

A Single-Case Study of CBT-Based Psychological Intervention Using Case Formulation to Support a Naginata Athlete Lacking Motivation to Compete

Introduction

Support for athletes using cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) has been gaining attention; however, in Japan, structured, and ongoing support based on case formulations remains rare. Athletes frequently encounter psychological challenges such as balancing daily life with competition and anxiety about the future. This study presents a single-case design involving a naginata athlete who expressed, “I don’t know why I continue to compete,” and describes the support process organized through a case formulation approach to explore how individualized psychological support can be effectively structured for athletes.

Methods

This single-case design study involved 15 individual sessions, each lasting 60 minutes, conducted over approximately one year from December X to March X+2 with a female naginata athlete in her twenties (12 years’ experience). The aims of the intervention were to help the client (Cl.) clarify her intrinsic motivation and competitive aspirations; develop coping and self-control strategies to manage anxiety and reduce negative automatic thoughts; and support autonomous career decision-making. Psychological assessment and case formulation were conducted using tools such as the Life Line (Kawamura, 2000), structured worksheets and goal-setting sheets. The intervention employed CBT-based techniques including self-monitoring, thought records, relaxation methods, and self-instruction. The effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated through session reflections, follow-up interviews, and behavioral observations, such as Cl.’s continued use of self-regulation techniques and proactive decision-making regarding retirement. All sessions were provided within a sports organization utilizing county-funded resources. Informed consent for publication was obtained from both Cl. and the affiliated sports organization.

Results

Cl. consistently practiced breathing techniques, muscle relaxation, and self-instruction before matches, and interviews confirmed that she continued to use breathing techniques daily before going to bed. Over the course of the sessions, Cl. reported a noticeable decrease in automatic negative thoughts, such as “I can’t believe in myself,” which she had previously experienced. While she acknowledged that some anxiety remained, she expressed increased confidence in her established pre-match preparation routine. With the support of the one-year goal-setting sheet created by Th., Cl. was able to develop and implement her own annual

training and competition plans independently. Cl. proactively decided on the timing of her retirement from naginata competitions, demonstrating greater self-determination. These changes indicate that Cl. has mastered practical self-control techniques, which she now applies in both competitive settings and daily life, and has developed a more autonomous and proactive approach to managing her athletic career and personal growth.

Conclusion

This case study suggests that a CBT-based intervention using case formulation can enhance athletes' self-control and positively influence their decision making, from addressing competitive challenges to planning their careers. The client demonstrated improved self-regulation and proactive career choices. However, a limitation of this study is the lack of objective psychological measures to track these changes. For future practice, it is important to incorporate multidimensional assessments such as the JISS Competition Psychological Test, Career Decision-Making Scale (Shimizu et al., 2007), and Self-Determination Scale (Sakurai, 1993) to ensure greater reliability.

Key Words : Case formulation, Naginata Athlete, Self-control, CBT

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I. Background and Problem

• The effectiveness of **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** in psychological support for athletes has gained attention (Kuribayashi, 2023).

• **Athletes in their 20s–30s** often face conflicts between their sporting life and personal life, such as balancing work, sport, and life plans (Yoshida et al., 2006).

→ **Although the Japan Sports Agency provides support for post-retirement career transitions, psychological support systems for active athletes remain underdeveloped.**

• Athletes selected for **prefectural teams** to compete in the *National Sports Festival* often struggle to balance work and practice, resulting in reduced training satisfaction (Asahina et al., 1998).

→ **These situations may contribute to various forms of psychological stress and difficulty in maintaining motivation to continue competition.**

II. Purpose

This study aimed to support a Naginata athlete who expressed, “I don’t know why I keep competing,” through a case formulation–based approach.

Objectives:

- To organize and reflect on the interview process.
- To review the effects of psychological support designed to enhance self-control.
- To discuss the implications of **case formulation**–based support for athletes.

The case was organized in accordance with the **CARE Guidelines** for psychological support practice.

III. Method

Client (Cl.): A female in her 20s with approximately 12 years of Naginata experience, employed by a private company and a member of a prefectural Naginata federation.

Period: 15 sessions (60 min each) over one year (Dec. X–Mar. X+2).

Context: Individual support requested via a federation survey; the therapist (Th.) had prior contact through group sessions.

(Funded by a prefectural athlete enhancement program.)

©**Ethical note:** Informed consent was obtained from Cl. and her sports federation.

Main Complaints

- “I don’t know why I’m still competing.”
- “I don’t know what I want to achieve in competition.”
- “I feel nervous and anxious before matches, and sometimes cry.”
- “My mind goes blank.”

Client’s Desired Goals

- To clarify her motivation, joy, and goals for continuing competition.
- To acquire effective coping strategies to manage pre-competition anxiety and maintain consistent performance.

Assessment: The client completed a *Life Line (Life Satisfaction Curve)* (Kawamura, 2000) and described her competition experiences in worksheets, which were used to develop the **case formulation** (Figure 1).

What’s “case formulation”? → Case formulation is a hypothesis that integrates complex information to explain the causes and maintaining factors of a client’s problems (Eells, 1997). As Shimoyama (2015) illustrated, it serves as a *clinical compass* that helps practitioners navigate interventions safely and purposefully.

IV. Procedure

Based on the case formulation, the Cl. and Th. collaboratively constructed alternative behaviors during the sessions.

【During Practice】

Planned to film her movements and analyze them before seeking advice from others.

- Reflected on her thoughts and behaviors during sessions.
- Strengthened self-monitoring habits in daily practice.

【Before Competition】

When the thought “I can’t trust myself” arose, she planned specific actions for pre-match preparation.

Reinforced self-control strategies in her pre-competition routine.

Applied breathing, relaxation, and self-instruction techniques in daily life.

【Underlying Background Factors】

- Was forced to continue lessons during childhood despite disliking them.
- Has a tendency to follow choices recommended by others.
- Endures physical discomfort without expressing it.
- Finds it difficult to express her own opinions and thoughts.

【During Practice】

“I can’t perform the technique well.”

Seeks advice from others

Feels temporary relief but often **cannot agree** with the advice

Engages in self-monitoring

Feels temporary relief and becomes **satisfied** with her own movements.

【Before Competition】

“I can’t trust myself.”

Used techniques: breathing/relaxation /self-instruction

Feels anxious and sometimes cries

Stress **decreases**, but tension temporarily **rises**

Practices self-control strategies

Stress and tension **gradually decrease**

Figure 1. Client’s case formulation results

V. Results and Discussion

-The following points were observed in the counseling sessions.-

- ✓ Practiced **breathing, muscle relaxation, and self-instruction** before competitions.
- ✓ Reported: “Although my anxiety never completely disappears, **my pre-competition preparation has become well established.**”
- ✓ Continued relaxation practice at bedtime in daily life.
- ✓ **Independently decided when to retire from competition and designed her own career plan.**

Case formulation–based support fostered self-reflection, self-control, and career decision-making; future studies should assess motivation using the Career Decision-Making Scale (Shimizu et al., 2007) and the Self-Determination Scale (Sakurai, 1993).

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発表成果報告書

国際学術交流助成金に採択された方は、学会参加後 1 か月以内（ただし、助成決定時にすでに発表済みの場合は通知から 1 か月以内）に以下の資料をご提出ください。

① 発表成果報告書（本様式）、②発表抄録（英文）、③発表実績（ポスターやスライド等の写し）

【発表概要】（400 字程度）

本発表では、競技継続への動機づけの低下を訴えた薙刀競技者 1 名を対象に、認知行動療法のケースフォーミュレーションに基づく心理支援を実施した単一事例研究について報告した。約 1 年間、全 15 回の個別支援を通して、競技に対する内発的動機の整理、不安や否定的な自動思考への対処、セルフコントロール方略の獲得、ならびに主体的なキャリア意思決定の支援を行った。その際、セルフモニタリング、思考記録、呼吸法や筋弛緩法、自己教示などの技法を用い、競技場面と日常生活の双方での適用を重視した。その結果、競技前の不安低減や準備行動の安定化、自己効力感の向上が確認され、最終的には本人が主体的に競技引退の時期を決定するに至った。本事例は、ケースフォーミュレーションに基づく個別的心理支援が、競技パフォーマンスのみならず、アスリートのキャリア形成や自己決定を支える有効な枠組みとなり得ることが示唆された。

【参加体験記】（800 字程度）

2025 年 12 月 8 日から香港で開催された第 16 回国際スポーツ心理学会（ISSP）に参加し、薙刀競技者を対象に、認知行動療法のケースフォーミュレーションに基づく心理支援を実施した単一事例研究について、ポスター発表を行った。国際学会への参加は、これまで参加経験はあったものの、自身の研究を ISSP で発表するのは初めての機会であり、国際的な研究交流の場において研究成果を発信する重要な経験となった。

ポスター発表では、介入の構成や支援過程に関する具体的な質問が寄せられた。とくに、各国の伝統的なスポーツ競技者を支援している研究者からは、自国における実践例を交えた意見が共有され、競技文化の違いを踏まえた心理支援の在り方について議論することができた。また、武道競技経験を有する研究者との質疑を通して、武道特有の規範意識や競技観が自動思考に影響を及ぼす可能性について議論する機会を得た。これにより、競技特性や文化的背景を踏まえた上で、ケースフォーミュレーションを柔軟に調整する重要性を再認識した。一方で、本研究では介入効果の検証において客観的指標を十分に用いていない点について指摘を受け、今後の研究において多面的な評価指標を導入する必要性を再認識した。また議論の中で、「認知行動療法」という名称自体は認知されているものの、具体的にどのように実践へ応用されているのかについては十分に共有されていない可能性が示唆され、国際学会の場においても、CBT の実践的枠組みをより明確に発信していく必要性を感じた。

本学会での発表および交流を通して、自身の研究を国際的視点から捉え直すとともに、今後は国際的な議論に耐えうる研究構成や発信力を高めていく必要性を強く認識した。国際学会への参加は、今後の研究活動を国際的に発展させていくうえで、英語力の向上とともに、研究視野を国際的に広げていく重要性を再確認する機会となった。