

Improving Use of Force Training for Officers

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the history of Jiu-Jitsu and how it became popular in North America. The premise is to address the benefits of grappling sports for law enforcement officers but specifically focuses on the use of Jiu-Jitsu, due to it being the most common of the grappling sports that adults can learn. This paper discusses the risks and potential issues of Jiu-Jitsu being used by or mandated for law enforcement. There are statistics and benefits discussed that were noted when the Marietta Police Department in Georgia began requiring this style of training for their officers. Lastly, there are some suggestions for potential ways to implement mandatory training for law enforcement officers in Florida to learn Jiu-Jitsu or some other similar style of grappling sport.

Introduction

Law enforcement officers today are facing a growing amount of criticism with how and when force is necessary and utilized during critical incidents. This includes everything from physical control and excessive striking, to the use of lethal force on both armed and unarmed subjects. The force used against unarmed subjects is usually the most critiqued by citizens. Sometimes this is due to an error in identifying the object that the suspect was holding or an error of a perceived threat, such as a suspect not showing their hands when ordered. However, there have been cases where lethal force had to be applied to unarmed citizens due to the law enforcement officer not being able to properly control or restrain the suspect. This can sometimes be due to a lack of training on the law enforcement officer's part. However, a lack of training is not a mistake or a valid excuse. Law enforcement officers are expected to be healthy enough and be in good enough conditioning to be able to handle a physical confrontation. Officers are also expected to be able to control a singular resisting subject of similar size to some degree. Although size and strength differences between suspects and officers are factors that require consideration, there are ways to reduce these types of disparities. Requiring officers to participate in grappling and combat sports training could prove to be advantageous when controlling situations that necessitate the use of force.

Currently Law Enforcement Officers in Florida have very minimal standards for mandated defensive tactics training. In fact, per the FDLE website, there is not a minimum number of hours required to train in Use of Force to maintain certification. It is only required that the training include 1) scenario based firearms training, 2) physiological response dynamics training, 3) less-lethal force options available within the agency, 4) agency use of force policies, and 5) legal aspects regarding use-of-force. This is to be done a minimum of once every four years.

This project is going to focus specifically on the use of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) by law enforcement officers due to the abundant number of gyms available that teach this technique. It will focus on several specific topics to include 1) the history of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and its fame in North America, 2) potential benefits of this sport for law enforcement and officers, 3) potential drawbacks and risks, and 4) results from agencies currently utilizing this style of training.

Literature Review

The History of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) and its Origins

The exact origin of jiu-jitsu (or jujitsu as it was originally spelled) are very unclear. This is mostly due to it being an ancient martial art. Some people credit India with the origins, others credit China, and a few even credit Ancient Greece. However, what is clear is that jiu-jitsu eventually became more refined than it originally was and taught in schools in Japan by professors. These schools were called ryu. These ryu were often funded by warlords who were trying to gain political power in a particular region. They would use the students of jiu-jitsu ryu to fight for them. (Gracie & Danaher, 2003)

Eventually the fighting style was recognized by the ancient Japanese military around 1192 AD. It was realized that soldiers were heavily protected by armor to prevent damage from blades and spears. This armor would also prevent any damage from traditional kicks and strikes. Therefore, there needed to be a type of hand to hand combat that could cause damage without relying upon the need to strike. Grappling style fighting was taught to the soldiers (samurai) to protect themselves. This style of fighting focused on joint manipulation, leverage, and control over striking. Eventually the wars and fighting in the region ceased and this martial art changed from a necessity of war to civilian protection. Around 1532, one of the first civilian ryu was opened to teach this skill to civilians for personal protection. This school was founded by a man named Takenouchi Hisamori. Hisamori no longer wanted the skill associated with warlords or the military. Hisamori further refined the style to what would be considered modern jiu-jitsu. (Gracie & Danaher, 2003)

Around 1868, Japan underwent a transition where it lost a lot of its nation's heritage and tradition to keep up with European progress. As a result, the teaching of the ancient traditions, to include Jiu-Jitsu, faded away. The military styles changed, there were no longer local warlords fighting for power, and areas became more civilized. There was little need for jiu-jitsu for self-defense or battle and many of the schools closed. The art was now mostly passed down in families as a family tradition, instead of being taught in schools or large ryu. Despite the closing of large ryu, some small ryu and schools remained available. However, they were not nearly as popular as they once were. The art was taught in different variations and altered styles over the next century. Some versions focused on the standing portion of the art and some focused mostly on the ground grappling. It is widely believed that this separated traditional jiu-jitsu in different subsets to include modern day judo and BJJ. Modern judo focuses mainly on throws from a standing position, while BJJ focuses mainly on the ground techniques. (Gracie & Danaher, 2003)

Jiu-jitsu was brought to North and South America by a man named Mitsuyo Maeda. Maeda was sent to this area in 1904 by his professor with the purpose of teaching judo and jiu-jitsu, as well as colonizing Japanese people in other countries. However, he did not like living in North America and moved to South America, eventually settling in Brazil. Here Maeda met and befriended a man named Gasteo Gracie. Maeda taught jiu-jitsu to Gasteo's oldest son, Carlos Gracie, as a favor to Gasteo. Carlos was just a youth at the time, but he trained with Maeda and Maeda's senior students for a few years. In 1925, Carlos Gracie opened his own school to teach and improve upon this martial art. It was also at this time that the spelling changed from the traditional spelling of jujitsu to jiu-jitsu and then later to Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu or BJJ. Carlos trained and worked on this art with his brothers and their sons as time passed. It is worth noting that one of the most important changes that the Gracie family made to their style of jiu-jitsu was to focus more on leverage and technique over strength due to smaller statures of the Gracie family members. (Gracie & Danaher, 2003)

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu remained in Brazil for many years as it was being refined by the Gracie family and their students. In addition to the Gracie family, there were other students of Maeda who were developing and teaching jiu-jitsu as well. It wasn't until the 1990s that this style exploded onto the stage in the United States of America. It was at this time that the world was introduced to The Ultimate Fighting Championship (or UFC). UFC was started by Art Davie and Rorion Gracie. The two wanted to settle the debate of which fighting style was the best in a competition that had very few rules and no weight classes. There were competitors from a variety of different fighting styles on display in the first few UFC exhibits. However, the most dominant fighter was Royce Gracie. Royce was a master of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. Royce was able to quickly defeat the opponents he faced. Royce ultimately won three of the first four exhibits but was unfortunately injured in UFC 3 after a bracket win and could not continue to the finals. (Says & Says, 2021)

This dominance revealed to the world the benefit of BJJ against more traditional striking styles of fighting to include karate and boxing. It wasn't until competitors started training to defend some of the traditional BJJ moves that they were able to compete against subjects who were trained in BJJ. Fighters ultimately realized that to be a well-rounded and dangerous competitor, they would need more than one fighting style to compete. However, it was the original success of BJJ against all other fighting styles that proved its dominance. This was done with little to no striking involved.

Benefits to Law Enforcement Besides Self Defense

It should be obvious that an increase in grappling training will improve your ability to physically control resisting subjects and protect yourself. However, there are numerous other benefits to training in grappling or BJJ that are not as obvious. These include but are not limited to mental health, interacting with citizens in the community, physical conditioning, confidence building, and reducing excessive use of force as well as the dependence on intermediate weapons.

Law enforcement officers have to do, hear, and see things that most members of society do not have to deal with or encounter. Scenes of horrific or unusual death and other high stress situations can cause officers to develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), alcoholism, anxiety, depression, and increased risk of suicide. A study

conducted by the National Institute of Justice Journal advised that there are many factors that contribute to these issues. Some of these are shift work, stress from calls, poor public image, and understaffing. The study continues to estimate that approximately 27% of officers asked reported symptoms of PTSD. In this study, it is advised that to get the officers to participate in traditional treatment for depression, anxiety, or PTSD that the agencies will need to overcome the “Tough Guy” culture that officers have. This is to say that officers refuse to admit that there is an issue with them or to seek traditional help. This is usually due to a fear of judgement. Unfortunately, when officers refuse to seek professional or traditional help for emotional and psychological issues, they just suffer or will turn to self-medicating. This self-medication is most often done with alcohol and alcohol abuse. Both of these will cause workplace performance issues. (Dawson et al., 2019)

There is evidence that training in combat sports like BJJ can help cope with PTSD and depression in a non-traditional way. Military Medicine and Oxford University conducted a study in 2019 to determine if BJJ training could assist in treating veterans and active service members with PTSD. The study utilized a self-reporting survey on traditional PTSD symptoms at the beginning of the study, mid-point in the study, and at the end of the study. During this study, participants had forty BJJ sessions over five months. This study used twenty-nine active or retired male service members between the ages of 22 to 60. Unfortunately, only nine people completed the study for the full five months. The results showed a significant improvement for PTSD related symptoms during the time subjects were participating to include those that finished the study as well as those that left in the middle of it. This was from just participating in BJJ with no other traditional treatment. It was believed that these improvements were due to the exercise, the problem solving needs of grappling, and social interactions in a positive environment. Ultimately, BJJ can provide a healthy outlet for a high stress job. (Willing et al., 2019)

Another benefit to officers participating in grappling sports is the physical conditioning and calories burned in classes. Any calorie calculator will show that a 200 pound person will burn approximately 974 calories while sparring or rolling in BJJ for 60 minutes. This can assist with weight reduction when combined with the exact same diet or improved eating. Grappling sports are also a great form of cardio. They utilize steady cardio with burst of high intensity similar to High Intensity Interval Training (HITT) but for a much longer duration than what traditional HITT would be. This type of cardio can reduce the risk of obesity, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

Training in a BJJ gym also provides the opportunity for officers to interact with citizens in an atmosphere that is not work related. Most officers don't realize or acknowledge that we are viewed as leaders in our communities. Training in this sport at a local gym gives the officers a chance to see citizens in ways that are not negative or potentially stressful, contrary to what may occur in a call for service. This is ultimately an unofficial version of Community Outreach. Many of the civilian participants in this sport have not had any interactions with a law enforcement officer that was not specific to a call for service or enforcement of laws. For many citizens this is a chance to “get to know” officers in their area. This could provide a chance to foster relationships in areas where it is needed. One of the most frequent questions I have received during my time training is what type of defensive training officers receive. Most people are shocked to learn that there is little to no training received on a regular basis.

One of the greatest benefits mentioned by officers who participate in this style of training is that it provides confidence in their skillset. They have confidence to utilize empty hand techniques to take subjects into custody. They have the confidence to speak to citizens calmly and not feel the need to raise their voices or be aggressive in order to establish dominance on a scene. They have the confidence to know that if the scene turns chaotic or physical, that they are capable of handling the issue safely with the techniques they have learned through training. Practicing BJJ quickly builds up hundreds of hours of full contact fighting and grappling. A person who trains regularly is more likely to be able to successfully utilize control techniques without panicking or relying on striking and intermediate weapons. Stats and studies monitored by Marietta Police Department in Marietta Georgia determined that officers who are trained in BJJ are much less likely to utilize a Taser in a confrontation or use of force situations. All new officers at this agency are required to participate in BJJ a minimum of one hour per week. The results from this mandate will be reviewed later. (Rogers et al., 2021)

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Justice conducted a study on Taser usage over the course of five years for Orange County Sheriff's Office and the Orlando Police Department. This study reviewed the effectiveness of the Taser against resisting suspects. They reviewed 2,395 reports and determined that a Taser was used in 2,113 of the reports. The Taser was successful in 1,459 of the deployments. This was about a 69% success rate. Unfortunately, since this study was conducted, the company that manufactures Taser has reduced the suggested targeted area for Taser deployment which seems to be essentially reducing the effectiveness of the Taser. Also the threat level recommendations for deploying the Taser has increased. Most importantly, the Taser did not work in 31% of deployments in this study that utilized the larger recommended target area. Unfortunately, this left the officer still having to control a resisting subject that they just attempted to utilize a Taser on. Also worth noting is that in the 2,395 incidents, officers resorted to the Taser 88% of the time. (Author(s) Charlie Mesloh; Mark Henych; Ross Wolf)

There are several other benefits that may result from requiring grappling training for officers. In times of stress when a subject is resisting, an officer will resort to what they know or think they know how to do. This is often just uncontrolled striking of a suspect to gain compliance. This even occurs in cases where the subject is only refusing to provide the officer their hands and not cooperating, not actively fighting. These are often the incidents used to create viral videos which are seen on television and shared on social media. This type of behavior is no longer accepted by the public, and citizens do not want to see officers striking people unless it is actually necessary. The use of BJJ will allow officers to negate a lot of size and strength differences. Officers should be able to utilize the moves to take a suspect to the ground and force their arms behind their backs with what appears to be peaceful moves but that could still cause severe pain and damage if needed. None of these moves will appear as violent to the average citizen as punching, kicking, or striking with a baton.

Potential Risks or Drawbacks to BJJ Training

This training and skill set does not come without any drawbacks. There are the risks of officers being injured while training. However, the risk of injury to a person who trains in

BJJ is lower than other martial arts or grappling sports. This is most likely due to the ability to “tap” or give up in the training session. Both participants are well aware of the ability to tap. It is one of the first lessons taught and there is a great emphasis given to it by the instructors and coaches. Interestingly enough, the ability to tap is also one of the reasons BJJ is such an effective training style. It allows for participants to train at nearly full speed and strength knowing that they can easily tap if needed. A 2014 study, conducted by Orthopaedic Journal of Sports Medicine, determined that participants in BJJ were far less likely to be injured than participants in judo, wrestling, mixed martial arts, or even a padded striking art like taekwondo. (Scoggin et al., 2014)

One of the biggest unfortunate realities with this style of training is a lack of understanding and knowledge by the general public which could cause scrutiny. Many citizens immediately think of violent and bloody matches in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) when they hear someone trains in BJJ. It is true that BJJ is often an important foundation of a well-rounded fighter in UFC. However, there is no punching, kicking, or striking of any kind in traditional BJJ. In fact BJJ is known as a non-violent martial art or sport due to this. The original spelling of jujitsu means “the gentle art”. Most citizens already mistakenly think officers are regularly trained in defensive tactics and they have accepted this as being needed to stop violent suspects. Educating citizens on what BJJ actually is could reduce improper judgement.

Another potential risk is a lack of knowledge from the people who create the requirements and laws governing required training. The state of Michigan has a 2021 House Bill (4525) being proposed that will require all new law enforcement officers to train in jiu-jitsu regularly. This is being praised as groundbreaking and a step in the correct direction by many who want law enforcement reform. This is certainly an improvement in the field and viewed very favorably by people who train in this sport. However, the law makers are attempting to mandate a time frame on the time allowed for an officer to receive a certain rank (blue belt). Jiu-jitsu has 5 main belts in its adult ranking system that are realistically obtainable by a person who trains. Listed from entry level to master they are: white, blue, purple, brown, and black. There are belts after black that are reserved for people who have trained in the sport their entire life or are the original creators of the sport but a regular participant in the sport would likely never go above black belt in varying degrees. Each of the first four belts can have 4 stripes attached to signify time or skill at that level. House Bill 4525 will require officers to obtain the rank of blue belt within two years of being hired. The issue with the time frame is that there is no way to determine how long one person will take to obtain this rank. The average time to obtain this rank is 12-18 months. However, that is training numerous times a week and is all dependent upon the person’s ability to learn the skills, physical conditioning, and time they can commit to training. The fear for this timetable is that some gyms will start issuing this rank before the student is actually capable of performing the required skills to prevent officers from being fired or from losing students to gyms that will do this. This would then reduce the credibility of that rank as being effective. (Scarano, 2021)

Many in the jiu-jitsu community believe the Michigan House Bill (4525) should have a minimum number of training hours a week instead of a deadline on a rank. Furthermore, the bill also demands that once the rank of blue belt is obtained, the officer is only required to do four hours of annual training a year in BJJ. This is not nearly enough training hours to maintain proficiency. There is currently a nationwide nonprofit organization called

Adopt-A-Cop BJJ that will reimburse patrol officers for the cost of classes to obtain the rank of blue belt. The blue belt rank is regularly considered the level needed to be able to start effectively using BJJ in a self-defense situation.

The New Jersey Police Training Commission just approved BJJ being taught to cadets in the police academies for their required defensive tactics course. All defensive tactics instructors are being required to get certified as BJJ instructors. The commission is recommending using a Gracie Survival Tactics Level 1 and Level 2 Instructor Course but is leaving the decision of where the instructors get certified up to each academy. The commission was very clear that the course must be a jiu-jitsu based program. This is great progress, but to be able to safely use this style it must be continued to be practiced regularly and not just shown to cadets once in the police academy.

There are some other issues that an officer who trains should also be aware of. This style is not effective against multiple attackers at once due to having to take a person to the ground to utilize it. This could open the officer up to being kicked and stomped by other people. It could also create a level of overconfidence where the officer may not use their intermediate weapons in a situation where they should have. These are both issues that an officer will need to be intentionally aware of. However, there are countless videos available on the internet that show this combat style being used by trained officers to easily gain control of individuals who resist them. The benefits are evident in these videos and should outweigh the few negatives.

Lastly, the biggest drawback to this fighting style is that a significant portion of the moves focus on the vascular neck restraint. This hold is often misidentified or referred to as a “choke hold”. The two are very different holds which affect the combative individual differently. An actual choke hold is dangerous to use on a resisting person, as it puts pressure on the trachea which is also commonly known as the windpipe. This can damage the trachea and prevents air from entering the lungs. This can lead to or cause death in the person being choked. A vascular neck restraint places pressure on the arteries that supply blood to the head and brain. This causes the person to lose consciousness and in no way affects their breathing. There have been some studies to show that the vascular neck restraint is safe to use when applied correctly. One such study conducted by The National Library of Medicine in 2020 utilized 4,307 volunteers. The study determined that there are no lasting issues caused by this type of “sports choke”. (Corry et al., 2020)

There are other studies and opinions that indicate that vascular neck restraints are dangerous. Often times in these studies, the reason for the danger is frequently listed as improper application or lack of training in the maneuver from the person applying the hold. The participant is trying to apply a vascular restraint but actually applies a choke hold due to a lack of training or knowledge. Much like the use of Tasers, there is no clear determination if this tactic is actually dangerous. However, one of the other commonly used methods by non-trained officers is repeatedly striking the resisting subject about the face and body to gain compliance. Repeated strikes are sure to be dangerous and cause injury.

Results from Marietta Police Department

In 2019 the Marietta Police Department in Marietta Georgia initiated an action requiring all newly hired officers to train in BJJ for one hour per week. This action was enacted due to a viral internet video where several officers could not control an unarmed resisting subject. The officers ended up repeatedly striking the subject and utilizing the Taser to gain control. This resulted in injuries to officers and the suspect. Marietta Police Department now has 95 of their 145 officers participating in this program. They are the first larger agency to actively implement and report the results from a program like this. The creator of the program is Major Jake King and he has been interviewed by numerous BJJ organizations and magazines. The program and results are highly discussed in BJJ programs and defensive tactics groups.

Since the program was started there has been impressive results being reported by the Marietta Police Department. The results over an eighteen month study revealed that non BJJ trained officers have used their Tasers in 77% of use of force (UOF) incidents. BJJ officers have used the Taser in 54% of their reported UOF incidents. Of those usages reported by BJJ trained officers, 85% of deployments were to stop a subject that was running from them and not to actually gain control. (Burne et al., 2021)

In the eighteen months before the program started, they had 29 officers injured while making arrests. In the eighteen months after the program started they only had 15 officers injured while making arrests. This is nearly half the injuries and of these 15 injuries, none of the injured officers were the officers that were trained in BJJ. There was a reduction to suspect injuries as well. In 2020, the non BJJ officers had 20 UOF incidents. As a result of these incidents, 65% of the suspects required medical clearance or treatment. During the same time frame, the BJJ trained officers had 13 UOF incidents and the suspects only needed medical treatment or clearance 31% of the time. This would suggest an obvious reduction in injuries to the BJJ trained officers and suspects when compared to non BJJ trained officers. This is likely due to the BJJ officers knowing how to safely control the suspects. (Burne et al., 2021)

Marietta Police Department also kept track of the cost burden and savings with this training. During the eighteen months, they used the average cost of a workers' comp claim and estimated they saved a total of \$66,752.00 in claims money due to the reduced injuries. However, the training itself did cost the agency \$26,000.00. This resulted in an estimated total savings of \$40,752.00. There is no way to estimate the cost savings in the reduction of paying out or contesting lawsuits. However, I spoke with Major Jake King who confirmed that since they started the training, they have had a reduction in excessive use of force claims and have not had to defend a single new lawsuit from use of force claims by BJJ trained officers. (Burne et al., 2021)

The view of use of force incidents in America is changing. The media and citizens are demanding that officers be less reliant upon their weapons as well as to not violently strike people unless it is necessarily. Many agencies have begun utilizing De-escalation Training to help officers with irate subjects. Crisis Intervention Training is one version of De-escalation Training. It suggests trying to speak with the subject and calm them down, provide them options to resolve the problem, giving them time to make a decision, and ultimately trying to bring the conflict to a non-violent resolution. A combination of De-escalation Training and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu could be the answer. Evidence suggests that

both these types of training are needed in this field to reduce injuries to officers and suspects. Most agencies are doing a good job with De-Escalation Training but are failing miserably with the second needed training. This training should also no longer be viewed or referred to as Defensive Tactics and instead be called Control Techniques Training to attempt to change the mindset of what is being done. Once these studies and the results become more common, there is a real possibility that a failure to teach grappling could be viewed as a “failure to train deficiency” in a lawsuit where a resisting suspect is injured from striking or intermediate weapons. Agencies that fail to change the training or simply do not provide a method for training could be held liable in the near future.

Methods

The purpose of this research was to determine the confidence level of deputies with their assigned Intermediate Weapons, utilizing empty hand techniques, detaining subjects who are bigger or more aggressive, and if officers currently or previous train in a combat sport. The survey was also designed to determine the views of participants on the training they currently receive and what they feel is needed. The survey was distributed to 209 sworn law enforcement officers with the Hernando County Sheriff's Office via the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 164 email list. The platform utilized for the survey was Survey Monkey. The survey was intentionally set to be anonymous in an attempt to solicit participation without fear of retaliation. It also excluded the deputies in detention as they are not assigned the same intermediate weapons, most importantly the Taser. The detention system is also designed to be more controlled and allow for time to make a decision on most resisting subjects.

The survey had preset answers in a multiple-choice fashion. One question allowed for an area to answer what type of sport the deputy was currently training in if they were actively training. The purpose of the answers being preset was to reduce the variations of answers provided, so that the data could be accurately accessed.

There is opportunity for error in this survey. It is dependent on deputies trusting that the survey was anonymous, being honest, and subject to interpretation of the question. It also is reliant upon the deputies being honest in their confidence levels with resisting subjects.

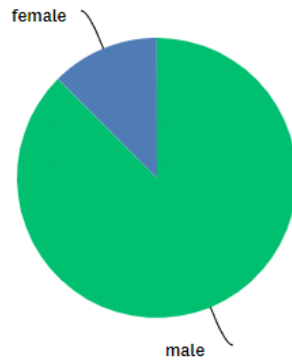
Results

The survey was distributed to 209 recipients who are on the law enforcement side of the Hernando County Sheriff's Office. This included officers of all ranks and experience. I received 64 responses, for a response rate of 30.6%. The returned surveys had no questions that were skipped. Therefore, the surveys returned had a 100% completion rate.

The first two questions in the survey were demographic in nature. The first question asked if the participant was male, female, or other/decline to answer. Of the 64 respondents 56 were male (87.5%) and 8 were female (12.5%). None of the subjects that responded chose the option of other/decline to answer (0.0%).

Gender:

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0

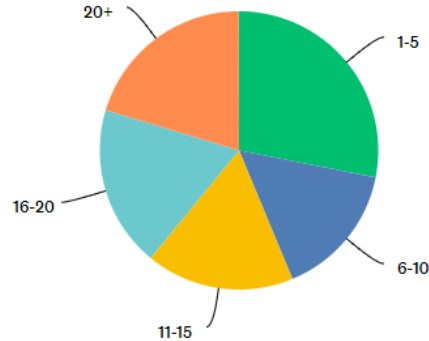


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ male	87.50%	56
▼ female	12.50%	8
▼ other/decline to answer	0.00%	0
TOTAL		64

The second question asked the participants “how many years have you been in law enforcement”. The answers allowed were separated by a range in years. 18 subjects (28.13%) advised 1-5 years, 10 subjects (15.63%) advised 6-10 years, 11 subjects (17.19%) advised 11-15 years, 12 subjects (18.75%) advised 16-20 years, and 13 subjects (20.31%) advised 25 plus years.

How many years have you been in law enforcement?

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0



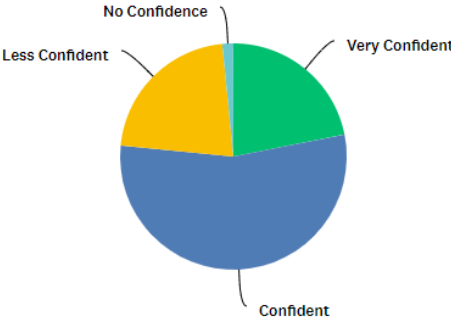
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ 1-5	28.13%	18
▼ 6-10	15.63%	10
▼ 11-15	17.19%	11
▼ 16-20	18.75%	12
▼ 20+	20.31%	13
TOTAL		64

The next four questions pertained to the participants' confidence level when detaining resisting suspects.

The third question asked "how confident are you in your currently assigned intermediate weapons for stopping an actively resisting suspect". Of the 64 respondents there were 14 subjects (21.88%) who advised they were very confident, 35 subjects (54.69%) advised they were confident, 14 subjects (21.88%) advised they were less confident, and 1 subject (1.56%) advised they had no confidence.

How confident are you in your currently assigned intermediate weapons for stopping an actively resisting suspect:

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0

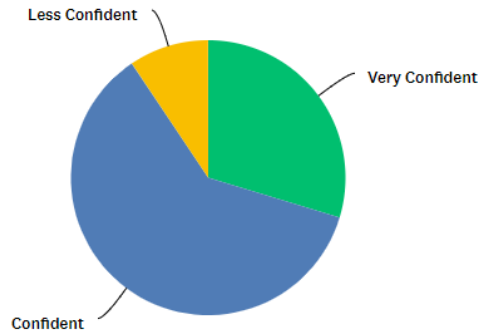


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Confident	21.88%	14
Confident	54.69%	35
Less Confident	21.88%	14
No Confidence	1.56%	1
TOTAL		64

The fourth question asked “how confident are you in your ability to detain a resisting suspect without intermediate weapons”. Of the 64 respondents there were 19 subjects (29.69%) that advised they were very confident, 39 respondents (60.94%) advised they were confident, 6 subjects (9.38%) selected less confident, and 0 subjects (0.0%) that selected no confidence.

How confident are you in your ability to detain a resisting suspect without intermediate weapons:

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0

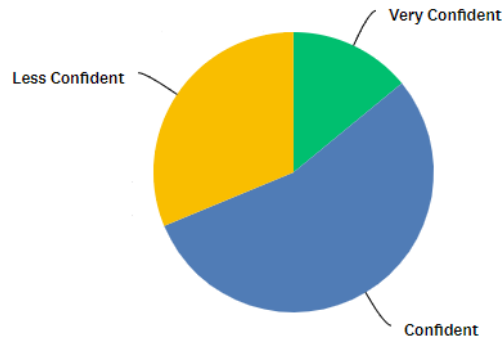


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Very Confident	29.69%	19
▼ Confident	60.94%	39
▼ Less Confident	9.38%	6
▼ No Confidence	0.00%	0
TOTAL		64

The fifth question asked “how confident are you in detaining a much larger suspect”. This question did not provide instruction if this was with or without intermediate weapons. It was designed to just gauge confidence overall with the tools and training they had available to them. Of the 64 respondents there were 9 subjects (14.06%) that selected very confident, 35 subjects (54.69%) selected confident, 20 subjects (31.25%) selected less confident, and 0 subjects (0.0%) selected no confidence.

How confident are you in detaining a much larger suspect:

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0

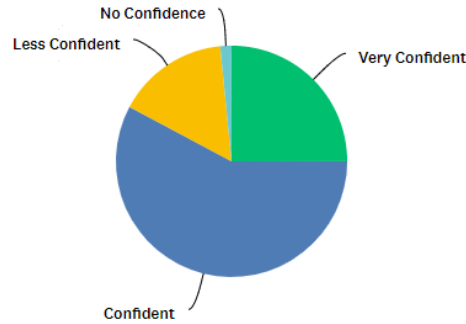


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very Confident	14.06% 9
Confident	54.69% 35
Less Confident	31.25% 20
No Confidence	0.00% 0
TOTAL	64

The sixth questions asked the participants “how confident are you in detaining a very aggressive but similar sized suspect”. Of the participants there were 16 subjects (25%) that selected very confident, 37 subjects (57.81%) that chose confident, 10 subjects (15.63%) selected less confident, and 1 subject (1.56%) selected no confidence.

How confident are you in detaining a very aggressive but similar sized suspect:

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0



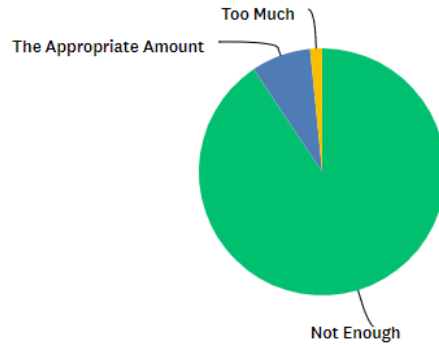
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very Confident	25.00% 16
Confident	57.81% 37
Less Confident	15.63% 10
No Confidence	1.56% 1
TOTAL	64

The last four questions pertained to the participants' training experience and opinion of training being provided.

The seventh question asked "do you believe law enforcement officers in general receive adequate empty hand training to effectively and safely stop a resisting suspect". 58 participants (90.63%) selected not enough, 5 subjects (7.81%) selected the appropriate amount, and 1 subject (1.56%) chose too much.

Do you believe LEO in general receive adequate empty hand training to effectively and safely stop a resisting suspect?

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0

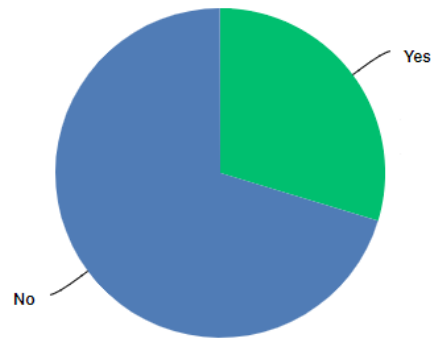


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Not Enough	90.63% 58
The Appropriate Amount	7.81% 5
Too Much	1.56% 1
TOTAL	64

The eighth question asked “have you ever trained in combat sports for more than one year” and provided examples of combat sports as wrestling, boxing, jiu-jitsu, MMA, etc. The one year mark was chosen as a cut off time to eliminate subjects who tried one of these sports for a brief time but did not commit long enough to actually benefit from the training. 19 subjects (29.69%) selected yes and 45 subjects (70.31%) selected no.

Have you ever trained in combat sports for more than a year? (ex: wrestling, boxing, jiu-jitsu, MMA, etc)

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0

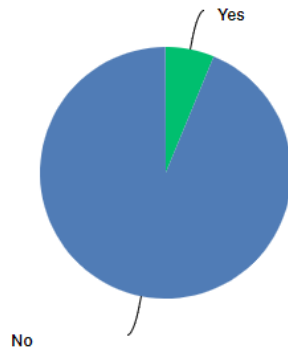


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	29.69% 19
No	70.31% 45
TOTAL	64

The ninth question asked the participants “are you currently training in some type of combat sport”. If they were, it allowed them to fill in what the training was. 60 subjects (93.75%) advised no and 4 subjects (6.25%) advised yes. There were five answers provided to the training currently being taken. However, one of the answers was “none”, so the participant misunderstood the directions. Of the other four answers there were two for Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, one for Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu/MMA, and one for Tae Kwon Do.

Are you currently training in some type of combat sport? If yes, then what type?

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	6.25% 4
No	93.75% 60
TOTAL	64

[Comments \(5\)](#)

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu

1/24/2022 7:32 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

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BJJ

1/2/2022 7:09 PM

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Tae Kwon Do

12/27/2021 9:31 PM

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BJJ/MMA

12/27/2021 6:38 PM

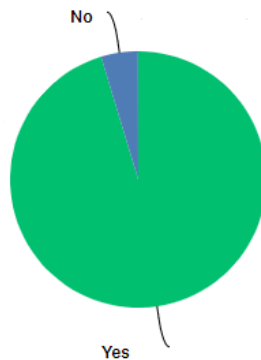
[View respondent's answers](#)

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The tenth and finale question asked “do you believe officers at the rank of sergeant and below should receive regular empty hand combat/grappling training”. This rank was chosen due to sergeants and below being the primary officers responding to calls for service. Of the 64 participants there were 61 subjects (95.31%) selected yes and 3 subjects (4.69%) that selected no.

Do you believe officers at the rank of Sergeant and below should receive regular empty hand combat/grappling training?

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	95.31%	61
No	4.69%	3
TOTAL		64

Discussion

The results of the survey suggest that many of the participants in the survey have confidence in their assigned intermediate weapons and the ability of these weapons to stop a resisting suspect. A good majority of participants also claim they are at least confident in detaining a resisting suspect without utilizing their intermediate weapons. However, this confidence is not as high when the suspect is larger than the officer or displays highly aggressive behavior. Most of the suspects that actively resist arrest display aggressive behavior and fight. This is also when officer tend to deploy their Tasers most often.

Interestingly, over 95% of participants in this survey advised that they believe officers should receive regular empty hand combat or grappling training. Also over 90% advised that officers do not receive enough empty hand training to safely and effectively stop a resisting suspect. However, over 93% advised that they are not currently taking

any type of training on their own. This suggests that officers know they need this type of training but fail to do it on their own for one reason or another. This is likely due to the same reasons that officers don't exercise regularly. Participants in this survey acknowledged the need for this type of training, however, in most agencies it is not being provided to them. The best way to get officers to participate in this needed training appears to be making it required, similar to the way some agencies have done with fitness standards.

It was interesting that of the four officers actively training in combat sports, 3 of the 4 were utilizing some or only Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. BJJ has become widely viewed as a popular method of suspect control by many law enforcement officers. There is also a possible need for other training as well to allow for the ability to control or subdue all different types of resisting persons. This could be a BJJ and mixed martial arts (MMA) base. BJJ is the most readily available training in grappling style combat sports. The sport of Sambo is a Russian based grappling art that incorporates striking to set up the take downs, submissions, or holds. This could be a powerful and valuable style to model in a training curriculum if an acceptable gym or instructor could be located.

If law enforcement officers agree and acknowledge that there is a lack of defensive tactic and control techniques training provided to them, and they are not being provided a way to improve upon these needs, it could possibly be viewed as negligence on a law enforcement agency. If an officer utilizes nothing but uncontrolled striking to pummel a resisting suspect, it could make civil litigation and liable easier to prove in court. It will certainly be viewed poorly in the eyes of public judgement.

Recommendations

The survey indicates that the great majority of officers who participated know that better training is needed and that they also do not feel they are receiving it. However, an occasional quarterly defensive tactics training class will not be enough to adequately train officers to correctly stop a resisting suspect. I will suggest three options to achieve compliance from officers for regular training. Florida should pass a bill requiring officers to attend a set amount of training monthly or rank obtained. This could be similarly authored to the 2021 Michigan House Bill 4525 with some obviously needed adjustments. A standard could also be achieved through required standards from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) or the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission (CJSTC). This would require regular training to stay certified as is currently required for other high liability areas like firearms qualifications. Compliance could also be achieved through a salary incentive program. An officer that reaches a certain rank in a recognized combat or grappling sport could receive a stipend to incentivize achieving this. The officer would be required to train so many hours per month to keep the stipend. This would be done from a list of preapproved gyms in the area that meet a standard that is predetermined.

Officers recognize that there is a need to be trained or retrained in control techniques that actually work. However, they do not appear willing to do this training on their own as evident by the survey. It needs to be the responsibility of the state to require that the officers receive this training to keep the officers, their partners, and citizens safe.

There are many ways to achieve this and other states are actively working towards making this a reality. As in any major change in training, there will likely be some options that are tried but are not successful. These will have to be evaluated and adjusted until a method is discovered that is acceptable and effective. If we do not try to improve in this area, we have already failed. Failing to adequately train officers is no longer an option.

The best option for keeping citizens and officers safe is a combination of training. Training officers to recognize when a person is in crisis. How to deal with and talk to people having these issues. As well as training the officers on how to control these subjects in crisis or resisting suspects when they will not comply with talk and reasoning.

Lieutenant Rocky Howard began his career with the Hernando County Sheriff's Office in 2006. As a deputy, he served as a Patrol Deputy, a Field Training Officer, and as a Detective. He was promoted to Sergeant in 2010 where he served as a Patrol Sergeant, Investigative Sergeant, and Administrative Sergeant before being promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in 2020. As a Lieutenant he has served as a Night Watch Commander and District Two Commander. Lieutenant Howard has a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from Saint Leo University.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

- 1) Gender: male, female, other/decline to answer
- 2) Years in service: 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 20+
- 3) How confident are you in your currently assigned intermediate weapons for stopping an actively resisting suspect: Very Confident, Confident, Little Confidence, No Confidence
- 4) How confident are you in your ability to detain a resisting suspect without intermediate weapons: Very Confident, Confident, Little Confidence, No Confidence
- 5) How confident are you in detaining a much larger suspect: Very Confident, Confident, Little Confidence, No Confidence
- 6) How confident are you in detaining a very aggressive but similar sized suspect: Very Confident, Confident, Little Confidence, No Confidence
- 7) Do you believe LEO in general receive adequate empty hand training to effectively and safely stop a resisting suspect? Not Enough, Appropriate Amount, Too Much
- 8) Have you ever trained in combat sports for more than a year? (ex: wrestling, boxing, jiu-jitsu, MMA, etc) Yes No
- 9) Are you currently training in some type of combat sport? Yes No
If Yes. What do you currently train in? _____
- 10) Do you believe that active officers at the rank of Sergeant and below should receive regular empty hand combat/grappling training? Yes No