SILAMBAM: INDIA'S ANCIENT MARTIAL ART

Dr. P. Kumaresan[1] & M. Syed Ali[2]

[1]*Associate Professor, Department of Physical Education, Health Education & Sports, The M.D.T. Hindu College, Pettai. Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India.*
[2]*Ph.D., Research Scholar, Department of Physical Education, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India.*

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to find out the influence of silambam on grip strength of school students. Grip strength: Grip dynamometer of the rectangular type was used to measure grip strength, both right and left hand tested. The collected data from the two groups prior to and after experimentation on selected variables were statistically examined for significant difference, if any applying the analysis of ANCOVA. This is enough to find significant difference between selected groups. So need not use any one of the post hoc test, to determine which the paired means difference was significant. In all the cases to test the significant, 0.05 level of confidence was utilized. The result of the study reveals that the silambam training group increased in performance of right hand grip strength and left hand grip strength.

Keywords: Martial Art, Silambam, Fitness.

INTRODUCTION

Martial arts are great as spectator sports and a good way to get fit, but they really come into their own when they are used in self-defense – undoubtedly the ultimate result for many of them. The earliest evidence for specifics of martial arts as practiced in the past comes from depictions of fights, both in figurative art and in early literature, besides analysis of archaeological evidence, especially of weaponry. The oldest work of art depicting scenes of battle, dating back 3400 BC, was the Ancient Egyptian paintings showing some form of struggle. In Vietnam, drawings and sketches from 2879 BC describe certain ways of combat using sword, stick, bow, and spears. A number of South Asian fighting styles remain closely connected to yoga, dance and performing arts. Some of the choreographed sparring in silambam can be applied to dancers who knew silambam were believed to be markedly better than other performers. Until recent decades, the "chhau" dance was performed only by martial artists. Some traditional Indian classical dance schools still incorporate martial arts as part of their exercise regimen. Written evidence of martial arts in Southern India dates back to the Sangam literature of about the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD. The Akananuru and Purananuru describe the use of spears, swords, shields, bows and silambam in the Sangam era. This referred to the *silambam* staff which was in great demand with foreign visitors. Some traditional Indian classical dance schools still incorporate martial arts as part of their exercise regimen.

Silambam is a weapon-based Dravidian martial art from Tamil Nadu. In Tamil, the word silambam refers to the bamboo staff which is the main weapon used in this style. Other weapons are also used such as the maduvu (deer horn), kathi (knife), vaal (sword), stick (kali or kaji), dagger (kuttuval), knuckle duster (kuttu katai), and whips with several flexible and metallic blades (surul pattai). Unarmed silambam, called kuttu varisai, utilizes stances and routines based on animal movements such as the snake, tiger, elephant and eagle forms. There are numerous sub-sects in silambam like nagam-16 (cobra-16), kallapathu (thieves ten), kidamuttu (goat head butting), kuravanchi, kalyanavarisai (similar to quarterstaff), thulukkanam, and so on. Each is unique and may differ from one another in grip, posture, foot work, method of attack, length of the stick, movement of the stick etc. Separate practice is needed for staffs of different lengths. Beginners are taught footwork (kaaladi) which they must master before learning spinning techniques and patterns, and methods to change the spins without stopping the motion of the stick. There are sixteen of them among which four are very important. Footwork patterns are the key aspects of silambam and kuttu varisai (empty hands form). Traditionally, the masters first teach kaaladi for a long time before proceeding to kuttu varisai. Training in kuttu varisai allows the practitioner to get a feel of silambam stick movements using their bare hands, that is, fighters have a preliminary training with bare hands before going to the stick. Gradually, fighters study footwork to move precisely in conjunction with the stick movements. The ultimate goal of the training is to defend against multiple armed opponents. In silambam as well as kuttu varisai, kaaladi is the key in deriving power for the blows. It

teaches how to advance and retreat, to get in range of the opponent without lowering one's defence, aids in hitting and blocking, and it strengthens the body immensely enabling the person to receive non-lethal blows and still continue the battle. The whole body is used to create power. In this study it implies the specificity principle regarding the present stretch condition of the muscle prior to explosive contraction. Millions of athletes are practicing games and sports regularly often these young athletes are disadvantaged. So in this study, silambam training selected as independent variable to test the improvement of selected criterion variables of 16 and 19 years old students.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to find out the influence of silambam on grip strength of school students. Grip strength: Grip dynamometer of the rectangular type was used to measure grip strength, both right and left hand tested. The collected data from the two groups prior to and after experimentation on selected variables were statistically examined for significant difference, if any applying the analysis of ANCOVA. This is enough to find significant difference between selected groups. So need not use any one of the post hoc test, to determine which the paired means difference was significant. In all the cases to test the significant, 0.05 level of confidence was utilized.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The analyses of variance ANOVA test was performed to investigate the comparisons between the control and experimental group involved in silambam among school students. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$ and all data are presented as Mean and SD. The test-retest reliability was obtained through the Intra-class Correlation Coefficient (ICC). The SPSS 20 Software was adopted for this analysis.

TABLE I.
ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE FOR THE DATA ON RIGHT HAND GRIP STRENGTH OFSILAMBAM AND THE CONTROL GROUP

Groups	Silambam group	Control group	Sources of variance	Sum of squares	df	Means squares	"F" ratio
Pre test	49.24	50.01	B:	120.26	1	120.26	0.26
Mean±Sd	3.45	3.23	W:	12714.23	28	454.08	
Post test	56.21	50.11	B:	574.58	1	574.58	12.31*
Mean ± SD	3.65	2.58	W:	1306.47	28	46.65	
Adjusted	56.20	50.07	B:	522.43	1	522.43	16.50*
Post test mean			W:	855.09	27	31.66	

*F.05(1.28)=4.20, F(.05) (1, 27)= 4.21

The above table-I indicates the adjusted mean value of right hand grip strength of experimental and control groups were 56.20 and 50.07 respectively. The obtained F-ratio of stress 16.50 was greater than the table value 4.21 for the degrees of freedom 1 and 27 required for significance at 0.05 level of confidence. The result of the study indicates that there was a significant difference among experimental and control groups on right hand grip strength. The above table also indicates that both pre and post test means of experimental and control groups differ significantly. The pre, post and adjusted mean values of right hand grip strength of both experimental and control groups are graphically represented in the Figure-I.

FIGURE I.
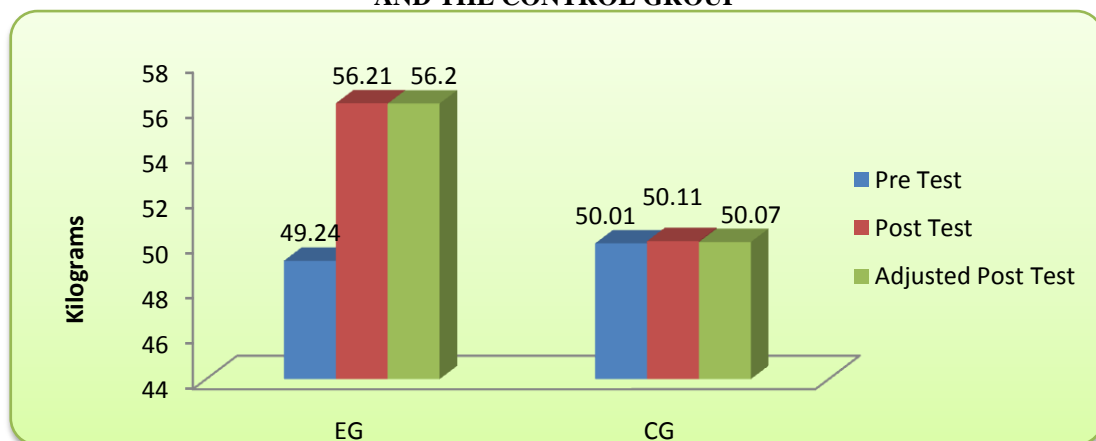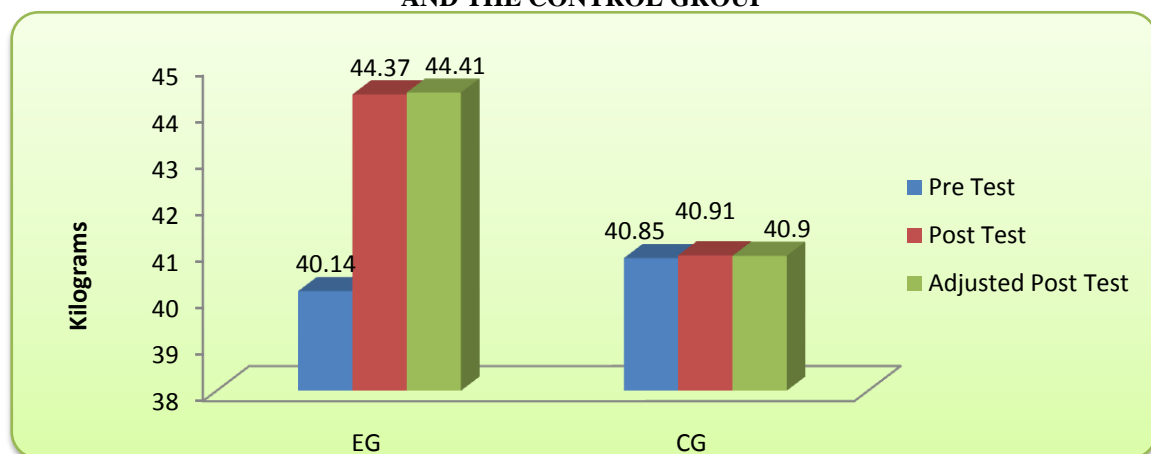**RIGHT HAND GRIP STRENGTH OF SILAMBAM GROUP AND THE CONTROL GROUP**

TABLE II.
ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE FOR THE DATA ON LEFT HAND GRIP STRENGTH OFSILAMBAM AND THE CONTROL GROUP

Groups	Silambam group	Control group	Sources of variance	Sum of squares	df	Means squares	"F" ratio
Pre test	40.14	40.85	B:	974.73	1	974.73	2.16
Mean±Sd	2.39	2.75	W:	12627.33	28	450.97	
Post test	44.37	40.91	B:	1755.46	1	1755.46	5.11*
Mean ± SD	3.35	3.11	W:	9604.27	28	343.00	
Adjusted	44.41	40.90	B:	602.81	1	602.81	13.80*
Post test mean			W:	1214.8	27	44.99	

*F.05(1.28)=4.20, F(.05) (1, 27)= 4.21

The above table-II indicates the adjusted mean value of left hand grip strength of experimental and control groups were 56.20 and 50.07 respectively. The obtained F-ratio of stress 16.50 was greater than the table value 4.21 for the degrees of freedom 1 and 27 required for significance at 0.05 level of confidence. The result of the study indicates that there was a significant difference among experimental and control groups on left hand grip strength. The above table also indicates that both pre and post test means of experimental and control groups differ significantly. The pre, post and adjusted mean values of left hand grip strength of both experimental and control groups are graphically represented in the Figure-II.

FIGURE II.
LEFT HAND GRIP STRENGTH OF SILAMBAM GROUP AND THE CONTROL GROUP

CONCLUSION

The result of the study reveals that the silambam training group increased in performance of right hand grip strength and left hand grip strength.

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