

PEDAGOGY & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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The Fall of Perseverance and Rise of Indomitable Spirit within Taekwon-Do during COVID-19

Submission: 27.01.2021; acceptance: 14.05.2021

Key words: International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF), Ch'ang Hŏn Taekwon-Do, COVID-19 pandemic, pedagogy, autoethnographic study

Abstract

Background. Taekwon-Do, a South Korean martial art and combat sport teaches hundreds of physical skills through a stratified curriculum. The highest learning objectives of Taekwon-Do are, however, its five tenets (courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit). Unlike the physical aspects of Taekwon-Do practice, there are no direct assessment tools that can determine if a student has acquired and utilized the tenets. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic may provide a unique opportunity to assess the acquisition of some of the tenets of Taekwon-Do.

Problem and Aim. This study aims to provide an indirect method of assessing students' adoption of some of Taekwon-Do's tenets by understanding how these ideals may enable Taekwon-Do practitioners to overcome physical and emotional challenges in their daily lives.

Methods. The research methodology utilizes an autoethnographic research design that correlates the author's application of the tenets of Taekwon-Do to his mental and spiritual health successes after suffering through the COVID-19 pandemic and life-altering physical injuries.

Results. COVID-19, like the author's injuries, provides an indirect and qualitative assessment opportunity for two tenets of Taekwondo (perseverance and indomitable spirit).

Conclusion. While indirect assessment is a viable and established pedagogical means of assessment, quantitative measurement tools may be more persuasive to prove the effectiveness of the tenets of Taekwon-Do.

Introduction

The International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) was founded in the Republic of Korea (ROK; South Korea) on March 22, 1966 in part to provide what ROK General Choi Hong Hi, the first ITF president, said was a growing lack of morality in the world's populace [Choi 1983]. Later, in the 1980s, Taekwon-Do split into two different types of physical pursuits. What could be called a traditional martial art education is taught by ITF instructors whereas a more sport-based education is advocated by World Taekwondo (WT; formerly the World Taekwondo Federation or WTF) and the Kukkiwon (the Taekwon-Do educational and rank examination center located in the ROK) [Johnson 2020; Johnson 2018; Johnson, Vitale 2018].

Taekwon-Do teaches hundreds of physical skills through a stratified curriculum that takes decades to

learn. Whether intentionally or not, its educators assess physical and mental knowledge and skills directly and indirectly. Both ITF and WT styles promote physical, mental, and social benefits of Taekwon-Do practice. Both styles embrace five tenets, the core of the martial art's philosophy that were established by General Choi: courtesy (예의; *yeüi*), integrity (염치; *yŏmch'i*), perseverance (인내; *innae*), self-control (극기; *kŭkki*), and indomitable spirit (백철불굴; *paekchŏlbulgul*). While it can be argued the five tenets were arbitrarily chosen and represent more of General Choi's personal beliefs, they serve as a moral compass for which Taekwondo students can guide their practice [Johnson 2018]. Taekwon-Do's tenets were preceded by and mostly likely inspired by the twenty guiding principles of Shotokan Karate-Do [Funakoshi & Nakasone 2004] and Judo's maximum efficiency (*seiyoku-zenyō*) and mutual prosperity (*jita-kyōei*)

pedagogical philosophies [Kodokan 2009]. General Choi stated “the success of failure of Taekwon-Do depends largely on how one observes and implements the tenets of Taekwon-Do which should serve as a guide for all serious students of the art” [Choi 1983, p. 15].

The tenets are intended to balance the potential brutality possible after learning Taekwondo’s physical skills with a moral code that serves a greater community. Rhee [2012], a world-renown Taekwondo instructor, explains this in greater detail:

Commandments or tenets of behavior were a common idea in Eastern philosophy, especially in military orders. In this way, the Tenets of Taekwon-Do follow a long tradition. Without moral culture or a code of conduct and ethics, an army would easily fall into barbarism. Although Taekwon-Do is mostly practiced by civilians these days, the need for honour and integrity in society as a whole is never more relevant than now [Rhee 2012, p. 106].

He also stated, “. . .the Tenets and the Taekwon-Do oath are key to our success not only on our path of improvement in Taekwon-Do, but also as human beings in the outside world” [p. 118], which Johnson [2018] supported. Similarly, Han [2013] stated the tenets are the spiritual (i.e., characterization) building blocks of Taekwon-Do. While most Kukkiwon tests do not mention the tenets specifically [Kukkiwon, 2005; 2012], they are displayed in *tojang* (Korean: martial arts practice halls) throughout the world and promoted by Kukki Taekwondo organizations as ways to become good citizens [THF 2020]. Thus, the highest educational goal a Taekwon-Do student should strive toward is the adoption of the art’s tenets regardless of which curriculum, ITF or Kukkiwon, a practitioner follows.

Taekwon-Do practice and its tenets are intended to assist students in improving their mental, emotional, and potentially spiritual capabilities and strengths just as much or more than their physical self-defense prowess [Choi 1983; Dziwenka 2014; Dziwenka, Johnson 2015; Mayen, Johnson, Bosch 2015]. To this point, an ITF grand master directed students to use the tenets “as a guide to help support us in our personal battle against [COVID-19]” [Vitale 2020]. Moreover, Taekwon-Do uses a rank system to indicate practitioners’ Taekwondo skills [Kukkiwon 2012; Kim, Johnson, Lee, Ha 2016]. Despite Taekwon-Do organizations such as the ITF and Kukkiwon requiring indirect non-physical components of their rank examinations (i.e., essays or theory examinations), neither the ITF nor the Kukkiwon organizations possess an assessment tool that determines qualitatively or quantitatively if a practitioner utilizes the tenets in their daily lives.

Direct assessments in Taekwon-Do occur during formal rank examinations, so instructors are familiar with this form of assessment. Indirect assessments, on the other hand, are not so commonly applied but are equally

valid to educators, classroom and Taekwon-Do alike. Yet, Taekwon-Do’s governing bodies have not outlined the requirements for assessing practitioners’ adoption of the tenets into their daily lives. In the pedagogical sense, it is undoubtedly regrettable that Taekwon-Do leaders have not created a method for evaluating whether students have adopted the tenets outside of the *tojang*. The absence of this assessment tool is problematic because it leaves the achievement of Taekwondo’s highest learning objectives to happenstance. No classroom teacher would allow students to fumble around until they hit the mark. They would guide their students’ knowledge and understanding of content through various experiences and lesson plans toward a learning objective. If this is done for multiplication tables and geography, then it certainly must be done for philosophical principles that are intended to prevent physical violence and realize higher learning objectives. We must identify alternative methods for assessing a student’s adoption of the Taekwon-Do tenets.

The incalculable challenges and sufferings of COVID-19 patients around the world provide a novel opportunity to assess the acquisition of Taekwon-Do’s tenets. This study proposes an indirect assessment method in Taekwon-Do. Using COVID-19 and a recent life-altering accident as a backdrop, I discuss herein two Taekwon-Do tenets (perseverance and indomitable spirit) and illustrate how one tenet has failed Taekwon-Do practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic and then how another tenet can assist Taekwon-Do practitioners in persevering in this unprecedented time. This multidisciplinary study utilizes an autoethnographic case study as well as martial arts philosophic and pedagogical theories to understand how the practice of Taekwon-Do may provide the emotional armor needed to ‘beat’ the COVID-19 pandemic and other life challenges. Concurrently, I illustrate for possibly the first time how Taekwon-Do instructors, and by extrapolation all martial arts instructors, can directly assess the intangible lessons acquired in martial arts education outside of Taekwon-Do rank examinations.

Note on Romanization

Korean terms are presented in the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system with the exception of *Taekwon-Do*, which has been rendered in the ITF’s preferred style. The only exception to this can be found in proper organizational names. Korean names, on the other hand, are presented in the person’s preferred English spellings with surname first for easier reference.

Methods and Materials

Although Taekwon-Do is now an umbrella term that can refer to the Korean martial art or the Olympic sport, the theoretical framework of this research rests within the ITF’s philosophy and practice of the martial

art. This study understands Taekwon-Do as a martial art that is to be practiced for the sake of self-cultivation as well as self-defense. In this sense, the current research rests within Cynarski's Humanistic Theory of Martial Arts [Cynarski 2016; 2017]; Johnson's *musulmuyae-mudo* (martial technique-martial artistry-martial way) pedagogy [Johnson 2017]; as well as Dziwenka's [2014], Dwizenka and Johnson's [2015], and Mayen, Johnson, and Bosch's [2015] studies on Taekwondo philosophy. Consequently, the theoretical framework considers Taekwon-Do, and in the particular style of the art promulgated by the ITF, to be a stratified pedagogy in which practitioners acquire self-knowledge as well as self-defense skills, with the former taking precedence through the practice of the latter. The ultimate goal of Taekwon-Do practice is thereby understood as psychophysical self-cultivation or self-improvement [Kim and Back, 2000]; a method whereby students transform themselves into better people and members of society. While the physical skills of Taekwon-Do are codified and systemized by Taekwon-Do's governing bodies, it is up to the individual learner to apply Taekwon-Do's character-building lessons in personally meaningful ways.

The present study utilizes an autoethnographic research design. Autoethnographic studies are qualitative in nature and use self-reflection to explore ideas and concepts on personal experiences that connect to wider issues [Richardson 2000]. These studies possess “multiple layers of consciousness” that connect personal experiences “emotionally, intellectually, morally, and esthetically” to a particular academic topic in order to discuss “something meaningful about the world” [Hillyer 2014, p. 55]. Lewis [2020] claims ethnographic studies may conserve the kinetic knowledge contained within a martial art and there is no evidence showing that they cannot also help understand the adoption of Taekwon-Do's tenets. Indeed, Dziwenka [2014] shows it is possible. Although autoethnographic research cannot claim “a detached or neutral position of authority” [Hillyer 2014, p. 55] as in other research methodologies, it can “connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” [Ellis 2004, p. xix], and by doing so it may generate new and deeper understandings. Consequently, this study connects injuries I sustained in a life-altering accident to Taekwon-Do philosophy, pedagogy, and the real-life struggle we are all encountering today during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results

Direct and indirect assessment

Students learn the tenets indirectly; therefore, it only seems appropriate to assess them indirectly [Bengoa 2008]. Thus, we now turn to Taekwon-Do's direct and indirect forms of assessment.

A direct assessment (i.e., a test) “requires the candidate to perform precisely the skill which we wish to measure” [Hughes 2000, p. 15]. These are assessments of performance; consequently, ITF Taekwon-Do direct assessments require students to perform Taekwon-Do skills according to the preordained methods and principles of motion, which were outlined by General Choi Hong Hi [Choi 1983]. These assessments are attractive to Taekwon-Do instructors for three reasons. First, it is relatively easy to create the conditions required for assessing the behavior or performance. For example, if we want to see how well a student drives a car, we assess the student while he or she is driving. Likewise, a direct assessment of a student's ability to perform a Taekwon-Do side piercing kick would require the student to do a side piercing kick. Indeed, this is a primary reason why Taekwon-Do students must perform board breaking during rank examinations: the breaking of boards demonstrates unequivocally that the student is performing a strike correctly and has toughened their attacking tools well enough to ensure such an impact will not cause self-injury if used in a self-defense situation. Second, direct assessments are straightforward: did the examinees perform Taekwon-Do correctly? By comparing a student's performance against the instructions provided by General Choi [Ibid], instructors can evaluate the student's skills fairly. Third, direct assessments are easy to prepare for, since students and instructors know what should be done [Hughes 2000].

The tenets of Taekwon-Do are very general and applicable according to practitioners' cultural understandings of the terms [Johnson 2018]. Because students' lives vary immeasurably due to their unique stations, statuses, and geographic locations, no widely-applicable direct assessment tool can be constructed to measure a student's success at applying the tenets to their daily lives. It is therefore virtually impossible to create a singular tool that assesses a person's ability to incorporate the tenets into their life due to the plethora of ways the person could do so. In more succinct terms, this means that how one applies the tenets to their daily life is unquantifiable, which may be why the Taekwon-Do organizations have yet to create such an assessment tool.

Conversely, an indirect assessment “attempts to measure the abilities which underlie the skills in which we are interested” [Hughes 2000, p. 15]. Examinees must demonstrate knowledge associated with a skill during an indirect assessment. For example, part of a driving license test may assess an examinee's knowledge of traffic laws. Likewise, an indirect Taekwon-Do assessment may include questions about Taekwon-Do philosophy, theory, or tournament rules. Indirect assessment results are also “generalisable” [Ibid, p. 17], making this assessment approach more viable for assessing Taekwon-Do tenets since the assessment tool is adaptable to each students' individual situation.

Assessing courtesy, the first Taekwon-Do tenet, exemplifies why a unified assessment method for all Taekwon-Do practitioners' adoption of the tenets is impossible. At a Taekwon-Do rank examination, a Canadian student could describe how they held a door open for an elderly person, while a Korean student could explain they used the honorific verb forms when conversing with their grandparents for the component of the examination that assesses their adoption of the tenets. In both cases, the students provide evidence they are courteous in their respective cultures. However, because Canadians typically do not speak a language that possesses honorific verb forms and Korean culture does not require one to hold a door for someone behind them, Taekwon-Do organizations cannot dictate either of these as global standards of courtesy.

Autoethnographic data

My favorite question that my Taekwon-Do students ask is, "What was your worst injury?" While not all caused by my martial arts practice, from my toes upward I have broken in separate injuries two metatarsals, my left tibia, have had tendinitis in both knees for over three decades, fractured a few ribs, as well as dislocated my right shoulder and a metacarpal in my right hand. I have also endured uncountable minor fractures in my hands from punching targets of various hardness including concrete walls, and a severe concussion in an accident that nearly left me paralyzed from the neck down. That was the worst of it until 2018 when I shredded left my right knee, dislocated three bones in my left hand, and fractured my left ulna in about a dozen places.

On August 16, 2019, I suffered a horrendous accident walking. The accident left my right ACL completely torn, my meniscus nearly severed, and my MCL greatly damaged. At the same time, I had somehow dislocated three bones in my hand and shattered my left radius in a dozen places at the coronoid process in what my doctor called a "terrible, terrible, terrible" break. Nevertheless, I did what my Taekwon-Do master always said when someone hit me hard: I stood up and walked it off. This time, however, I hobbled to a hospital. When the doctors released me four hours later, I limped the two kilometers to my hotel on a very unstable knee with my fractured arm in a sling. I then traveled home by train to meet the doctors who would put me back together again.

The day after my accident, I was in my hospital of choice with two doctors pulling my shattered arm in different directions while a third played Tetris with my hand bones to relocate them. After about two hours, they finally got things back into place. I underwent a wrist surgery a few days later and after waking up, I experienced the worst pain in my life. For it, doctors gave me a fentanyl drip. Fentanyl is, incidentally, 80-100 times stronger than morphine and is infamous for taking the lives of musicians Michael Jackson and Prince. Yet, it did

next to nothing for my suffering.

Throughout the night and the next day, I watched with all of my being a stopwatch that counted down the minutes and agonizing seconds to when I could press the button to release the fentanyl again. Although the drug lessened my pain for a few minutes and permitted me to think more clearly for some time, I was still experiencing the worst physical agony of my life. In fact, my wrist hurt more than when I twisted my left tibia in a greenstick fracture while skateboarding. The pain in my wrist made that break feel like a calm stroll during a summer evening. After suffering like that for about eight hours, I had a conversation with myself. I postulated asking the doctor to amputate my arm at the elbow because nothing – absolutely nothing – could be worse than what I was experiencing.

For the next couple of days, I screamed silently. Why silently? Because my daughter was usually in a chair next to me asleep or studying, and the emotional toll on her of seeing me in such agony would have been unbearable and most likely irreversible. This silent way of screaming alarmed the doctors and nurses because they were worried my lungs might collapse. They taught me Lamaze breathing techniques, which my wife helped me do during the worst flares of pain.

About five hours after my surgery, I remembered my second-degree black belt Taekwon-Do examination. I had to fight four men simultaneously for that examination, all of whom were several inches taller than I was and outweighed me by 30 to 50 pounds each. I realized after that test that I could do anything. As I lay lying in my hospital bed and watching that stopwatch, I told myself I could endure the pain for a little longer. After all, I also told myself, a Taekwon-Do life with only one arm would be less than desirable. About an hour after that conversation, the pain did begin to subside a little. I continued to endure shooting pains for days afterward that redefined the word "terrible" in my lexicon.

Against the best wishes of my doctor and family, I returned to work just two weeks after my wrist surgery in order to teach my theory and practical Taekwon-Do classes. My knee surgeon had yet to do his work since I had to wait four months until my wrist was healed enough to walk on crutches but I found a way to teach my practical and theoretical Taekwon-Do and Hapkido courses. As expected, four months later I endured a similar, but thankfully shorter and less intense, experience immediately after my ACL replacement operation. Now, nearly two years after the accident, the pain is almost gone, and I am back practicing Taekwon-Do and Hapkido, albeit in a somewhat altered fashion since my wrist is now permanently disabled. My knee is almost fully recovered, but my rehabilitation has been hampered significantly by the closure of all gyms due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The last time I saw my wrist surgeon he asked if I needed any pain medication, because all of the cartilage

in my wrist is now gone. I said I did not need anything, and then demonstrated that I can still punch hard targets full power with both hands and do knuckle push-ups. The doctor’s mouth dropped open (literally), and he said, “That’s not human.” To that, I paraphrased a White Zombie lyric and said, “Taekwon-Do makes you more human than human” [Yuenger et al. 1995].

Now, you may be wondering how my story relates to COVID-19, and rightfully so. To be succinct, I endured pain beyond my ability to describe after my accident. It was so “terrible” that I suffered post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, for several months. I persevered nonetheless and met my professional and familial responsibilities. I did much of that with the help of my family and friends, but my Taekwon-Do instructors’ lessons are what enabled me to conquer it and COVID-19.

The ability of a person to take intangible traits acquired through Taekwon-Do practice and apply them to one’s daily life has been called the *mudo* stage of Taekwon-Do pedagogy [Johnson 2017]. Accordingly, I have adhered to two of Taekwon-Do’s tenets, perseverance and indomitable spirit, since the summer of 2018 to overcome my physical and emotional challenges as well as COVID-19. My Taekwon-Do lessons taught me I could suffer and overcome. Now, I can draw upon the self-knowledge to get me through the hardest times of my life. I know I will never be the same, but I also know that I will be OK: thousands of hours of physical and mental Taekwon-Do training have forged me into a “more than human” person.

Taekwon-Do philosophy and its tenets

Perseverance has been defined as “the willpower and the spirit of sacrifice that exist in every martial art” [Chung 2018, p. 140] and is synonymous with tenacity. General Choi [1983] stated, “One of the most important secrets in becoming a leader of Taekwon-Do is to overcome every difficulty by perseverance” [p. 16]. It is a more physical representation of the martial arts spirit. By this, I mean that when one perseveres in Taekwon-Do, they are usually doing something physical. In Taekwon-Do practice, a student perseveres when they perform the last 10 front kicks in a 300-kick set, or they keep fighting even when outmatched by a far superior opponent.

Indomitable spirit, on the other hand, is the internal expression of perseverance. No one or thing can alter a person’s mind when that person has an indomitable spirit. General Choi [1983] exemplified this ideal by recollecting Leonidas’s last stand at the Battle of Thermopylae. Chung [2018] elaborates on *indomitable spirit* with the following:

The Taekwon-Do student must sustain the difficulties and obstacles with courage, without fear and hesitations, in other words with indomitable spirit, in spite of the fact that the [circumstances] are against him. Thus, the student will earn respect and honor, even if

he loses [p. 182].

Indomitable spirit, therefore, presents itself not in the action of the Taekwon-Do student, but beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and determination that drives his or her actions. It is self-describing in that the spirit becomes resolute and undaunted.

Taekwon-Do pedagogical concerns

As Taekwon-Do instructors are charged with teaching the martial art’s physical and mental aspects, there must be a means to measure our students’ success in all things Taekwon-Do. Taekwon-Do masters are charged with building character in their students, so their students’ behavior must be assessed while they are outside of the *tojang* just as their physical skills are assessed when they are inside it. If Taekwon-Do educators follow General Choi’s belief that demonstrating perseverance and indomitable spirit in one’s daily life is part of the art’s ultimate learning objective (and I do), then we must teach students how to do so. In the same breath, we must also ask how instructors can assess how well students are doing it.

Today’s Taekwon-Do rank examinations for the *gup* (color belt) and *dan* (black belt) are fairly standardized, not unlike the American SAT or other national examinations. A typical ITF rank examination consists of the physical skills of Taekwon-Do: fundamental skills (i.e., individual techniques such as blocks, strikes, thrusts, punches, and kicks), patterns (i.e., forms), board breaking for power and/or accuracy, multiple types of sparring, self-defense, and other skills. In other words, instructors are required to assess Taekwon-Do physical skills during rank examinations. Many instructors also ask students to write an essay, the length of which is not mandated by the ITF. If the essays require students to write on the tenets of Taekwon-Do or other indirect lessons (e.g., courage or stamina), their answers permit Taekwon-Do instructors to assess how much their students have adopted Taekwon-Do lessons in their lives outside of Taekwon-Do class. Essays, however, are just one indirect form of assessment where students demonstrate their understanding of Taekwon-Do beyond its mere physical skills. Students may also need to participate in other Taekwon-Do activities like coaching and/or competing in tournaments. To pass the rank examination, students may also have to complete other requirements such as teaching a minimum number of hours or helping the ITF in some way. These activities and requirements permit students to experience, and therefore learn, Taekwon-Do in new and indirect ways. Therefore, there are precedents for assessing Taekwon-Do knowledge indirectly within the art’s standard pedagogical practices.

The ITF does not mandate a list of questions to its instructors for the essay requirements, leaving instructors to choose essay topics that may or may not direct them toward the higher Taekwon-Do learning objectives.

It can be claimed then that Taekwon-Do pedagogy has yet to find a quantifiable means to measure the abstract concepts of Taekwon-Do education like the tenets. As a Taekwon-Do instructor and someone who studies the crossroads of its pedagogy and philosophy, I have pondered what an assessment tool for determining the effectiveness of Taekwon-Do's tenets could look like. Then, my accident and COVID-19 occurred, and I may have found my answer.

Discussion

COVID-19, like my injuries, may provide an indirect and qualitative assessment for Taekwon-Do practitioners and instructors. Outside of the tremendous toll on human life the virus has caused, I have personally witnessed many of my Taekwon-Do seniors, friends, and colleagues suffer through the effects of COVID-19 on their Taekwon-Do practices and businesses. Social and local media have been littered with reports of martial arts school owners closing their businesses. Most local news media reports describe how instructors have overhauled their business practices and incorporated technologies such as Zoom into their teaching methodologies. However, social media has been littered with stories of *tojang* closings.

There are times in life you will never be able to accomplish a goal no matter how hard you try. Christopher Reeve, star of the 1980s Superman movies, was paralyzed after a horse-riding accident. He nonetheless believed that he would walk again. Sadly, he passed away from other health complications before he realized that dream. He was unable to walk again not for a lack of trying but because his lifetime had expired. Similarly, a cow may practice jumping every day of its life but will never be able to fly over the moon. A Taekwondo student may also prepare for the Olympics, but unpreventable extraneous circumstances may prevent him/her from that lifelong goal. As Balampanos and Lazarou [2020] wrote, "although Taekwon-Do has the unique ability of empowering the practitioner, there are obviously some limits to this extraordinary ability" [p. 10].

Perseverance is the "ability to overcome any difficulties to reach your goals" [Kang 2020, p. 40], but, as the Christopher Reeve and bovine examples above illustrate, some things are just impossible. During the COVID-19 pandemic, operating a martial arts school has been just that in some markets. Taekwon-Do and other martial arts instructors have been unable to persevere their businesses due to financial challenges caused by the pandemic regardless of how much they wanted to keep those schools open. Be it financial, physical, or a once-in-a-century pandemic, a person's station as well as the ever-emerging and changing situations in life affect how far they can persevere. Therefore, a cow may not make it over the moon, and some instructors may never

be able to afford to reopen their schools no matter how hard they try. Perseverance is finite in some cases, and as such, it cannot be Taekwon-Do practitioners' solution to COVID-19.

Yet, this is where the indomitable spirit comes into play. For instance, I chose not to be defeated after being injured. I immediately stood up and began the healing process. I decided that my injuries would not define nor defeat me; likewise, I chose not to allow the social limitations caused by COVID-19 to affect my spirit and my healing process. I chose to find alternatives when gyms closed preventing me from rehabilitating my knee and wrist. For instance, I converted my university office into a *tojang*, climbed the stairs in my apartment complex, and walked to work in the dead of winter at 6 AM. Conversely, some of my Taekwon-Do colleagues chose to allow the closures of their schools to defeat them. They did not begin planning how to reopen their *tojang* in the future, decide to teach out of their homes, or devise some other way to continue teaching. Instead, they packed up their uniforms, sold their equipment, and left their dreams forever.

Indomitable spirit is the internal choice to remain undefeated. Sometimes, however, we have to define what defeat means for ourselves. When perseverance fails, indomitable spirit allows Taekwon-Do practitioners to pick up and find a way to continue. We may need to conclude that the new way is not what we originally desired but it is a continuation of our growth process in Taekwon-Do. I cannot explain to you why I am able to hit targets with full power with a reverse knife-hand strike where six pins and a metal plate still lay just under my skin. The pain just is not there anymore. However, I can tell you that I practice today because I refused to give up. More importantly to my family and university students, I extrapolated that lesson to my career. I must emphasize that I learned this lesson from my Taekwon-Do practice, because the childhood coach potato I was before Taekwon-Do would have waited for someone to carry himself to the hospital that August night.

Intangible as the tenets are, indirect assessments may be an ideal option to assess a practitioner's adoption of Taekwon-Do's philosophy. In many situations around the world, COVID-19 challenged people's lives to a point where they felt overwhelmed, beaten, and helpless. Yet, the pandemic is an opportune time for Taekwon-Do practitioners to extrapolate lessons of perseverance and/or indomitable spirit from their practice and apply them to their daily lives. Many have not, and consequently, we can see through their experience with COVID-19 that they failed to apply Taekwon-Do philosophy to their lives.

On the other hand, at the time of the greatest physical pain in my life, at a time in which I was willing to cut off my arm to reduce my suffering, I remembered the indomitable spirit Taekwon-Do taught me that I now possess. There is no way that my instructors could know

I would endure this challenge, but they knew that life is hard and only hard training and correlating it with the Taekwon-Do's tenets would help me overcome any hardship. So, when a global pandemic began three kilometers from my apartment and my friends and family were near panic, I remained calm because I recalled my training and how it helped me overcome the worst moment of my life. When my landlord went bankrupt and informed me that I had to find a new apartment during the pandemic and in the worst Korean housing market in decades, I faced that problem with the same resoluteness of character and confidence, because I knew that I would overcome it like everything else life had dealt me. Consequently, my successes over the pain from “terrible” injuries and the emotional tolls of a pandemic, both which were only possible due to what I learned about myself through Taekwon-Do practice, provide some proof that indirect Taekwon-Do lessons can be applied to daily life.

Conclusions

So, what does my autoethnographic research say about COVID-19 and martial arts pedagogy in general? For one, it provides a qualitative and indirect method of assessing the acquisition of Taekwon-Do's tenets. As a Taekwon-Do pedagogue, I cannot teach something in good conscience without having an accurate assessment method. Until my accident and COVID-19, I had not found a way to assess if a student had adopted the tenets to their daily lives. This pandemic, however, may have provided an assessment tool through which we Taekwon-Do practitioners can gage ourselves and our Taekwon-Do students.

I certainly do not think Taekwon-Do instructors have to wait for the next pandemic to assess their students' ability to adapt the tenets to their lives. Instructors can instead integrate the maieutic method of questioning practice during class and ask students how they may have demonstrated a particular tenet outside of the *tojang* [Mayen, Johnson, Bosch 2015]. For example, just asking a student “How were you courteous to your friends last week?” forces her to see courtesy as being applicable outside of the *tojang*. Furthermore, due to the Taekwon-Do instructor merely asking it, the student associates courtesy with Taekwon-Do and practices it in their daily lives because it is just as important to their physical practice in the *tojang*. Through this process, they can generate new self-knowledge meaningful only to them in what has been called self-cultivation [Kodokan 2009; Johnson 2017]. Doing this will guide them to highly personal and individualized forms of applying Taekwon-Do's tenets in whatever way best works for them. They can find their own solutions to life's problems by adopting Taekwon-Do's core philosophical principles.

Self-reporting of self-knowledge or ability, such as I did in this study, are viable means to assess knowledge [Lachner, Backfisch, Stürmer 2019], but quantitative measurement tools would be more persuasive to prove the effectiveness of this aspect of Taekwon-Do practice. Consequently, more research is required to ascertain a more precise measurement tool for indirect assessments of this nature.

Funding and conflict of interest

No funding was provided in the support of this study, and as such the author declares no conflict of interest.

Sources

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Upadek wytrwałości i wzrost nieposkromionego ducha w Taekwon-Do podczas COVID-19

Słowa kluczowe: Międzynarodowa Federacja Taekwon-Do (ITF), Ch'ang Hön Taekwon-Do, pandemia COVID-19, pedagogika, badania autoetnograficzne

Streszczenie

Tło. Taekwon-do, południowo-koreańska sztuka walki i sport walki, uczy setek umiejętności fizycznych poprzez warstwowy program nauczania. Jednak najważniejszymi celami nauczania Taekwon-Do jest jego pięć zasad (uprzejmość, uczciwość, wytrwałość, samokontrola i niezłomność). W przeciwieństwie do fizycznych aspektów praktyki Taekwon-Do, nie ma bezpośrednich narzędzi oceny, które mogłyby określić, czy uczeń przyswoił i wykorzystał założenia. Wyzwania związane z pandemią COVID-19 mogą stanowić wyjątkową okazję do oceny przyswajania niektórych zasad Taekwon-Do.

Problem i cel. Niniejsze badanie ma na celu dostarczenie pośredniej metody oceny przyjęcia przez uczniów niektórych zasad Taekwon-Do poprzez zrozumienie, w jaki sposób te ideały mogą umożliwić praktykującym Taekwon-Do pokonywanie fizycznych i emocjonalnych wyzwań w ich codziennym życiu. Metody. Metodologia badań wykorzystuje autoetnograficzny projekt badawczy, który koreluje zastosowanie przez autora zasad Taekwon-Do z jego psychicznymi i duchowymi sukcesami w zakresie zdrowia po doświadczeniach spowodowanych pandemią COVID-19 i obrażeniami fizycznymi zmieniającymi życie.

Wyniki. COVID-19, podobnie jak kontuzje autora, stanowią pośrednią i jakościową możliwość oceny dwóch zasad Taekwondo (wytrwałości i niezłomnego ducha).

Wniosek. Podczas gdy ocena pośrednia jest realnym i uznanym pedagogicznym środkiem oceny, narzędzia pomiaru ilościowego mogą być bardziej przekonujące, aby udowodnić skuteczność doktryn Taekwon-Do.