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The Practice of Nanbudo in the Thiès Region (Senegal): Obstacles and Prospects for Development

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Abstract

This article analyzes the practice of Nanbudo in the Thiès region of Senegal, focusing on obstacles to its development and prospects for improvement. The main objective is to understand the conditions of Nanbudo practice, identify constraints encountered by practitioners and clubs, and propose avenues for expansion. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining a quantitative survey of 23 practitioners and qualitative interviews with five key stakeholders. Results show that Nanbudo is practiced primarily by a young population (39% aged 21-25), mostly students (52%), with relatively balanced gender participation. Technical supervision and training organization are generally satisfactory. However, several obstacles limit its development: inadequate material resources (70%), limited financial means (55% depend solely on membership fees), lack of regular sponsors (64%), insufficient institutional support (73%), and low media visibility (78%). Despite these difficulties, Nanbudo has real development potential, driven by strong practitioner motivation (100% wish to continue and would recommend the discipline). Strengthening supervision, improving resources, and better promotion could contribute to its expansion and sustainability.

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Introduction

Sport occupies an essential place in contemporary societies because of its multiple contributions to physical well-being, psychological development, and social cohesion. Among the various forms of sporting activities, martial arts occupy a distinctive position because of their physical, educational, and cultural dimensions. These disciplines, often rooted in ancient philosophical traditions, aim not only to teach combat techniques but also to foster moral development and personal growth among practitioners (Donohue, 1994; Theeboom & Knop, 2010). Nanbudo, a Japanese martial art created in 1978 by Master Yoshinao Nanbu, is distinguished by its particular emphasis on harmony between the body and

mind. This discipline combines combat techniques (Budoho), health-oriented exercises (Kidoho), and personal development (Noryokukaihatsuho). In Senegal, Nanbudo was introduced in 1987 by Master Jean-Charles TALL and currently comprises sixteen dojos distributed across the country, with more than four hundred affiliated practitioners.

However, despite its recognized educational and social benefits, Nanbudo remains a relatively underdeveloped discipline and faces numerous challenges related to its organization and promotion. In the Thiès region, where the discipline has been practiced since 2007, several obstacles appear to constrain its development, including a lack of suitable infrastructure, inadequate material and

financial resources, limited public awareness and promotion, and organizational constraints.

Problem Statement

The central problem addressed by this study revolves around the following question: What factors hinder the practice and development of Nanbudo in the Thiès region, and what prospects can be considered to promote its expansion?

This general research problem is further divided into the following specific questions:

- a. How does the lack of financial resources constitute a barrier to the progression of practitioners and the promotion of the discipline?
- b. What challenges affect the practice of Nanbudo and the establishment of new Nanbudo dojos in the Thiès region?
- c. What development strategies and prospects could be considered to improve the practice, attractiveness, and sustainability of Nanbudo in the Thiès region?

The scientific literature indicates that the educational and psychosocial effects of martial arts are strongly influenced by the pedagogical framework within which the practice is organized (Theeboom *et al.*, 2010; Coalter, 2007).

The benefits associated with these disciplines do not automatically result from technical training alone; rather, they are influenced by the quality of instruction, the structure of training programs, and the educational intentions of instructors. In the Senegalese context, limited institutional organization and resource constraints constitute major barriers, thereby reinforcing the relevance of a study focusing specifically on Nanbudo in the Thiès region.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Psychosocial and Educational Effects of Martial Arts

The work of Theeboom *et al.*, (2010) represents an important theoretical foundation for understanding the psychosocial effects of martial arts. Their review indicates that benefits frequently attributed to martial arts practice—including socialization, self-discipline, emotional regulation, and respect for social norms—are

not automatic consequences of technical training. Rather, they emerge from a pedagogical framework that is intentionally structured to promote such outcomes.

Educational effectiveness depends on the consistency between stated objectives, teaching methods, and the interpersonal climate established within the training group.

Meta-analyses conducted by Kim *et al.*, (2021) on martial arts, particularly Taekwondo, have demonstrated positive effects on character development, self-discipline, and social skills among practitioners. However, these studies also indicate that outcomes vary according to the pedagogical context, duration of practice, and instructional methods employed.

Barriers to Development: A Multidimensional Approach

Barriers refer to all constraints and obstacles that hinder regular participation in Nanbudo as well as its sustainable development. These barriers occur at several levels:

- **Institutional factors:** limited official recognition, inadequate sports-support policies, and limited administrative support and supervision.
- **Material factors:** inadequate or insufficient infrastructure and a lack of specialized equipment.
- **Human-resource factors:** an insufficient number of qualified instructors and limited involvement of some senior practitioners.
- **Economic factors:** limited purchasing power among potential practitioners and costs associated with equipment and transportation.
- **Media-related factors:** limited visibility in the public sphere and insufficient media coverage.

Development Prospects

Development prospects refer to the range of directions, actions, and strategies that could contribute to the revitalization, consolidation, and sustainable expansion of Nanbudo practice.

These prospects can be organized around several key areas, including strengthening organizational structures, providing continuing professional development for instructors, improving infrastructure, diversifying funding sources, and enhancing media promotion and public visibility.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. This methodological triangulation strengthens the relevance and reliability of the findings by combining the analytical depth of qualitative inquiry with the statistical representation provided by quantitative data.

Study Population and Sampling

The study population consisted of Nanbudo practitioners who were regularly registered in clubs affiliated with the Thiès region in 2024.

According to the study records, the total population comprised 83 licensed practitioners distributed among three clubs: Nichi (13 practitioners), Nami (6 practitioners), and Tsur Ashi (4 practitioners).

For the quantitative survey, simple random sampling was reportedly used to select 28% of the practitioners, corresponding to 23 participants. A quota-based allocation procedure was used to distribute the respondents among the three clubs in proportion to their respective membership numbers.

For the qualitative component, five key stakeholders were interviewed, including three club leaders and two members of the governing committee, together with experienced senior practitioners serving as resource persons.

Data Collection Instruments

- **Questionnaire:** A questionnaire was administered to practitioners and consisted of 42 questions organized into several sections, including participant identification; organization and instruction; supervision and learning conditions; financial and material resources; institutional support; participation in events; visibility and attractiveness; perceived benefits; and development prospects.
- **Semi-structured interview guide:** A semi-structured interview guide was administered to club leaders and members of the governing committee. The interviews addressed the history and development of Nanbudo, club organization and activities, resource management, constraints, and future development prospects.

Data Processing and Analysis

Quantitative data were processed using statistical software and tools, including Google Forms and Statistica, and were presented using tables and graphical representations.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify recurring themes, categories, and patterns emerging from the participants' responses.

Results and Discussion

Profile of Nanbudo Practitioners

The results indicate that Nanbudo practice in the Thiès region primarily involves a young population.

- **Age:** 39% of practitioners were aged 21–25 years, 22% were aged 26–30 years, 17% were aged 15–20 years, 13% were below 15 years, and 9% were above 30 years.
- **Sex:** The distribution was relatively balanced, with 52% males and 48% females.
- **Educational level:** 57% of practitioners had higher education, while 30% had secondary-level education.
- **Occupational status:** 52% were pupils or students, 39% were employed, and 9% were not engaged in any occupational activity.
- **Duration of practice:** 65% had been practicing Nanbudo for more than six years, indicating a high level of commitment and sustained participation in the discipline.

Organization of Training Sessions

The organization of training sessions was generally perceived positively by the practitioners.

- **87%** of practitioners considered the duration of training sessions appropriate, with sessions generally lasting approximately two hours.
- **91%** considered the training schedules convenient, with sessions predominantly conducted between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.
- Only **1%** of practitioners reported training more than three times per week.

However, 52% of respondents reported that training sessions sometimes ended late at night, while 48% considered these late schedules potentially detrimental to their regular attendance.

Technical and Pedagogical Supervision

Technical supervision was generally perceived positively by the respondents.

- **87%** of respondents considered the training content appropriate for their level of proficiency.
- **87%** believed that instructors effectively combined theoretical and practical components.
- **74%** reported receiving adequate explanations during training sessions.
- **61%** reported being highly satisfied with the technical supervision provided.

However, interviews revealed that many instructors did not have comprehensive pedagogical training, which may limit the overall quality and effectiveness of instruction.

Material and Financial Resources

The findings revealed substantial deficiencies in material and financial resources.

- **70%** of practitioners considered the available equipment insufficient.
- **65%** rated the condition of the available equipment as unsatisfactory.
- **65%** believed that inadequate equipment negatively affected the quality of training sessions.
- Practitioners' membership fees constituted the main source of club funding, accounting for **55%** of reported financial resources.
- **64%** of respondents indicated that their clubs did not benefit from regular sponsorship.
- **73%** considered the lack of support from public authorities to be a major challenge.

Visibility and Attractiveness

The findings revealed an apparent paradox regarding the visibility of Nanbudo.

- **61%** of respondents considered the discipline sufficiently known within their local environment.
- **78%** nevertheless believed that insufficient visibility constituted a barrier to attracting new practitioners.
- Initial exposure to Nanbudo occurred mainly through **family networks (48%)** and **friends (30%)**, highlighting the important role of informal social networks in introducing new participants to the discipline.

Perceived Benefits of Nanbudo Practice

The indicators of practitioner engagement were highly positive.

- **100%** of respondents recognized the contribution of Nanbudo to personal discipline and self-control.
- **100%** considered Nanbudo to have an important educational and social role.
- **100%** expressed their intention to continue practicing Nanbudo.
- **100%** stated that they would recommend the discipline to other young people.

Factors Limiting Participation in Events

The following factors were identified as the main constraints limiting regular participation in educational and sporting events:

Limiting factor	Percentage
Financial costs	39.1%
Incompatibility of schedules	34.8%
Distance to event venues	17.4%
Other factors	8.7%

Financial constraints represented the most frequently reported barrier, followed by scheduling difficulties and the geographical distance of event venues.

Priority Actions Proposed by Practitioners

Respondents identified several priority actions for improving the development and promotion of Nanbudo.

Priority action	Frequency
Strengthening communication and media promotion	4
Organization of demonstrations, training seminars, and competitions	4
Establishment and expansion of dojos	3
Increased support from authorities and partners	3
Improvement of infrastructure and equipment	2

A Discipline Practiced by a Young and Committed Population

The predominance of young practitioners, particularly those aged 21–25 years (39%), together with the high proportion of pupils and students (52%), represents an important characteristic of Nanbudo practice in the study area. This demographic profile may facilitate the renewal and continuity of participation in the discipline.

At the same time, the predominance of students and young practitioners may create organizational challenges related to time availability and competing academic or occupational commitments. This is consistent with the finding that 34.8% of respondents identified schedule incompatibility as a barrier to participation in events.

Positive Perception of Technical Supervision with Room for Improvement

Although technical supervision was generally viewed positively by practitioners, the interviews revealed important limitations concerning the pedagogical preparation of instructors. As expressed by one participant, P.S.D., “Having a high rank does not guarantee that one knows how to teach effectively.”

This observation is consistent with the conclusions of Theeboom *et al.*, (2010), who emphasized that the educational effectiveness of martial arts depends substantially on the quality of the pedagogical framework and the competencies of instructors. Technical expertise and martial arts proficiency alone may therefore not be sufficient to ensure effective educational outcomes; appropriate pedagogical training is also important.

Structural Material and Financial Constraints

Deficiencies in material and financial resources emerged as major structural constraints. Limited access to tatami mats, protective equipment, and appropriate training facilities may directly affect both the quality of training and practitioner safety.

Furthermore, the substantial dependence on practitioners' membership fees, which accounted for 55% of reported club funding, together with the absence of regular sponsorship reported by 64% of respondents, may restrict the capacity of clubs to organize activities, acquire equipment, improve facilities, and expand their membership.

Limited External Visibility despite Strong Internal Acceptance

Nanbudo appears to enjoy strong acceptance among existing practitioners, as demonstrated by the fact that **100%** of respondents expressed their intention to continue practicing and would recommend the discipline to other young people.

However, its external visibility appears comparatively limited. The introduction of new practitioners relies predominantly on informal networks, particularly family members and friends, rather than on structured institutional communication and promotional strategies. This situation may constrain the recruitment of new practitioners and limit opportunities for developing partnerships and obtaining financial support.

Toward Institutional Restructuring

The findings collectively point to the potential importance of strengthening the institutional framework governing Nanbudo in Senegal. The establishment of a dedicated federation and the strengthening of regional leagues could provide mechanisms for improving organizational coordination, increasing visibility, and facilitating the integration of Nanbudo into the national sports system.

Development Prospects

Redefining Institutional Directions

The present study proposes the implementation of a renewed development policy centered on the establishment of a federation and the strengthening of regional leagues.

Such institutional development could facilitate broader territorial coverage through the establishment of additional dojos and potentially support the greater integration of Senegalese Nanbudo into the international martial arts community.

Strengthening Resources

The State and local authorities could play an important role in strengthening the material, financial, and human resources available to Nanbudo organizations. This could include the development of modern and appropriate training facilities, mobilization of private-sector partnerships, and implementation of a standardized

training and professional-development program for instructors.

Motivation and Awareness-Raising Strategies

Support measures could be introduced to facilitate the balance between sports participation and academic studies.

These measures could include the provision of educational materials and the introduction of performance-based incentives where appropriate.

In parallel, a communication strategy incorporating both traditional and digital media could increase the public visibility of Nanbudo and broaden awareness of its educational, social, and sporting dimensions.

Improvement of Sports Organization

Improving the organization of sporting activities requires systematic planning, effective human-resource management, and adaptation to the needs of different participant groups.

Regular organization of demonstrations, training seminars, and competitions, accompanied by appropriate media coverage, could contribute to revitalizing the discipline, strengthening public awareness, and attracting new practitioners.

In conclusion, this study aimed to analyze the factors constraining the practice and development of Nanbudo in the Thiès region and to identify potential development prospects. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a comprehensive and nuanced assessment of the current situation.

Nanbudo possesses several important strengths, including a young and committed practitioner base, strong acceptance among existing practitioners, and widely recognized educational and social values. However, these strengths are constrained by structural challenges, particularly inadequate material and financial resources, limited institutional support, the absence of regular sponsorship, and insufficient media visibility.

The future development of Nanbudo in the Thiès region will depend on the capacity of relevant stakeholders to

address these constraints through coordinated, context-appropriate, and sustainable strategies. Strengthening the institutional framework, improving access to resources, enhancing instructor training, and developing more effective promotional strategies may represent important mechanisms for supporting the expansion and sustainability of the discipline.

The findings also provide opportunities for further research, particularly regarding the role of Nanbudo in school environments, its potential contribution to the prevention of juvenile delinquency, and its possible integration into public policies for sports development in Senegal.

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