



Review of the sporting ethics in competitive taekwondo

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: This study seeks to identify the ethical issues in competitive taekwondo and presents a direction for the instilling and practicing of ethics.

Methods/Statistical Analysis: The common participant conditions are at least five years of competitive taekwondo experience. For the judges, only those with a senior-judge license were eligible, and instructors who were registered with the Korean Taekwondo Association were considered to improve the quality of the interviews. The data-collection method in a qualitative study can be categorized into interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Findings: First, for the ethical practices in judging, the trust in the judge must be restored, and a clarification

must be made regarding the points that are acquired by the fist movements. Second, the blind spots must be minimized and more effort should be directed toward the selection and management of the judges. Third, to practice the ethical behaviors that are related to sportsmanship in terms of the instructors, morality must be restored. Fourth, to ensure that the ethical behaviors that are related to the instructor instruction philosophy are practiced, an improvement must be made.

Improvements/Applications: Instructors should not perceive the athletes as a tool for the achievement of their own goals, and the athletes should instead be perceived as human beings. The practice of teaching questionable techniques to win matches should be eliminated, and instead a fair-play spirit should be instilled. The instructors should also develop various training methods to improve their students unethical and to prevent any injuries.

Key Words : Taekwondo, Practicing of Ethics, Interviews, Movements, Sportsmanship, Ethical Behaviors.

1 Introduction

Sporting activities are one of the best ways of learning the rules and roles that are required by a specific society, such as personality formation, the harmony between cooperation and competition, and the promotion of morals and a civic mentality. During sporting activities, the observation rules facilitate sportsmanship and the spirit of fair play, leading to self-control and self-training¹. Cooperation and role-sharing in competitive sports help in the promotion of ethics and morality by forming the values and attitudes of self-respect and a respect toward others². But if the professional aspects or the challenging of the limits of humankind form the dominant focus, then appearances will detrimentally overwhelm a sport; that is, sportsmanship or the spirit of fair play will be abandoned, undermining the meaning of sports. The lack of ethics in sports is being mentioned here as a serious issue. The issue of ethics in sports also appears in Eastern-culture-based martial arts. Competitive taekwondo has been transformed into a sport based on Western culture, undermining the original meaning of Eastern martial arts.

Given that taekwondo has a high number of trainees and member countries, a discussion of the ethical issues is especially timely.

The sports of Western cultures focus on the artificial aspects of the development of the physical and technical aspects of the body and its constituent parts through external stimuli³. The source of taekwondo is religious, and the focus is the training of the unification of the mind, focus, and stability; furthermore, it is an experience-oriented self-perception training based on Eastern philosophy⁴.

Taekwondo was about the protection of one's self, but over time and with the developments in culture and civilization, the aspects of sport, play, and competition were incorporated with the audience in mind⁵. That is, it was eventually aligned with other sporting activities, leading to a greater focus on general material values and a competitive consciousness.

A solution to resolve the conflicts that occur during taekwondo competitions needs to be prescribed to restore the ethical aspects. Accordingly, the behavioral rules and major values that are emphasized in taekwondo must be promoted to guide the development of the competitive culture in the proper direction.

Kim⁶, regarding the improvement of sporting ethics, argued for the resolution of unethical sporting behaviors. That is, to practice ethical behaviors in sports, one must become familiar with the values and behavioral norms that are needed in an ethical life, promote ethical behaviors to further a love for humankind, and work on the practicing of these ethical behaviors. Therefore, the unreasonable policies, institutions, power structures, and laws that cause the ethical issues in sports can only be resolved by those who practice ethics.

In a preceding study, Bing, Yoon, and Lee⁷ noted that the agent of the unethical behaviors is people, and that the judges, instructors, athletes, and their parents are overly focused on winning and their self-interests. Further, such issues can be categorized depending on who is involved. The judges must be the agents of impartial acts and must avoid favoritism or any manipulation of the results⁸.

The instructors are required to concertedly root out physical punishment and violence, as well as overly competitive recruitment practices that can lead to unethical practices. The athletes need to refrain from using cheating techniques or ignoring the minor

etiquettes, and should instead demonstrate a spirit of fair play that respects the other party. Therefore, this study seeks to identify the ethical issues in competitive taekwondo and presents a direction for the instilling and practising of ethics. In this paper, an ideal model that is characterized by impartiality, sportsmanship, and fair play is presented for those involved in taekwondo, including the judges, instructors, and athletes, to promote taekwondo progress on a national level.

2 Methodology

2.1 Participants

Since the selection process of participants is directly related to the validity of a qualitative study, the process must be described in detail. As such, the reasons and limits of the selection need to be both presented, and the gender, age, experience, and status need to be stated.

In qualitative studies, non-probability sampling is typically used, because unlike quantitative studies, generalization is not the goal. In general, non-probability sampling is referred to as intentional or purposeful sampling⁹. The advantages of the non-probability sampling is the freedom and flexibility in the sampling process of the researcher, whereas the shortcoming that must be prevented is the bias potential that is due to the influence of the researcher he entered in the selection of the samples. Caution is required in the generalization process¹⁰. Since this study is related to ethics, the real names of the participants are omitted.

The common participant conditions are at least five years of competitive taekwondo experience. For the judges, only those with a senior-judge license were eligible, and instructors who were registered with the Korean Taekwondo Association were considered to improve the quality of the interviews. <Table 1> shows the characteristics of the subjects.

Table 1. Participants

Category	Name	Gender	Membership	License	Experience
Judge	ADS	M	Senior judge	International judge license	9
	PDS	F	Senior judge	International judge license	9
	KHT	M	Senior judge	International judge license	7
Instructor	LJS	M	Registered with the association (university department)	Instructor license	10
	YHM	M	Registered with the association (high-school department)	Instructor license	9
	JHJ	M	Registered with the association (high-school department)	Instructor license	11

2.2 Tools

The data-collection method in a qualitative study can be categorized into interviews, observations, and document analysis. Among them, the interviews are classified into structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Depending on the interview subject or method, the interview process can be one-on-one, group-based, or phone-based. When an interview method is selected, the type and specific details (number of sessions, time, venue, and order) must be stated in detail. In particular, for rich data collection, the number of sessions and time must be provided^{9,11}. For this study, to prevent the variation of the results depending on the individual interview technique or management technique, an interview method where the interviewee answers a series of very specific questions in a semi-structured interview was used¹². To review the sport ethics in competitive taekwondo, three people were selected from each of the judge and instructor groups to collect the data from a total of six people. To examine the issues of unethical behavior and the practice of ethical behavior, the questions were composed as follows:

[Questions]

Question 1. What do you think is required to practice ethical behavior in competitive taekwondo, and what are the unethical issues posed by the judges?

Question 2. What do you think is required to practice ethical behavior in competitive taekwondo, and what are the unethical issues posed by the instructors?

2.3 Research ethics

The ethics that need to be observed by the researcher are as follows¹³: First, participant consent; second, the selection and exclusion of the subjects; third, the use of the participants; fourth, the misleading of the participants; fifth, confidentiality and privacy protection; sixth, the right to cease participation; seventh, a consideration of the losses and benefits of the study; eighth, participant time consumption; and ninth, the cultural differences. Therefore, the researcher must consider the ethical and legal standards that do not harm the participants during the conduction of the study. The participants were asked in advance for their consent, and their names were marked as acronyms to protect their privacy.

2.4 Data processing

The methods to secure the data truth in a qualitative study include triangular verification, a review between the members, and consultations with colleagues⁹. The validity that is an evaluation of the quality of the study can be categorized into internal and external validities. The internal validity refers to the extent of the validity of the interpretations of the cause and effect; it shows the possibility of a causality extrapolation. Meanwhile, the external validity refers to the degree to which the results can be generalized. The validity of the sampling and the sampling method are important¹⁰. As such, during the internal validity stage, a triangular verification with expert groups was used. During the external validity stage, a consultation with experts was used to verify the truth of the unprocessed data.

3 Discussion of ethics in competitive Taekwondo

3.1 Just behavior by the judge

A judge rules whether a certain team has won or lost or whether a penalty is warranted. The subjective judgment of a judge cannot be entirely ruled out in competitive taekwondo, and depending on the judge's personal prejudices and interests, the result may change¹⁴.

Impartiality includes equality and an ability to perceive a situation from both sides without resorting to personal associations in terms of educational background, regional background, or gender. The impartiality of the judge's assessment in a taekwondo match is extremely important. The judge must refrain from personal prejudices to gain the confidence of the instructors and athletes. A specific measure to evaluate the impartiality of the attitudes of judges must be studied.

3.1.1 Unethical behavior related to reliability

One of the factors that undermines the reliability of judges in a taekwondo match is a suspicion regarding cheating or partial rulings. Cheating refers to collusion with an athlete or team to ensure that the athlete wins, or a manipulation of the scores. The participants expressed the following opinions on this:

ADS: I was never been accused of cheating when I was a judge; however, rumors about cheating have been shared. I think it is unforgivable. If such a thing happens, then the judge or athlete must be punished. Looking at the structure of the judgment system, it is impossible to have them [the judges] move in a more systematic manner to cheat. There may be cases where one's personal friendship is used to cheat.

PDS: One person asked me if I could help with his nephew. So I replied that there is no guarantee that I would be the judge of the game that the athlete is in. But yes, I did have that experience. I did not cheat or manipulate the results though.

KHT: It was during the early years of my career as a judge; during the quarter-finals. An athlete who had been taught by an instructor who was close to me was in the game. It was a tight match. A single point could determine the winner. During the third round, there was a very vague fist attack. I then pressed the point-acquisition button and that sealed the deal. But to this day, it troubles me with guilt. Even if it was a vague attack, I feel guilty that what I did determined the winner and could have hurt the athlete that lost. For a while after that, I could not serve as a judge due to this guilt.

Even though judges realize they need to offer impartial rulings, many point out that they can be misconstrued because the points

that are gained by one out that they can be misconstrued because the points ruble me with guilds, where the judge leans more toward those he is close with. Therefore, the ethical behavior of judges is reliant on the individual conscience. A judge is capable of manipulating the game results within an extent so that he does not feel guilty.

ADS: Judges are professionals and they have received training, but sometimes they misunderstand the game rules. Or there are parts that they individually emphasize; in particular, the matters concerning the fist, or when there is a difference in opinion with the second judge, thereby leaving room for a partial ruling.

It was highlighted that, unlike the game rules that are clearly stated for the overall match, the corresponding details are lacking, leaving room for partial judgments from the judges.

PDS: We are human. I try my best to be an impartial judge, but since the judges have also practiced taekwondo, sometimes it is not easy; for example, the school they went to or the region they come from can be influential. To be honest, there are cases where partial rulings happen. There can be cases where a judge with lots of connections is allocated to a certain court. I think the judge allocation must be done carefully for this reason. At present, the head judge is responsible for this allocation. I think it is important for this head to look at the backgrounds of the judges and allocate them to remove the risk of a partial ruling in a game.

KHT: At present, the appointed senior judges must present a certificate showing their familial relations, so if their own child is a competing athlete, they must suspend their activities as a judge in this case¹⁵. But personal connections that are based on school, region, or family ties still exert a negative effect on the evaluations of athletes¹⁶. In the case of figure skating, judges are selected through a random raffle to ensure that a partial ruling cannot occur; this can be referenced by those in the taekwondo community to increase the transparency.

3.1.2 Unethical behaviors related to the match method

The matches in taekwondo occur in a tournament format. The two athletes of the tournament wear blue and red, respectively, enter the court together, and victory is granted to the athlete with the

higher score in a single session.

ADS: At present, in the competitive matches of the Korean Association for Taekwondo, there are three judges, where one is the main judge and the other two are junior judges. As for the torso, electronic devices with sensors are used so point acquisition is not a problem. But for the fists, it can be vague. Therefore, a five-judge system must be introduced so that when three or more junior judges agree, then the points that have been gained by the fists are acknowledged.

PDS: We have a limited sight when we watch an instantaneous movement, so this constrains our accuracy. For the upper body, we can use the video to verify matters, but this delays the flow of the game. Also, depending on the angle of the camera or the definition of the video, differing results can be given. Since we already have electronic devices and head gear, I think we should only acknowledge the points that are registered through these devices¹⁷. Machines are different from people.

KHT: First, the selection of the judges needs to be strict, and only those who are qualified should be allowed to judge. In terms of training too, even though it has seen much improvement, it is still lacking. Video training or various training methods must be adopted. A continued improvement in the selection, management, and training of the judges will help secure impartiality for the game.

At present, two judges are allocated diagonally from each other. If the allocation of the judges is applied in the same way for all athletes, this may not affect the impartiality of the ruling¹⁸. But if there are continuous movements or hits, blind spots can be introduced. To minimize the blind spots, an allocation of the junior judges in each corner could be another way to increase the impartiality. Many of the interviewees pointed out the need for various efforts in terms of not only the selection of suitable judges but also the management of them. Video training should be adopted to analyze the strengths and weaknesses, and a simulated training method should be adopted to improve the current system¹⁹.

3.2 Ethical philosophy of the instructors

Sporting instructors hand down sporting techniques and present the directions for athletes and pves as well. In taekwondo, the

temperament of the instructors may exert an absolute effect on the match style of the athletes. Moreover, since they teach technical strategies, the instructor must also possess other qualities²⁰. That is, an instructor of the matches must instill sportsmanship and the proper values in his students. The instructor serves as an important role model for the students.

Sportsmanship refers to the basic principle of etiquette that is common across all sports. It presents a regulatory standard for specific behaviors in sports, such as honesty, respect, and the consideration of others²¹. Sportsmanship is about rule observation and the minimum attitude one must maintain during one's participation in the sport. It is a concept that encompasses fair play, respect of the other athlete, and a polite attitude toward the competitor⁹.

Cases where taekwondo instructors experienced ethical conflicts are as follows: First, conflict with the judges; second, the dilemma surrounding the recruitment of the athletes; third, a result-oriented situation; fourth, a closed-off team operation; and fifth, an overcoming of ethical conflicts²². Next, the instructors' opinions on unethical behaviors in terms of sportsmanship violations will be reviewed. This will offer an important perspective regarding the instruction philosophy and the restoration of morality, and it will serve as meaningful study data given that these instructors guide athletes who can become future instructors.

3.2.1 Unethical behaviors related to morality

The factors hampering the morality of leaders in the taekwondo competition stadium are shown as corporal punishment, violence, recruitment and intentional abandonment of a game, etc²³. A research participant's opinion regarding this is as follows:

LJS: We are trained on the human rights of students and whenever the press comes across incidents of physical punishment or violence, they make the instructors step down. However, I do believe a certain level of physical punishment is needed. Because we are human, there are times when our anger gets the best of us and sometimes it is needed to control a large number of students. But fundamentally, I am against physical punishment or violence. Even without them, the children follow your instructions and they are on the right path.

JHJ: I have been severely beaten by senior students when I was in middle school. It was when I did something immoral or something that I should not have done as a student. So I think if there is a clear cause, physical punishment should be allowed. But it shouldn't be overboard. I think a certain level that we all agree upon in advance should be allowed.

YHM: A while ago, I witnessed an instructor hitting an athlete should not have done as a student. The reason was that the athlete had made a mistake during the game. This does not help in the formation of the proper personality for the athlete, and it only tenses up the other students too. Of course, for the student in question, it would be traumatizing too. Since the punishment happened in front of many others, the memory will stay with him. I think punishments should not be given in front of others.

There are frequent cases where instructors use physical punishment or violence against athletes. Bing and Jang²⁴ noted that trust and a bond are important in the relationship between the instructor and the athlete, and that they can become an important variable in a match performance. In particular, personal resentment should not be reflected when a physical punishment is applied, and the focus of the punishment should be the strengthening of one gather.

The physical punishment of the athlete by the instructor varies depending on whether personal resentment is involved or not. In the past, instructors saw physical punishment as a necessary evil that would bring about immediate responses from the students²⁵. Those who support physical punishment emphasize the strengthening of the student punishment empies and performances, but given that the competition area is an open space where the judges, parents of athletes, and audience are also present, physical punishment or violence from the instructor toward the student should not be allowed.

LJS: I did student should not be allowed or violence from the instructor t. In the past, if they could participate in a seminar or a lecture, so that they could have an influence on the judges or the game. I do nice from the instructor t. In the past, instructors saw judges or senior executives are asked to give a special lecture.

JHJ: Although it was not a special lecture, I have personally participated in a similar lecture.

I think that both the people who ask and those who respond

should obviously find a way helpful for each other. I don't think it is right for people to participate to be remembered by umpires with a purpose of forming a simple human relationship and achieving even an effect for decision later.

YHM: Since I serve as an instructor at a high school, I have never been pushed to participate in seminars or special lectures. But I did hear that this happens often to instructors at universities. They can receive fees through the special lecture, and universities can form relationships with the judges or senior executives. I think this is an unethical practice that needs to be eradicated as it does often the athletes but only promotes personal interests.

Participants refer to unethical cases where the current judges or those with influence are asked to give special lectures. In contrast, there are also cases where the judges or senior executives abuse their position to force instructors or athletes to host special lectures for them. These are unethical practices. Cases where one seeks to influence game rulings by forming relationships through these methods must be prevented. Even though the judges are required to make an impartial ruling with no attachments, sometimes they are lured by personal interests; this is contrary to the ethics of a judge. Also, the philosophy of the instructors should not place winning above everything else. To prevent such situations, a regulation must be established to impact the judges or senior executives of the hosting organization.

YHM: In the past when I was in high school, I yielded an award to a friend of mine who had no awards because I wanted to help him with his college admission. I wasn't asking for anything in return, it was out of pure friendship. There are still cases where high school students do this. It was a long time ago in my case, but when I look back now, I think it was wrong of me to have done so.

LJS: I too had one such case. I had already been admitted to a college, while my friend had. I had already been admitted to a college, who a friend yield this once to help him gain an admission to a college. Now that I think about it, it benefited that friend, but I am sure it served as a disadvantage to someone else. At the time, there was no training on the ethics regarding such practices, so there were many cases where people would do this without even realizing the implications.

JHJ: When I was an athlete, I got involved in a manipulation

of the game results without meaning to. Now that I think back on it, it is ridiculous but I think back then I thought I had to because my teacher told me to. It was during the round of 16. The athlete that I was running against had never won against me. But then the instructor of that athlete and my instructor had a long talk, and then my instructor told me to give up on that match.

In the end, this athlete was admitted to university and is currently serving as an instructor alongside me. Whenever I see him, I am reminded of this incident. I also suspect he might be doing the same thing as an instructor. I think dishonesty stays with you as a powerful memory.

The participants criticized the practices of match-result manipulation, whether it is for oneself or is from the recommendation of their instructor, as unethical behavior that runs against sportsmanship. This can happen since the performance results are often used for college admissions. In particular, it is shocking that some were asked to write a note indicating their pledge to give up on a match, because they were forced to do so by their instructor. Although much has been improved due to the press coverage on such practices and the training on the manipulation of match results, a stronger system must be established given that such unethical practices can seriously affect the athletes in question. In fact, the revelation of manipulation and cheating in match results is difficult²⁶. Because of this, the consciences of the instructors and athletes must be relied upon. Therefore, the related institutions must make ethics and personality education a regular part of taekwondo training to improve the culture in the field.

3.2.2 Unethical behaviors related to instruction philosophy

The instruction philosophy is closely related to the instructor action a regular part of performance results are often used for college ad, and behavior²⁷. An instructor related to the instructor values and greatly affects the future of the athletes he/she teaches. It is also a representation of the instructor's personality. The following opinions are those of the participants regarding the unethical behaviors that are related to the instruction philosophy in taekwondo games.

LJS: Since they are instructors, I think they should set a good example as someone who teaches. They should not just preach with words, but walk the talk.

JHJ: Winning a medal at a nation-wide competition is directly related to one would set a good example as someone who teaches, Since the school can directly rule of the costs related to competitions, sometimes the student has to bear them. But the instructor should not see the athletes as a source of money I think that leaders do their duty as leaders by planning and managing players' lives from a player's position. I think that they should make constant efforts to do their duty.

YHM: During games, there are cases where points are acquired through questionable techniques. When it is questionable, this means that it goes against the rules. Instructors must work harder to develop kicking skills and overall skills so that they can abide by the rules of the games.

Instructors should respect athletes as human beings and must behave in front of them. Bing, Yoon, and Lee⁷ argued that during their investigation into the ethical conflicts that are experienced by taekwondo instructors, "under-the-table" deals occurred in terms of recruitment, the sport had been degraded into a form of business, and a hierarchy had formed between the athletes. But the instructors must hold a firm belief that they are in the process of nurturing the development of a human being. They should never think of the athletes as a product or a means to satisfy their own desires. Oh, Oh, and Lee²⁸ pointed out cases where, contrary to sportsmanship, instructors would order illegal moves on the athletes in the interest of winning the game. A new match-technique training method must be developed to encourage fair play among the athletes to improve the overall practice of taekwondo. Therefore, the instructors are required to develop training methods and learning opportunities that are more scientific.

4 Conclusion

The ethical behaviors that are required of the judges and instructors in competitive taekwondo are as follows. First, for the ethical practices in judging, the trust in the judge must be restored, and a

clarification must be made regarding the points that are acquired by the fist movements. One of the factors that undermines the trust in judges is the suspicion that they are manipulating the results through a partial ruling. Although the judges of the present time period clearly recognize the need for impartial rulings, they are often misconstrued due to the vagueness regarding the points that are acquired by the fist movements; therefore, the points that are gained by the fist movements need to be more specific to clarify the matter.

Second, the blind spots must be minimized and more effort should be directed toward the selection and management of the judges. The existing three-judge system should be converted to a five-judge system to minimize the ruling errors. To encourage the impartial behavior of the judges, the selection process and the training of the judges must be reviewed from multiple angles for an improvement to occur.

Third, to practice the ethical behaviors that are related to sportsmanship in terms of the instructors, morality must be restored. As part of this, the reckless physical punishment or violence that the athletes are subjected to must be eradicated. Judges or senior executives must also refrain from taking part in lectures or seminars where the sole purpose is the formation of relationships that can be leveraged later to affect rulings. The association must introduce strict regulations on this matter to eradicate any unethical behaviors.

Fourth, to ensure that the ethical behaviors that are related to the instructor instruction philosophy are practiced, an improvement must be made. Instructors should not perceive the athletes as a tool for the achievement of their own goals, and the athletes should instead be perceived as human beings. The practice of teaching questionable techniques to win matches should be eliminated, and instead a fair-play spirit should be instilled. The instructors should also develop various training methods to improve their student unethical s and to prevent any injuries.

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