

The Motivation and Reasons behind Taking Distance-based Taekwondo Martial Arts Lessons: Social Cognitive Career Perspectives from Parents

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Keywords: Distance Learning, Martial Arts Education, Online Education, Online Programme, Social Cognitive Career Theory, Technologically-assisted Teaching Tool.

Abstract: The increasing use of technologically-assisted teaching and learning approaches and tools has been raised in the current school system. However, most of the practice-based and vocational-based courses have still relied on face-to-face instruction. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of courses and programmes have been moved to the online platform for teaching. In this study, the researcher interviewed 12 participants who have sent to their children to one of the distance learning based martial arts education courses in South Korea. Based on the lens of the Social Cognitive Career Theory, this study sought to understand the motivation and reasons why do parents want to send their children to one of the distance learning based martial arts school online? The finding of this study indicated that the achievements of education and career goals always drove the motivation and reasons of these groups of parents, regardless of the outcomes of the programmes and the willingness of their children. The results of this study provided a blueprint for government leaders, policymakers, school leaders, parents, students, and researchers to understand the current social problem, such technologically-assisted tools.


1 INTRODUCTION

The increasing use of technologically-assisted teaching and learning approaches and strategies in the pre-12 education system has raised concerns and prompted confusion around the applications, effectiveness, expectations, experiences, and outcomes related to these distance-based materials and teaching (Dos Santos, 2019a, 2020f; Espino et al., 2020; Santagata and Guarino, 2011). Traditional approaches and strategies for pre-12 education and schooling usually involve face-to-face instructions with technologically-assisted materials delivered by instructors in classroom environments (Weiner, 2012; Weiner and Jerome, 2016). However, due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, many pre-12 and university-level education institutions have moved to distance learning to prevent infection among both students and instructors (Simpson, 2018).

Distance learning is not a new teaching and learning approach or strategy internationally (Brown

et al., 2015; Yamagata-Lynch et al., 2015). However, many East Asian learners, particularly South Korean learners and parents, do not have any previous experience or expectations of visual classroom environments. Recently, several studies have investigated feedback from both students and instructors (Cavus, 2015; Elyakim et al., 2019). However, it is important to understand how parents make sense of and describe these distance learning experiences and the expectations of their children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Martial arts, which students learn in face-to-face classroom environments, involve vocational and practical-based exercises and performances, rather than either cognitive learning or paper-based exercises (Lantz, 2002). In traditional martial arts education, instructors demonstrate the exercises, the students follow the same steps and procedures, and the instructors provide effective feedback and comments to help the students improve. In addition to practice exercises and performances, instructors may teach breathing exercises, as sports and performances

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require both psychological and physical developments (Nosanchuk, 1981).

According to many previous studies (Brown et al., 2015; Dos Santos, 2020b; Yamagata-Lynch et al., 2015), distance learning and online teaching and learning may provide excellent materials and backgrounds for cognitive development and textbook-oriented knowledge. In other words, learners may gain expected outcomes and results through theoretical knowledge and practice. However, as some practical and vocational skills may need to be demonstrated and explained by instructors, it may become a question of how students can learn these essential skills from visual materials.

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the development of technologically-assisted teaching and learning strategies, many schools and universities have moved to distance learning based classroom environments. From early 2020, government departments required all schools, regardless of their status and subject matter, to move to distance learning platforms. It was expected that traditional pre-12 schools and universities should be well prepared to make this move to distance learning classroom environments, as much of the coursework and many of the lessons involve cognitive-based learning materials. However, instructors of vocational and practical courses (in this case, martial arts lessons) may be facing difficulties, concerns, and confusion, as their lessons can only be effectively delivered via face-to-face instructions. A previous study (Petrenko et al., 2020) has indicated that the idea of delivering vocational courses via distance learning prompts concerns about the tailor-made coursework design, positive communication between instructors and students, effective interactions between students, and practical exercises with effective feedback and comments.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand and explore the motivation and reasons behind why parents decide to send their school-age children to a distance learning based martial arts (i.e., Taekwondo) course online. It is worth noting that this study does not focus on measurements of effectiveness or grading improvement(s). This study was guided by the following research questions:

- Why do parents want to send their child(ren) to one of the distance learning based martial arts (i.e., Taekwondo) schools online? What are the motivations and reasons behind this decision?

The results of this study may provide a holistic picture for school leaders, parents, students, and instructors in regard to how to reform martial arts education, improve vocational-based curricula, and select distance learning based teaching and learning programmes.

1.2 Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Career Theory

The Social Cognitive Career Theory is one of the popular approaches and theories in the field of motivation, reasons, and career decision. The theory was originally developed by (Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996). The theory mainly focused on how individuals and groups decide their career decision and development based on their achievement of education and career goals, academic and career interests, and the interests of career developments.

Over the last few decades, a large number of researchers and scholars employed this theory to studies about career development (Dos Santos, 2020a), motivation (Dos Santos, 2018a), foreign language teaching and learning (Dos Santos, 2018b), teachers' professional development, and individuals' academic decision (Brown and Lent, 2019; Flores and O'Brien, 2002; Gibbons and Shoffner, 2004; Thompson et al., 2017).

However, based on the development of the behaviours of the individuals and groups, as well as the foundation of the theory, the current Social Cognitive Career Theory was developed based on the recommendation of some applied studies. As a result, the current version of the Social Cognitive Career Theory concerns the connections and relationships among four factors, which are,

- Interests of career developments;
- Achievements of education and career goals;
- Academic and career interest; and
- Financial consideration

The current study concerned about these four factors and applied these directions as the lens for the findings and discussions.

2 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The current study employed the qualitative research method (Tang and Dos Santos, 2017) as the means of the research design. Based on the nature of this study, the researcher sought to understand the motivation(s) and the reason(s) why do parents want to send their

child(ren) to one of the distance learning based martial arts (i.e., Taekwondo) schools online? What are the motivations and reasons behind this decision? In order to collect the first-hand data from the participants, asking them would be the appropriate approach.

2.1 Research Design: Case Study

The case study methodology was employed as the researcher recruited and collected data from the participants who were located on one site in South Korea. The exploratory embedded single-case study research design was used in this study (Yin, 2012). The case for this study was located in a martial arts school in South Korea. The case study approach was selected because the researcher tended to understand how the individuals and groups in a particular site and area would describe their experience about the distance learning based teaching and learning experience and approach of the martial arts education for their children.

2.2 The Participants

The participants were parents of a group of children who are currently taking the distance learning based martial arts education in one of the South Korean academies. The purposive sampling strategy was employed in order to recruit the participants.

The population of the participants were all parents. The researcher contacted the administrator of the school for the permission of the study. The administrator transferred the invitation to each parent for the ideas about this study. As a result, 12 participants would like to join this study for further investigation.

2.3 Data Collection

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the recommendation of the social distancing from the South Korean government, only a few options can be exercised for qualitative data collection. Therefore, the researcher employed the Zoom-based interview session for the data collection procedure.

The researcher employed the semi-structured interview tool to collect feedback and sharing according to the research question based on the lens of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Dos Santos, 2018a, 2019b, 2020b, 2020d, 2020e; Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996).

Each participant was interviewed once for the data collection procedure. Each interview session lasted from 45 minutes to 53 minutes. During the interview

sessions, the researcher employed a digital recorder for recording. All agreed with the arrangement of the interview procedure.

2.4 Data Analysis

After the researcher completed the data collection procedure, the researcher immediately transcribed the voice messages into written transcripts for data analysis. The researcher re-read the written transcripts multiple times for potential themes and subthemes based on the guideline from the general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006).

The researcher first employed the open-coding technique to categorise the large-size transcripts into the first-level themes and subthemes (Merriam, 2009). During this time, the researcher grouped 11 themes and 12 subthemes. However, an effective qualitative research study should have narrowed groups for reporting. Therefore, the researcher employed the axial-coding technique for second-level themes and subthemes. As a result, two themes and five subthemes were merged (Merriam, 2009).

2.5 Human Subject Protection

The privacy of the participants was the most important part of this study. Therefore, the researcher employed all different types of strategies to protect the privacy of the site, the participants, and the related personnel. The signed and unsigned content forms and agreements, personal contacts, voice messages, written transcripts, and related materials were all locked in a password-protected cabinet. Only the researcher has the rights to read it.

After the researcher is completed, the researcher deleted and destroyed the related materials immediately in order to protect the privacy of all the parties.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the Zoom interview sessions, all the participants answered the same interview questions, to enable us to collect their opinions and feedback about the research questions, based on the theoretical framework of Social Cognitive Career Theory (Dos Santos, 2018a, 2019b, 2020b, 2020d, 2020e; Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996).

This chapter summarises the results from the 12 semi-structured interview sessions, organised by two themes: academic achievement and discipline of study. Although all parents and students were from

different families and backgrounds, many of these parents shared similar ideas and stories about their decisions. The following section explains how Social Cognitive Career Theory may connect to the motivations and reasons of these groups of parents (Dos Santos, 2018a, 2019b, 2020b, 2020d, 2020e; Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996).

Unlike previous studies (Freer and Evans, 2019) that have focused on academic-oriented courses in secondary schools and universities, this study sought an understanding of practice-based courses – in this case, martial arts (i.e., Taekwondo) – during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Korea. More importantly, the researcher sought the feedback of parents instead of students.

3.1 Academic Achievement

3.1.1 Need to Take Additional After-school Programmes for Personal Development

First, all 12 participants indicated that, although government-funded schools do not require students to take any practice-based courses via online learning platforms, all parents allowed their children to continue with their sports courses, to gain better performance and achieve better grades. According to the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Dos Santos, 2018a, 2019b, 2020b, 2020d, 2020e; Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996), the participants positioned the academic achievement(s) of their children as highly important. Their feedback, therefore, reflected the factor of academic achievements and goals in Social Cognitive Career Theory. The researcher gained significant feedback from the participants, as follows:

I think it is important for my two children to take physical education courses at school. However, due to government regulations, there were no physical education courses available via the online platform at their high school and middle school. So, I have to pay additional tuition fees to the academy. I want them to learn some good knowledge from teachers. (Participant #1)

I need my kid to go to the academy because I think it is important for him to learn additional knowledge and skills beyond his high school curriculum. Now, he can only study some traditional subjects online, such as biology and physics. What about sports and physical education? Therefore, I have to send him to the online academy. He needs to have these academic achievements. (Participant #4)

Based on the feedback of the participants and our own reflections on Social Cognitive Career Theory (Dos Santos, 2018a, 2019b, 2020b, 2020d, 2020e; Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996), it is evident that the participants believed that physical education could not be delivered due to government recommendations and regulations. To receive a source of physical education skills, they sent their child(ren) to a distance learning based academy to make up for the missing parts of the current school curriculum.

3.1.2 Need to Take Additional After-school Programmes to Meet Social Expectations

Second, according to some previous studies (Kim, 2009; Kwon et al., 2017), South Korean people and communities expect well-established backgrounds and reports from their candidates and applicants. In other words, university admissions offices tend to recruit applicants with excellent grades, extraordinary activities, and positive recommendation letters. Due to social pressure and expectations, many parents decide to send their children to after-school programmes and academies, regardless of their delivery modes. According to Social Cognitive Career Theory (Dos Santos, 2018a, 2019b, 2020b, 2020d, 2020e; Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996), the following feedback from three participants is connected to the factor of academic achievements and goals:

If my kid does not go to the academy, how can he apply to some excellent and top universities in the future? In Korea, universities and companies always evaluate students and young people's report cards and the ranking of their university. If my boy won some of the Taekwondo games in Korea, he could go to one of the top universities after high school. (Participant #3)

Most of my children's classmates are taking different types of programmes and courses from the academy, from music, mathematics, Chinese, and English to dancing. My children cannot miss any of these after-school programmes. I asked my boys which courses they would like to take. They told me Taekwondo. (Participant #12)

Children need to study hard, very hard. This is the social expectation of Korean people. I used to live in this pressured society and community. Even if I don't want to, the social pressure will ask my children to do so. (Participant #2)

Based on the feedback from these participants, the researcher concluded that social expectations and pressure from members of the public play important roles in parents' decisions and motivations. Many participants indicated that South Korean people always compare people's backgrounds and achievements, due to social pressure. Based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (Dos Santos, 2018a, 2019b, 2020b, 2020d, 2020e; Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996), the behaviours and decisions of these participants (i.e. parents) confirmed the factor of academic achievements and goals (i.e., for both the desires of parents and social pressure).

3.1.3 Develop Some Personal Goals and Achievements during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Finally, all participants advocated that children do not need to go to school due to government policy. Therefore, there is some additional space for further development (i.e., in the area of hobbies and interests). Parents are willing to spend additional financial resources for some after-school programmes and courses. In this case, with negotiation between their children, the participants decided to send their children to a martial arts academy for online Taekwondo lessons. A previous study (Kim, 2009) has shown that South Korean families generally save and spend a certain amount of their monthly expenses for their children's after-school programmes and courses. Two participants in this study confirmed this:

It is not a trend, but a requirement for Korean children and students to attend after-school programmes and courses after their regular school hours. Now, my children don't need to go to school. Instead of playing computer games, why don't they spend some time playing sports? (Participant #9)

I don't want my children to develop an interest in playing computer games. It is not good at all. They don't like mathematics, they don't like English. I asked them if they like sports; they said yes. But our house cannot be a running field or basketball field, so let's try Taekwondo. (Participant #10)

In conclusion, most of the feedback from the participants reflected Social Cognitive Career Theory (Dos Santos, 2018a, 2019b, 2020b, 2020d, 2020e; Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996), particularly the factor of academic achievements and goals. Social

expectations and pressure also play important roles in parents' motivation and decisions. Although some agreed that the distance learning based Taekwondo and related sport lessons might not be effective, they are willing to spend financial resources on them. The academic achievements of their children are important in motivating the course selection and related decisions.

3.2 Discipline of Study

Besides the consideration of academic achievement, all 12 participants expressed ideas regarding discipline and discipline of study for traditional-age students. Due to traditional thinking and the influence of Confucianism in South Korea, young people, particularly traditional-age students, are expected to go to school and earn excellent grades, to show respect for their families.

3.2.1 Work Hard and Become Good Students and Children

The idea of filial piety (Hui et al., 2018) was repeated more than 50 times during the interview sessions. Like many East Asian groups and families, South Korean people view filial piety as one of the most important behaviours and practices of their daily lives, due to the influence of Confucianism. All participants believed that their children should follow their guidelines and plans to become good students and children. Three participants in particular shared their ideas in this respect:

These are the rules in our Korean tradition. It is not something that I or we can break. I know it is very hard for my children. I want to play computer games too, but it is the responsibility of students to study... (Participant #11)

My children do not understand how society and company leaders... how bad those people and leaders are. I experienced that. I don't want them to fall into the same trap. They need to show people they are hard-working students and good students. Society will not let them go in such easy ways. (Participant #8)

I know it is hard for all of us – parents, children, and even the teachers – but this is how it works in Korea. This is discipline. We have to follow the rules. (Participant #7)

All participants believed that Korean communities and the top leadership expect positive

backgrounds and excellent discipline from the next generations. According to Social Cognitive Career Theory (Dos Santos, 2018a, 2019b, 2020b, 2020d, 2020e; Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996), positive backgrounds and discipline may lead to the factor of academic achievements and goals. The expectation of good grades and well-established personalities framed the directions and motivations of the parents' motivations and decisions.

3.2.2 Children Should Take After-school Programmes and Courses Regardless of Their Desires

The researcher further asked the participants about what they would do if their child(ren) did not want to take any additional after-school programmes and courses – how would they react? A previous study (Bousselaire, 2017) has indicated that a large number of South Korean students take different types of after-school programmes and courses (i.e., based on personal desires or parental influence) (Choi and Cho, 2016). In this case, the participants indicated that they let their children choose which after-school programmes and courses to take (i.e., subject matter). However, their children must take some after-school programmes to meet their (i.e., the parents') desires. Two significant comments are pertinent in this respect:

My children can select their own courses, but they have to take a course, an after-school course at the academy. I have two boys and one girl. My girl is taking English and my second boy is taking mathematics. They can take whatever they want. It is free enough. (Participant #5)

After-school programmes are important; they need to take them regardless of the subjects, from music to sport, but I need them to take it. (Participant #6)

In conclusion, this study confirmed that the motivations and reasons were influenced by Social Cognitive Career Theory (Dos Santos, 2018a, 2019b, 2020b, 2020d, 2020e; Lent et al., 1994; Lent and Brown, 1996, particularly the factor of academic achievements and goals. More importantly, the researcher found that parents decided to send their children to an academy mainly because of social expectations and pressure from their Korean communities and societies. Korean societies expect positive and effective academic achievements and backgrounds from the next generations and young people. If their children do not meet these expectations, societies may neglect their existence.

As a result, the participants decided to send their children to different types of after-school programmes and courses, regardless of the teaching and learning modes and locations.

4 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Each study has its own limitation(s). The researcher indicated that there are two limitations in this study. First, the study focused on a single-site for this case study. Participants from other backgrounds and site-environments may have different ideas and sharing. Therefore, future research may continue to discover sharing and feedback from other schools and participants.

Second, the current study investigated the course in the field of martial arts (i.e. Taekwondo). However, other practical-based and vocational-based courses and programmes may face a similar difficulty and problem. Therefore, future research studies may expand the directions and inquiries to other subject matters.

5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the teaching and learning behaviours of many courses and programmes, including the practice-based and vocational-based subject matters. Based on the results of this study and the lens of the Social Cognitive Career Theory, South Korean parents tend to send their children to different types of after-school programmes and academies for academic and interest enhancements. Although the after-school programmes and courses may not be beneficial to their children, the social expectation and trend force them to spend additional financial resources for the courses.

Second, although some of the practice-based and vocational-based programmes and courses may not be beneficial if the instructions are delivered via distance learning platforms. Most of the participants (i.e. parents) continue to send their children to these courses regardless of the outcomes and the results. The findings of this study confirmed the recommendations and guidelines of the Social Cognitive Career Theory about the factor of academic achievements and goals.

The results of this study serve as the blueprint for the government leaders, school leaders,

policymakers, parents, students, and researchers to reform and polish their current policies and regulations about after-school programmes and distance learning based programmes in the East Asian region, particularly the South Korean environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study received the supports from the Woosong University Academic Research Funding 2020.

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