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## Different approach analysis of self–defence for people with physical disability

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### Abstract

In some countries it has been shown that individuals with disabilities are three times more likely to become victims of crime, and that crime is the biggest concern for people with physical disabilities. The aim of the study is the knowledge about the current state of self-defence for people with physical disabilities in the world. Using meta-analysis we draw on previous research looking for common elements to create new patterns of self-defence for people with physical disability. The major threat and challenge in this area seems to be vulnerability, abuse and sexual assault of women with disabilities. The topic of self-defence for people with physical disabilities is a serious problem which needs to be addressed in further research, especially by using exploratory methods.

**Key words:** abuse • crime • disabled persons • secure • vulnerability

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## INTRODUCTION

The term 'disability' has been much discussed in recent years [1]. Many advocate groups for people with disabilities have shunned the use of the adjective 'disabled' because they argue that many, perhaps most disabled people are quite 'able' but are forced by external circumstances into situations that do not allow them to function to their full potential. Other specialists [2], and indeed some of the biggest European advocate groups, accept the term as it is defined again by the WHO [3]: *“Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in life situations. Thus disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives”*.

Violence and disability: two simple nouns that, in reality, represent some very complex concepts. Together, they reflect a sinister but sadly very real problem that faces all regions of the world, including Europe [1].

It is often mentioned that people with disabilities are “more vulnerable” to violence than able-bodied people [4,5], but vulnerability is also a contentious concept. In fact, vulnerability is not a 'characteristic', but rather a phenomenon related to how violent people, exploiters or other abusers perceive the person they victimise. In this sense some impairments are likely to be perceived as making a person more 'vulnerable'. The main point here, as in so many other areas relating to violence and disability, and certainly also for people who do not have a disability, is to ensure that people have the knowledge, tools and means to protect themselves to the full extent of their capacity [1]. The higher risk of victimisation in the disabled is highlighted by Čírtková [5]. These risks can negatively influence the degree of independence as described by Válková [4]. To prevent this problem there is a way to accept our vulnerability [6].

The aim of the study is the knowledge about the current state of self-defence for people with physical disabilities in the world. The analysis based on available data from the four countries (Czech Republic, France, Germany, USA).

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Using meta-analysis we are looking for common elements to create new patterns of self-defence for people with physical disability.

## RESULTS

### USA

In The USA there is The International disabled Self-defence Association (IDSA), which has been focusing on self-defence for disabled persons since 1996. The Defense Ability system based on combat hapkido was developed by Jurgen Smidt. Jurgen Schmidt, who is a paraplegic, has used the art to defend himself against muggers. He said the skills based on dynamics and balance are easily adaptable to fit his special needs. Advanced training includes defences against weapons as well. The official website is available from: [www.defenseability.com](http://www.defenseability.com). There is also a demo on youtube [7,8].

On the other hand, Ronald van de Sandt claims that some attacks are similar to those experienced by anyone sitting on a chair or bank. Other attacks are unique for people with physical disability. While the period of time he has been confined to a wheelchair he adapts some defence technique from American Kempo, Shorin Kempo, Karate and Aikido for self-defence on wheelchair. Van de Sandt uses the wheelchair as an always present weapon as well. He teaches how to employ different parts of the wheelchair, in particular handles, breaks or footboard in self-defence. A good level of ability to manipulate with the wheelchair is essential [9–11].

Another umbrella organization for self-defence of specific groups in the USA is a non-profit organization „NOT-ME!“. Its primary objective is to promote, advance and unify self-defence education and training for at-risk populations. These populations that are traditionally considered vulnerable or have been historically targeted for violence, include but are not limited to people with physical disabilities, women, the elderly, the gay and lesbian population, and ethnic minorities. A key person and founder of this organization is Erik Kondo, who became disabled at the age of 19 after a motorcycle accident. NOT ME! strategy is elaborated into details. It is grounded on 5D – decide, deter, disrupt, disengage and debrief. [12] Also many videos are available on youtube as „Paraplegic Self-Defense“ [13–23].

### France

In France we can find „Self defense en Fauteuil“, an infant working group of 5 members (3 on wheelchair), who apply Krav Maga concept to self-defence for people with physical disability. The official website is available from <http://www.sdfworld.org>. [24]. Another French judoka Adrien Marcone focused his classes of self-defence for wheelchairers on prevention of bad habits in the field of self-defence [25].

### Germany

In German speaking countries Hermes [26,27] and others [28] point out the higher risk of sexual assault in women with physical disability. They are often placed in various organizations, where they are dependent on orderly or other often male employee of organization. Because of this, a female trainer of self-defence is mostly required by German women on the wheelchair. This requirements is met naturally in wendo, where only women are in the position of trainer for other women with or without impairments [29]. Hermes [26] also highlights a necessity of barrier-free entrance and presence of assistants on the self-defence courses. The possibility to express their feelings, concerns and experience with every kind of violence is for disabled participants important too.

Patric Hummer, policeman and trainer who organized self-defence courses for various groups of people on the wheelchair, emphasizes the usage of strong and self-confident voice, which every participant should adopt to discourage attacker in the first phase of conflict. When it comes to physical defence he teaches where sensitive nervous endings on body are and how to take advantage from that knowledge as well as using improvisational weapon including the wheelchair. He encourages participants to lower attacker to them [30].

Another German self-defence possibility for people with physical disability is in Bremen, where Nils Thate applies wing tsun and escrima to self-defence [31]. Rollstuhlsportmenainschaft (RSG) Langenhagen (a community of wheelchair sport in Langenhagen) organizes regular seminars of self-defence for children and youth on wheelchair with Nils Thate as the main instructor [32]. A condition training, body language or usage of voice is included in the self-defence seminar as well as various defence techniques and recognition of the coming threat [33].

### The Czech Republic

There is a need to create a concept of self-defence for people with physical disabilities in the Czech Republic. No association offers regular courses for disabled people. There was just one attempt in 2014 in Brno, where Self Defence Brno club held a four hour seminar for people on mechanical wheelchair. Marian Komrska, the head instructor of the course had been using a wheelchair for 3 month to find out what kind of problems people with physical disability could face. Other self-defence instructors do not see the physical disability as an insuperable obstacle but they do not offer a course for disabled people either [34,35].

During creation of self-defence concept we draw on Wagner [36] and Cooper [37] with baring in mind specific needs and limitations of people with physical disability.

### CONCLUSION

The self-defence concept for physically disabled people should meet their requirements, which can be formulated by disabled people only. Their needs can be specific for each group of participants according to their experience and concerns. General research of disabled people's security threats should be done for the first proposal of the concept. Then the same should be done for every group of participants before each course.

Each individual participant of the self-defence course for people with physical disability needs specific approach with accord to the type of their disability. Only this way leads to making use of the full extent of their capacity. It is better to work with a group of participants of similar diagnosis.

The course should include every aspect of self-defence: physical, mental, tactical preparation for conflict solution such as prevention and communication strategies, physical defence and postconflict acting, which is always a big challenge while teaching self-defence for people with any kind of disability.

Because of movement limits the defence strategy should focused on the pre-conflict phase, prevention and communication, as well as on asking for help and using security aids such as personal alarm or lacrimatory spray.

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