



PERCIEVED BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO JUDO PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN MEN AND WOMEN

TEMBA SELVIN HLASHO¹, MUSA LEWIS MATHUNJWA¹, BRANDON SHAW², INA SHAW²

¹Department of Human Movement Science at University of Zululand, Private Bag X1001, KwaDlangezwa, 3886, Republic of South Africa

²School of Sport, Rehabilitation and Exercise Science, University of Essex, Colchester CO4 3SQ, UK

Corresponding Author and Address: Temba Hlasho, Department of Human Movement Science, University of Zululand, Private Bag X1001; KwaDlangezwa, KwaZulu Natal, Republic of South Africa.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceived barriers and facilitators to Judo participation in South African men and women. Poor participation in the sport in South Africa necessitated a reflection and a compelling rationale for the study. Understanding the factors that influence participation is vital for developing targeted interventions to promote inclusivity and engagement in the sport. Through a mixed-methods approach, data was collected from surveys and interviews with male and female Judo participants, coaches, and stakeholders across different regions of South Africa. The study targeted (n=30) participants, but due to various reasons (n=13) participated. The analysis identifies various barriers that deter individuals from joining or continuing their involvement in Judo, including limited access to training facilities, financial constraints, lack of female representation in leadership roles, and societal gender norms. Conversely, the study also uncovers factors that facilitate Judo participation, such as the presence of supportive coaches and mentors, community engagement initiatives, positive role models, and a sense of belonging within the Judo community. During the interviews, six themes emerged, for facilitators family, friends, career, discipline and confidence were seen as motivators to join the sport. While discouragement, lack of capacity and location were seen as demotivators to join the sport. The findings of this research provide valuable insights for Judo South Africa and other sports organizations to design targeted programs and policies that address the perceived barriers and enhance the facilitators to Judo participation. By fostering a supportive and inclusive atmosphere, Judo can become an empowering platform for both men and women in South Africa to develop their skills, confidence, and passion for the sport.

Keywords: Judo Participation, South Africa, Men and Women, Perceived Barriers, Facilitators, Inclusivity.

INTRODUCTION

In 1993, the National Sports Council hosted national conference themed “Vision for Sport” aimed at unifying sport in the country solving social justice issues pertaining to sport (Swart, and Martin-Gonzalez, 2021). To that effect, to expand the base for sport and recreation the 2011 White Paper highlighted recreation, schools sport and participation promotion exhibitions as key focus areas (SRSA, 2013). Post-apartheid, the South African government tried its utmost level best to remove all barriers to participating in sport aimed at promoting national unity and social cohesion (Ricknell, 2022).

The former late president, Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, at a height of sensitive sport politics, took the commitment to unify the nation to the next level by attending the 1995 Springbok Rugby World Cup wearing the springbok jersey (Höglung and Sundberg, 2008). In 1992, Preceding the 1995 Springbok Rugby World Cup, it was politically important for the world body to readmit South Africa into international sport thus breaking the barrier that was created by apartheid system (Höglung and Sundberg, 2008).

In a study conducted by Martin, Marques, Sarmiento and Dacosta (2015), youth participation in sport or physical activity is linked with today and tomorrow’s health benefits, especially when it comes to physical strength, cardio health and general fitness. The study, amongst others, suggests that individuals aged 5 to 17 years should participate a minimum of 60 min per day at a scale of medium to high level physical activity. However, majority of young people are not sufficiently active to exploit the benefit of health from physical activities (Martins et al., 2015). Taverno Ross, and Francis (2016) see active physical education in schools as part of class curriculum and facilitators in participating in sport and physical activities. This view is contradicted by Alcantora et al. (2021) arguing that more commitment and paradigm shift is necessary to retain participation in physical activities and sport. Parents were also seen as role models to participating in physical activities and sport and their unavailability due to work commitment is seen as a barrier to their children participating in sport and physical activities (Taverno Ross, S.E and Francis, L.A. 2016).

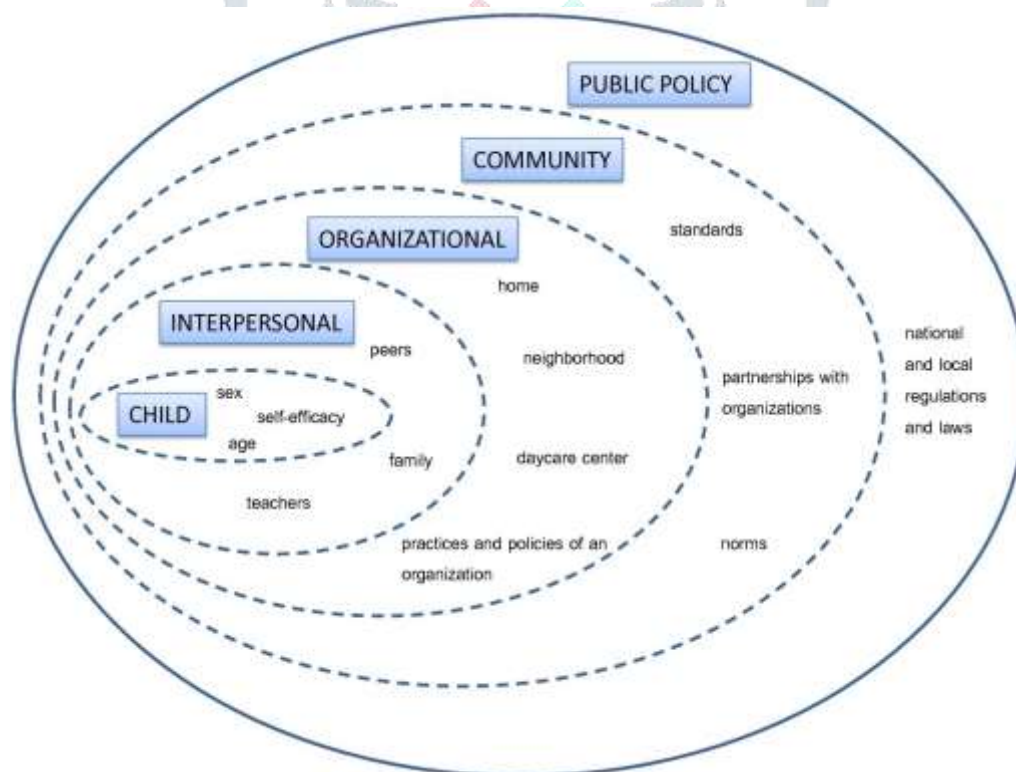
Abdelghaffar et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study, a first of its kind in Morocco, to pinpointing barriers and facilitators of teenagers to participating in physical activities. The study findings showed that there is more than one barrier and facilitator and identified six topics, “perceived motivating and limiting factors, physical activity awareness and perceived time constraints, social support, gender and cultural norms, and access to opportunities.” (Abdelghaffar, Hichman, Shiham, Samira and Youness, 2019). Taverno Ross et al. (2016) flagged crime and poor maintenance of road infrastructure as barrier to people participating in physical activities and sport as it will not be safe to go out.

Alcantora-Porcuna, Sanchez-Lopez, Martinez-Vizcaino, Martinez-Andres, Ruiz-Hermosa, and Rodriguez-Martin (2021) explain the behaviour of youth in respect of participation in physical activity or sport in terms of the socio-ecological model. SEM is a rational extensive structure convenient for the analysis of complex and influences of people, the environment they interface with and the social construct they are expose to. Alcantora-Porcuna et al.

(2021) argue that the causes of particular conduct relating to physical activities can be set into four categories, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem)differentiate.

- The microsystem entails the most adjacent environment to the person such as family members, friends and teachers at school.
- The mesosystem refers to multifaceted systems in which people participate in. this will entail relationship between the family and the school , or work and the individual's social life.
- The exosystem means more than one system in which individuals do not necessary have to participate, their day to day actions may influence it.
- The macrosystem view all issues associated culture, values, and law as indirectly impacting on the behaviour of individuals in relation to participating in physical activities.

Figure 1 show a combination of factors that influence individuals to participate in physical activities and sport. The depicted socio-ecological model provides researchers with clear context in relation to helping them find opportunities for participating in physical activities and sport.



Socio-ecological model. Adapted from McLeroy KR, Bibeau D, Steckler A, Glanz K. An ecological perspective on health promotion programs. *Health Educ Q* 1988, 15:351–377.

O' Connor, Alfred & Payne, (2012) argue in support of Alcantora-Porcuna et al. (2021) in highlighting the importance of socio-ecological consideration when approaching physical education in schools. Physical education in school in its current form does not entice individuals to commit to sustained engagement in physical

activities or sport (O'Connor et al. 2012). Both authors agree that socio-ecological framework to physical education is a better tool to take physical education to the next level where individuals will feel their interests catered.

Stephens, Neil & Smith, (2012) conducted a study within disability sport, and used permanent wheelchair individual. The first limitation was that participants came from few sports and the second limitation was that the permanent wheelchair users by their nature had to overcome a multiple of barriers outside the ordinary. In view of the notable limitations further research could be considered to harmonise the limitations.

According to Nthangeni, Toriola, Paul, and Naidoo, (2021) Individuals are encouraged to participate in physical activities or sport when their interests are accommodated, and group programmes that meet their needs are implemented for them. In a nutshell, customization of sport programmes in favour of interest groups will help retain them in sport (Nthangeni et al. (2021).

Jaarsma, Dekker, Geertzen and Dijkstra (2016) introduce the context of barriers and facilitators for disabled athletes and argue that, in addition to barriers experienced by abled athletes, disabled athletes are affected by health related factors leading to lack of energy and fatigue. In line with Nthangeni et al (2021), disabled athletes are also attracted to sport because of fun, fitness, motivation and love for the sport. Existing knowledge suggests that if people with disability find suitable sport aligned to their disability could increase chances of athletes to not only play, but sustain their stay in active sport. The factors affecting individual athletes' participation in sport seem to be common with team sport in that, as Brinkley, Greeman and Munir (2017) narrate, feeling of fun and love for sport motives team to play sport. The external factors equally play a role as evidence by the teams' passion to compete, win and be awarded incentives.

Somerset and Hoare (2018) made an observation and suggest that barriers identified in quantitative studies were also evident in qualitative studies. Surprisingly, a number of barriers found in qualitative studies were not picked up in the quantitative studies. They coded these barriers, "lack of employment", "Politics", Self-conscious", "lack of interest", "Competition conformity", "Bullying", lack of voice, choice, motor skills and don't like strangers", and "lived experience". The figures, 1 and 2 illustrate situational and personal barriers to participation in sport

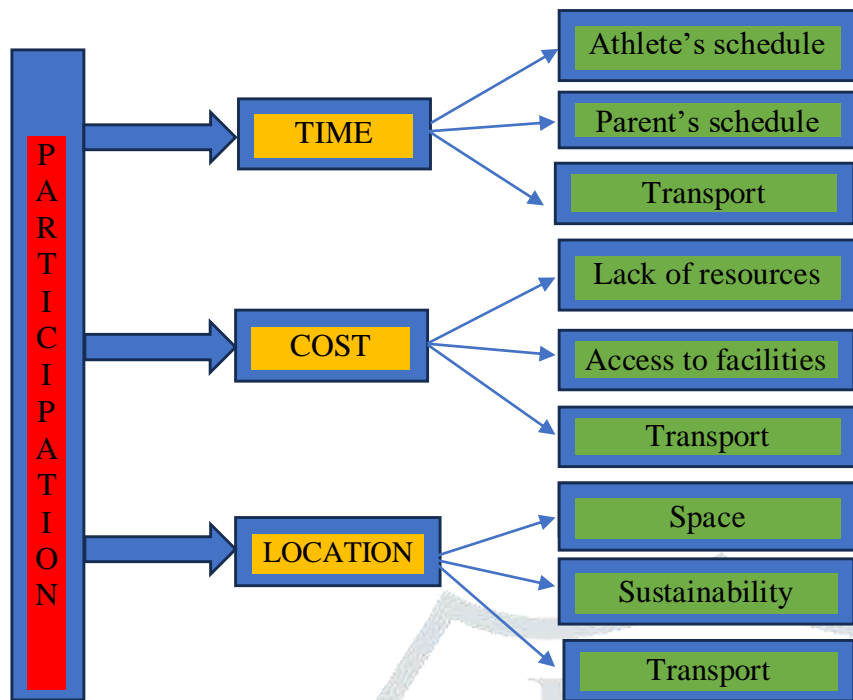


Figure 2 Model: Practical barriers to participation in sport
(Somerset and Hoare BMC Pediatrics (2018) 15:47)

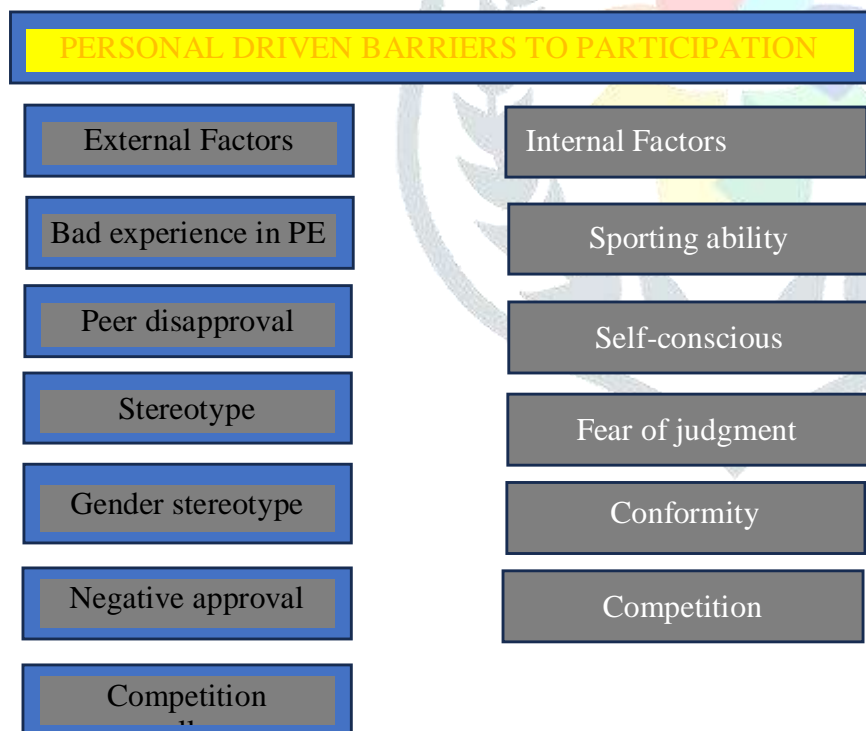


Figure 3 Model: Personal barriers to athlete's participation in sport.

(somerset and Hoare BMC Pediatrics (2018) 15:47)

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study population

The target research population in the current study consisted out of a combination of athletes, coaches, administrative staff or technical officials involved in Judo South Africa. The enrolled number of participants was 30 constituted by 10 coaches (n=10), 10 athletes (n=10) and 10 administrators (n=10). However, due to unforeseen circumstances, a total of 13 (n=13) individuals were available and were interviewed as the pool was a purposive sampling. Data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews with open ended and close ended questions. All interviews were conducted online and the same time slot was scheduled for each individual. The interviews took between 20 and 30 minutes for each respondent. After introducing the study aims and obtaining informed consent, judokas were asked to provide details about their sport career (e.g., the length of judo training, the club where they train and their lived experience in active judo).

The interviewer stressed that the following discussion would aim at participants' own lived experience about the barriers and facilitators which may be perceived as important factors hindering or encouraging the team/individual participation to judo. Participants were asked to discuss barriers that hinder or encourage people to participate in judo, be it from new entrance athlete to existing judokas (i) barriers and facilitators for officials and executive members(ii) barriers and facilitators faced by judokas in general, and (iii) barriers or facilitators referring to the coach. The respondents were asked to focus on psychological, social, financial and organisational barriers and facilitators. Participants were encouraged to discuss at least four examples of barriers and facilitators within each category. The areas of focus as alluded were read to the interviewees and were requested to note them down. Interviewees were requested to give consent to the interview being recorded to capture consent, guidelines and feedback accurately. The current study made use of qualitative data as it focused heavily on the overall lived experiences that participants had during their time involved in the sport of Judo. This lived experience is important as it seeks to address practical solutions to the perceived barriers or facilitators of Judo in a South African context. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data from the interviews with respondents.

RESULTS

Demographic information was collected from the population group of members involved in Judo South Africa as athletes, coaches, technical officials, referees or administrative officials. The sampled focus group consisted of 2 judokas (n=2) who doubled as coach and administrator, 3 coaches (n=3), 1 judoka (n=1) who is a coach, athlete and an administrator at the same, 2 judokas (n=2) who are both athlete and coach and 5 administrators (n=5). In terms of gender, 30,77% of the respondent were females and 69,23% were males. The most prominent themes that came from the majority of respondents for facilitators to participation in judo, are self-defence, discipline, sense of belonging, social cohesion and youth development. In terms of barriers, respondents highlighted financial constraints and lack of knowledge as reasons for not participating in judo. Respondent X, a female coach/athlete, had this to say, "*Judo is a sport where you get discipline, learn respect for each other, its calm, judo is a gentle way. It teaches you self-respect, discipline and respect for each other*".

Statistical Analysis

The current study made use of qualitative data and focused on participants' lived experiences acquired by respondents during their judo career. This lived experience is crucial as it seeks to address practical solutions to the perceived barriers or facilitators to participation in judo in the context of South Africa. The study presents the data collected using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The interviews used purposive sampling to select a total of 13 (n=13) participants. The demographic information was collected from the population group of members involved in Judo South Africa, such as athletes, coaches, technical officials, referees, or administrative officials. The following demographic information was collected; 30,77% of the respondents were female and 69,23% were male. The participants' age range was between 34 and 60, with the average age being 46,77 years old. Figure 4 below represents participation influence in respect of the following themes; close relationships, Education Career, Confidence and Discipline.

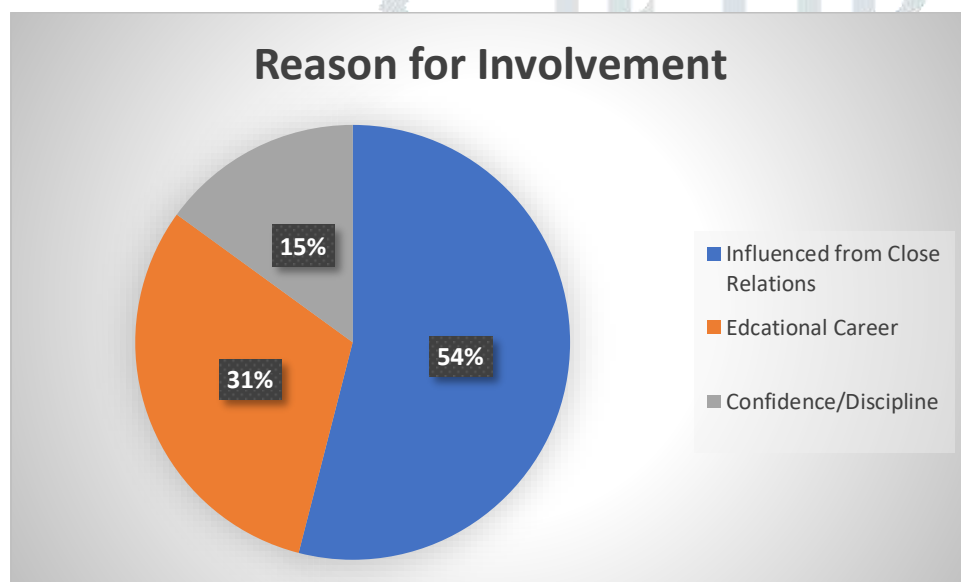


Figure 4 Graph represents reasons for involvement in judo

Overall influence from persons that are close to members of judo is fifty-four percent (54%). This means most participants got involved in judo because of family members, or friends with whom they witnessed and were attracted to the sport. Thirty-one percent (31 %) of the participants indicated that they interphase and joined judo while completing their high school and university studies. Lastly, only fifteen percent (15%) of the participants were motivated to join judo for confidence and self-defence skills. Figure 5 below graph represents the cohort of participants that expressed barriers to participation in judo

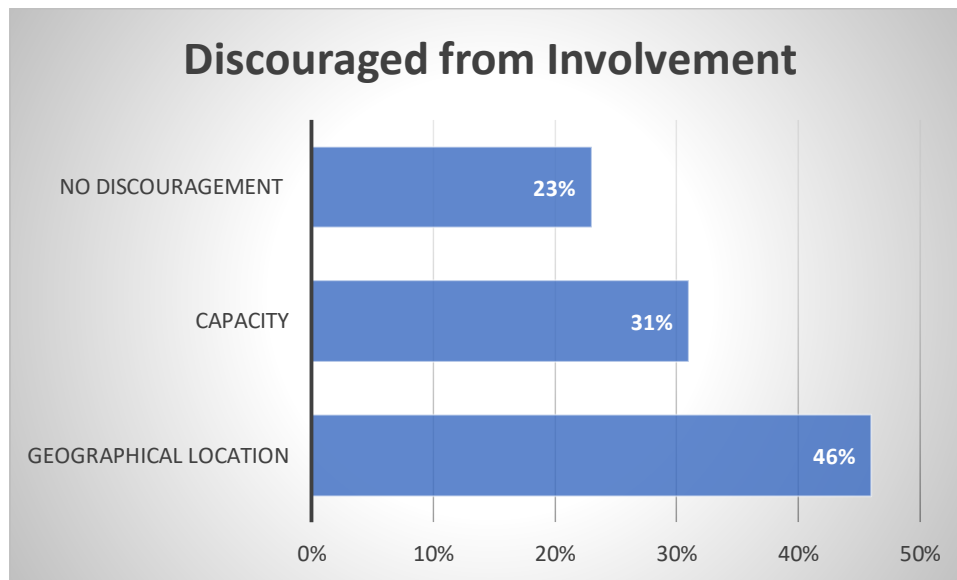


Figure 5, Graph represent participants who expressed barriers participating in judo

The themes that were most common for barriers to participation in judo are discouragement, capacity and geographic location.

DISCUSSION

This study focuses on participants' lived experiences in respect of judo in South Africa. The existing body of knowledge confirms existing barriers and facilitators to participation in physical activities, including judo. The findings from the interviews suggest that, 30 years in democracy in South Africa, challenges are still skew. Coaches and athletes in the townships still struggle with transportation to go to well-resourced judo clubs in areas that are located in high socio-economical spaces. However, there are commonalities in respect of the majority of barriers and facilitators to participation in judo. These are lack of marketing and lack of funding in respect of barriers and sense of belonging and self-defence.

The majority of participants cross gender and age groups mentioned self-defence, discipline, sense of belonging, social cohesion and youth development as major facilitators for people to participate in judo. In respect of barriers, the majority of the participants indicated that, poor marketing of the judo contributes largely to people not knowing and participating in the sport. Other aspect mentioned as barriers are financial constraints, limited time, lack of physical infrastructure in poor areas and the administrative burden and effort to search for clubs and to join.

The first barrier that dominated discussions was the geographical location of the participants who desired to participate in Judo. A total of 46% of participants indicated that their place of residence offered them a minimum chance to participate in this sport. In the Free State Judo exists in two districts with ten clubs (six of which are in Bloemfontein). Therefore, participants in the remaining two districts without clubs, experience extreme difficulty to participate in the sport. Herewith below are statements from two respondents,

'It is very difficult in our community to find a club, because there are no more coaches. My husband is the only coach. So we try to teach our children. Specifically our daughter to get her coaching levels' (Respondent 6, 2024).

‘In Bloemfontein, we have too few clubs. She stayed with the same coach the same coach for 28 years when her and her husband opened their own club. It is a problem in Bloemfontein. For Judo is the biggest indoor sport in the world and the second biggest participation sport in the world it is one of the smallest sports in South Africa and that is a problem. It is sad because our players do not have enough options,’ (Respondent 1, 2024)

The statement made by respondents above affirms the challenges relating to geographical location. This barrier further creates challenges with available clubs and coaches; Hlasho, Mathunjwa, Shaw and Shaw (2024) mention that quality training facilities are another critical challenge, especially in rural and underprivileged areas.

The second aspect that creates a barrier to participation in JUDO is capacity. This capacity relates to the availability of coaches. 31% of the respondents indicated that they had challenges finding a coach in their area. Respondent 1 affirmed this challenge by stating that she has had one coach for 28 years. A coach is a crucial role player in an athlete's success. Mthombeni, Coopoo and Noorbhai (2024:7) mention that *‘one of the enablers of sporting success among athletes was the availability of coaches.’* Therefore, the limitation of coaches not only hinders the athletes' success but also the expansion or increase of Judo in the Free State. Respondent 3 (2024) made the following statement;

‘In the Free State we have three very competitive clubs on a national level, a few years ago the Free clubs struggled to get enough players. Covid in 2020 also made it difficult and had a major negative impact. It is a problem to find players, but the Free State is in a good place.’ The challenge of the availability of coaches also relates to the financial challenges experienced by coaches. Nolte, Burnett and Hollander (2017: 223) mention that “South African coaches agreed that national coaches and managers receive limited financial support for tours.”

Physical education in schools remains important to promote health habits to learners globally (Daskapan and Tuzun 2006:615). Goslin (2020: 84) mentions that there is scholarly evidence regarding correlations between school children's participation in physical education and academic achievement and positive outcomes. However, in the context of South Africa, only few schools allow judo to be practised in their schools. To this effect, thirty one percent (31 %) of the respondents indicated that their motivation to practise judo came from judo association with schools. More research is needed to investigate best possible ways of ensuring that judo is widely practised in schools in South Africa. Twenty three percent (23%) of participants indicated that they were neither encouraged or discouraged to participate in judo. This category of participants strongly flagged poor marketing of the sport as a reason they could not provide reasons for not participating. The majority of participants (46%) mention geographic location as the most determinant to join a judo club. Most evident characteristics were safety and distance of the geographic location from the potential participants to judo clubs and competition venues. Judo management in South Africa has to innovatively look into how best they accommodate ‘would be’ judokas in terms of accessibility to judo clubs and competition venues. Capacity is also an issue that was flagged by the participants, thirty one percent (31%) stated that availability of coaches was a problem and some qualifying by adding the quality component. Mthombeni et. al, (2024:7) argue that one of the most enablers of sporting

success amongst athletes was the availability of coaches. Therefore, limitation of coaches has to be addressed by the national federation cascading down to the districts to ensure support and participation of athletes.

CONCLUSION

In a study entitled, “ The Systematic Review of the History of judo in south Africa, the authors found that judo has a lower profile than other sports, however, its research interest have increased. (Hlasho et. al, 2024:4). Flowing from this argument, it is prudent that Judo South Africa management innovate a marketing strategy that will see judo gaining popularity in South Africa. Accordingly, there is still a gap in this research area which opens an opportunity for future research. Judo has made significant strides in promoting the sport and the efforts should be enhanced to foster and advance the practise of judo in South Africa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank Mr Gernus Terblanche, for helping with the facilitation of the collection of data and interviews and Ms Nothando Hlophe, for the analysis of the data.

STATEMENT AND DECLARATION

Authors declare that this work is original and all existing knowledge used is cited in recognition of respective authors.

ETHICS CONSIDERATION

Ethical Clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of Zululand: Ethical clearance number: UZREC 1771110-030 PGD 2022/31

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Consent to participate was both written and verbal. Coaches, athletes and administrators were requested, via email, to participate in the interviews and the process was explained and were further requested to indicate their willingness to participate. Thereafter, interview schedule was forwarded to them and during their interviews it was further indicated that if they were still willingly participating and if at any stage they changed their minds and wished to withdraw, it was confirmed to them that they could do so.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare no conflict of interest on any matter relating to this manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Alcantora-Porcuna, V., Sanchez-Lopez, M., Martinez-Vizcaino, V., Martinez-Andres, M., Ruiz-Hermosa, A., and Rodriguez-Martin, B. (2021). Parents' Perceptions on Barriers and Facilitators of Physical Activity among Schoolchildren: A Qualitative Study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 18 (6), 3086,
- Abdelghaffar, EA., Hicham, E.K., Siham, B. *et al.* Perspectives of adolescents, parents, and teachers on barriers and facilitators of physical activity among school-age adolescents: a qualitative analysis. *Environ Health Prev Med* **24**, 21 (2019).
- Brinkley A, McDermott H, Munir F (2016) What benefits does team sport hold for the workplace? A systematic review. *J Sports Sci* 1. doi: 10.1080/02640414.2016.1158852.
- Dakaspan, A. Tuzun, E., Eker, L. (2006). Percieved Barriers to Physical Activity in University Student, *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*. 5, 615-620. <http://www.jssm.org>
- Goslin, A. (2020). Physical Education in Gauteng schools, south Africa: A case study, *African Journal for Physical Activity and Health Sciences*. (AJPHES) December 2020 (Supplement), pp. 82-96.
- Hlasho T., Mathunjwa, M., Shaw, B., and Shaw, I. (2024). A Systematic Review of the History of Judo in south Africa: Implication for the Future. *Open Public Health J*. 2024;17:e18749445313228.
- Höglung, K., & Sundberg, R. (2008). Reconciliation through Sports? The case of South Africa. *Third World Quarterly*,29(4), 805-818.
- Jaarsma, E. A., Dekker, R., Geertzen, J. H. B., & Dijkstra, P. (2016). Sports participation after rehabilitation: Barriers and facilitators. *Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine*, 48(1), 72-79.
- Martins,, J., Marques, A., Sarmiento, H., & Carreiro da costa, F. (2015). Adolescents' perspectives on the barriers and facilitators of physical activity: a systematic review of qualitative studies. *Health Education Research*. 30 (5), 742-755.
- McLeroy, R.K., Bibeau, D., Steckler, A., and glanz, K. (1988). An Ecological Perspective on Health Promotion Programs. *Health Education Quarterly*. 15(4), 351-377.
- Mentälä, M.A.K., Sääklahti, A.K., Inkinen, M.E. et al. (2014). A socioecological approach to physical interventions in childcare: A systematic review. *Int J Bahav Nutr Phys Act*.
- Mthembeni, S., Coopoo, Y., Noorbhai, H. (2024). Factors enabling and hindering sporting success among South African elite athletes from historically disadvantaged areas: Through a coaching lens.
- Nthangeni, S., Toriola, A., Paul, Y., and Naidoo, V., (2021). Student-Athlete or Athlete-Student: Analysis of Benefits and Barriers of University Sport Participation in South Africa. *Annals of Applied Sport Science*. Aassjournal.com.
- Nolte, P., Burnett, C., and Hollander, W. (2017). Perspective of Coaches on LTDA JUDO thletes: a Comparative Analysis, south Africa Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation. 39(1:2): 219-228
- Ricknell, E. (2022). Sport society: the role of sport and identity in democratic society. *South Africa's Democracy at the Crossroads*. Emerald Publishing,157-170.

- Somerset, S., and Hoare, D.J. (2018). Barriers to voluntary participation in sport for children: a systematic review. *BMC Pediatrics*. 18:47.
- Stephens, C., Neil, R., & Smith, P. (2012). The perceived benefits and barriers of sport in spinal cord injured individuals: a qualitative study, *Disability and Rehabilitation*. 34 (24), 2061-2070.
- Swart, K., and Martin-Gonzalez, R. (2021). Sport and Development in south Africa: Sport in a changing society and economy. *Sport and development in emerging nations*. Emerald Publishing, 150-170.
- Taverno Ross, S.E., and Francis, L.A. (2016). Physical activity perceptions, context, barriers, and facilitators from a Hispanic child's perspective. *Empirical Study. International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*. Co-Action Publishing

