

Leisure Studies

ISSN: 0261-4367 (Print) 1466-4496 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rlst20

Making sense of martial practice: training orientation as an analytical lens for embodied leisure

Deniz Kaan Yazıcı & Ezgi Pehlivanlı

To cite this article: Deniz Kaan Yazıcı & Ezgi Pehlivanlı (17 Sep 2026): Making sense of martial practice: training orientation as an analytical lens for embodied leisure, Leisure Studies, DOI: 10.1080/02614367.2026.2733346

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2026.2733346

Published online: 17 Sep 2026.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rlst20

LEISURE STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2026.2733346

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Making sense of martial practice: training orientation as an analytical lens for embodied leisure

Deniz Kaan Yazıcı[a] and Ezgi Pehlivanlı[b]

[a]Department of Physical Sciences and Sport, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye; [b]Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye

ABSTRACT

As martial arts have become increasingly prominent within leisure studies, scholars have examined their contributions to wellbeing, identity, belonging, and lifelong participation. Yet the concept of martial arts remains analytically unstable. Existing classifications typically distinguish practices by institutional status, historical development, or stylistic tradition, but often fail to capture the diverse pedagogical purposes and embodied experiences that coexist within the same practice. We argue that this ambiguity reflects a broader epistemological challenge concerning how martial practices are understood, organised, and studied. Rather than proposing another taxonomy, this article introduces training orientation as an analytical lens. We develop three ideal-typical orientations—disciplinary, competitive, and combative—understood as dynamic pedagogical logics rather than fixed or mutually exclusive categories. These orientations may coexist, shift over time, and vary across instructors, organisations, and practitioners. The framework is illustrated through a critical reading of Turkish academic literature, treated as an analytically revealing context where classificatory ambiguities become especially visible. Foregrounding training orientation, we argue, enables more nuanced analysis of embodied learning, gender, ageing, and lifelong participation. The article therefore proposes training orientation as a heuristic vocabulary for more reflexive and context-sensitive research into how martial practices are organised, experienced, and made meaningful within contemporary leisure contexts.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 23 May 2026
Accepted 2 September 2026

KEYWORDS
Martial arts; leisure studies; training orientation; pedagogy; embodiment; classification

Introduction

Despite growing scholarly interest in martial arts over the past two decades, what constitutes a *martial art* remains remarkably unsettled. Martial arts have increasingly attracted the attention of scholars across philosophy of sport, sociology, anthropology, psychology, health sciences, and, more recently, leisure studies (Maliszewski, 2012; Ronkainen & Pauha, 2026; Theeboom & De Knop, 1999). Rather than being understood solely as systems of combat or competitive activities, they have come to be recognised as complex forms of embodied leisure through which individuals pursue wellbeing, identity, belonging, moral development, self-cultivation, and lifelong participation (Stebbins,

CONTACT Ezgi Pehlivanlı ezgip@metu.edu.tr Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye

© 2026 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

2007; Kohn, 2001; Ronkainen & Pauha, 2026). Research has shown that participation in martial arts frequently exceeds the boundaries of sport, becoming a sustained leisure career characterised by perseverance, specialised knowledge, social worlds, and enduring identities (Stebbins, 2007; Jones et al., 2011). More recent studies have further complicated this picture by demonstrating that practitioners continually negotiate multiple orientations towards participation, moving between commitment and balance (Meyer, 2025; Yazıcı, 2025).

), discipline and enjoyment, competition and personal development, throughout the course of their leisure lives (Ronkainen & Pauha, 2026). Taken together, this growing body of research suggests that martial arts are better understood as dynamic forms of embodied leisure than as fixed institutional categories.

Paradoxically, while leisure scholarship has become increasingly attentive to the fluidity of participation, martial arts scholarship continues to rely on comparatively stable classificatory assumptions (Sánchez Garcia & Spencer, 2013. The term *martial arts* is routinely employed to describe practices as diverse as meditative Aikido training (Lukoff & Strozzi-Heckler, 2017), Olympic judo (Bagińska et al., 2022), professional mixed martial arts (Sánchez García & Spencer, 2013), traditional weapons systems, military close-combat instruction (Boe, 2015), and contemporary self-defence programmes (Piepiora & Witkowski, 2020). Although these practices may share historical genealogies or embodied techniques, they differ substantially in their pedagogical aims, institutional logics, ethical orientations, and relationships to violence, risk, competition, and self-cultivation (Donohue & Taylor, 1994; Cynarski & Lee-Barron, 2014; Bowman, 2017; Martínková & Parry, 2016). Yet they continue to be grouped under the same conceptual umbrella, often with little explicit reflection on what exactly is being classified.

This tension is particularly striking from a leisure studies perspective. Leisure scholarship has already demonstrated that the same activity may generate profoundly different meanings depending on how participants experience, organise, and integrate it into their everyday lives (Stebbins, 2007; Ronkainen & Pauha, 2026). Martial arts may simultaneously function as recreation (Bielec etal, 2021), serious leisure (Ronkainen & Pauha, 2026), physical education, therapy, spiritual cultivation (Moenig & Kim, 2018), community participation (Rajan & Tsang, 2015), or competitive achievement. However, this relational understanding of participation has rarely been translated into classificatory debates themselves (Farrer, & Whalen-Bridge, 2011). Existing typologies continue to distinguish martial practices primarily according to external characteristics; such as competition, institutionalisation, historical origin, or philosophical tradition (Bowman, 2017; Cynarski & Skowron, 2014; Guttmann, 1994) while paying comparatively little attention to the orientations through which training is organised and experienced. Consequently, scholars often compare qualitatively different forms of embodied practice under a common label, making cumulative interpretation increasingly difficult (Cynarski & Skowron, 2014), particularly as martial arts research expands into questions of well-being, ageing, gender, disability, identity, and lifelong leisure participation (Ganoe, 2019).

Our interest in this problem emerged not only from academic inquiry but also from our positionality as scholar-practitioners: sociologists and long-term Aikido practitioners whose scholarly engagement with martial practice develops alongside

sustained embodied participation. Recent Martial Arts Studies scholarship has increasingly recognised this overlap between academic and practitioner identities, conceptualising the scholar-practitioner as occupying a productive but reflexively demanding position between embodied knowledge and scholarly analysis (Contreras Islas & Jennings, 2023; Dobrich & Contreras Islas, 2026). Rather than providing privileged access to the meaning of martial practice, such positioning can sensitise researchers to tensions that may remain less visible when practice is approached solely as an external object of inquiry.

Throughout years of training, teaching, and researching martial arts, we repeatedly encountered one such tension: a persistent disconnect between our embodied experience of practice and the classificatory vocabularies available within the literature. The same practice could legitimately be described as sport, leisure, education, self-defence, philosophy, therapy, or discipline depending on the institutional setting, pedagogical emphasis, and participants' intentions. Rather than interpreting these inconsistencies as merely terminological, we came to understand them as symptoms of a broader epistemological problem. Our aim, therefore, is not to identify the correct definition of martial arts, but to develop an analytical perspective through which the plurality of embodied practice becomes intelligible.

This question becomes particularly salient in the Turkish context. Located at the intersection of European and Asian histories, institutions, and intellectual traditions, Türkiye has long negotiated Western and Eastern philosophies, pedagogies, economic formations, and epistemological traditions simultaneously. Martial arts circulate within sporting federations, traditional martial arts organisations, commercial fitness cultures, military training, and self-defence programmes, producing overlapping and often contradictory classificatory vocabularies. As practitioners living and training within this context, these ambiguities are not abstract theoretical concerns but everyday realities that continually challenge how practice is understood and communicated. Rather than treating Türkiye as representative of martial arts globally, we approach it as an analytically strategic and particularly transparent case in which broader classificatory tensions become especially visible. The Turkish literature therefore functions not as empirical evidence for a universal model but as an illustrative discursive field through which the epistemic consequences of classification can be observed with unusual clarity.

Rather than viewing this ambiguity as merely terminological, this article approaches it as a philosophical and epistemological problem concerning how martial practices become intelligible as objects of scholarly inquiry. Following Martínková and Parry (2016), Bowman (2017, 2019), and Vaittinen (2014), we argue that the central challenge is not simply defining what martial arts *are* but understanding why fundamentally different forms of embodied practice continue to be assembled under a single conceptual label. We therefore suggest that conceptual ambiguity cannot be resolved through increasingly refined definitions alone. Instead, it requires a classificatory framework capable of accounting for the heterogeneous pedagogical purposes and training orientations through which martial practices are enacted. By shifting attention from institutional labels to training orientation, this article proposes a tripartite analytical framework consisting of Discipline Arts, Combat Sports, and Close Combate Practices. In doing so, it seeks to contribute not only to ongoing debates within Martial Arts Studies but also to leisure studies by offering a conceptual

vocabulary better suited to analysing martial arts as dynamic, embodied, and lifelong leisure practices.

Methods

Conceptual analysis and discursive illustration

This study adopts a conceptual and qualitative methodological approach grounded in critical literature analysis (Wall et al., 2015) and discursive illustration (Burck, 2005). Rather than producing original empirical data, the study intervenes at the level of conceptual clarification, addressing how martial practices are classified, named, and analytically framed within existing scholarship (Collier et al., 2012).

The primary method consists of a critical review and theoretical synthesis of key contributions in Martial Arts Studies, sport sociology, and related fields, with particular attention to debates surrounding classification, sportification (Delalandre, 2012), pedagogy, and embodiment (Channon & Jennings, 2014; Vaittinen, 2014). We tried to keep this review not exhaustive in a bibliometric sense; instead, it is theoretically selective, focusing on works that have shaped or problematised the use of the term *martial arts* as an analytical category. Following scholarship in reflexive methodology (Alejandro, 2021; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Knoblauch, 2021), classification is treated not as a neutral descriptive task, but as a form of epistemic intervention that structures how social phenomena are rendered comparable and intelligible.

In addition to conceptual analysis, the study employs discursive illustration through a critical reading of Turkish academic literature on martial practices. As mentioned above, this material is not used as empirical evidence in a comparative or representative sense. Rather, it functions as an illustrative discursive field in which the practical consequences of conceptual ambiguity become visible (Bowman, 2019). The Turkish case is particularly suited to this purpose due to the coexistence of multiple, often interchangeable terms, such as *martial arts*, *combat sports*, *defence sports*, and *self-defence* (Akman, 2024; Çakmakçı & Aydogan, 2021; Filiz, 2002; Koçak & Balçıkanlı, 2021; Öztürk, 2023; Şirin & Hamamioğlu, 2007; Ulukan, 2021; Uyar & Susuz, 2020; Yıldırım et al., 2023), within a relatively small and interdisciplinary body of literature. The illustrative analysis draws on a corpus of approximately 20 peer-reviewed academic publications produced in Turkey between 2000 and 2023. These publications were identified through targeted searches in national academic databases and university repositories and span multiple disciplinary locations, including sport sciences, sociology, education, psychology, and physical education. The corpus includes journal articles and selected book chapters that explicitly engage with martial practices such as boxing, judo, karate, taekwondo, wrestling, kickboxing, and related forms, using terms such as *martial arts*, *combat sports*, *defence sports*, or *self-defence*.

The analysis focuses on how martial practices are categorised, justified, and associated with values or outcomes, rather than on measuring their effects or prevalence. By reading these texts through the proposed tripartite framework we mentioned above; *Discipline Arts*, *Combat Sports*, and *Close Combate Practices*, the study demonstrates how different training orientations are conflated or obscured when classification remains under-theorised.

Researcher positionality

We position ourselves as martial arts scholar-practitioners, recognising that our engagement with martial practice is simultaneously embodied and analytical. Contreras Islas and Jennings (2023) conceptualise martial arts scholar-practitionership as a spectrum of positions through which researchers move between different degrees of academic and practical involvement, while more recent work emphasises the tensions involved in negotiating scholarly distance alongside embodied belonging within martial communities (Dobrich & Contreras Islas, 2026). Jennings' practitioner-researcher scholarship similarly demonstrates how sustained martial training can shape the questions researchers ask and the forms of embodied knowledge to which they become attuned.

Both authors have medium- to long-term experience as Aikido practitioners, including sustained participation in training and teaching environments. This embodied familiarity informed our sensitivity to differences in pedagogical purpose, training orientation, and practitioner discourse, particularly the recurring difficulty of reconciling lived practice with existing classificatory terminology. We therefore treat scholar-practitionership not as a source of privileged or more authentic knowledge, but as a situated standpoint from which particular conceptual tensions became visible.

At the same time, Aikido does not function as a normative reference point for the framework proposed here. Our embodied experience necessarily makes some dimensions of martial practice more immediately legible to us while leaving others outside our direct experience. Reflexivity therefore requires recognising both the analytical possibilities and the limits of practitioner knowledge. The framework was consequently developed through sustained engagement with scholarship across diverse martial traditions and institutional contexts and is intended as an analytical lens rather than an extrapolation from Aikido practice itself.

Illustrative case: conceptual ambiguity in Turkish academic literature

Rather than evaluating the applicability of the proposed framework through a representative national sample, this article adopts the Turkish academic literature as an analytically revealing case through which broader classificatory tensions can be examined. As argued in the introduction, our interest in the Turkish context does not stem from an assumption that Türkiye is exceptional or representative of martial arts scholarship globally. Instead, we regard it as a particularly productive site in which classificatory ambiguity (Bailey & Samsudin, 2025; Cynarski & Skowron, 2014) becomes highly visible because multiple philosophical traditions, institutional arrangements, pedagogical models, and epistemological influences intersect. Positioned historically and culturally between Europe and Asia, Turkish martial arts scholarship has developed at the crossroads of Western sport sciences, Eastern martial philosophies, military traditions, physical education, and leisure practices. This coexistence of different intellectual traditions makes underlying classificatory assumptions more explicit than they often appear elsewhere.

This classificatory ambiguity is also visible in the Turkish terminology itself. Multiple and often interchangeable expressions coexist, including *dövüş sanatları* (martial

arts), *dövüş sporları* (combat sports), *savunma sporları* (defence sports), and *öz savunma* or *kendini savunma* (self-defence), alongside formulations such as *Uzak Doğu sporları* (Far Eastern sports) and *savaş sanatları* (martial/warrior arts) across different strands of the literature. Importantly, these expressions do not constitute straightforward one-to-one translations of established English-language categories. Rather, their coexistence illustrates how martial practices are translated and made conceptually intelligible through different sporting, pedagogical, cultural, and disciplinary vocabularies within Turkish academic discourse.

Our engagement with the Turkish literature is also informed by our own positionality as researchers and long-term Aikido practitioners working within this context. Throughout both our academic and embodied encounters with martial arts, we repeatedly experienced the difficulty of reconciling lived practice with the classificatory vocabulary available in scholarly work. Practices were described interchangeably as *martial arts*, *combat sports*, *defence sports*, *combat disciplines*, or *self-defence*, often without clarification regarding what exactly was being classified. Rather than treating these inconsistencies as terminological shortcomings, we came to understand them as empirical manifestations of a broader epistemological problem concerning how martial practices are rendered intelligible within academic discourse.

Accordingly, the purpose of analysing the Turkish literature is not to test or validate the proposed framework empirically. Instead, it serves as a heuristic lens through which the consequences of classificatory ambiguity can be observed in practice. Because conceptual boundaries remain comparatively fluid within this body of scholarship, shifts in terminology and analytical emphasis become particularly transparent, allowing the epistemic effects of classification on research design, interpretation, and knowledge production to be examined more directly. Yet for practitioners situated outside the historical and cultural contexts in which these concepts emerged, their meanings are often communicated through multiple and sometimes competing philosophical, pedagogical, and institutional vocabularies. Thus, classification also shapes practitioners' embodied learning and/or expectations which can prevent drop out in life-long participation (Larson et al., 2018). In contexts such as Türkiye, where Western sporting rationalities intersect with Eastern martial philosophies, this creates an additional layer of interpretive uncertainty. The challenge, therefore, is not merely understanding individual concepts, but locating them within a coherent analytical framework capable of explaining why the same practice may simultaneously be presented as sport, self-defence, philosophy, education, or embodied leisure. It is precisely because these ambiguities are particularly visible in the Turkish literature that it functions as an analytically productive case through which the epistemic consequences of classification can be examined.

To illustrate these dynamics, we reviewed Turkish academic publications published between 2000 and 2023 that examined martial practices across disciplines including sport sciences, physical education, sociology, education, recreation, and related fields. The review revealed considerable variation in the terminology used to describe practices such as boxing, judo, karate, taekwondo, kickboxing, wrestling, wushu, and Aikido. These practices were alternately categorised as *martial arts*, *combat sports*, *defence sports*, *self-defence practices*, or similar concepts, frequently without explicit conceptual justification or discussion of the assumptions underpinning these classificatory choices. As a consequence, practices sharing comparable pedagogical characteristics or training

environments were often interpreted through markedly different conceptual frameworks, while substantively different practices were occasionally grouped together under a single label.

Table 1 summarises these classificatory patterns across the selected Turkish studies. Rather than demonstrating inconsistencies unique to Türkiye, the table functions as an analytical window into a broader epistemological challenge facing martial arts scholarship: the absence of a conceptual vocabulary capable of distinguishing practices according to their training orientation rather than their institutional labels, historical origins, or competitive status. It is precisely this analytical gap that motivates the framework proposed in the following sections.

Table adapted from a critical review of Turkish academic publications on martial practices.

The table does not merely document terminological diversity; it reveals a deeper conceptual instability in how martial practices are understood and analysed. Identical or highly similar practices are alternately framed as *sport*, *art*, or *defence* depending on the analytical focus of the study, often without acknowledging these shifts as theoretically consequential.

For example, studies categorising boxing or taekwondo as *sport* tend to foreground variables such as performance, competition, aggression, or physiological outcomes. In contrast, when the same practices are framed as *martial arts* or *art*, analyses shift towards moral development, discipline, identity formation, or psychosocial well-being. These divergent framings are rarely discussed as methodological choices; instead, they are treated as self-evident descriptors of the practices themselves.

From the perspective of the proposed framework, this inconsistency reflects the conflation of training orientations rather than disagreement about empirical realities. Many of the practices listed in Table 1 can operate simultaneously as *Discipline Arts*,

Table 1. Discursive categorisation of martial practices in selected Turkish academic studies.

Study Focus / Title (abridged)	Primary Category Used	Martial Practices Included	Dominant Keywords / Analytical Emphases
Prediction of Licenced Athlete Numbers in Martial Practices	Competitive Oriented	Boxing, Judo, Karate, Kickboxing, Muay Thai, Wushu, Taekwondo	Competition, universality, struggle
Pre-Competition Stress in Defence Sports	Competitive Oriented	Kickboxing, Wrestling, Taekwondo, Boxing	Performance, anxiety, winning, rules
Values of National-Level Combat Athletes	Competitive Oriented, Discipline Oriented	Not specified	Discipline, responsibility, respect, morality
Aggression Levels in Defence and Combat Sports	Combative Oriented, Competitive Oriented	Not specified	Violence, aggression, competition, control
Social Stratification and Amateur Defence Sports	Combative Oriented, Competitive Oriented	Muay Thai, Taekwondo, Boxing, Kickboxing	Habitus, social capital, bodily power
Empathy in Defence Sports	Competitive Oriented, Discipline Oriented	Judo, Taekwondo, Kickboxing	Moral development, empathy, discipline
Psychosocial Benefits of Martial Arts	Discipline Oriented	Karate, Taekwondo, Judo, Hapkido	Self-esteem, dojo culture, self-acceptance
Martial Arts Sociology and Masculinity	Discipline Oriented	Boxing, Judo, Karate, Muay Thai, Wushu, Wrestling	Hegemonic masculinity, habitus, embodiment
Kickboxing in Physical Education Curricula	Competitive Oriented, Discipline Oriented	Kickboxing	Discipline, motivation, institutional use

Combat Sports, or *Close Combate Practices*, depending on pedagogical context and institutional setting. However, in the absence of an explicit conceptual framework, these shifts remain implicit and analytically underdeveloped.

The Turkish literature thus, makes visible how classificatory ambiguity shapes not only terminology, but also research questions, outcome measures, and normative assumptions about martial practices. By reading this material through the tripartite framework proposed in this study, it becomes possible to distinguish whether a given study is engaging with martial practices as sites of self-cultivation, competitive performance, or survival-oriented training, without reducing the practice itself to a single, fixed identity.

This illustrative discussion demonstrates that conceptual ambiguity is not a minor semantic issue, but a methodological problem (Kennedy, 2019) with tangible analytical consequences. When classification remains implicit, studies risk talking past one another, producing fragmented bodies of knowledge that are difficult to compare or synthesise. By contrast, applying the proposed framework allows researchers to situate their analyses more precisely, clarify their analytical assumptions, and make their contributions legible across disciplinary boundaries. In this sense, the Turkish case does not function as evidence for the framework's universality, but as a discursive mirror reflecting the broader challenges of classification within Martial Arts Studies.

Proposed framework: training orientation as an analytical framework

The framework proposed here does not classify martial arts themselves. Rather, it identifies three ideal-typical training orientations through which martial practices are organised, experienced, and embodied. These orientations; Disciplinary, Competitive, and Combative, are not properties of particular martial arts, nor do they constitute mutually exclusive categories. Instead, they represent dynamic pedagogical logics that may coexist within the same practice, shift over time, or emerge differently across institutional settings and stages of practitioners' development.

We deliberately speak of training orientations rather than arts, sports or practices because our concern is not with classifying styles, but with understanding how particular pedagogical logics organise embodied learning. Training orientation refers to the purposes through which practitioners are invited to inhabit martial practice and, consequently, to the forms of embodiment that are cultivated through that practice.

This distinction becomes clearer when considered through concrete training situations. Judo, for example, need not express a single training orientation. In a competition-focused setting, training may prioritise timing, scoring opportunities, tactical efficiency, and performance within a regulated ruleset, making competitive orientation particularly salient. The same technical repertoire, however, may be taught in another setting through repetition, attentiveness to form, bodily regulation, and long-term development, bringing disciplinary orientation to the foreground. Similarly, an Aikido class predominantly organised around disciplinary learning may temporarily foreground a combative orientation when practitioners work with less predictable attacks, situational awareness, distance, or responses to threat. What changes across these examples is not necessarily the martial tradition, or even the technique being practised, but what the training is oriented towards at a particular moment. Training orientation therefore directs analytical

attention away from asking what a martial practice *is* and towards examining what practitioners are being trained *to do, experience, and become* within a particular pedagogical context.

Disciplinary orientation

A disciplinary orientation organises martial training around the gradual cultivation of embodied attentiveness, ethical self-formation and relational awareness. Here, the body is not primarily understood as an instrument of performance or survival, but as an ongoing pedagogical project through which practitioners learn to inhabit concepts such as discipline, centredness, timing, harmony or responsibility. Progress is therefore measured less by competitive success than by increasingly sophisticated forms of embodied understanding (Martínková et al., 2019; Mullis, 2016). Brown and Leledaki (2010) conceptualise Eastern movement forms as body–self transforming practices in which embodied awareness and self-cultivation develop through sustained participation. This understanding resonates with disciplinary orientation, where progress is internal, gradual, and often non-linear rather than primarily validated through competitive outcomes. Bowman's (2017) work further cautions against treating the meanings attached to martial practices as stable, reinforcing the importance of attending to the particular training logics through which progress becomes meaningful.

Pedagogically, disciplinary orientation is characterised by repetitive practice, Lowry (2006) demonstrates the significance of repetition, ritual, and etiquette within traditional dojo environments, while Cynarski and Lee-Barron (2014) draw attention to the philosophical orientations through which bodily and relational dimensions of martial training acquire meaning. Martínková and Parry (2016) similarly show that philosophical distinctions are integral to how different forms of martial engagement are understood. Within what we term disciplinary orientation, these elements operate pedagogically: posture, breath, repetition, etiquette, and relational awareness become means through which practitioners cultivate forms of embodied attentiveness and self-regulation.

Practices such as Aikido, Tai Chi, Iaido, and certain forms of traditional Kung Fu are commonly situated within this orientation, though the framework does not assume that any style is inherently or permanently a Discipline Art (Donohue & Taylor, 1994). Olympic or competitive forms of judo, karate, or taekwondo may move away from this orientation, while the same practices taught in non-competitive settings may align closely with it. What defines the category is therefore not the style itself, but the training logic through which the body is disciplined and meaning is produced (Bowman, 2019).

Importantly, Discipline Orientation is particularly conducive to lifelong participation, inclusive pedagogies, and the accommodation of diverse bodies. Because training is not organised around weight classes, peak performance, or elimination, practitioners of different ages, genders, and physical capacities can train together (Channon, 2014; Fuller & Lloyd, 2020). This orientation thus opens analytical space for examining martial practices in relation to ageing, disability, care, and non-competitive forms of bodily excellence (Brown & Leledaki, 2010).

Competition orientation

Competition Orientation designate martial practices structured around regulated competition, performance optimisation (Beamish & Ritchie, 2006) and institutionalised

rulesets (Sánchez García, 2018). In this orientation, training is explicitly directed towards success in competition, where outcomes are measured through victory, ranking, scoring systems, or titles. The body is treated primarily as a performance instrument, and training regimes are designed to maximise efficiency, power, speed, and endurance within clearly defined physiological and regulatory parameters (Bompa & Buzzichelli, 2015; Franchini et al., 2014).

Pedagogically, *Competition Orientation* is characterised by systematic periodisation, weight categorisation, standardised techniques, and externally validated progression (Bompa & Buzzichelli, 2015; Issurin, 2010). Coaching practices prioritise tactical decision-making, physiological conditioning, and psychological preparedness for competitive environments, often framed through measurable performance indicators (Lyle, 2018). Ethical considerations in this orientation are typically embedded within formal rules, refereeing systems, and institutional governance structures (Beamish & Ritchie, 2006) rather than cultivated through explicit moral or philosophical instruction (Sánchez García & Malcolm, 2010).

Practices such as boxing, wrestling, kickboxing, Muay Thai, and mixed martial arts are commonly situated within this orientation, as are sportified forms of judo, taekwondo, and karate operating under international federation systems (Downey, 2014; Sánchez García, 2018). As with *Disciplinary Orientation*, the framework does not treat *Competition Orientation* as a stable or homogeneous category. A single practice may adopt a combat sport orientation in one institutional context while retaining disciplinary, educational, or recreational dimensions in another (Bowman, 2017).

Analytically, distinguishing *Competition Orientation* as a tendency rather than an essence enables more precise examination of martial practices in relation to commercialisation, media representation, nationalism (Dortants, 2018), gender segregation, and performance governance (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012; Channon & Phipps, 2017). By doing so, the framework avoids reducing martial practices to spectacle or violence while still accounting for the specific institutional and cultural logics of competitive sport.

Combative orientation

Combative Orientation encompass training systems oriented towards survival, self-defence, and professional application in contexts of heightened embodied risk (Farrer & Whalen-Bridge, 2011; Miller, 2008). Unlike *Competitive Orientation*, these practices are not organised around competition, and unlike *Disciplinary Orientation*, they do not prioritise self-cultivation as an end in itself. Instead, effectiveness under unpredictable and potentially dangerous conditions constitutes the central pedagogical concern, with training oriented towards managing uncertainty, threat, and bodily vulnerability (Benesch, 2020; Ong, 2012).

Training within this orientation frequently includes scenario-based drills, stress exposure, situational awareness, and techniques designed to neutralise threats (Miller, 2008) as efficiently as possible (Grossman & Christensen, 2008). Pedagogical emphasis (Driskell & Salas, 2013) is placed on decision-making under pressure, adaptability, and emotional regulation, particularly in relation to fear, shock, and heightened arousal. Institutional settings commonly include military, police, private security, or civilian self-defence programmes (Woodward, 2014), where training formats are often modular,

goal-oriented, and temporally bounded rather than continuous or open-ended (Lande, 2007).

Practices such as law enforcement trainings, military close-combat systems, and civilian self-defence courses are typically aligned with this orientation, although elements of combative training may also be incorporated into other martial practices depending on context and institutional demand (Benesch, 2020; Sánchez García, 2018). What defines the category is therefore not the presence of violence per se, but the explicit orientation towards real-world confrontation, threat management, and survival, often framed through professional or civic discourses of security (Ong, 2012).

From an analytical perspective, *Combative Orientation* render visible dimensions of martial training that are frequently marginalised in sport- or art-centred classifications. They invite critical engagement with questions of security, legitimacy, proportionality, and the ethical boundaries of bodily harm, as well as with the professionalisation and governance of violence in contemporary societies (Farrer & Whalen-Bridge, 2011; Woodward, 2014). By treating these practices as a distinct training orientation rather than an aberration or residual category, the framework enables more reflexive analysis of how violence is taught and regulated across institutional contexts.

Analytical implications of the framework

The contribution of the proposed framework extends beyond resolving conceptual ambiguity within martial arts scholarship By shifting analytical attention from institutional labels and stylistic classifications to training orientation, the framework offers a way of understanding how different pedagogical logics organise not only martial practices but also the forms of embodiment they cultivate. Rather than asking whether a particular style should be classified as an art, a sport, or a combative system, the framework asks what practitioners are being encouraged to become through training (Martínková & Parry, 2016; Johnson & Ha, 2015; Minarik, 2026).

From this perspective, classification is not simply an epistemological exercise through which researchers organise knowledge. It also possesses pedagogical consequences. Training orientations shape how practitioners learn to interpret movement, bodily competence, discipline, competition, vulnerability, cooperation, ageing, and ethical responsibility. In other words, they do not merely classify practices rather they orient embodied learning. As practitioners gradually internalise particular pedagogical values, they simultaneously acquire specific ways of understanding themselves, others, and the purposes of martial training.

This perspective is particularly relevant within leisure studies. If martial arts are understood as dynamic forms of embodied leisure (Masilela, 2024) rather than fixed institutional entities, then participation cannot be reduced to style or organisational affiliation alone. The meanings practitioners derive from martial arts emerge through the pedagogical orientations that structure their everyday engagement with training. Consequently, the same martial practice may generate markedly different embodied experiences depending on whether training is organised primarily around self-cultivation, competitive performance, or preparation for real-world confrontation.

Accordingly, the framework proposed here should not be understood as a definitive taxonomy of martial arts. Rather, it functions as an analytical heuristic through which the relationship between pedagogy, embodiment, and leisure participation can be examined across different social and institutional contexts.

Reading the corpus through training orientations

The analytical value of the proposed framework becomes visible when the Turkish literature is reconsidered through the lens of training orientation. Rather than asking whether particular martial traditions should be classified as arts, sports, or combative systems, the framework shifts attention towards the pedagogical purposes around which training is organised. This seemingly modest shift has important analytical consequences. Practices that appear similar because they share techniques or historical origins may cultivate fundamentally different forms of embodiment, while practices originating from different traditions may share remarkably similar pedagogical logics.

Reading the corpus in this way demonstrates that much of the observed conceptual ambiguity does not arise because previous scholars incorrectly classified martial arts, but because the classificatory vocabulary available to them has tended to privilege institutional forms over pedagogical orientations. By foregrounding training orientation, it becomes possible to reconsider questions of gender, ageing, disability, ethics, and lifelong participation as outcomes of particular pedagogical logics rather than intrinsic characteristics of particular martial traditions.

Gender, segregation, and training orientation

Gender has long occupied a central place within the study of martial practices, particularly in relation to access, hierarchy, embodiment, and the organisation of participation (Channon, 2014; Sánchez; García & Spencer, 2013; Lindsay et al., 2023). Rather than treating gender as an intrinsic characteristic of particular martial traditions, the proposed framework suggests that gendered experiences emerge through the pedagogical orientations that organise training. Different training orientations cultivate different understandings of bodily competence, cooperation, authority, competition, and vulnerability, thereby shaping how gender is experienced and negotiated within martial practice.

Hargreaves (2000) demonstrates how modern sporting structures have historically organised bodily difference through gendered assumptions about performance and competitive fairness. Within a competitive training orientation, these distinctions can become institutionalised through weight categories, performance standards, and regulatory frameworks. Here, bodily difference is largely interpreted through measurable performance and physiological optimisation (Tong, 2022), encouraging binary understandings of physical capability. Channon (2013) show, in different contexts, that gender relations within combat sports are produced through the social organisation of participation rather than simply reflecting pre-existing bodily difference. From the perspective of training orientation, gender segregation can therefore be examined as an outcome of pedagogical arrangements in which comparison, ranking, and competitive equity become organising principles.

By contrast, a disciplinary orientation reorganises the pedagogical relationship between bodies. Because progress is directed towards self-cultivation, embodied awareness, and relational learning rather than competitive success, practitioners engage through cooperation, mutual adjustment, and continuous refinement of movement. Mixed-gender practice, shared learning, and reciprocal adaptation become pedagogically meaningful rather than exceptional (Brown & Leledaki, 2010; Channon & Matthews, 2015). Within this orientation, bodily difference is not eliminated but negotiated through practice, allowing gender to emerge less as a fixed biological distinction than as a relational accomplishment shaped by the social organisation of training (Follo, 2012).

A combative orientation introduces yet another pedagogical configuration. Here, training is organised around preparedness for unpredictable confrontation, and gendered assumptions frequently become embedded within narratives of vulnerability, protection, risk, and threat perception (Miller, 2008; Noel, 2009; Velija et al., 2013). Decisions about who should be protected, who is expected to confront violence, and what forms of bodily competence are prioritised are shaped by broader cultural imaginaries as much as by technical considerations. Consequently, gendered differences become intertwined with particular understandings of security, legitimacy, and survival (García and Spencer, 2013).

Viewed through the lens of training orientation, gender is therefore not an inherent property of martial arts, nor simply an outcome of institutional rules. Rather, it is continuously produced through pedagogical arrangements that organise how practitioners learn to move, relate to one another, and understand bodily competence (Channon & Jennings, 2013). This perspective shifts analytical attention away from asking whether particular martial traditions are more or less gender inclusive and towards examining how different training orientations cultivate distinct embodied understandings of gender itself. In this sense, classification has consequences that extend beyond conceptual clarity. By privileging particular pedagogical orientations, classificatory frameworks also influence the forms of embodiment that become possible, legitimate, and meaningful within martial practice.

Ageing, temporality, and lifelong practice

Where training is organised primarily around a competitive orientation, participation is structured through cycles of performance optimisation, measurable achievement, and physiological efficiency. Wacquant's (2004) ethnography of boxing vividly demonstrates how competitive fighting bodies are produced through intensive regimes of physical preparation, while Beamish and Ritchie (2006) locate such processes within the wider logic of performance optimisation characteristic of modern sport. Within a competitive orientation, success is consequently evaluated against external standards such as rankings, victories, records, or competitive progression. This creates a particular temporality of embodied leisure in which physical capacity and achievement acquire heightened significance. Yet, as Dionigi's (2006) work on older athletes reminds us, declining competitive performance does not necessarily imply declining capacity for meaningful sporting participation. Training orientation therefore helps distinguish physiological change from the pedagogical meanings attached to ageing bodies.

A disciplinary orientation, by contrast, organises training around an entirely different temporality. Progress is understood as an open-ended process of embodied learning in which practitioners continuously refine (Jennings, 2012) movement, attentiveness, relational awareness, and self-understanding throughout the life course (Brown & Leledaki, 2010; Fuller & Lloyd, 2020). Rather than measuring achievement against others, practitioners engage with their own embodied histories, allowing ageing to become part of ongoing transformation rather than evidence of decline (Channon & Jennings, 2014). From this perspective, longevity is not an exception to martial practice but one of its pedagogical possibilities. The body is understood less as a vehicle for peak performance than as a site of accumulated experience through which technical understanding, ethical reflection, and embodied knowledge continue to develop (Jennings, 2012). Such an orientation resonates strongly with leisure studies, where martial arts have increasingly been understood as lifelong forms of serious and embodied leisure that sustain participation, identity, and wellbeing across different stages of life.

A combative orientation introduces yet another temporal logic. Here, age is valued less for physical optimisation than for experiential judgement, situational awareness, emotional regulation, and the capacity to respond effectively under conditions of uncertainty (Miller, 2008). Training remains directed towards effectiveness in unpredictable situations, but competence increasingly incorporates accumulated practical knowledge alongside physical capability. Consequently, experience itself becomes a pedagogical resource rather than merely the residue of time spent training.

Viewed through the lens of training orientation, ageing therefore emerges not as a biological variable acting upon martial practice, but as a pedagogically mediated experience. Different orientations cultivate different understandings of what it means to improve, mature, and continue practising across the life course. This shift has important implications for leisure studies. If martial arts are approached as forms of lifelong embodied leisure, then questions of ageing cannot be reduced to physical capacity alone (DelCastillo-Andrés et al., 2018). They must also consider how different pedagogical orientations (Dionigi, 2006) shape practitioners' relationships to time, continuity, aspiration, and embodied learning. In this sense, training orientation not only reorganises how researchers analyse participation but also how practitioners come to understand their own ageing bodies and the possibilities of continued practice.

Pedagogy, embodiment, and reflexive martial arts

The implications of the proposed framework extend beyond conceptual clarification. By foregrounding training orientation, the framework invites a shift in how martial arts scholarship understands pedagogy itself. Rather than viewing pedagogy as a means of transmitting techniques within pre-existing categories of martial arts, combat sports, or self-defence, the framework suggests that pedagogical orientations actively organise what practitioners learn, how they interpret their training, and what kinds of embodied capacities they gradually cultivate.

From this perspective, training orientation is not simply an analytical tool for researchers but also a way of understanding embodied learning. Different pedagogical orientations encourage practitioners to develop different relationships to movement, repetition, cooperation, competition, bodily awareness, and personal development. The

same technique may therefore acquire different meanings depending on the orientation through which it is practised. Training becomes not only the acquisition of technical competence but also the gradual embodiment of particular ways of understanding oneself, one's body, and one's relationship to others.

This perspective also helps explain why classificatory ambiguity is experienced not only by researchers but by practitioners themselves. As martial arts circulate across different cultural, institutional, and philosophical contexts, practitioners frequently encounter concepts whose meanings cannot be reduced to direct translation. Terms such as discipline, self-cultivation, harmony, or mastery carry distinct pedagogical and philosophical assumptions that are interpreted differently across epistemological traditions. For practitioners training outside the cultural contexts in which these concepts emerged, embodied learning often involves negotiating multiple conceptual worlds simultaneously. The challenge is therefore not simply learning techniques but making sense of the pedagogical ideas those techniques are intended to express.

This is particularly evident in contexts such as Türkiye, where Western educational traditions coexist with Eastern martial philosophies. Practitioners often approach concepts through interpretive frameworks shaped by different intellectual traditions, producing tensions between what techniques are intended to cultivate and how those aims are understood. From this perspective, classification is not merely a scholarly concern. It shapes the conceptual language through which practitioners interpret their own embodied experiences and locate themselves within martial practice.

Accordingly, the contribution of the proposed framework lies not in proposing another fixed taxonomy of martial arts but in offering an analytical language capable of connecting pedagogy, embodiment, and participation (Bowman, 2017; Martínková & Parry, 2016) while also extending recent developments in leisure studies that increasingly understand martial arts as dynamic, embodied, and lifelong forms of participation. Training orientations, in this sense, do more than organise scholarly analysis. They provide a way of understanding how martial practices become meaningful, how embodied knowledge develops over time, and how practitioners learn to inhabit particular ways of moving, thinking, and being.

Conclusion

Martial arts scholarship has long recognised that the practices gathered under the label martial arts are remarkably heterogeneous, yet existing classificatory approaches continue to rely predominantly on institutional, historical, or stylistic distinctions. While these perspectives have generated important insights, they often struggle to account for the fluidity with which the same practice may be organised, experienced, and interpreted across different pedagogical and social contexts. Rather than proposing another fixed taxonomy of martial traditions, this article has argued that training orientation offers a more productive analytical lens through which this diversity can be understood.

By distinguishing between disciplinary, competitive, and combative orientations, the framework shifts attention away from what martial arts are towards how martial practices are organised through particular pedagogical purposes. These orientations should not be understood as stable categories or essential properties of individual martial traditions. Instead, they represent dynamic pedagogical logics that may coexist within

the same practice, change over time, and vary across institutional settings, instructors, and practitioners' goals. The analytical value of the framework therefore lies not in resolving classificatory ambiguity once and for all, but in providing researchers with a conceptual language capable of engaging with that ambiguity more reflexively.

The Turkish academic literature was employed not as a representative case but as an analytically revealing context in which classificatory assumptions become especially visible. Situated at the intersection of Western and Eastern philosophical, institutional, and pedagogical traditions, the Turkish context illustrates how martial practices are frequently interpreted through multiple and overlapping conceptual vocabularies. Rather than viewing this plurality as a limitation, we suggest that it exposes broader epistemological tensions that are likely to be present, albeit less visibly, in martial arts scholarship elsewhere.

Beyond conceptual clarification, the framework also highlights the relationship between classification and pedagogy. Training orientations do not merely provide researchers with analytical categories; they also shape the pedagogical environments through which practitioners come to understand movement, discipline, competition, cooperation, ageing, and embodied learning. From this perspective, classification is not solely an epistemological exercise concerned with organising knowledge but also a pedagogical process that influences how martial practices become meaningful and how embodied knowledge develops through participation and the physical practice itself.

This argument is particularly relevant to leisure studies. As martial arts are increasingly understood as lifelong forms of embodied leisure associated with wellbeing, identity, belonging, and personal transformation, greater analytical attention must be paid to the pedagogical orientations through which these experiences are produced. Rather than treating martial arts as homogeneous leisure activities, future research might explore how different training orientations shape practitioners' experiences of ageing, gender, disability, inclusion, identity, and community across diverse cultural settings.

Ultimately, this article does not seek to determine what martial practice *essentially is*. Rather, it argues that greater conceptual precision can be achieved by asking a different question: what kinds of embodied learning do particular training orientations cultivate? Reframing classification in this way opens new possibilities for dialogue between leisure studies, Martial Arts Studies, sociology of sport, pedagogy, and the broader sociology of embodiment, while encouraging more reflexive engagement with how martial practices are researched, taught, and lived.

Limitations and future directions

As with any conceptual framework, the present model should be understood as a heuristic rather than a definitive account of martial practice. The framework therefore complements rather than replaces existing approaches to the study of martial arts.

A second limitation concerns the dynamic character of training orientations themselves. The orientations proposed here should not be understood as fixed or mutually exclusive categories (as we can see from table one at some cases they might overlap). A single martial tradition, organisation, instructor, or practitioner may move between different orientations over time or simultaneously incorporate multiple pedagogical logics. Rather than viewing this instability as a weakness of the framework, we argue that it reflects the fluid nature of martial practice and therefore constitutes an important

object of sociological inquiry. Nevertheless, recognising this fluidity also means that the framework should not be applied as a rigid classificatory instrument but as a sensitising analytical concept.

Because the framework is conceptual, its empirical value remains to be examined. Future studies may explore training orientations through ethnographic observation, interviews with instructors and practitioners, comparative case studies across organisations, or longitudinal research examining how pedagogical orientations evolve throughout practitioners' biographies.

Finally, the three orientations proposed here should not be regarded as exhaustive. Future empirical research may reveal additional orientations or identify meaningful subdivisions within the disciplinary, competitive, and combative orientations presented in this study. Whether such refinement is analytically productive should ultimately be determined through empirical investigation rather than conceptual proliferation. At this stage, we intentionally retain three ideal-typical orientations because they offer sufficient analytical differentiation while preserving conceptual clarity. Our intention is therefore not to establish a closed classificatory system but to provide a flexible analytical vocabulary capable of evolving alongside future scholarship evolving.

Author contributions

CRediT: **Deniz Kaan Yazıcı:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Deniz Kaan Yazıcı is a PhD student in Physical Education and Sports at Middle East Technical University (METU), Türkiye. Born in Ankara and raised in Samsun, he completed his undergraduate degree in Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering at METU before continuing his academic studies in Physical Education and Sports. His research interests include martial arts and combat sports, coaching philosophy, pedagogy, and embodied practice.

Ezgi Pehlivanlı is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Middle East Technical University (METU), Türkiye. She holds a PhD in Sociology from METU and has conducted postdoctoral research at Lund University and the University of Stavanger. Her research interests include digital and media sociology, feminist science and technology studies, gender, embodiment, and martial arts.

References

Akman, M. K. (2024). Göğüs Göğüse Muharebe Ve Güvenlik Uygulamalarındaki Yeri. *Socıal Scıences Studıes Journal (SSSJournal)*, *3*(12), 2002–2010.

Alejandro, A. (2021). Reflexive discourse analysis: A methodology for the practice of reflexivity. *European Journal of International Relations*, *27*(1), 150–174. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120969789

Bagińska, J., Piepiora, P., Piepiora, Z., & Witkowski, K. (2022). The geography of Olympic combat sports-part one: Judo, karate, taekwondo. *Arch Budo*, *18*, 183–192.
Bailey, R. P., & Samsudin, N. (2025). Martial arts and the problem of definition. *Philosophies*, *10* (3), 55. https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies10030055
Beamish, R., & Ritchie, I. (2006). *Fastest, highest, strongest: A critique of high-performance sport*. Routledge.
Benesch, O. (2020). Olympic samurai: Japanese martial arts between sports and self-cultivation. *Sport in History*, *40*(3), 328–355. https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2020.1739739
Boe, O. (2015). Does practicing close combat improve the perceived ability to perform better. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *190*, 409–415. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.05.018
Bompa, T. O., & Buzzichelli, C. A. (2015). *Periodization training for sports* (3rd ed.). Publisher of Health and Physical Activity.
Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. University of Chicago Press.
Bowman, P. (2017). The definition of martial arts studies. *Martial Arts Studies*, *3*(1), 6–23. https://doi.org/10.18573/j.2017.10092
Bowman, P. (2019). *Deconstructing martial arts*. Cardiff University Press.
Brown, D., & Leledaki, A. (2010). Eastern movement forms as body-self transforming cultural practices in the west: Towards a sociological perspective. *Cultural Sociology*, *4*(1), 123–154. https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975509356866
Burck, C. (2005). Comparing qualitative research methodologies for systemic research: The use of grounded theory, discourse analysis and narrative analysis. *Journal of Family Therapy*, *27*(3), 237–262. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6427.2005.00314.x
Çakmakçı, G., & Aydogan, H. (2021). Savunma sporları ile ilgilenen sporcularda başarı motivasyonunun incelenmesi. *Spor Eğitim Dergisi*, *5*(3), 161–170.
Channon, A. (2013). Enter the discourse: Exploring the discursive roots of inclusivity in mixed-sex martial arts. *Sport in Society*, *16*(10), 1293–1308. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2013.790896
Channon, A. (2014). Towards the "undoing" of gender in mixed-sex martial arts and combat sports. *Societies*, *4*(4), 587–605. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc4040587
Channon, A., & Jennings, G. (2013). The rules of engagement: Negotiating painful and "intimate" touch in mixed-sex martial arts. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *30*(4), 487–503. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.30.4.487
Channon, A., & Jennings, G. (2014). Exploring embodiment through martial arts and combat sports: A review of empirical research. *Sport in Society*, *17*(6), 773–789. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2014.882906
Channon, A., & Matthews, C. R. (2015). *Global perspectives on women in combat sports: Women warriors around the world*. Palgrave Macmillan.
Channon, A., & Phipps, C. (2017). 'Pink gloves still give black eyes': Exploring 'alternative' femininity in women's combat sports. *Martial Arts Studies*, *3*, 24–37. https://doi.org/10.18573/j.2017.10093
Collier, D., LaPorte, J., & Seawright, J. (2012). Putting typologies to work: Concept formation, measurement, and analytic rigor. *Political Research Quarterly*, *65*(1), 217–232. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912912437162
Contreras Islas, D. S., & Jennings, G. (2023). A typology of martial arts scholar-practitioners: Types, transitions, and tensions in Capoeira. *Societies*, *13*(10), 214. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc13100214
Cynarski, W. J., & Lee-Barron, J. (2014). Philosophies of martial arts and their pedagogical consequences. *Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology*, *14*(1), 11–19.
Cynarski, W. J., & Skowron, J. (2014). An analysis of the conceptual language used for the general theory of martial arts-Japanese, Polish and English terminology. *Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology*, *14*(3), 49–66.

Delalandre, M., & Collinet, C. (2012). Le mixed martial arts et les ambigüités de sa sportification en France. *Loisir et Société / Society and Leisure*, *35*(2), 293–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/07053436.2012.10707845

DelCastillo-Andrés, Ó., Toronjo-Hornillo, L., Rodríguez-López, M., Castañeda-Vázquez, C., & Campos-Mesa, M. D. C. (2018). Children's improvement of a motor response during backward falls through the implementation of a safe fall program. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *15*(12), 2669.

Dionigi, R. A. (2006). Competitive sport as leisure in later life: Negotiations, discourse, and aging. *Leisure Sciences*, *28*(2), 181–196. https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400500484081

Dobrich, E., & Contreras Islas, D. S. (2026). Navigating the 'field of tension': A comparative critical autoethnography on becoming a martial arts scholar-practitioner. *Martial Arts Studies*, *20*(20), 36–47. https://doi.org/10.18573/mas.240

Donohue, J. J., & Taylor, K. (1994). The classification of the fighting arts. *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, *3*(4), 10–37.

Dortants, M. F. T. (2018). *Power and truths in combat sports: The impact of societal and policy changes on governing practices in sport* [Doctoral dissertation]. Utrecht University.

Downey, G. (2014). *Learning capoeira: Lessons in cunning from an Afro-Brazilian art*. Oxford University Press.

Driskell, J. E., & Salas, E. (2013). *Stress and human performance*. Psychology Press.

Farrer, D. S., & Whalen-Bridge, J. (Eds.). (2011). *Martial arts as embodied knowledge: Asian traditions in a transnational world*. SUNY Press.

Filiz, K. (2002). Sporun tanımlanması ve kapsamının belirlenmesi üzerine bir çalışma. *Gazi Üniversitesi Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, *22*(2).

Follo, G. (2012). A literature review of women and the martial arts: Where are we right now? *Sociology Compass*, *6*(9), 707–717. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2012.00487.x

Franchini, E., Del Vecchio, F. B., Matsushigue, K. A., & Artioli, G. G. (2014). Physiological profiles of elite judo athletes. *Sports Medicine*, *44*(4), 449–465. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-013-0135-0

Fuller, C., & Lloyd, V. (2020). *Martial arts and well-being: Connecting communities and promoting health*. Routledge.

Ganoe, K. L. (2019). "You start by changing the whole cultural context": Aikido v. gender violence. *Leisure Studies*, *38*(5), 590–602. https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2019.1635190

Grossman, D., & Christensen, L. W. (2008). *On combat: The psychology and physiology of deadly conflict in war and peace*. (Rev ed.). Warrior Science Publications.

Guttmann, A. (1994). *Games and empires: Modern sports and cultural imperialism*. Columbia University Press.

Hargreaves, J. (2000). *Heroines of sport: The politics of difference and identity*. Routledge.

Hutchins, B., & Rowe, D. (2012). *Sport beyond television: The internet, digital media and the rise of networked media sport*. Routledge.

Issurin, V. (2010). New horizons for the methodology and physiology of training periodization. *Sports Medicine*, *40*(3), 189–206. https://doi.org/10.2165/11319770-000000000-00000

Jennings, G. (2012). Learning, mastery and ageing: Alternative narratives among British practitioners of traditionalist Chinese martial arts. *Asia Pacific Journal of Sport and Social Science*, *1*(2–3), 128–142. https://doi.org/10.1080/21640599.2012.742312

Johnson, J. A., & Ha, P. (2015). Elucidating pedagogical objectives for combat systems, martial arts, and combat sports. *Ido Movement for Culture*, *15*(4), 65–74. https://doi.org/10.14589/ido.15.4.9

Jones, G. W., Mackay, K. S., & Peters, D. M. (2006). Participation motivation in martial artists in the West Midlands region of England. *Journal of Sports Science & Medicine*, *5*(CSSI), 28–34.

Kennedy, C. (2019). Ambiguity and vagueness: An overview. In *Semantics-lexical structures and adjectives* (p. 236). https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110626391-008

Knoblauch, H. (2021). Reflexive methodology and the empirical theory of science. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, *46*(2), 59–79.

Koçak, İ., & Balçıkanlı, G. S. (2021). Savunma sporları ve empati: Elit sporcularda empati becerilerinin incelenmesi. *Gazi Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, *26*(2), 203–218.

Kohn, T. (2001). Don't Talk—Blend: Ideas about body and communication in Aikido practice. In H. Joy & C. W. Watson (Eds.), *An anthropology of indirect communication* (pp. 163–178). Routledge.

Lande, B. (2007). Breathing like a soldier: Culture, embodiment, and US army basic training. *Body & Society*, *13*(1), 95–123. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2007.00695.x

Larsson, I., Staland-Nyman, C., Svedberg, P., Nygren, J. M., & Carlsson, I. M. (2018). Children and young people's participation in developing interventions in health and well-being: A scoping review. *BMC Health Services Research*, *18*(1), 507.

Lindsay, R., Horne, J., Shaw, J., Kentzer, N., & Bacon, W. (2023). The influence of gender dynamics on women's experiences in martial arts: A scoping review. *International Journal of the Sociology of Leisure*, *6*(3), 297–325. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41978-023-00140-2

Lowry, D. (2006). *In the dojo: A guide to the rituals and etiquette of the Japanese martial arts*. Weatherhill.

Lukoff, D., & Strozzi-Heckler, R. (2017). Aikido: A martial art with mindfulness, somatic, relational, and spiritual benefits for veterans. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, *4*(2), 81. https://doi.org/10.1037/scp0000134

Lyle, J. (2018). *Sports coaching concepts: A framework for coaches' behaviour* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Maliszewski, M. (2012). *Spiritual dimensions of the martial arts*. Tuttle Publishing.

Martínková, I., & Parry, J. (2016). Martial categories: Clarification and classification. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, *43*(1), 143–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2015.1038829

Martínková, I., Parry, J., & Wagner, M. (2019). The contribution of martial arts to moral development. *Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology*, *19*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.14589/ido.19.1.1

Meyer, M. J. (2026). The dynamics of power and violence in martial arts. *Revista de Artes Marciales Asiaticas*, *21*(1), 197.

Miller, R. (2008). *Meditations on violence: A comparison of martial arts training and real-world violence*. YMAA Publications.

Minarik, M. (2026). Towards a performativity-based understanding of norms and values in martial arts practice. *Martial Arts Studies*, *20*, 90–104. https://doi.org/10.18573/mas.298

Moenig, U., & Kim, M. (2018). The Japanese and Korean martial arts: In search of a philosophical framework compatible to history. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, *35*(15–16), 1531–1554. https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2019.1618277

Mullis, E. (2016). The martial arts, culture, and the body. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, *50*(4), 114–124. https://doi.org/10.5406/jaesteduc.50.4.0114

Noel, H. (2009). Un-doing gendered power relations through martial arts? *International Journal of Social Inquiry*, *2*(2), 17–37.

Ong, A. (2012). *Neoliberalism as exception: Mutations in citizenship and sovereignty*. Duke University Press.

Öztürk, E. (2023). Savunma sporu ile uğraşan sporcularının müsabaka öncesi stres düzeylerinin incelenmesi. *Spor Eğitim Dergisi*, *7*(1), 40–44. https://doi.org/10.55238/seder.1224656

Piepiora, P., & Witkowski, K. (2020). Self-defence as a utilitarian factor in combat sports, modifying the personality of athletes at a champion level. *Archives of Budo Science of Martial Arts and Extreme Sports*, *16*.

Rajan, P., & Tsang, H. W. H. (2015). Martial arts practice in community-based rehabilitation: A review. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, *22*(1), 31–34.

Ronkainen, N., & Pauha, T. (2026). A way of living or just a hobby? Negotiating 'serious' and 'casual' leisure in martial arts and combat sports. *Leisure Studies*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2026.2692678

Sánchez García, R. (2018). *The historical sociology of Japanese martial arts*. Routledge.

Sánchez García, R., & Malcolm, D. (2010). Decivilizing, civilizing or informalizing? The international development of mixed martial arts. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *45*(1), 39–58. https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690209352392

Sánchez García, R., & Spencer, D. C. (Eds.). (2013). *Fighting scholars: Habitus and ethnographies of martial arts and combat sports*. Anthem Press.

Sánchez García, R., & Spencer, D. C. (2013). Fighting scholars: Habitus and ethnographies of martial arts and combat sports. *Ethnography*, *14*(3), 303–321. https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138113502516

Şirin, E. F., & Hamamioğlu, Ö. (2007). Uzak Doğu Spor Branşlarındaki (Taekwondo, Karate, Judo) Sporcu Gençlerin Spora Katlllm Motivasyonlarlnln Belirlenmesi. *Gazi Journal of Physical Education and Sport Sciences*, *12*(2), 29–42.

Stebbins, R. A. (2007). *Serious leisure: A perspective for our time*. Transaction Publishers.

Theeboom, M., & De Knop, P. (1999). Asian martial arts and approaches of instruction in physical education. *European Journal of Physical Education*, *4*(2), 146–161. https://doi.org/10.1080/1740898990040204

Tong, A. W. (2022). *The science and philosophy of martial arts: Exploring the connections between the cognitive, physical, and spiritual aspects of martial arts*. North Atlantic Books.

Ulukan, M. (2021). Farklı dövüş sporu yapan öğrencilerin sportmenlik yönelim düzeylerinin bazı değişkenler açısından incelenmesi. *Spor Eğitim Dergisi*, *5*(1), 52–62.

Uyar, M., & Susuz, Y. E. (2020). Uzak doğu sporu (Wing Chun-Wushu-Karate-Taekwondo-Judo) antrenörlerinin benlik saygısı ve problem çözme becerilerinin incelenmesi. *Uluslararası Bozok Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, *1*(2), 1–9.

Vaittinen, A. M. (2014). *Varieties of embodied knowing: An ethnographic study of mixed Martial arts* [Doctoral dissertation]. Newcastle University.

Velija, P., Mierzwinski, M., & Fortune, L. (2013). 'It made me feel powerful': Women's gendered embodiment and physical empowerment in the martial arts. *Leisure Studies*, *32*(5), 524–541. https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2012.696128

Wacquant, L. (2004). *Body and soul: Notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford University Press.

Wall, J. D., Stahl, B. C., & Salam, A. F. (2015). Critical discourse analysis as a review methodology: An empirical example. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, *37*(1), 11. https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.03711

Woodward, R. (2014). Military landscapes: Agendas and approaches for future research. *Progress in Human Geography*, *38*(1), 40–61.

Yazıcı, D. K. (2025). *Coachıng philosophıes and practices of martial arts coaches* [Master's thesis]. Middle East Technical University.

Yıldırım, F., Akıncı, A. Y., & Kılıç, T. (2023). Uzak Doğu Sporları Sporcularının İnovatif Bakış Açılarının İncelenmesi (Isparta Örneği). *Yalvaç Akademi Dergisi*, *8*(1), 166–178. https://doi.org/10.57120/yalvac.1261047