

The Effects of Martial Arts Instruction on Preadolescents' and Early Adolescents' Self-Esteem

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The purpose of this study was to determine whether changes in attitudes toward self occurred after preadolescents and early adolescents participated in the first level of Taekwondo instruction. The sample included students enrolled in Taekwondo classes in 100 martial arts training centers across the United States. Two surveys were administered: one to students and another to the instructors. A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze student responses, and a MANOVA was used to examine differences in instructors' ratings of their students. Results of this study indicated that students had higher self-esteem after receiving the first cycle of Taekwondo instruction.

Introduction

This investigation attempted to determine whether changes in attitudes toward the self occurred after preadolescents and early adolescents participated in the first level of Taekwondo instruction. Findings from a pilot study that indicated both students and instructors believed students' attitudes about themselves were more positive after receiving Taekwondo instruction prompted this study (Martin, 1991). This study, therefore, included both students' and their instructors' ratings of each student's self-esteem level.

Coopersmith (1990) defines self-esteem as a judgment of worthiness that is expressed by the attitudes a person holds toward self, and found that students with high self-esteem approach tasks with the belief that they will succeed. Gwin (1990)

claims that true self-esteem means more than teaching students to feel good about themselves. She believes that students earn self-respect when they succeed at a task because they apply effort. Ames and Archer (1988) found that students feel better about themselves when they are in instructional settings that support the idea that effort will lead to success.

Method and Results

A simple random sample of 150 nine- to fifteen-year-old students enrolled in Taekwondo classes throughout the United States was selected. Two surveys were administered to students and their instructors: one at the beginning of training and another eight months later. Eight months represented the first complete cycle of Taekwondo instruction.

The martial arts training centers administered to Taekwondo students the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (School Form) which measured students' attitudes

Taekwondo instructors rated their students' self-esteem at the beginning and ending of instruction by directly observing behaviors during instructional time periods.

TABLE 1

Taekwondo instructors' perceptions of their students change in self-esteem before and after training

	Student initiative		Social attention		Success/failure		Social attraction		Self-confidence	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Pre	3.40	0.67	3.57	0.81	3.40	0.72	3.08	0.73	3.37	0.86
Post	4.25	0.54	4.47	0.46	4.22	0.61	4.08	0.51	4.33	0.64

toward their social, academic, and personal selves (Coopersmith, 1990). Students were

asked to determine their level of self-esteem at the beginning and ending of the first instructional cycle. An *F* of 6.79 was computed using ANOVA and with 1,112 degrees of freedom was found to be significant at the .01 level.

The Behavioral Academic Self-Esteem Rating Scale was administered to the students' martial arts instructors who rated students on five self-esteem factors: student initiative; social attention; success/failure; social attraction; and self-confidence. Student initiative represented how often a student participated in instructional activities. Social attention measured how well a student exhibited behaviors that facilitated learning. Success/failure assessed how well a student coped with corrective feedback from instructors. Social attraction measured how compatible students were with peers. Self-confidence represented the degree to which a student verbally expressed his/her accomplishments.

The instructors rated their students on a scale of 1 "never" to 5 "always". An *F* of 19.60 was computed using MANOVA and with 1,112 degrees of freedom was significant at the .01 level. The pre and post

means for each dependent measure displayed in Table 1 were also significant at the .01 level.

Conclusions

Students' self-esteem was higher after the first instructional cycle of Taekwondo training. The instructional emphasis was on teaching students to take control of themselves in a highly structured and ritualistic environment. Teacher instructions, expectations, and assessments were clear. Students, therefore, gained confidence to master defined goals—that is, students intrinsically valued the instructional process of Taekwondo, and thus, applied the necessary effort to achieve. Learning environments that promote students' taking control of their own learning through structured and ritualistic activities create for

students an intrinsic purpose for learning. In the Taekwondo learning environment students increased their feelings about themselves and reduced fear of failing after applying effort.

References

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