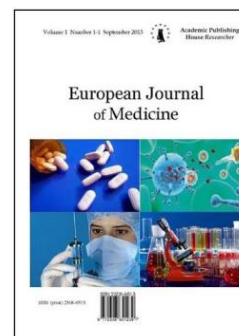


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Aikido Game Activities as Stimulation Factor for a Proper Behavior in Conflict Situations

Todor Marinov ^{a, *}, Nezabravka Gencheva ^a, Mariana Angelcheva ^a, Ignat Ignatov ^b,
Diana Stefanova ^a, Yuliana Pesheva ^b

^aNational Sports Academy V. Levski, Bulgaria

^bScientific Research Center of Medical Biophysics, Bulgaria

Abstract

The conflicts between different personalities offer contradictions, division of opinions and clashes between people. In a field like sport activity the trainers should be able to identify the motives for the conflicts that burst out among the sportsmen and the methods to overcome them. The goal of the study is to prove the positive influence of the physical activity demonstrated in the aikido game over the ways in which one may react in case of conflict situation. The respondent group consists, generally, of 64 youngsters aged from 18 to 24, divided in to two groups: Control group of 24 young people who do not practice sport; and Experimental group of 40 young people that are actively practicing aikido in various clubs in this country. We applied the approved Ken Thomas 'Test (Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument) (Thomas, 1977). We used some given keys to determine the five instruments for reaction to conflict situations: 1) Competing; 2) Collaborating; 3) Compromising; 4) Avoiding; and 5) Accommodating. The analysis made is defining some generalizations: the young people practicing aikido have more harmonious structure of the tactics configuration to be used as a response to conflict situations in comparison to the group of non-involved in sport their peers. They are inclined to cooperation, adaptation and reasonable compromise in such environment. Competition and avoidance are not preferable techniques to resolve conflicts. In the same time non-involved in sport activities young people are governed by attitudes for competitiveness; sometimes their behavior and motives are commanded by the will to make compromise and the desire to avoid conflicts to which it is difficult to adapt. The youngsters with higher physical aikido activities improve their will and tenacity; they are striving to achieve the goals and to assume definite responsibilities. The research of Ignatov with long living people and centenarians shows how physiological status is important for healthy life and adaptations after conflicts again stress (Ignatov et al., 2014). For that the sport is useful for young people.

Keywords: Conflict, Sport, Aikido game.

1. Introduction

The recent rapid development of society as a whole and particularly technologies modernization, especially the information systems, both drive to an evolutionary transformation of physical activities into mental. As a result of the enhanced knowledgeable activity, it is observed an increase of the psychical tension. The modern person demonstrates obvious limitation of his/her

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: stunty@abv.bg (T. Marinov)

physical activities. The last EU reports have registered, in particularly, a notable decrease of the physical activity standards among the population. In these reports the Bulgarian citizens are ranked last and the statistics is rather alarming: „82 per cent of the Bulgarians have never practiced any kind of physical activities or sport“ ([Eurobarometer, 2010](#)), and ever since 2009 the motive inactivity of the population has been grown by 20 per cent. Probably, the negative trend will be preserved in future times if this problem is not focused seriously.

This considerable degradation of the physical activity in general, which is respectively connected with the motion limitation, is regarded as one of the fundamental, radical reasons for socially important and substantial diseases among the aged population such as ischemic heart disease (IHD), known also as coronary artery disease (CAD), hypertension (HTN or HT), known also as high blood pressure (HBP), neurological diseases such as stroke, diabetes and obesity. Physical activity in the various groups of children and grow-ups occurs to be a significant factor simulating growth and development processes. Hypodynamics is a stepping stone to the delay in child's physical and psychical development and to the advance of different acute and chronic diseases, aberrations and anomalies such as obesity, diabetes, acute and chronic diseases, postural distortions such as incorrect spinal position, scoliosis, kyphosis, fallen arch and flat feet ([Markovska et al., 2010](#); [Gencheva et al., 2010](#)). In accordance with a NCPHA Report, there is a constant reduction of the physical efficiency in the time period 2008 - 2012, on the one hand, and on the other, the statistics have registered an increase of the postural disturbances. In reference to the spinal distortions in the group of 7-18 olds, Bulgarian children are ranked at fourth position (5.3 per mille), and the 2008 Annual Report records the two most widespread problems: overweight (average 15 per cent) and obesity (average 5 per cent); the tendency is to increase these situations and thus to create a serious precondition for another level, ever higher, of degradation of whatsoever kind of physical activity [[ncpha.government.bg](#)].

The pragmatic advantage of regular execution of some motions (physical exercises) is proved ever since Antiquity. The ancient Greek physician and scientist, Hippocrates of Kos, described different methods to practice physical exercises and massage in order to cure people suffering from spinal deformations. Gl. Tissot (1750-1826) pronounces his famous phrase 'so far as the effects of motion are concerned, it could substitute each medicine; however, all healing agents cannot replace the motive effects'; thus he reveals the great acceptance of the physical exercises. Movement occurs to be the most important factor influencing human adaptation to the changing environment. The considerable degradation of physical activities, which is bound up to the limitation of motions, opens the door for serious destructions of human active life and work. It has unfavorable influence on his/her psyche. Irritability, fatigue and anxiety are going up. The mutual determination of inner (psychic) and outer (physical) activity is broken.

On the other hand, the mutual determination of psychic and physical factors in the structure of human activity is obviously proven. While developing physical capacity there is also an improvement of the activity structure, itself, as well as an improvement of its psychic processes. ([Kaykov, 1997](#)). It is obvious that there is also a substantial decrease of the power of negative emotional experiences such as anxiety, fear, anger, aggression, etc. That is why, physical activity is among of the basic factors that are decisive for the health and life-style qualities of the modern person.

It is proved that the purposeful physical activity exerts favorable influence on the behavior modes needed for the resolution of various conflict situations ([Gavrilov et al., 2016](#)).

In modern times conflicts are among the most fundamental problems in the relationships between people. The conflict, per se, is a process in which one party involved accepts that its interests are set against the other party or are negatively affected by the other ([Wall, Callister, 1995](#)). Similar is the definition, given by K. Markov in 2013: at the root of each conflict there are subject-object oppositions; the reasons for them are underlying in the incompatible interests, needs and values which quite often occur to be salient in a real counter fight between both parties. Most often the emerged conflict is transformed into a real aggression, and in some cases such aggressive communications are converted into some forms of open violence. Science scrutinizes the various conflicts (military, religious, emotional, etc.) but those that are examined in depth are some that are most often observed in the human communication, such as the interpersonal.

Interpersonal conflicts are related to the contradictions between particular psychic processes, psychic statuses, distinctive features and attributes of the personality ([Lee, 2008](#); [Wall, Callister,](#)

1995). We may add to them such as motivation conflicts, conflicts of the non-realized intention, role conflicts, adaptation conflicts as well as conflicts concerning non-adequate estimation. Basic structures of the inner personal world are motivations and experiences („I want “), values („I am ought “, „I must/I should “) and self- assessment („I can“ or „I cannot “). While a misbalance among these three structures occurs, interpersonal conflicts different in intensity, substance and duration emerge on the surface.

The conflicts between different personalities offer contradictions, division of opinions and clashes between people. These conflicts may be reduced to the level of persuasion conflicts; they are sources of the perception that different people apprehend one and the same situation in different ways and that each of the parties involved is an entirely complete believer in his/her personal individual understandings (Huseinagić, Hodžić, 2010). These conflicts are studied in depth and are directly related to the objectivity of the human relations (Wall, Callister et al., 1995). Their specific features are as follows: 1) Availability of counter interests; 2) Awareness by each conflicting party of the existence of opposing interests; 3) Persuasion in both parties that the Other has harmed or will do harm the respective party's interests; 4) A fluent mutual interaction between the parties; and 5) Direct actions carried out by one or by both parties which are harmful for the interests of the other party (Andreeva, 2007). Basic attitudes and adjustments of the individual and the psychic status are strongly influencing on the conflicts and their specific development. Fundamental dipoles (bipolar attitudes) are attraction-repulsion, love-hate.

The various situational conflicts may impede efficiency and to avert one from the satisfaction to do the things s/he is doing. Each conflict may happen to be a threat for specific social relationships and for the stability of the social communications. Because of this, it is necessary to study the conflict causes and their effects on the personal emotions, cognitions, motivations and behaviors. The knowledge of the conflict and its evaluation in a holistic manner may be of help for the people involved in resolving them; and thus, to prevent their further escalation up to a destruction level. While exercising some activity and having in mind that nobody can be protected from such confusions, everyone may build up attitudes reactive towards such conflict situations, (Nauta, Kluver, 2004). Doing a special research, David Antonioni (1998) finds out that the people, who are thorough, attractive and open, may manage with skill and competence the conflict situation using constructive and acceptable behavioral models. The researcher makes reference to something more: by drawing attention to the fact that there is no perfect style of conflict management, he accents that every situation should be resolved individually and each one needs a special instrumentarium to be used for the purpose. According to Green, B., Leslie, A.D. and Marks, M. (2001), the management design of the group conflicts is influencing on effectiveness of the inner group relations and, so, occurs to influence on the conflict resolution processes, as a whole.

In a field like sport activity the trainers should be able to identify the motives for the conflicts that burst out among the sportsmen and the methods to overcome them. The study work of Laios A. and G. Tzetzis (2005) is based on a sample of 42 professional football, basketball and volleyball trainers inquired through questionnaires. The researchers have specified that the trainers use five conflict management styles and the most effective ones for team conflict resolution are: collaboration, compromise or avoid while the most non-effective are competition and accommodation. Huseinagić E. and A. Hodžić (2010) find out that majority of team trainers from the European championship think the conflicts should be avoided because they are unpleasant experiences in the everyday life and in sport as well. So, the conflicts may be solved administratively instead contractively and operationally.

Being a martial art, aikido offers a specific type of physical activity which is particularly influential on psychic and physical development of everybody who is practicing it; it contributes to the creation of a sense of readiness to find an individual conflict solution in each single personal value structure (Kaykov et al., 1998). Translated, the word aikido means method or way (do) to coordinate and harmonize (ai) the mental energy (ki). Ultimately, it is a doctrine for coordination of the body and mind, for their fusion, amalgamation of the individual physical and psychic capacities; as a result of these processes the individual practitioner becomes an all-round man (Drumev, Marinov, 2016). A. Nocque (1977) indicates that „aikido is a way practically to study, to apply to practice and to aware the laws concerning the unity of the body and spirit. This unity is implicitly necessary since the spirit expresses its power through the body”.

The aikido game is ruled by strictly defined series of movements demonstrated in various techniques in order to neutralize the enemy. Each of them may turn aside and redirect, i.e. ward out, each attack, notwithstanding how many attackers have launched it - one or several. This tactic is a method demonstrating how everyone may move from the basic consummative attitude to the self-defence instrumentarium toward a higher level. At such a higher stage the art itself is in a process of transformation into a system of teaching principles for coordination between the human Self and the environment in order to harmonize the oppositions; and clears up all doubts that it is an art aiming physical destruction. As B. Sosa and B. Robbins (1987) underline, „aikido is occasionally termed a martial art without fight. The person who is training aikido should respect the body of his/her enemy. Despite the fact that many of its techniques are unhealthy and unsound, the pain is provisional and should never give birth to any lasting harms and damages”.

Combined with the idea how to improve self-defence technical skills and the heightened physical activity, the entire aikido philosophy exercised some kind of ascendancy over us while discussing how to organize this study and how to define the working hypothesis. At the end of the day it is as follows:

We presuppose that the physical activity in the aikido game would friendly influence the process to form more harmonious structure of the whole set of techniques that are usually necessary to react to the conflicts.

The goal of the study is to prove the positive influence of the physical activity demonstrated in the aikido game over the ways in which one may react in case of conflict situation.

To achieve this goal and to confirm the working hypothesis we had to solve the following basic tasks:

1. To reveal the theoretical foundations of the problem focused on.
2. To reveal what is the real status of the tactics methods that are usually used by the respondents for reaction in conflict situations.
3. To analyze the results of the field work and to confirm or to reject the working hypothesis.

The respondent group consists, generally, of 64 youngsters aged from 18 to 24, divided into two groups: Control group of 24 young people who do not practice sport; and Experimental group of 40 young people that are actively practicing aikido in various clubs in this country.

2. Materials and Methods

During the research process we used complex methods, including literature resources study, observation and talk. In order to determine what are the typical ways to react to conflicts, we applied the approved Ken Thomas ‘Test [Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument]. We used some given keys to determine the five instruments for reaction to conflict situations: 1) Competing; 2) Collaborating; 3) Compromising; 4) Avoiding; and 5) Accommodating. The information we obtained was processed via a variation analysis and a hypotheses test for independent samples (Student’s t-criteria with guaranteed probability $P \geq 95,0\%$).

3. Results and Discussion

After a detailed mathematic-statistic processing of the information collected during the field work we discovered the following regularities related to the ways of conflict reactions.

The young people from the Control group, who do not involve in sport activities, organize these reactive methods in the following configuration – see [Figure 1](#).

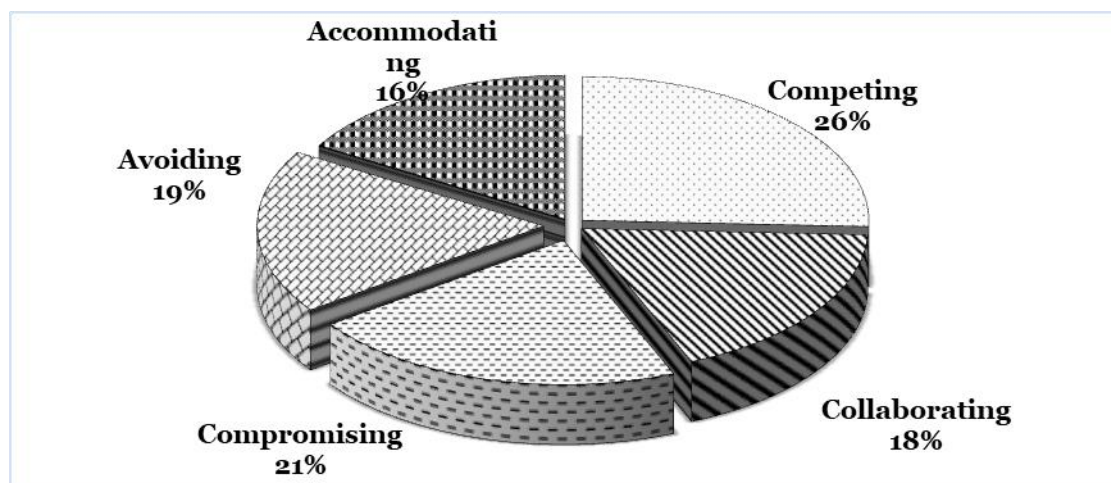


Fig. 1. Response tactics to conflicts in the group of sport non-involved young people

First rank, competing with average rating result of 7,42 units or 26 per cent of all conflict response methods. The respondents' preference for this tactics shapes a trend to manifest the personal Self of the individual actor. The respondents, who have answered in this manner, obviously prefer to manifest themselves in particular specific and tangible situations in their everyday life, includingly in conflict situations. Leading attitude here is to meet the requirements of their private exclusive interests and, so, disturbing the interests of the others. The choice of this conflict reaction mode almost always has a negative effect on their individual physics. The psychological tension increases and leads to anxiety, anger, hate and even abhorrence as experience. Naturally is has some negative reflections on the health of both conflicting parties and leads to health complications.

Second rank, compromising with average rating result of 6,17 units or 21 per cent in the Control group. This choice is an index that the non-involved with any sport activities young respondents have considered the motives and the arguments of the opposite party in the conflict and are striving to avoid the situation. Therefore, they take measures so as to not to meet the influence of its negative conflicting factors and to prevent the situation, respectively some event, from happening; more or less, the behavior is diplomatic and the reactions of the other party involved and, so, affected, do not increase the psychological tensions.

Third rank, avoiding with average rating result of 5,33 units or 19 per cent in the Control group. In this category the respondents try not to be directly involved in the arising conflict. They are in search for ways to avoid the conflict situation; however, they do not undertake any active action to resolve it. Using this instrument, they lose the capacity to achieve their own individual goals and give a chance to the other pretender, the opposite party in the game, to do so. This tactic is not quite favorable as far as the respondents demonstrate they are ready to get out of a situation which they should solve.

Fourth rank, collaborating with average rating result of 5,21 units and 18 per cent preference for it from all registered methods. It occurs to be the most positive way to react in such cases and is a search for finding all opportunities and possible capabilities to slow down the tension in the emerged conflict situation. In the majority of occurrences this predisposition helps them to manage the conflict situation and leads to the needed positive attitudes to play a hardball in the communication with the opposite game actor.

Fifth, last rank, accommodating with average rating result of 4,75 units and preferred by 16 per cent of the respondent group of sport non-involved young persons. Through the will registered for adaptation and adjustment to the situation, the non-involved in sport activities young people demonstrate that they are ready carefully to attend to the opponent stands, to debate the various arguments and to strive to understand their goal rationality. In most cases the individual personal skills, per se, to accommodate to the situation and to declare respect to the opposite party, involved in the conflict, create a priori a favorable climate for conflict resolution.

The so recognized and ranked pragmatic tactics for conflict reaction by the young people, who are not involved in sport activities, is of asymmetrical structure, non-harmonically

constructed, and may be considered as not quite perfect. In most of the cases the actions of the respondents may lead to plunging into the conflict situation, to extending and intensifying its negative effects which finally might lead to a stalemate without a chance to reveal any probable room for solution.

The configuration of the conflict reaction methods chosen by the Experimental group, consisting young people actively practicing aikido, is rather different – see [Figure 2](#).

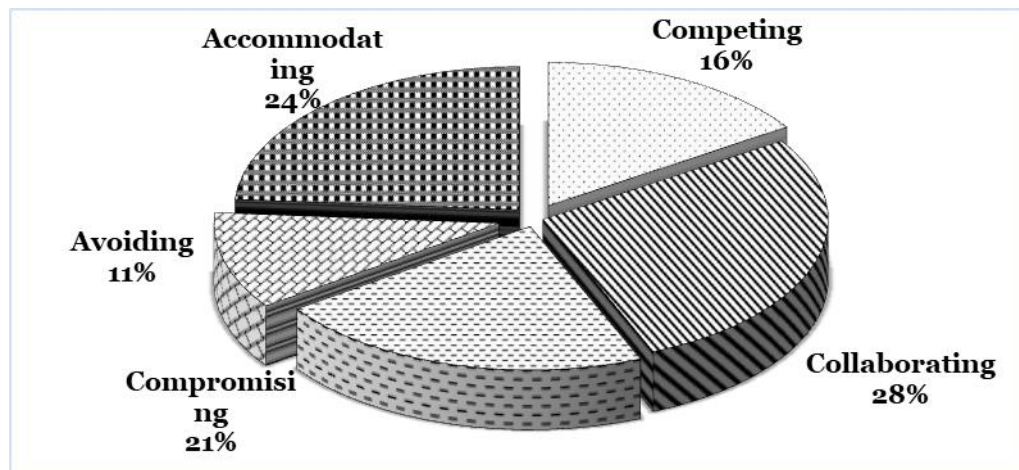


Fig. 2. Response tactics to conflicts in the group of actively involved in aikido game young people

First rank, collaborating with average 8,30 unites and 28 per cent preferred from all 5 methods in the Experimental group; thus this tactics is registered as the most preferred method for conflict reaction by the respondents who are involved in aikido training. The philosophy of aikido, grounded on the roads to harmony and lack of competing elements during the training practices, helps the people to build up a set of skills indicating unity, integrity and inner-structural arrangement and cohesion of collectivity, per se. At the end of the day this can be transferred in all activities in all other fields they are or maybe, in future, involved; and in case of any conflict situation this set of techniques subserves to obtain harmonious structure of the relationships with the other collectivities with whom they communicate. This is a positive drive which is built up on the idea to communicate, having in mind positive emotions and feelings such as understanding, good intensions, respect and demonstration of mutual good will; it has positive influences on the human health, as a whole. On the other hand, the lack of competition in aikido game eliminates the contest, per se, in pursuit of the dream „to be the first in the field” in any competition and, thus, the goal to be “victorious” at any rate is transformed into “let’s do it together”. There is a lack of dispute, not-agreement, and fight. There is a dominance of balance, harmony and solidarity, and unity.

Second rank, accommodating with average rating result of 7,08 units and 24 per cent preference in the experimental group of actively involved in aikido. The respondent arguments are associated with readiness to enter into the skin of the other party and neglecting one’s individual interests. The respondents accept the opponent’s viewpoint without confrontation. Keeping self-control is among the fundamental factors that are perceived, de facto, as guarantees for the effectivity in hard and tough situations – conflicts pertain to such situations. This sense of self-control may be created due to the determined strongly-willed aikido trainings and, so, it helps the practitioners to build up pragmatic skills allowing them to accept the conflict without any plunge into despair.

Third rank, compromising, with average rating result of 6,40 units and 21 per cent preference as a way to react in conflict situation. The rationally award compromise is among the tactical maneuvers in each conflict situations. The respondents are ready to make certain diplomatic moves back. In some cases, compromising is even necessary if the opponent manifest a correct behavior. The effect may even be better if both parties step back, at least partially, some of their goals in order to get a mutual agreement and to manage the conflict situation.

Fourth rank, competing, with average rating result of 4,68 units and 16 per cent preference. This tactics demonstrates one of the specific characteristics of the Self-concept; such an orientation is a manifestation that the goal of each party in the conflict is to verify identity validity of its

individual singular Self. However, predominantly its consequences are expressed by many different negative effects. In this case the respondents aim to make all possible efforts in order to obtain their goals and work hard on real fulfillment of this mental map, invest a lot of efforts, make attempts to demonstrate their individual rational thinking and advantages in front of the other.

Fifth rank, avoiding, with average rating result of 3,25 units and 11 per cent preference in the experimental group. This low rating permits us to think that aikido practitioners would undertake the activities, necessary to solve the conflict situation without seeking techniques how to avoid the conflict situation. This reaction tactics is typical for cases in which there is a need not to allow the conflict to extend and third parties to be involved in it. Thus, via avoiding, a chance is given to the opponent to take responsibility for the resolution of the emerged disputable problems.

Such a configuration of the methods used as a reaction to conflict situations possesses a harmonious structure. The activities of the young people practicing aikido are quite adequate to various conflict situations. Evidence we have found out in the significant distance between the data obtained in the Experimental group (EG) of the aikido training young people and the findings in the Control group (CG) of the non-involved in sport activities young people – Table 1 and Figure 3. After a variation analyses we have got the normal Gaussian division of the obtained values (the coefficients for As. and Ex. do not go above the critical values at the level of significance – $\alpha = 0.05$) (Brogliey, Petkova, 1988). This has allowed us to compare the reactions of the respondents from both groups via each separate method for conflict reaction and to apply Student's t-criterion for independent samples.

Table 1. Response tactics to conflicts in both groups: of aikido non-involved (CG) and aikido practitioners (EG). Comparative data

№	Indices Reaction Tactics	CG		EG		D	d%	P%
		\bar{X}_1	S	\bar{X}_2	s			
1	Competing	7,42	1,95	4,68	1,65	2,74	36.9	99,9
2	Collaborating	5,21	1,98	8,30	2,10	3,09	59.3	99,9
3	Compromising	6,17	1,76	6,40	1,68	0,23	3.7	40,1
4	Avoiding	5,33	2,06	3,25	1,06	2,08	39.0	99,9
5	Accommodating	4,75	1,51	7,08	1,86	2,33	49.1	99,9

First. Collaborating, as a result of systemic aikido training activities, occurs to be the preferred selected technique as a response to any conflict situations in the experimental group (EG). The average score in the respective respondent group is 8,30 units (S=2,10). The achieved result is with 3,09 units higher than the result achieved by the sport non-involved youngsters; the latter rate this criterion at third place with 5,21 units (S=1,98). This distinction is supported by a high guaranteed probability (P=99,9 %). This shows 59,3 per cent higher probability the aikido practitioners' behavior to be more adequate to the emerged conflict situation and their capacity to track down painless path to going out of it. These young people would not permit themselves to get into contradiction and confrontation with the opponent. Their approach is directed to turning back to their own individual interests in return for obtaining communication harmony and preservation of good mutual relations.

Second. Accommodating: aikido practitioners' capability to adapt to the changing environment of the conflict situation is greater in comparison with the ability of non-involved in sport young people. The distinction in the accommodating index is backed by 2,33 units, i.e. P = 99,9 per cent. The first achievement – aftermath of effectivity of training burden during the various physical activities (including aikido), – is the capacity of the former respondents to quick accommodation of the separate systems and organs in the physical body. There is also adaptation

of the psychological and functional processes as a response to the high demands of the activity, per se. This shapes an adequate response signals for readiness and this readiness to react is carried over conflicting situations. The probability aikido training persons to adapt to conflict situation environment is of 49,1 per cent higher, which pragmatically means to be able to accept occurrences without being desperate and to act adequately to the opponent's behavior and actions.

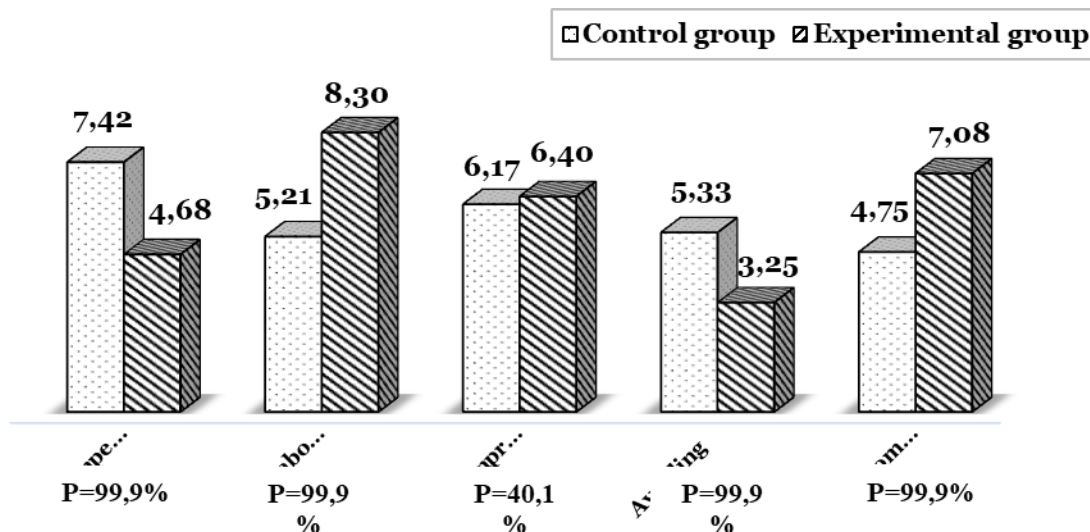


Fig. 3. Comparison of the response tactics in conflict situations within CG and EG

Third. Compromising: in some conflict situations rational compromise occurs to be a useful tool to exit the situation. There are some distinctions in average rating results registered in the data collected for this index; however, they are not reliable (P=40,1 per cent), and so, from this finding we may conclude that the attitudes towards this conflict reaction technique are of equal value.

Fourth. Competing is a response tactics in conflict situations preferred by the young people in the EG – $\bar{x}=4,68$ (S=1,65) first for the CG – $\bar{x}=7,42$ (S=1,95). The distinction is reliable (P=99,9 per cent). In this case non-involved young people accept conflict in a literal manner as a competing situation and enter into it with the will ‘to win at any rate’, irrespectively of the negative sequences. In the group of the aikido practitioners, the notion of competition is supported by high degree of will for collaboration and this is expressed by a respect to the opponent while communicating with him/her.

Fifth. Avoiding is characterized by lack of drive for solidarity, lack of trend to achieve one’s personal aims and non-acceptance, even rejection, of responsibility; it appears as one of the unfavorable ways to react to the conflicts. In the control respondent group, the tendency to avoid is more clearly expressed than in the experimental respondent group. The distance between both groups as average rating results here is 2,08 units under P=99,9 per cent. The youngsters with higher physical aikido activities improve their will and tenacity; they are striving to achieve the goals and to assume definite responsibilities.

4. Conclusion

The analysis made is defining some generalizations: the young people practicing aikido have more harmonious structure of the tactics configuration to be used as a response to conflict situations in comparison to the group of non-involved in sport their peers. They are inclined to cooperation, adaptation and reasonable compromise in such environment. Competition and avoidance are not preferable techniques to resolve conflicts. In the same time non-involved in sport activities young people are governed by attitudes for competitiveness; sometimes their behavior and motives are commanded by the will to make compromise and the desire to avoid conflicts to which it is difficult to adapt.

The research working hypothesis has been proved: physical activities involved in the aikido game favorably affect formation of more harmonious tactical configuration of the response in conflict situations. The challenge for us in future will be to study the methods for conflict resolution

in collective sports such as football, basketball, volleyball, etc., as well as whether there are gender distinctions registered. This will be an object of our further researches.

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