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A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF TAEKWONDO TRAINING TECHNIQUES FOR CHILDREN IN CENTRAL ASIA AND THE USA

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ABSTRACT

This review looks at how Taekwondo is taught to kids aged 7-10 in Central Asia and the USA. Taekwondo is a Korean martial art that helps kids grow physically and mentally. In Central Asia, Taekwondo training focuses on traditional values and intense physical exercises. Kids learn about respect, discipline, and the history of Taekwondo. In contrast, Taekwondo classes in the USA are designed to be fun and engaging. They include games and rewards to keep kids interested while following a clear step-by-step program. Both methods have their benefits: Central Asia's approach builds strong discipline, while the USA's method makes learning enjoyable. The review suggests combining the best parts of both methods could be useful for teaching Taekwondo to kids everywhere.

KEYWORDS

Taekwondo, children, Central Asia, USA, martial arts, physical growth, mental development, training methods, cultural values, fun activities.

INTRODUCTION

Taekwondo is a popular martial art that originated in Korea. It is known for helping children develop physically and mentally. This article compares how

children aged 7-10 are trained in Taekwondo in Central Asia and the USA, focusing on the techniques and methods used.

Literature Review. Research has shown that martial arts benefit children's physical and mental growth. A meta-analysis conducted by Sang-Seok Nam and Kiwon Lim "evaluated the effects of Taekwondo training on the physical fitness factors in Korean elementary students comprehensively and quantitatively" [4]. According to Ik Rae Cho, Hyo Joo Park, and Taek Kyun Lee, "survey results show that Taekwondo training affects school-life adaptation by improving student morality and bolstering compliance with school rules." The exercise value of Taekwondo training is "considered necessary for US adolescents due to its educational aspects, particularly in maintaining amenable student-teacher and student-peer relationships" [2]. Additionally, Seunghui Baek, Jong-Beom Park, Sang-Hwan Choi, Jae-Don Lee, and Sang-Seok Nam found that Taekwondo training "at a frequency of five times per week for more than 12 weeks positively improved the obesity factor," showing that Taekwondo can prevent or positively improve obesity and contribute to promoting human health [1]. Furthermore, Guyeol Jeong, Hongyong Jung, Wi-Young So, and Buongo Chun concluded that Taekwondo training "significantly increased GH and IGF-1 secretion in children and adolescents aged 10-16 years," suggesting Taekwondo as an appropriate physical exercise for maintaining normal growth [3].

Main Part. In Central Asia, Taekwondo training for children combines traditional values with modern

techniques. Training starts with basic movements (kihaps) and forms (poomsae). These movements and forms are practiced repeatedly to ensure precision and discipline. For example, children learn to execute kicks, punches, and blocks with exact timing and form. The practice of poomsae, which are predefined patterns of movements, helps in understanding the flow of techniques and improves muscle memory.

Physical conditioning is a vital part of the training. Children build strength, flexibility, and endurance through a variety of exercises. These include running laps around the training area, jumping rope to improve coordination and stamina, and performing bodyweight exercises like push-ups, sit-ups, and squats. Stretching routines are also emphasized to enhance flexibility, which is crucial for executing high kicks and other Taekwondo techniques.

As children progress, they are gradually introduced to sparring (kyorugi) and self-defense techniques (hosinsul). Sparring sessions start with controlled, light-contact drills to teach children the importance of timing, distance, and control. For example, they might practice sparring with a partner, focusing on techniques like the roundhouse kick and back kick. Self-defense training includes learning how to break free from grabs, defend against strikes, and use joint locks. This practical aspect of training is essential for building confidence and applying Taekwondo skills in real-life situations.

Mental training is integrated into the physical practice to teach respect, focus, and perseverance. Children participate in meditation sessions to improve concentration and mental clarity. They also learn about the five tenets of Taekwondo: courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit. Moral lessons are woven into the training to help children understand the importance of these values in both martial arts and everyday life. For example, they might be taught to bow to instructors and fellow students as a sign of respect and to maintain a positive attitude even when facing challenges.

In the USA, Taekwondo training for children blends traditional techniques with fun and engaging methods. Training programs follow a clear and organized curriculum created by Taekwondo organizations. This curriculum ensures that children learn skills in a consistent and systematic way. For example, beginners start with basic kicks, punches, and blocks. As they progress, they learn more complex techniques and forms (poomsae). Each level has specific goals and requirements, so children know exactly what they need to achieve to move to the next level.

To keep children interested and excited about learning, classes include a variety of games and interactive drills. For instance, instructors might organize obstacle courses where children practice jumping, kicking, and running. They might play games like “kick the target”, where kids try to kick foam targets held by their

partners. These activities make learning Taekwondo enjoyable and help improve coordination, speed, and agility. According to Sinan Bozkurt and Tuğçe Yeşilçimen “the differential learning approach could be significantly more effective, especially for the techniques of Yapchagi, Dui-chagi, Dollyo Chagi, and Palding. Practicing with differential learning may also be effective in terms of saving practice time for the development of tae-kwon-do skills.” [5, 314]

Instructors use praise and rewards to encourage children and build their confidence. For example, after a child performs a good kick or successfully completes a form, the instructor might give them a high-five or a verbal compliment like “Great job!” In some schools, children can earn stickers, badges, or small prizes for showing improvement or demonstrating good behavior. This positive reinforcement helps motivate children to keep trying their best.

Safety is a top priority in Taekwondo classes in the USA. Instructors ensure that all activities are closely supervised to prevent injuries. For example, when children practice sparring, they wear protective gear like helmets, gloves, and chest protectors. Instructors carefully watch to make sure that sparring is controlled and that children do not get hurt. Additionally, classes often start with warm-up exercises to prepare the muscles and reduce the risk of injury. Parents can feel confident that their children are learning in a safe and supportive environment.

Discussion and Results. In Central Asia, Taekwondo training deeply integrates cultural values and traditions. Children learn not just the physical techniques but also the cultural significance behind them. For example, they might learn about the history of Taekwondo, traditional Korean customs, and the importance of respect and humility. This cultural education is woven into every aspect of training. In contrast, the USA combines traditional Taekwondo techniques with modern educational practices. While children still learn about respect and discipline, the focus is more on making the lessons relatable to their everyday lives. For instance, instructors might use stories or examples from modern culture to teach important values.

Training in Central Asia often focuses heavily on physical conditioning and discipline. Children engage in rigorous exercises to build their strength, flexibility, and endurance. They might run long distances, do many push-ups, or practice difficult kicks repeatedly to improve their skills. Discipline is also a key part of the training, with children expected to follow strict rules and show respect to their instructors at all times. In the USA, the emphasis is more on engagement and enjoyment. While children still practice physical conditioning, the exercises are often presented in a fun and interactive way. For example, instead of just running laps, they might play running games. The goal

is to keep children interested and excited about their training.

In the USA, Taekwondo schools often follow a very structured curriculum with clear progression paths. Each level has specific skills and techniques that children must master before moving on to the next belt. This structure helps children understand what they need to achieve and gives them a sense of accomplishment as they progress. In Central Asia, the curriculum is often more flexible and tradition-based. While there are still levels and belts, the focus is more on mastering techniques at one's own pace and integrating traditional practices and values into the training.

In the USA, instructors use a lot of positive reinforcement to motivate children. They give praise, rewards, and encouragement to help children feel good about their progress. For example, an instructor might give a child a sticker or a small prize for showing improvement or demonstrating good behavior. This helps build the child's confidence and keeps them motivated to continue training. In Central Asia, the focus is more on discipline as a motivational tool. Children are taught the importance of hard work, perseverance, and respect. They are encouraged to push themselves and strive for excellence, with less emphasis on rewards and more on personal growth and achievement.

Natalya Mischenko and others in their research say that “Plyometric training «Rope-skipping» and exercises of «Tai-bo» fitness program allowed to develop and increase the speed abilities and dynamic strength of the lower extremities, increase the jumping ability and overall endurance, flexibility, speed and coordination abilities of the girls of the experimental group significantly more than those of the athletes in the control one. The rhythmicity of the musical accompaniment of the training contributed to the pace of striking development and created a positive emotional background of the lesson.” [6, 3219] This highlights the effectiveness of integrating engaging and rhythm-based exercises in children's training programs to achieve comprehensive physical development and maintain high motivation levels.

Conclusion. Taekwondo training for children in Central Asia and the USA takes different approaches because of cultural and educational differences.

In Central Asia, the training focuses a lot on discipline and tradition. Children learn about the history of Taekwondo and the importance of respect and humility. They go through intense physical exercises to build strength and endurance, and they follow strict rules to learn discipline. The training is very traditional, with a lot of emphasis on mastering techniques and understanding their cultural significance.

In the USA, the training is more focused on keeping children engaged and making sure they have fun while learning. The classes are structured with a clear curriculum, so children know what they need to achieve to move to the next level. Instructors use games and interactive activities to make learning enjoyable. They also use a lot of positive reinforcement, like giving praise and rewards, to motivate children and build their confidence.

Both approaches have their strengths. Central Asia's method helps children develop strong discipline and respect for tradition, while the USA's method makes learning fun and keeps children motivated with a structured path to progress.

Future research could look at ways to combine the best parts of both approaches. For example, integrating the cultural and disciplinary focus of Central Asian training with the engaging and structured methods used in the USA could create an even better way to teach Taekwondo to children worldwide. This way, children can enjoy learning while also gaining a deep respect for the art and its traditions.

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