

Motivations and Expectations of Elite Turkish Athletes Practicing Taekwondo

Sakir Bezci

Karabuk University, Hasan Dogan School of Physical Education and Sports, Balıklar Kayası Mevkii,
Karabuk 78350, TURKEY

E-mail: sakirbezci@karabuk.edu.tr

ABSTRACT: The aim of this study is simple: to determine what draws elite Turkish taekwondo athletes to this rather unconventional sport, and to explore what sort of expectations they hold for their future in taekwondo. All data pertaining to this study was acquired via surveys; the alpha reliability coefficient for 27 survey items was 0.87. The study's population comprised 1400 athletes from 60 provinces, consisting of both males and females participating in Turkey Seniors Taekwondo Championship organized in Alanya District of Antalya Province in 2012. The sample group includes 515 randomly chosen taekwondo athletes (133 females, 382 males) who participated in the survey voluntarily. For data analysis, frequency and percent values of athletes were calculated, and a t-test for independent samples was used to test for differences according to gender or level of education. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for the age variable. The findings showed that members of the subject's family and local trainers respectively had the greatest influence regarding the decision to take up taekwondo; conversely, media coverage had the least effect. In addition, the primary motivations behind practicing taekwondo were the enjoyment the athletes felt when they experienced success, and enthusiasm for the sport itself. Athletes were also found to have high expectations of being selected for the national team.

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INTRODUCTION AND AIM

Sports are a means to ensure the physical, mental, emotional and social development of individuals; they also help to develop aptitude, intelligence and leadership skills. Sports help individuals overcome psychological and physiological problems through intensive and enriching physical and mental discipline (Açıkada and Ergen, 1990; Başer, 1986). In other words, sports contribute to the development of bodily and spiritual health sports, indeed, are an important practice that increase a given individual's success in life and allow them to achieve their maximum potential (Aracı, 2001). For this reason, physically skilled individuals should be involved with an intensive and uninterrupted training program. In addition, sports make positive contributions to the national condition through international friendship and peace. Reducing stress, maintaining physical fitness, and, above all, achieving international success in sports have all become important aspects of everyday society and morale—each, in turn, have become important dimensions of sports (Açıkada and Ergen, 1990; Başer, 1986).

Taekwondo is a martial art developed independently in Korea for over 20 years; recently, it has gained international acceptance, recognition, and popularity (Kim, 1986). Taekwondo can literally be translated as “the path of kick and fist” and, in Korea, is characterized as a martial art performed with speed, flight and the spinning heel kick (Law, 2004; Melhim,

2001). The sport promotes social and emotional development through extensive training and discipline. Through taekwondo, athletes can control their excitement and emotions while also developing social skills such as working cooperatively with others and competing healthily—they also grow to understand the spirit of fighting. Taekwondo, through its intricate level of techniques, tactics, and official rules, promotes not just physical fitness, but also intelligence and creative thought. An individual's intellectual aptitude and perception are both positively impacted as they participate in taekwondo (Heller et al., 1998). At the same time, individuals undergo rapid physical development—including a loss of excess weight and a drastically increased reaction time. Motor skills such as agility, speed, flexibility, strength and endurance are developed (Köknel, 1978). In addition, Pak (1993) demonstrated that taekwondo helped to develop spiritual and social abilities such as reflexes, decision-making, courage, self-confidence, cooperation, and patriotism. Individuals performing taekwondo developed self-confidence and the characteristics of being patient and humble.

Studies aiming to promote taekwondo and to determine the motivations for participating in taekwondo are important because they enable many aspects of personal development and can easily be accessed and practiced by a diverse group of people. This study examines the motivations among elite

athletes in Turkey for taking up taekwondo and their expectations with the beneficial sport.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Population and Sample:

The study's population is comprised of 1400 male and female athletes from 60 provinces participating in the Turkey Seniors Taekwondo Championship organized in the Alanya District of Antalya Province in 2012. The sample group contains 515 randomly chosen taekwondo athletes (133 females and 382 males) who agreed to participate in the survey.

Data Acquisition Tool:

Data was acquired through the same survey form used by Bayraktar and Sunay (2007). The first part of the survey sought personal information on study participants; the second part consisted of five Likert-type items comprised of three sub-dimensions: the factors encouraging taekwondo, the motivations for practicing taekwondo, and the expectations regarding taekwondo. The alpha reliability coefficient for all 27 items was 0.87. Alpha reliability for the factors encouraging taekwondo (8 items) was 0.82; Alpha reliability for the reasons for practicing taekwondo (9 items) was 0.79; Alpha reliability for the expectations of taekwondo (10 items) was 0.79. Bayraktar and Sunay (2007) calculated alpha reliability coefficients of 0.80; 0.63 and 0.81, respectively.

Statistical Analysis:

Data analysis was primarily comprised of frequency (f) and proportional distributions (%) of variables and descriptive statistics. Item scores were summated and divided into the total score in order to

find the proportional scores of athletes. Therefore, total proportional scores for each athlete ranged between 1 and 5. A t-test for independent variables was used to test for differences according to gender or educational level. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for the age variable.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Frequency and Proportional Distributions of Taekwondo Athletes According to Demographic Variables

Variables		f	%
Gender	Male	382	74.2
	Female	133	25.8
	Total	515	100
Age	16–18	250	48.5
	19–21	138	26.8
	22–24	74	14.4
	25–29	53	10.3
	Total	515	100
Educational Level	High School	388	75.3
	University	127	24.7
	Total	515	100

According to Table 1, 382 (74.2%) participants practicing taekwondo were male and 133 (25.8%) were female. In terms of age distribution, 250 participants (48.5%) were aged 16–18, 138 participants (26.8%) were aged 19–21, 74 participants (14.4%) were aged 22–24, and 53 participants (10.3%) were aged 25–29. Of the 515 participants, 388 (75.3%) were high school students and 127 were (24.7%) university students.

Table 2. Athletes' Opinions of the Factors Encouraging Participation in Taekwondo

Factors Encouraging Participation in Taekwondo	None		Slight		Medium		Considerable		Very Much		\bar{X}
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Sporting inclination of Parents and Siblings	42	8.2	53	10.3	108	21.0	129	25.0	183	35.5	3.70
The Effect of Local Environment	28	5.4	86	16.7	152	29.5	136	26.4	113	21.9	3.43
Friends and Peer Group	34	6.6	68	13.2	148	28.7	155	30.1	110	21.4	3.46
Physical Education Teacher	71	13.8	82	15.9	99	19.2	120	23.3	143	27.8	3.35
Media Organs	85	16.5	111	21.6	146	28.3	106	20.6	67	13.0	2.92
Television Coverage of Sport	61	11.8	116	22.5	136	26.4	128	24.9	74	14.4	3.07
School Sports Facilities and Materials	88	17.1	111	21.6	130	25.2	111	21.6	75	14.6	2.95
A Local Trainer	52	10.1	52	10.1	91	17.7	134	26.0	186	36.1	3.68

As shown in Table 2, participants stated that the level of involvement among parents and siblings towards sports, and the presence of a local trainer, provided the greatest encouragement in regards to sports participation. In comparison, media had the least influence on athletes' decisions.

According to Table 3, the most popular reason for participating in taekwondo was "enjoyment of success", followed by "loving taekwondo" and "acting in a group spirit with friends". The least common reason was "increasing income".

Table 3. Reasons for Laboring with Taekwondo

The Reason of Athletes for Laboring with Taekwondo	None		Slight		Medium		Considerable		Very Much		\bar{X}
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Increasing income	94	18.3	78	15.1	175	34.0	104	20.2	64	12.4	2.93
Loving taekwondo	4	0.8	18	3.5	52	10.1	120	23.3	321	62.3	4.43
Knowing positive contributions of sport	10	1.9	22	4.3	100	19.4	169	32.8	214	41.6	4.08
Easier integration into a social group	50	9.7	72	14.0	138	26.8	132	25.6	123	23.9	3.40
Positive use of free time via sport	13	2.5	26	5.0	102	19.8	138	26.8	236	45.8	4.08
Health benefits through laboring with taekwondo	9	1.7	29	5.6	83	16.1	141	27.4	253	49.1	4.17
Being loved and respected by friends as an athlete	26	5.0	45	8.7	93	18.1	140	27.2	211	41.0	3.90
Enjoyment of success	3	0.6	22	4.3	48	9.3	110	21.4	332	64.5	4.45
Acting in a group spirit with friends	8	1.6	18	3.5	73	14.2	145	28.2	271	52.6	4.27

Table 4. Athletes' Expectations of Taekwondo

The Expectations from Taekwondo Branch	None		Slight		Medium		Considerable		Very Much		\bar{X}
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Becoming and staying healthy	19	3.7	23	4.5	77	15.0	153	29.7	243	47.2	4.12
Having good physical appearance	9	1.7	42	8.2	107	20.8	174	33.8	183	35.5	3.93
Sustaining their relationships as a popular person laboring with sport	32	6.2	66	12.8	114	22.1	136	26.4	167	32.4	3.66
Being a good athlete and earning a living from sport	9	1.7	40	7.8	78	15.1	129	25.0	259	50.3	4.14
Future university degree in sports education	18	3.5	36	7.0	76	14.8	114	22.1	271	52.6	4.13
Becoming a trainer	24	4.7	56	10.9	94	18.3	144	28.0	197	38.3	3.84
Becoming a referee	97	18.8	104	20.2	105	20.4	84	16.3	125	24.3	3.07
Becoming a physical education teacher	35	6.8	47	9.1	63	12.2	120	23.3	250	48.5	3.98
Having financial opportunities	27	5.2	49	9.5	119	23.1	138	26.8	182	35.3	3.77
Being selected for national team, being a national athlete	2	0.4	9	1.7	29	5.6	86	16.7	389	75.5	4.65

Table 5. Factors Encouraging Taekwondo, the Reason for Laboring with This Sport and Athletes' Expectations according to Gender

Variables	Gender	N	\bar{X}	S	t	sd	p
Factors Encouraging Taekwondo	Male	382	3.33	0.85	0.267	513	0.790
	Female	133	3.30	0.84			
The Views regarding Laboring with Taekwondo	Male	382	3.97	0.64	0.126	513	0.900
	Female	133	3.96	0.66			
Expectations from Taekwondo	Male	382	3.93	0.68	-0.240	513	0.810
	Female	133	3.94	0.62			

According to Table 4, the most common response was "The Expectations to be Chosen for National Team", whereas the least common as "The Expectation to be Referee".

According to Table 5, male athletes had more positive views regarding the factors encouraging taekwondo (\bar{X} =3.33) than those of female taekwondo athletes, but the difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

The views of male athletes regarding the reasons for practicing with taekwondo (\bar{X} =3.97) were slightly more positive than those of female athletes, but the difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

Female athletes had slightly more positive expectations from taekwondo (\bar{X} =3.94) than male athletes, but the difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

Table 6. Factors Encouraging Taekwondo, the Reason for Laboring with This Sport and Athletes' Expectations according to Age

Variables	age	N	\bar{X}	S	F	p
The Views regarding the Elements Encouraging Taekwondo	16–18	250	3.36	0.82	0.873	0.455
	19–21	138	3.26	0.83		
	22–24	74	3.38	0.82		
	25–29	53	3.21	1.01		
The Views regarding Laboring with Taekwondo	16–18	250	3.99	0.65	1.142	0.332
	19–21	138	3.94	0.66		
	22–24	74	4.05	0.63		
	25–29	53	3.85	0.63		
The Views regarding Expectations from Taekwondo	16–18	250	3.94	0.64	0.341	0.796
	19–21	138	3.92	0.68		
	22–24	74	3.95	0.71		
	25–29	53	3.85	0.70		

According to Table 6, the views of athletes aged between 22 and 24 regarding the elements encouraging taekwondo ($\bar{X}=3.38$) were more positive than those of other age groups, but the difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

Athletes aged between 22 and 24 expressed more positive reasons for laboring with taekwondo

($\bar{X}=4.05$) than those of other ages, but the difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

Athletes aged between 22 and 24 expressed more positive expectations from taekwondo ($\bar{X}=4.14$), but the difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

Table 7. Factors Encouraging Taekwondo, the Reason for Laboring with This Sport and Athletes' Expectations according to Educational Level

Variables	Educational Level	N	\bar{X}	S	t	sd	p
The Views regarding the Elements Encouraging Taekwondo	High school	388	3.35	0.85	1.267	513	0.206
	University	127	3.24	0.82			
The Views regarding Laboring with Taekwondo	High school	388	3.96	0.65	-0.457	513	0.648
	University	127	3.99	0.65			
The Views regarding Expectations from Taekwondo	High school	388	3.93	0.67	0.095	513	0.924
	University	127	3.92	0.67			

According to Table 7, athletes with a high school education expressed more positive views regarding the elements encouraging taekwondo ($\bar{X}=3.35$) than those with university educational level education, but the difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

Athletes with university educational level expressed more positive reasons for laboring with taekwondo ($\bar{X}=3.99$) than those with high school educational level, but the difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

Athletes with high school education level expressed more positive expectations from taekwondo ($\bar{X}=3.93$) than those with a university education, but the difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The study examined factors encouraging male and female elite female athletes in Turkey taekwondo championship in 2012 to participate in taekwondo, the reasons for becoming involved with this branch of Martial Arts, and their expectations from the sport.

According to the findings:

1. The effect of mother, father and siblings on taekwondo participation

The findings showed that family members were the greatest influence in encouraging athletes to take up taekwondo. In a similar study, Alibaz et al. (2006) came to similar conclusions; and, in addition, Yıldırım and Sunay (2009), Altınok (2004), Whitehead et al. (2006), Yıldız (2006), Şimşek and Gökdemir (2006), Wald (2003), Bayraktar and Sunay (2006),

Sunay and Saracaloğlu (2003) all reported findings consistent with the present study: that athletes were strongly influenced by their families. According to these findings, families, the presence of sports culture in families, knowledge about the benefits of sports and family support for individuals beginning sports are very effective in regards to an individual's participation with sports.

2. The effect of a local trainer

The second most important factor encouraging taekwondo was the presence of a local trainer. According to Sunay and Saracaloğlu (2003), the presence of a local trainer in a relevant sport branch was the main factor encouraging licensed athletes to begin sports. The literature includes other studies supporting this finding (Kılıçgil, 1998; Aslan and Başaran, 2002).

3. The effect of media organs in inclining to sport

According to the research, the least effective factor steering people towards taekwondo is media, or rather, the expectations of athletes becoming famous. In researches conducted with different groups, Kılıçgil (1998), Kara and Pular (2003), Sunay and Saracaloğlu (2003), Alibaz et al. (2006), Şimşek and Gökdemir (2006), Bayraktar and Sunay (2008), Yıldırım and Sunay (2009), detected that media has a minimal effect on encouraging one to take-up sports. These findings support the observations of the research.

The study examined the reasons of athletes in Turkey for practicing taekwondo. According to the findings:

1. Enjoyment of Success

Athletes stated that "enjoyment of success" was the most important reason for practicing taekwondo. Similar findings were reported by Sunay and Saracaloğlu (2003), Alibaz et al. (2006), Bayraktar and Sunay (2006), Şimşek and Gökdemir'in (2006) in studies of various sports. All athletes participating in the study had earned the right to participate in the Turkish Championship by succeeding in various provincial qualifiers. It may be natural for them to be motivated by success, and it may be suggested that creating competitive conditions in which athletes could be successful in provinces, regions and special tournaments could create positive contributions for them to work with and continue taekwondo.

2. Loving Taekwondo

The findings showed that "loving taekwondo" was the second most important element agreed upon by participants. The findings support those of Sunay and Saracaloğlu (2003), Kara and Pular (2003), Alibaz et al. (2006), Şimşek and Gökdemir (2006), Bayraktar and Sunay (2007). This reason is therefore an important element in decisions to take up and continue taekwondo.

The results showed that athletes were not

motivated by financial gain and paid some clubs and fitness centers in order to receive training, which supports this finding.

Given these reasons for athletes' commitment to taekwondo, it is important that taekwondo fitness centers, clubs, coaches, trainers and tournament referees should lead athletes without demotivating and offending athletes involved in the sport.

3. Acting in a team spirit with friends

"Acting in a team spirit with friends" was the third most common motivation expressed by participants. Although taekwondo is an individual sport, most athletes stated that socializing, collaborating, and working with friends as important reasons for their involvement in the sport.

The research examined the expectations of athletes from taekwondo. According to the findings:

1. The expectation to be selected for national team

Being selected for the national team was the most common expectation among participants. This result supports the reason "enjoying from success", which was the most common reason for beginning taekwondo. In a study of taekwondo athletes, Alibaz et al. (2006) also found that being selected for the national team was the most important factor. Turkey's individual or team success in taekwondo at the Olympic Games and World and Europe Championships may increase the hope that these individuals are selected by the national team.

2. The expectation to become referee

The results showed that few participants expected to become a referee. It may be said that athletes are not interested in becoming a referee due to the lack of appeal for refereeing. Sunay and Saracaloğlu (2003) and Bayraktar and Sunay (2007) found low levels individuals wishing to become a referee.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study examined the factors encouraging taekwondo athletes in Turkey. Athletes primarily begin this sport with the **encouragement of their families**. In addition, **a local trainer and friend/peer groups** are effective motivational tools for athletes deciding to take up taekwondo. According to the findings, media organizations had the least influence in encouraging athletes to take up the sport. It may be said that Turkey, which wants to organize 2020 Olympic Games, does not demonstrate the same amount of attention for taekwondo, as it shows to sports such as football. This is a shame as taekwondo, having an Olympic champion, has a lot of potential for bringing Turkish success in future international competitions.

The study examined the motivations for athletes practicing taekwondo and determined that

athletes stated **enjoying from success** as the primary reason. Another important finding of the study is that athletes chose this sport due to their **love of taekwondo**. Athletes are generally not motivated by an increase in their income. Primarily, families, sport educators and all individuals practicing sports have great responsibilities in the preservation and development of an athletes love for taekwondo. In addition, introducing successful athletes to society would encourage participation in this sport.

The highest expectation and goal of taekwondo athletes was to **be selected for the national team**. In line with this result, taekwondo educators and everyone involved in sport are aware of the difficulties in being selected for the national team. To that end, scientific and future practices with athletes are important areas of focus for taekwondo trainers. In addition, hosting Olympic, World and European Championships in taekwondo increases the number of new athletes competing to be selected for the national team.

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