

An Autoethnographic Optic: Experiences of Migration to Multiple Modes of Training and Participation in Karate during COVID-19

Sadhana Manik

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7687-0844>

Abstract

Karate, a favoured and glamourized martial art in society with a rich history, was due to make its first appearance as an Olympic sport at the 2020 Tokyo mega event but this was scuppered by the arrival of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Numerous other sports were crafting innovative and flexible ways of training and participation for them to endure as a sport of choice during and after lockdown, however karate has had an intimate relationship with online platforms for some time. This chapter contributes by providing a nuanced autoethnographic optic, by a number one ranked South African master's kata champion, into karate club training and competition participation pre and during COVID-19. Locating my argument within a theoretical framing of program risk and resilience and the notion of 'arrhythmic experiences' (Thorpe 2015), underpinned by the occurrence of a natural disaster, I illuminate the multi-modal training approaches which my club and I used prior to COVID-19 due to extenuating circumstances which created an environment for bolstering resilience during the pandemic. I detail the historical reasoning and approaches to highlight my personal and club experiences over a 3-year period in migrating from a face to face dojo approach to alternative remote training blending multi modal ways of karate training to maximise participation and learning. This has significance in recognizing and navigating the efficiencies and deficiencies of multiple modes of sports training delivery for competitive and non-competitive karatekas (practitioners of karate) amidst a fluid environment demanding adaptation given the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: karate training, participation, program risk and resilience, autoethnography, COVID-19

1 Introduction

It is valuable to understand the background to karate in order to understand its current role in society. Karate as a sport of choice, has a rich history spanning hundreds of years. The birthplace of karate is suggested as the island of Okinawa (Leo 2018). There is much contestation about the exact origins of karate but what is clear is that the following countries are connected in its birth and early development: India, China and Okinawa, before it moved to mainland Japan. China is said to have influenced karate's development in Okinawa due to the trade between China and Okinawa. One school of research indicates that China's roots itself in the martial arts comes from an Indian monk Bodhidharma who travelled to China around the 6th century (± 520), teaching an ancient Indian form of fighting (Vajramushti) and zen buddhism to weak and starving Shaolin monks to strengthen their bodies and minds while living amongst them (Haines 2011) whilst another claims that monks in China were already knowledgeable about the martial arts (Budokai 2014).

Karate, has long been perceived as a favoured sport and martial arts pursuit (Leo 2018) across the world for its link to exercise, a healthy lifestyle, self-defence and discipline. Haines (2011) explains that 'America's ignorance of karate produced an aura around it that is both fictional and sensational' and much of this is evident in the Hollywood movies. Karate spread through the travel of a few Okinawans initially to Japan to promote open hand fighting techniques. At that time, a few Japanese knew of it because it was considered a foreign import –from Okinawa. It is advanced that the Americans similarly learned of it during World War 2. It is said to have launched in its international journey from around the 1950s gaining in momentum. There are four Japanese styles of karate: Gōju-ryū, Shitō-ryū, Shotokan and Wadō-ryū. In the early 1990's conservative estimates indicated that more than 15 million people (Haines 2011) were karatekas (practitioners of karate) but currently it is estimated at closer to 100 million. It must also be recognized that it is a sport that is unfortunately steeped in debate due to its commercialization and I also support Haines who pines the loss of the simple Buddhist philosophy of its roots. He decries some instructors' pursuing high financial gains from teaching the sport, quick grading of students for financial goals, the handing out of belts to politicians as leverage, and in fighting over who heads associations and which style is better believing that these pursuits have tainted the sport. Regardless of such views, the resilience of karate as a sport code is accepted. Karate would

have featured for the first time as an Olympic sport at the Tokyo Olympic games in 2020 but this mega event was postponed due to the appearance and global spread of COVID-19, a disease of pandemic proportions, which is engulfing the world and which provided the impetus for this publication.

This chapter presents a discussion into karate participation and training making a scholarly contribution to the training of ranked athletes and program resilience during aberrant circumstances. I share my personal and club training and competition participation pre and during COVID-19 from an autoethnographic optic incorporating my own personal and instructor experiences with the aim of highlighting the characteristics for athlete and program resilience. I also make an academic contribution to identity research within the phenomenon of sports. I insert interactions with selected members of the Karate clubs, an African head of style Kyoshi Nikki Pillay and the president of the national karate Federation of South Africa, Hanshi Sonny Pillay for an extended understanding of the context of karate as a community club sport. In this chapter, I illuminate the multi-modal training approaches which the club and I used prior to COVID-19 which created an environment that prepared me as an athlete and the club for program resilience during the pandemic.

I commenced this chapter with a brief background into the roots of karate and then I extended this to its value at community level before I present the theoretical and methodological foundations for the chapter. I then focus on presenting my own experiences as a karateka (I am a number one ranked South African master's kata champion: 2018-2020), my experiences as an instructor and selected club experiences pre-COVID-19 and during the pandemic. I argue from a bifurcated stance – that of a ranked karateka and an instructor of karate. Herein, I adopt a 'program risk and disaster management' perspective for an ongoing evaluation of training strategies adopted. This I do, for an understanding of the context and for the need for adaptability in developing continuity for myself as an athlete and in a karate program of training for club resilience during an aberrant occurrence such as a natural disaster (the COVID-19 pandemic).

My Choice of Methodology

The perspective I'm using is autoethnographic with narrative inquiry which has been used before in sport research (Zavattaro 2014; Smith 2017) due to its importance for reflexivity and self -identity although there is no documented

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use in the sport code of karate. It's also not a common methodology and McMahon, Gannon and Zehnter (2017) advocate for the value of autoethnography for sport management arguing for its benefits. I draw from my 'fresh memories' (Wall 2008) involving verbal communication and a litany of mostly digital communication instruments such as emails, whatsapp messages, zoom and phone/ whatsapp calls. I include elements of thinking and decision-making because ethnographic mining includes 'self-questioning' (Ellis 2004: xvii - xviii), 'fears and self-doubts—and emotional pain' (Tuura 2012: 01). I am mindful of how narrative can be reductive and complexity can be compromised (Kraus 2003).

Similar to Chang (2008: 48 - 49) I focus not on the 'self alone, but about ... understanding of others (culture/ society) through self' during a time of sudden change. I also extend autoethnography into 'identity' research in sport studies. I thus offer up a bottom-up approach with a practitioner's view of the challenges (Eide *et al.* 2012) related to COVID-19 and karate consumption from a training lens.

Positionality is also an area of my contribution as majority of the studies are undertaken by researchers who are outside of the event under scrutiny presenting an outsiders' perspective (for example, Thorpe 2015) whereas there are few studies that present an insiders' perspective. In Thorpe's study, the residents in the geographical area of the disaster are the participants in the study but in this current chapter, the identity of the author is significant as I write from a self-reflective autoethnographic perspective, with commentary from the umbrella sports federation (Karate South Africa-KSA) in South Africa as well as my own lived karate experiences and that of the karate club.

Theoretical Cilia

The theoretical insights critical for the chapter, are distilled from Lefebvre's (2004) theory of rhythm analysis with his concepts of arrhythmia, polyrhythmia and eurhythmia.

Karate as a Facet of a 'Rhythmic' Society and the 'Arrhythmia' of Lockdown

Karate is one of the sports undertaken at community and school level. Sports

which feature at this level, practiced on a regular basis provide a significant role in the development of the code as well as in contributing to community cohesion. Wicker, Filo and Cuskelly (2013: 510) argue, ‘Community sport clubs are critical to the provision of sport’ in numerous countries. They provide a crucial role in intergenerational and immigrant integration providing evidence of the involvement of youth and immigrants mingling with older people in community sports clubs. Thus, when a global disaster strikes, as has COVID-19, it has repercussions for the continuity of community sport participation and there is a negative ripple effect created for communities and people due to this ‘arrhythmia’. I draw from Thorpe’s use of Lefebvre’s (2004) theory of rhythm analysis where she alludes to how a natural disaster presents an ‘arrhythmic experience’ which ‘forces people to rethink the importance of sport in their everyday lives’ (Thorpe 2015: 301).

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, countries across the world began declaring lockdown. The lockdown heralded a break in the normal rhythm/s of daily human activities. Lefebvre in his ‘rhythmanalysis’ explains that ‘everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time, and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm’ (Lefebvre 2004: 26) however people in general are not ontologically aware of rhythm in their daily lives. He conceived of rhythms as comprising of three types: ‘Lefebvre refers to polyrhythmia as being the composition of diverse and multiple rhythms, eurhythmia as the ‘harmony of rhythms’ (p.20) and arrhythmia as ‘the discordance of rhythms’ (p.16)’. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic heralded a shift from eurhythmia to arrhythmia in society. This sudden change brings with it negative emotions such as distress and suffering (Lefebvre 2004: 77) because regular behavior patterns and habits form the architecture of people’s lives in society and this maintains their feelings of security (Edensor 2010) which is suddenly disrupted by a disaster. In the current chapter, Lefebvre’s work is significant as it allows for an understanding of experiences of arrhythmia over time for myself and the karate club and the most recent pandemic’s disruption to the regular karate participation and training rhythm. Significantly, it facilitated a re-thinking by instructors, myself included, of the concepts of time, space and place for karate club training. For me as a ranked athlete, Lefebvre’s work revealed the arrhythmia that impacted on me and the polyrhythmia that I harnessed in my own karate ‘life’ when I experienced various forms of disruption prior to the pandemic as well as during the pandemic.

2 Literature on Relevant Concepts

This chapter's relevant literature is an amalgamation of literature from risk and disaster management, program resilience and multi modal training avenues.

Risk and Disaster Management

The COVID-19 pandemic was a social disruptor with a domino effect for karate training and thus karate club longevity calls for an interrogation from a risk and disaster management perspective. However, risk and disaster management as a discipline is in its infancy with a foothold in a variety of disciplines (Raydugin 2017). In a post disaster study unrelated to sport but valuable for organizational response, Eide, Haugstveit, Halvorsrud, Skjetne, and Stiso (2012) drew attention to the value of communication and collaboration that should have occurred during the disaster as it unfolded. They highlight the significance of disaster management and response by giving value to time that is lost during the event, planning and strategies that should unfold. Risk management in sport appears to be relatively well developed for participants. In the karate literature that is available, risk management pertains to hazards for karate students (karatekas) and spectators in terms of injuries, facilities in terms of equipment and lighting and fires but it is rarely from an individual sustained training perspective nor is it from an organizational perspective although the English Karate federation does provide some organizational awareness. A comprehensive document on risk management and a guidelines policy by the English Karate federation (EKF 2009) for member associations and clubs does offer nuanced insights into the main risks that can be faced with a component dedicated to organizations. Collectively EKF presents strategic, operational, financial and external risks to be considered by karate clubs in England. Strategic risks involves organizational risks and it can include planning, leadership and communication. Wicker, Filo and Cuskelly (2013) by contrast, point to key organizational challenges as being largely financial in addition to the recruitment of volunteers to assist.

The EKF also points to operational risks for clubs that include policy, human resources, information (adequacy for decision making), integrity of data, reputation, technological (use of technology to achieve objectives), project (planning and management procedures) and innovation. Financial risks comprise of budgetary, fraud or theft, investment evaluation and liability. Infrastructure risks include both physical (such as transport) and electronic

such as internet use. There are also legal and regulatory risks, political risks and partnership risks. An important point on clubs planning for risks in the future, is made by the Federation. This was a critical component in hindsight because of the swiftness with which the pandemic COVID-19 has spread and shaken the very core of daily living on earth including participation in sport. Unfortunately, numerous sport codes including karate clubs were caught by surprise with little time to plan and react (a mere week) before lockdown took effect in South Africa (This commenced on the 27 March 2020).

Under the auspices of Karate South Africa in June 2020, Roetz and Pillay (2020) undertook a study and presented a risk management plan as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic which was aimed at preparing clubs for re-opening. Again, this was a response document and no other document prior to the pandemic on risk in the sport code could be found using the key words: ‘karate South Africa and risk management/ policy’ in a google search. A perusal of the KSA constitution did contain a section on safety and security (p. 79) and unforeseen contingencies and force majeure (p. 89). However, the former was largely focused on security at KSA events and the latter on the national executive committee being the decision-making body because the constitution is focused on the protection of the national karate federation and not on athlete and karate club resilience.

Program Resilience

There is a dearth of literature on program resilience research in sport clubs and where there have been studies these have centred on natural disasters such as floods and cyclones (Wicker *et al.* 2013), droughts (Kellett & Turner 2009), earthquakes (Thorpe 2015). Wicker *et al.* (2013) state that most of these have been natural disaster impact studies for organisations and incorporated unpacking the elements that are needed for organizational recovery. Thorpe’s (2015) study included individuals apart from community sport clubs and it focused on the ‘recovery and resilience of individuals and communities’ after the 2011 earthquakes in New Zealand. She explored from residents’ perspectives their lived experiences after a natural disaster that has ‘damage (d) or destroy(ed) the spaces and places used for participation’ (Thorpe 2015: 302). All of the studies on an organization’s program and individual resilience have been undertaken after the event, for example on focusing on the recovery period weeks and months after the disaster and not during the hazard event. Thus, program resilience for sports clubs and individuals is generally studied

post the disaster event and not as in the current paper. Here, program and individual resilience is explored during the global disaster event, namely the COVID-19 pandemic as it is unfolding across months with no distinct idea of when it will cease. Herein is where I aim to also make a modest contribution to the literature as well on community sport clubs' program resilience and individual athlete's resilience in focusing on sport resilience for karate during a natural disaster.

Karate, the Internet and Online Training

Karate skills training had long migrated from only face to face dojo (karate school/club) training. Karate, since the invention of the internet, has indeed had an intimate relationship with online platforms such as Google search and facebook for some time as a source of teaching and learning in addition to the face to face instruction in a dojo by karate senseis (teachers). Multi modal teaching and learning comprises of an array of representations to maximize teaching and learning and these include verbal and written language as well as visual and other forms of spatial representation (Papageorgiou & Lameris 2017). Thus, multi modal training opportunities had surfaced long before the pandemic struck. A mixture of synchronous (technology using audio or video where the feedback is immediate) and asynchronous (technology where there is a time lag such as email or a pre-recorded video) communication opportunities (Watts 2016) had prevailed given a multitude of training contexts and club branches across the world. Karatekas, have in general been learning ways of honing their kata and kumite techniques from the internet which has a plethora of pre- recorded videos of competition participation and seminars by world renowned and highly ranked karatekas and grand masters whose knowledge and expertise are then used to grow the sport. For example, in the category of kata competition, Rika Usami and Antonio Diaz, both of whom were world kata (fighting an imaginary opponent) title holders belonging to the Inoue-Ha Shitoryu style of karate (the club to which I once belonged) can be found with ease on the internet doing an array of katas and also teaching these katas at seminars held across the world.

3 Athlete Training, Program Resilience and my Sports' Identity

My discussion below encapsulates the national karate federation's response to

COVID-19, a selected club response (to which I belong) with associated challenges, my individual training program, experiences and challenges as a club instructor.

Lockdown in South Africa and KSA's response

The announcement of a national lockdown was accompanied by strict rules and regulations for sports training and participation which were continuously amended as lockdown measures were relaxed across the months (Hassen 2020). Karate was not exempt from the rules and in SA, all face to face dojo training stopped as people had to abide with remaining indoors and only leaving their homes for emergencies or to purchase groceries. During this period Hanshi Sonny Pillay of Karate South Africa (personal correspondence to the author) explained

As President of the National Karate Federation Karate South Africa (KSA) I firstly must concede that our karate fraternity were in a state of shock the day the Covid-19 Lockdown was announced as suddenly from being very active in our sport the karate athletes and coaches were grounded to a sudden halt.

He went on to explain that KSA leadership was instrumental in initiating the migration to alternate modes for workshops, seminars, coaching and training,

I have nothing but admiration for our KSA karate Instructors (aka coaches) for rising to the need of the hour (on the recommendation by the KSA leadership) in facilitating online classes for the athletes on various social media platforms such as Zoom You tube etc. KSA applauds the coaches and athletes for successfully engaging in the said online activities viz. daily lessons, Week end Provincial Protea team coaching workshops and referees' seminars amidst other activities.

It is thus evident that the enormity of the pandemic and its effect was unanticipated but the national karate federation responded and so did instructors and karatekas in migrating to various online platforms for training and other karate activities.

Shito-ryu Karate Club Training during COVID-19

At grassroots level of the community sports club and individuals, there were targeted responses as well. My sensei (teacher) for 29 years, Kyoshi Nikki Pillay, a 7th dan karateka has been based in Australia, from 2010 after emigrating from his home country, South Africa. Australia went into lockdown in the second week of March well before South Africa and Kyoshi Nikki explained the transition from face to face dojo training to virtual dojo via online training that occurred and its impact for him as instructor with fee paying classes:

... all group activities indoors and outdoors stopped. Out of desperation in order to keep the interest and the students motivated and still make a living, I took to social media. Zoom was the choice for many coaches at this time. Just to back track a little before the corona epidemic I had seven classes and was doing very well financially. Initially Zoom seemed the perfect way to keep the classes going. Unfortunately not everyone had access to social network.

He draws attention to the digital divide evident in Australia and I later allude to the same challenge in my class in South Africa. My peers who are instructors and athletes, like me are located in the Western Cape province of South Africa, an epicenter of the pandemic. They were similarly trying to adapt to a new context for karate instruction and their own training. Sensei John Solomon uses online methods to teach, namely zoom and whatsapp. Sensei John is from the Cape Winelands area and he does prefer zoom explaining that ‘*real interaction is missing in whatsapp*’ and he has to rely on parents’ feedback via videos to which he responds after viewing the videos. Parents did inform him of obstacles to them undertaking this form of feedback. Sensei Rafeeq Larney is an advocate of zoom which he uses as it allows his students,

to feel a bit closer and it has many features such as allowing for many people and the ‘chat’ function. He explained, I feared losing students over the lockdown but this platform has actually opened doors for new members to join in our sessions from a distance.

It is thus evident that the club’s instructors were using multiple digital tools in a disrupted social space to continue karate training despite challenges

and these challenges were demanding and stressful at times. Kyoshi Nikki explained a host of challenges with having a virtual dojo, such as poor online discipline and a lack of parental involvement. He does not advise online karate training as being advantageous to the sport. He explained this,

Working online with children is not the way to go. I have been teaching karate now for over fifty odd years working with children and adults alike face to face correcting them as the classes progressed I got the best from them. Online discipline is a major problem when it comes to teaching children because they are at home you don't get their full co-operation. I don't think their parents help to supervise them to make sure that they working. I notice children especially the little ones jumping on the sofas and running out of sight and coming back. Teaching karate online to me is not the way- there are more disadvantages than advantages maybe one on one will be good (but not for children). Online fitness training I think is ok, no proper technique is required but if you want to teach karate it most certainly not advisable.

It is clear that he draws a distinction between fitness training and karate, stating that the former can be successfully taught online but not the latter due to the requirement of karate needing close attention to the detail in a technique.

My Sports' Identity: Aspects and Experiences of Synchronous and Asynchronous Training Pre Covid-19 and during the Pandemic

I think it's important for me to trace the trajectory of the club to which I belonged as the route had inadvertently prepared me and the club for transition to multi modal karate training during the pandemic. For karatekas in other clubs, the pandemic was a period of training challenges as anecdotal evidence indicated that many karate clubs in the community placed all training on hold due to the pandemic.

Migration has been a feature of my karate life for over 30 years. I am a karate enthusiast. I train regularly (I have experienced some lulls due to work commitments) as I consider it to be part of ensuring my spiritual and emotional well- being and karate is part of my identity. I began martial arts training 30

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years ago under the late Bob Davies (who later emigrated from South Africa) and I branched specifically into karate 29 years ago (after being introduced to it and to Sensei Nikki by my husband who was his student from childhood). My most recent affiliation was to the Japanese club, Inoue-ha Shitoryu from approximately 2009 to December 2019, which follows the Shitoryu style of karate. This was after a club migration following the untimely death of Grandmaster Teruo Hayashi (10th dan) in 2004 who led his own style: Hayashi-ha Shitoryu. Soke Hayashi trained under the founder of the Shitoryu style of karate and was his main disciple as well. I was privileged to have also trained under Grandmaster Hayashi who shared a special relationship with my own sensei (teacher) Nikki. It was only when Kyoshi Nikki Pillay emigrated to Australia in 2010 that multi modal teaching using synchronous and asynchronous communication gained a foothold for me and other black belt karatekas in the club as he was unable to regularly travel to South Africa. In addition to our face to face peer training as black belts in the dojo, and hosting our colleagues from other provinces for training sessions, alternate modes of training were sought. As keen karatekas, due to not wanting to lose the expert eye and rigorous training from Kyoshi Nikki, regular communication commenced via watasap and facebook with the club leadership correcting our techniques after viewing sample training sessions. Sensei Nikki would post video clips or send us links to watch details of techniques and katas. He would whatsapp call weekly and sometimes daily to provide feedback on our training and progress if we were preparing for a competition. This became the norm for us karatekas in South Africa and more especially for me as I re-entered competition karate (after more than a 15-year break of non-competition karate) in 2018.

2018 became a critical year for me as I was intent on participating in every KSA league event and reaching number one ranking in the masters' division of kata, my specialization area of karate. Face to face training with my peers and then dedicated coaches Viren Gosai and Rodney Nair was frequent, three to four times in a week. In addition, Kyoshi Nikki Pillay from afar, would consult with the club on the katas for competition and advise on karate training using synchronous and asynchronous communication methods (Watts 2016) via wastap, sending kata videos and strength and endurance training ideas. He would regularly source feedback from my lead coach Sensei Viren Gosai. I reached number one ranking in South Africa in kata in 2018, becoming a national gold medalist, winner of the Arnold Swarzenegger Classic and later

in the year represented the country at the Commonwealth karate Championship. I have retained number 1 ranking to present (2020) given the multiple approaches (synchronous and asynchronous) to consistent training for competition. Early in 2020, Kyoshi Nikki informed me that he would be making a trip to South Africa for my face to face grading to third dan black belt. Two months later and into lockdown, I was sent an invitation to participate in an online kata competition where I had to upload a video clip of a kata for the first elimination round of the competition. I didn't feel sufficiently confident about this new system of karate competition for me: I don't have access to extensive space to perform, a state-of-the-art camera phone or the requisite flooring in my apartment. Nevertheless, I do think that this was an innovative way of keeping competition karate alive in difficult circumstances.

Whilst multi modal training has worked for me personally and now during the pandemic: as club instructors, we have formed a zoom training class for regular training sessions which comprise of fitness and kata training in addition to planning for 'post the pandemic'. This class has been inspiring to me during lockdown as it has kept my spirits high, reinvigorated me mentally and is a way of ensuring consistent training as lockdown blues started to take a hold. The arrival of December 2020 heralded the second wave of the pandemic with stage 3 lockdown being announced with the infection rate and deaths spiralling and the looming threat of contracting the new variant of corona virus on everyone's mind, an ever-present worry, sparking arrhythmia when I was just achieving some form of eurhythmia.

My Pandemic Challenges as a Karate Instructor

The arrival of the pandemic in March 2020, presented serious challenges for my newly formed class of 2020 karatekas in terms of developing club resilience. When lockdown initially commenced, I was keen to continue training for my class anticipating that lockdown would not extend beyond a month or two and I did not want the karatekas' performance to drop as I had been grooming them for their annual grading and an upcoming competition. In addition, I had recently commenced weapons training and the karatekas were keen to learn without interruption and on numerous occasions, karate classes extended beyond the normal one hour. When I did a poll for parents as I wanted to immediately commence online training via zoom lessons when lockdown was announced, I found that none of the parents replied to my whatsapp

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message to send an email address. When I further queried via the whatsapp group, I found that they preferred the asynchronous communication of videos to synchronous online zoom lessons. I enthusiastically commenced with a 21day lockdown challenge of karate training as this was the initial length of lockdown before it was extended. I thus started making videos (asynchronous training) in advance and posting them on the group. However, I was unhappy because in general, the parents would not send feedback videos of their children training undertaking the different techniques following the lessons I had posted. This was strange because prior to COVID-19, parents- of their own accord would capture their children training after hours at home and send me short video clips to explain their children's enthusiasm for karate. Nevertheless, there was a silver lining from abroad, as a teacher in the Middle east requested for some of my videos to share with his students as he was in a school where no sport initially was being promoted for students during lockdown although there were classes in Maths, English and Science; physical education lessons were later added to the online school curriculum so I then stopped contributing as there are other forms of martial arts which were offered such as jujitsu.

With my local karatekas, parents complained of their children not listening to them. I soon realized that I needed to migrate to zoom lessons (synchronous) to track the karatekas' progress as the videos and lack of feedback indicated a deficiency in the method adopted during lockdown. The zoom class size has also reduced and I'm not sure that online zoom classes is a sustainable way of quality training for children, just like Kyoshi Nikki had pointed out with his classes in Australia and sensei John in the Cape. In addition, there are at times an unstable network connection which interrupts training, parents who can't connect on time due to work commitments which have apparently increased during lockdown and karatekas who sometimes take a 'timeout' by sitting on a nearby chair whilst training is in session, excusing themselves or are interrupted by an activity happening in the home. Additionally, as a sensei, from a teaching perspective, I can't closely see each students' individual techniques and have to request them to adjust their cameras frequently so that I can view their stances, punches and blocks- details are difficult to observe via zoom for each individual student albeit in a small class, a concern also raised by my Sensei in Australia. Time passes rapidly as I ask each karateka to undertake some of the techniques individually and not as a group, to ensure quality training. Currently, after each zoom training

session, I email the video link to all parents for additional training at katareka's lesiure.

Four months into lockdown (June 2020), I was uncertain that zoom as an online training option in a virtual dojo, is a sustainable platform for karate teaching and learning for neophytes: children and adults for several reasons: They may be impacted upon by one or more of the following- either not motivated to attend due to training in a virtual dojo that is generally their lounge with limited space, the lack of a karate instructor in close proximity, parents' activities and their school work commitments, still navigating their arrhythmia or the digital divide. The lack of feedback from the videoclips is also a key deficiency for me (similar to Sensei John) in the training program for the class. Karate training for my class limps on via zoom with the class sizes being small but with individual attention. My personal training continues with asynchronous instruction from my sensei Nikki Pillay in Australia and both synchronous and asynchronous communication within South Africa with fellow karate athletes and instructors: John Solomon and Refeeq Larnee from the Western Cape, although we sometimes pause training due to work commitments which have eaten into our training schedule. Reopening the face to face dojo in 2021, is not possible at present (January 2021) due to increasing infections and deaths in the second wave of the disease and we will consider face to face club recovery upon the 'curve being flattened' which is not currently in sight.

4 Theoretical Understandings and Conclusion

Wicker, Filo and Cuskelly (2013: 510) argue that 'When community sport clubs are impacted by natural disasters, organizational resilience is critical to recovery'. In their study of community sports clubs in Australia, they explain that organizational resilience for their study was 'conceptualized as a function of robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness, and rapidity, and applied to community sport clubs' however, their natural disasters were understood to be cyclones and flooding and certainly not a worldwide pandemic so their findings have to be understood within the limited parameters of a short term localized natural disaster and not a global pandemic of epic proportions, such as the corona virus. However, it is instructive in advancing the importance of the concept of organizational resilience which is critical for the longevity of karate training at community level.

The Pandemic: Disrupted Spaces, Efficiencies and Deficiencies

As Thorpe (2015) has maintained, people in natural disaster areas live in ‘disrupted spaces’ and SA and the world currently due to the global pandemic is a highly disrupted space and whilst SA appears to have been easing up on restrictions in September 2020, the second wave of the virus affecting SA from December 2020 (and the rest of the world) has led to another lockdown with restrictions. Sport has borne the brunt of the pandemic as close contact codes of sport have been relegated to a different set of regulations (Hassen 2020). Using Lefebvre’s notion of ‘arrhythmia’, one can understand the social and psychological effects of the pandemic on karatekas and possibly their parents. As Thorpe (2015: 307) has contended, ‘the sporting experiences of interviewees before, during and after’, the natural disaster, ‘cannot be separated from the life stresses experienced by participants and their families’. This is significant as it would contribute to an explanation about the poor attendance at zoom karate lessons. However, this does signify time being lost for karate training until ‘eurhythmia’ is achieved in the community.

Covid-19 demands adaptation for karate club survival, it was instrumental in being the catalyst for remote karate training for many karate clubs including the one I belong to, with the exception of my personal training as I had migrated to multi modal training due to exigent circumstances years ago. There is the need to recognize the efficiencies of each mode of training, to evaluate the progress of each new adaptive strategy and to also try to navigate the deficiencies as they unfold. Resilience for community karate clubs was being tested very early for me as well, as I just formed my own class in late January 2020 as it is a requirement as senior karate level to share knowledge, so the class was not yet a full three months old when lockdown commenced and the physical face to face dojo had to close.

Individual and Club Risks in Attempts to Fashion Program Resilience

Although, I was used to multiple approaches to my own personal training for years and achieving much success, the transition from one mode to another, that is from face to face training in a physical dojo setting to remote/ online dojo training due to the spread of the corona virus was not without challenges for my karate class and my colleagues in clubs in South Africa, karate peers

who are part of KSA and my sensei in Australia. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a migration of my own class to remote teaching and learning to counter numerous club risks. Wicker *et al.* (2013: 510) aver that ‘an understanding of organizational characteristics that can assist clubs in recovering is important because natural disasters can often arrive without warning and impact community sport clubs in almost any part of the world’. For my class, the strategic risk organizationally was planning and communication to parents and receiving parents’ feedback on the nature of remote teaching which they preferred. The operational risks included a new innovation of using the latest technology that parents had clearly not been exposed to setting up previously (zoom online classes) and a mix of synchronous and asynchronous communication. Thus, initially asynchronous teaching via whatsapp video posts and later, the add on of synchronous zoom teaching were both challenges to karatekas and parents. Asynchronous teaching did exist prior to the pandemic as I would post video clips and links for karatekas to practice before their next class but this was not the sole medium of communication- previously it was used as a supplement face to face instruction.

The ‘digital divide’ is enormous in the South African context which is one of the most unequal societies in the world and this impacts on access to services especially now during the pandemic when internet access is imperative for karate training in KwaZulu-Natal province. The divide is not simply between those who have access to the internet and those who don’t, it extends to people who don’t have digital literacy skills and those who lack the finances to optimize internet use (VPUU 2019). Thus, an important financial risk related to the digital divide included electronic risk such as internet connectivity for parents and myself as zoom and videos uploaded require data to send and receive the requisite information. This could be impacting class attendance during zoom sessions. The efficiencies and deficiencies of various training options and multi-modality was illuminated weekly. Changing strategies from videos to zoom with some videos to complement the problem areas has resulted in me being able to try to maximize karate teaching and learning albeit in ‘a disrupted space’. Unfortunately, the class size dwindled when lockdown commenced and the migration to zoom from the weekly video posts has reduced karatekas’ participation more. Lefebvre’s (2004) ‘arrhythmia’ is clearly evident due to the sudden change in karatekas and parents’ routines since the commencement of lockdown. It remains to be seen how and when the South African government will relax lockdown regulations

in 2021 pertaining to sport codes such as karate and when parents will feel sufficiently confident and regain their ‘rhythms’ to allow their children to return to training, using personal protective equipment and sanitise, without the fear of being infected.

5 Recommendations

Assessing the risks of depleted training as a result of the pandemic is important as a step towards acknowledging that sustained participation in sport is essential for a healthy body and mind. Individual athlete training on a regular basis and the participation of karatekas in group training are the keys to program resilience. In the absence of physical face to face training options, online training options via zoom and other platforms, a previously under maximized avenue, appears to be the only possibility to maintaining social distancing during the pandemic.

However, ensuring commitment to attending group training and participation in karate activities in a virtual dojo can be undermined by the digital divide in SA and home circumstances for karatekas (training space and family members’ interruptions). Thus, it is highly recommended that multiple modes of training, using synchronous and asynchronous methods be adopted to safeguard continued participation.

Small classes for synchronous learning and time for individual assessment and feedback to karatekas appear to be critical components for quality training especially for younger karatekas’ training and participation, in assisting them to maintain their fitness levels and technical standards.

Conversations (via zoom or whatsapp) between instructors and club leadership in addition to instructor training programs assist in exploring and discussing best practices for online karate training and building club resilience. In addition, it assists instructors in coping with the pandemic and its ongoing influence on all karatekas.

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Sadhana Manik
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
manik@ukzn.ac.za