

# Lived Experiences of Karatedo Athletes: A Phenomenological Study

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## Abstract

**Background and aim.** Karatedo is a martial art that emphasizes discipline, self-mastery, and personal development. Despite its growing popularity, particularly in the Philippines, limited research has explored the lived experiences of Karatedo athletes. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the experiences of collegiate Karatedo practitioners, focusing on their motivations, challenges, and personal growth throughout their athletic journey.

**Methods.** This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 Karatedo athletes from various competitive levels, including university teams and national representatives. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's framework to identify recurring themes and patterns.

**Results.** The findings revealed a cyclical pattern of experiences consisting of motivation, challenges, financial struggles, personal growth, and athlete development. Athletes were driven by intrinsic factors such as passion and discipline, as well as extrinsic factors such as scholarships and recognition. However, they faced significant challenges, including physical fatigue, injuries, psychological pressure, and financial constraints. Despite these difficulties, Karatedo contributed positively to athletes' development, fostering resilience, leadership skills, emotional control, and discipline.

**Conclusions.** Karatedo serves as a platform for holistic athlete development, integrating physical, mental, and emotional growth. However, greater institutional support, including financial assistance and psychological training, is necessary to enhance athletes' performance and well-being.

**Keywords:** *Athlete Resilience; Collegiate Athletes; Karate; Martial Arts; Sports Psychology.*

## 1. Introduction

Karatedo, a Japanese martial art deeply rooted in discipline and self-mastery, has gained global recognition both as a traditional practice and a competitive sport (Funakoshi, 2018). For athletes, Karatedo is more than a form of self-defense; it serves as a vehicle for personal transformation, instilling values such as perseverance, respect, and mental toughness (Bhattacharya et al., 2022; Morstabilini, 2013) (Nakayama, 2020). (Fisica et al., n.d.) Despite its growing popularity in the Philippines, research focusing on the experiences of Karatedo practitioners remains scarce. While studies on sports psychology emphasize the

importance of mental resilience in athletics (Deci & Ryan, 2017), there is a gap in understanding the unique challenges and triumphs faced by Karatedo athletes. This study aims to bridge that gap by exploring the lived experiences of Karatedo practitioners, particularly how they navigate their training, competition pressures, and personal growth. Through a phenomenological approach, this study presents narratives that highlight the struggles and victories of Karatedo athletes, offering insights into how the sport impacts their lives beyond the dojo.

## 2. Materials and Method

A qualitative phenomenological research design was employed to capture the authentic lived experiences of Karatedo athletes in select colleges

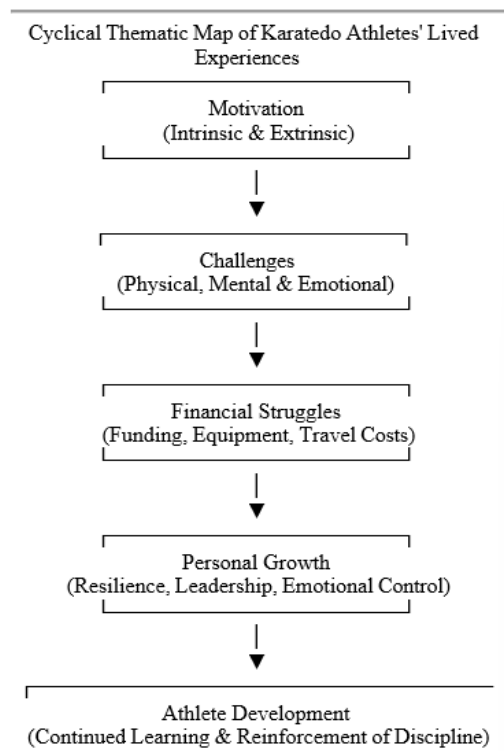
in the Philippines. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 10 Karatedo athletes from different competitive levels, including university teams and national representatives. Participants were consistent athletes selected using purposive sampling to ensure diverse perspectives

### 3. Results and Discussion

The lived experiences of Karatedo athletes revealed several key themes, including their motivations, challenges, and personal growth throughout their journey in the sport. Here is an

on the sport. The data were analyzed thematically, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Recurring themes were identified, and a thematic map was developed to illustrate the core experiences of Karatedo athletes.

improved cyclical version of the thematic map, which better illustrates the continuous journey of Karatedo athletes' lived experiences:



#### Explanation of the Cyclical Structure

- **Motivation:** Athletes begin their Karatedo journey due to intrinsic factors (self-growth, passion, discipline) or extrinsic factors (scholarships, family influence, recognition).
- **Challenges:** As they progress, they face physical, mental, and emotional difficulties due to competition pressure, injuries, and burnout.
- **Financial Struggles:** Limited funding, expensive travel, and lack of institutional support add to their challenges.
- **Personal Growth:** Despite hardships, Karatedo fosters resilience, leadership,

and mental strength, helping athletes overcome adversity.

- **Athlete Development:** As they grow, athletes continue learning and reinforcing discipline, eventually mentoring younger athletes, passing on their experiences, and inspiring the next generation.

The study revealed that collegiate Karatedo athletes in the Philippines experience a dynamic interplay of motivation, challenges, and personal development throughout their athletic journey. Motivation emerged as a significant factor in their engagement with the sport, with intrinsic and extrinsic elements shaping their commitment. Intrinsic motivation was driven by a deep passion for martial arts, personal growth, and the discipline instilled by Karatedo, which many athletes found

beneficial beyond sports. Participants highlighted how their training enhanced their self-discipline, perseverance, and resilience, which translated into their academic and personal lives. Additionally, extrinsic motivations, such as scholarship opportunities, family influence, and the prestige associated with being a Karatedo athlete, played a crucial role in sustaining their involvement. Several athletes expressed gratitude for the educational access their sport provided, reinforcing the significant role of Karatedo in higher education. This in support to the studies (Meyer & Bittmann, 2018; Parnabas et al., 2015) made by the motivation is crucial among athletes in karatedo for joining.

Despite these motivations, the study identified substantial challenges faced by collegiate Karatedo athletes as also good to examine as mentioned in the study also of (Degli & Di, 2018). Physical challenges were a common theme, as athletes

#### 4. Conclusion

This study underscores the multifaceted experiences of collegiate Karatedo athletes in the Philippines, highlighting both the challenges and the profound growth associated with their participation in the sport. While athletes navigate physical strain, mental pressure, and financial constraints, their journey is marked by resilience, discipline, and personal transformation. Karatedo serves as a platform for holistic development, fostering mental fortitude, leadership, and a strong sense of purpose among athletes.

Given these insights, it is imperative that universities and sports institutions enhance their support for Karatedo programs. Increased financial

endured rigorous training schedules that often resulted in injuries and fatigue. Rehabilitation from injuries proved to be a mental and emotional struggle, yet many athletes viewed these experiences as opportunities to build resilience. Psychological challenges were also prevalent, with athletes experiencing performance anxiety, self-doubt, and the immense pressure of representing their schools in competitions. Mental fortitude became a key factor in managing these stressors, with some athletes adopting strategies such as mental conditioning and self-regulation techniques. Financial constraints further exacerbated these difficulties, as limited institutional support for Karatedo often required athletes to fund their own training, travel, and equipment expenses. Unlike mainstream sports such as basketball, Karatedo received minimal financial backing, making it difficult for athletes to fully focus on their development without external burdens.

backing would alleviate the economic burden on athletes, allowing them to focus on their training and academic pursuits. Additionally, integrating sports psychology programs into athletic training would provide athletes with the mental resilience needed to manage competition stress and performance anxiety. Community-based initiatives should also be encouraged to promote Karatedo at the grassroots level, ensuring that aspiring athletes have access to training and opportunities from an early stage. By addressing these concerns, institutions can contribute to a more supportive and sustainable environment for collegiate Karatedo athletes, empowering them to thrive in both their sporting and academic pursuits.

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