (1993) suggests it's because people with disability are more likely to be economically disadvantaged, making them more vulnerable to crimes. They say it's the social disadvantage and not disability *per se* that leads to higher rates of assault. But this does not explain high rates of abuse even when people with disability are well-resourced or live in privileged areas. Then there is the dependency-stress theory. This suggests that because people with disability often need carers, their carers get stressed and sometimes act aggressively in response to demands. This can be exacerbated by people with a disability, when able and given the opportunity to self-report, being discouraged from doing so by fear of losing their home, being placed in a more restrictive or unfamiliar setting, fear of reprisal, or even out of affection for the offender (Murphy, O'Callaghan & Clare, 2007).

These conditions have led to increasing requests for self-defence courses created for people with disabilities or for more inclusive types of classes. Currently, most self-defence systems (Čihounková, 2015) dealing with specific groups focus on women, the elderly, and children, with disabled people being least included.

This research follows a series of projects focused on the self-defence of specific groups, which were conducted at the Faculty of Sports Studies of Masaryk University in Brno. Specifically, the research focused on people with special needs, their concerns (Čihounková, Skotáková, & Kohoutková, 2016; Skotáková, Reguli & Vajda, 2021; Tomeček, & Skotáková, 2019) and evaluation of the methodology of self-defence courses for specific groups that we created, (Bugala, Skotáková, Čihounková, & Reguli, 2016; Skotáková, Čihounková, & Sklenaříková, 2017; Šenkýř, Skotáková, Čihounková & Kohoutková, 2015).

In this contribution, we focus on the competencies of the instructor of self-defence with the aim of finding how self-defence instructors feel prepared to work with specific groups, including people with disabilities.

Materials and method

Methodologically, the work builds on the long-term plan of the Faculty of Sports Studies to map the possibilities of self-defence of groups of people with special needs. The first part of the research plan focused on the security concerns of individual-specific groups (Čihounková et al., 2016). The second phase proposed and evaluated a methodology that can be applied for teaching self-defence of specific groups (Šenkýř et al., 2015), and the third phase determined the readiness and competency of qualified self-defence instructors to work with these groups.

Participants

Sixty-five respondents – self-defence instructors in the Czech Republic (52 men and 13 women) volunteered for this research. For a detailed characteristic (Table 1).

Table 1 Characteristics of respondents

Sex	<i>Men</i>	<i>52</i>
	<i>Women</i>	<i>13</i>
Age	<i>20-25</i>	<i>5</i>
	<i>26-30</i>	<i>13</i>
	<i>31-35</i>	<i>13</i>
	<i>36-40</i>	<i>11</i>
	<i>More than 40</i>	<i>23</i>
Length of practice	<i>Max 2 years</i>	<i>7</i>
	<i>3-5 years</i>	<i>12</i>
	<i>5 and more</i>	<i>46</i>
Education	<i>Vocational school</i>	<i>5</i>
	<i>High school</i>	<i>16</i>
	<i>University</i>	<i>30</i>
Graduate of self defense instructor	<i>No</i>	<i>13</i>
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>52 (21 Krav Maga, 9 czech combat academy)</i>
Total	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>65</i>

Measures

We proceeded from the definition of competence as a comprehensive system of knowledge, abilities, and willingness to apply them (Beneš, 2014). According to this definition, a questionnaire that evaluated the self-assessment of the ability and willingness to lead, communicate, or organise self-defence courses for individual groups with special needs or willingness to integrate these people into regular self-defence lessons was created.

The self-defence instructors expressed their level of their confidence on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 means 'I feel completely confident', 5 means 'I do not feel confident at all') with the statements about their competency of working with specific groups (1 means 'I feel completely confident', 5 means 'I do not feel confident at all').

Procedures

The questionnaire was distributed online. Every self-defence instructor in the Czech Republic could participate in the study beign approached through an email obtained from their website, their club's website or umbrella organisations.

Analysis

Data were processed by MS Excel, analysing for descriptive statistics. Cohen's d was applied for effects sizes.

Results

The return of the questionnaire was marked by the coronavirus crisis when some clubs were forced to close down and others had existential problems. In general, the willingness to participate in this research was low with only 55 reponses.

In the questionnaire, we asked instructors if they were educated in working with specific groups (woman, elderly, children, visually impaired, hearing impaired, people with physical disabilities, people with intellectual disability) and how they evaluated this education.

Most of the 55 instructors stated that they were educated to work with women and feel well prepared. Alarming is the fact that other specific groups are not the regular part of self-defence instructors' education (Table 2). About one-third of instructors are educated in working with other specific groups, but only a few feel well prepared for it.

Table 2: Courses related to teaching specific groups and instructors perception of their personal level of competence

	VI	HI	PD	W	ID	W	E	CH
Numbers of Instructors who completed training	28	15	18	18	10	55	39	27
Numbers of instructors who feel qualified for work with specific groups	8	4	6	6	4	53	27	20

Note: VI – visually impaired, HI – hearing impaired, PD – Physically disabilities, Wh – Wheelchair users, ID – intellectual disabilities, E – the elderly, CH – children

We used effect size to find out the differences between men and women, instructors with and without a university education, and instructors with the length of the practice under 5 years and more than 5 years (Table 3.)

Table 3: The differences between men and women, instructors with university education and lower education, and instructors with the length of practice under 5 years and more than 5 years

How qualified do you feel to teach a self-defence course for specific group?						I know how the lesson for the specific group should be					I know how to communicate with people from specific groups					I know how to modify individual exercises and training for specific groups				
Group	Cohen D					Cohen D					Cohen D					Cohen D				
	M	SD	MxW	UNIxLE	LP x MP	M	SD	MxW	UNIxLE	LP x MP	M	SD	MxW	UNIxLE	LP x MP	M	SD	MxW	UNIxLE	LP x MP
VI	3.28	1.34	1.13	0.31	-0.7	3.17	1.45	1.26	0.42	-0.37	3.45	1.32	1.27	0.5	-0.3	3.32	1.46	1.07	0.53	-0.47
HI	2.81	1.35	0.55	0.59	-0.41	2.91	1.52	0.7	0.44	-0.25	2.91	1.43	0.6	0.52	-0.11	3.18	1.48	0.69	0.44	-0.38
PD	3.03	1.47	0.78	0.76	-0.43	3	1.52	1.02	0.8	-0.31	3.6	1.32	0.42	0.37	-0.13	3.17	1.52	0.95	0.72	-0.45
Wh	2.78	1.57	0.7	0.77	-0.68	2.78	1.57	0.77	0.72	-0.63	3.43	1.44	0.24	0.58	-0.37	2.86	1.56	0.77	0.71	-0.55
ID	1.98	1.34	0.41	0.44	-0.15	2.1	1.5	0.53	0.25	-0.04	2.15	1.52	0.51	0.26	-0.14	2.02	1.43	0.41	0.37	-0.12
W	4.9	0.4	0.14	-0.27	-0.76	4.89	0.4	0.14	-0.27	-1	4.89	0.4	-0.32	0	0.12	4.92	0.32	0.3	-0.13	-0.87
E	4.22	1.15	0.48	0.08	-0.53	4.26	1.08	0.39	0.18	-0.56	4.34	1.02	0.13	0.11	-0.39	4.28	1.13	0.3	0.15	-0.63
CH	4.65	0.84	0.045	0.12	-0.38	4.66	0.87	0.06	0.15	-0.48	4.57	0.87	-0.4	0.06	-0.07	4.58	1.01	-0.04	-0.03	-0.3

Note: VI – visually impaired, HI – hearing impaired, PD – Physically disabilities, Wh – Wheelchair users, ID – intellectual disabilities, E – the elderly, CH – children, M – mean, SD – standard deviation, MxW – men versus women, UNIxLE – instructors with university education and lower education LPxMP instructor with the length of the practice to 5 years and more than 5 years

We can see (Table 3) that the instructors feel more qualified to work with specific groups such as elderly people, women, and children. They feel least comfortable with respect to working with people with intellectual disabilities. There is a relatively high assurance around working with groups of visually impaired people, maybe because 28 respondents state that they underwent a course of working with the visually impaired, with eight of them stating that they were very well prepared.

In the following questions regarding organisation and communication with specific groups, the instructors answer similarly. They are surer of being able to work with elderly people, children, and women, but less so in groups of people with disabilities. A slight discrepancy can be noted with regards to communication with physically disabled people and wheelchair users which might reflect, for example, working with people with cerebral palsy as they often have difficulties with controlling facial expressions (normally a key component of communication) and muscled involved in speaking.

Instructors underwent training focusing on a specific group (Table 2), with courses for working with women (55), elderly people (39) and children (27) being highest. Courses for people with hearing impairment experienced 15 respondents, physically impaired and wheelchair users 18. Courses for working with intellectually disabled people only had 10 respondents, with concomitant low results to the four questions in Table 3 with regards to working with those individuals. It's important to say that we didn't ask explicitly about tuition for self-defence courses, just for courses on how to work with a given specific group.

Men feel more qualified than women (Table 3) in the field of teaching self-defence of specific groups. Practical differences were found in VI (Cohen d 1,13), HI (Cohen d 0,55), PD (Cohen d 0,77) and wheelchair users (Cohen d 0,70). This difference was also confirmed in the individual sub-questions, except communication with specific groups, where women feel a little more qualified, so the difference between men and women is insignificant.

The level of education also shows differences in self-perception as a qualified self-defence teacher for specific groups. The group of participants with academic degrees feel more competent than instructors with lower education in PD (Cohen d 0,76) and wheelchair users (Cohen d 0,77). Similarly to men-women differences, this difference was confirmed by other sub-questions except for communication.

While looking at how experiences influenced the level of self-confidence in teaching specific groups, we found instructors who experienced less than 5 years felt less qualified with visually impaired people (Cohen d 0,70) wheelchair users (Cohen d 0,68), and women (Cohen d 0,76) than more experienced instructors (Table 3). When considering working with visually impaired people, less experienced instructors feel less confident overall, but this difference was not confirmed in other sub-questions.

When asked about their willingness to create a specific self-defence class for specific groups, or to allow people with special backgrounds to access classes responses were mixed.

Most self-defence instructors were willing to include individual children, women, and the elderly in the current self-defence course (Table 4). About half of the participants were willing to include visually and hearing impaired. People with physical disabilities and wheelchair users are welcome by about one-third of instructors, others refuse to include these individuals (about one tone quarter to one fifth) or were not able to decide.

Only 13 instructors were willing to include a person with intellectual disabilities, 23 refused, and others could not decide.

Table 4: If you were approached by an individual from the following groups who would like to attend your regular course, would you allow him/her to do so?

	VI	HI	PD	Wh	ID	W	E	CH
Yes	31	37	29	25	13	64	59	58
No	9	4	11	17	23	0	0	3
Undecided	25	24	25	23	29	1	6	4

Note: VI – visually impaired, HI – hearing impaired, PD – Physically disabilities, Wh – Wheelchair users, ID – intellectual disabilities, E – the elderly, CH – children

The willingness of instructors to hold a course for a specific group turned out similarly. Almost every instructor was willing to have a course for women, children, and the elderly (Table 5).

On average 26 instructors were willing to organise a course for other specific groups as well, except for mental disabilities, where the willingness is reduced to 11 instructors, and 26 refused.

The refusal to organise the entire course for the visually and hearing impaired has grown in contrast to the willingness to include these specific groups

Table 5: If the specific group approached you, would you create a self-defence course for them?

	VI	HI	PD	Wh	ID	W	E	CH
Yes	26	28	24	27	12	64	53	61
No	14	9	14	29	28	0	2	1
Undecided	25	28	27	19	25	1	10	3

Note. VI – visually impaired, HI – hearing impaired, PD – Physically disabilities, Wh – Wheelchair users, ID – intellectual disabilities, E – the elderly, CH – children

Discussion

Physical activity is as crucial for people with disabilities as it is for non-disabled individuals (Haegele & Sutherland, 2015; Winnick, 2005). Self-defence classes are undoubtedly one of the ways to bring specific groups (not just people with disabilities) to regular physical activity.

However, we know that specific groups, especially people with disabilities, face more serious obstacles (Jaarsma, Dijkstra, Geertzen, Dekker & Barriers, 2014) than the general population. We also consider the insufficient competencies of instructors and lecturers who work with those people to be an obstacle. Our results match the assumption that self-defence instructors are prepared for seniors, children, and women, not people with disabilities. We, therefore, call on organisations that train self-defence instructors to include working with people with disabilities as part of their education.

In recent research, we can see more efforts to create a range of self-efficacy or competencies for the work of a teacher educating people with disabilities (Zhang, Wang, Stegall, Losinki, & Katsiyannis, 2018; Leyser, Zeiger & Romi, 2011; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012; Yeshayahu, Meier, Reuker & Zitomer, 2019). In our case, however, we did not want to use any of these questionnaires because our situation is more specific, given that we were looking at self-defence classes only as opposed to general education.

In any case, if we use these studies for comparison, we get similar results. For example, if we compare competencies in the context of the length of practice, we share similar results to Leyser et al. (2011) who found that the length of practice is crucial in self-efficacy and inclusion.

Our research shows that instructors feel prepared to work with groups such as women, children, and older people. However, only half of the respondents received training for children and two-

thirds for elderly individuals. We feel that there might be a misplaced overconfidence as the work undertaken is not underpinned on specialised knowledge, abilities, and skills.

The most significant concern is about working with people with intellectual disabilities, which points to the inexperience and persistent taboo around this disability. In addition, the willingness to include a hearing-impaired individual in a regular course instead of organising a course for a more homogeneous group points to a lack of understanding of the essential specifics of teaching people with hearing impairments which are entirely different from a regular course. Insufficient education then leads to an incorrect assessment of the situation. The need to educate teachers to work with groups with special needs is also highlighted by Taliaferro, Hammond, & Wyant (2015) and Tindall, Culhane, & Foley (2016) amongst others.

Since teachers who have support in the form of consultations and cooperation in teaching with specialists from the APA field achieve a higher level of self-efficacy (Jennet, 2003), it would be appropriate to share the experience of training disabled people in the field of self-defence. Unfortunately, this need conflicts with the fact that most organisations are profit-oriented and protect their know-how. Unfortunately, this is also the reason for the small number of courses offered for specific groups with personnel requirements being so high that their reflection in the price of the commercial course will make them unaffordable

Conclusion

Self-defence instructors feel prepared to communicate and modify teaching approaches in specific groups such as women, seniors and children. Working with these groups is also part of regular self-defence courses. The instructors are willing and able to handle even people with special needs (those who are visually impaired, people with physical disabilities, and wheelchair users), especially those who have undergone training or course. The group that seems to be the most problematic is that of people with intellectual disorders.

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