

*Opportunities, Issues and Best Practices in Online
Education and Examination of University Students*

INTERACTIVE ONLINE TAEKWONDO TRAINING AND EDUCATION IN THE TIMES OF COVID-19

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Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the world in every aspect of our life. It produced a huge impact on sports and education. People have to adapt and change in order to maintain their normal activities. Education and sports training are of great importance to young people. In this study, I research the possibilities for trainings under COVID-19 pandemic and local lockdowns. There are several ways to continue teaching and educating students in taekwondo under the social distancing rules.

The research focused on discussing the way taekwondo practicing has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic and what types of taekwondo trainings beginners, advanced and elite sportsmen prefer during the local lockdown.

The study was conducted through online questionnaires and interviews with coaches and taekwondo students. It shows that there was a major decrease in the number of students practicing taekwondo and it also reveals the ongoing fear of a major part of taekwondo athletes of the coronavirus.

Keywords: taekwondo; COVID-19; online; interactive; education

Introduction

Sports have always been of great importance for social and economic development. All governments recognize the effect of sport activities on the society and therefore the sports issue is included in the Political Declaration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which reflects on "the contribution sports make to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities, as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives"¹⁾.

In the beginning of 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported many cases of pneumonia with no deaths in Wuhan. Later, a novel coronavirus was identified and temporary named 2019-nCoV. According to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that usually cause mild to moderate upper-respiratory tract illnesses, like the common cold²⁾. The newly discovered novel coronavirus was recognized as SARS-CoV-2 by the World Health Organization and the disease was named COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has a tremendous effect on all spheres of economic and social life. It has a huge impact on sports as well. Individual and team trainings have been cancelled. Championships and all kinds of tournaments have been delayed, postponed and even cancelled all over the world. The biggest sport event on the planet – the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games has been postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Youth Olympic Games have also been recently postponed to 2026³⁾. This affects a whole generation of talented athletes who will not have the opportunity to participate in the most prestigious youth sports event in the world. Most countries declared a state of emergency and governments had to take extraordinary measures to protect the health and well-being of the population⁴⁾. There were lockdowns and people had to stay at home for long periods of time. That affected the education process, businesses, sports and all spheres of life. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), almost 1.6 billion children in 195 countries worldwide were affected and could not use their classrooms⁵⁾. Similar or even worse was the situation with the sports facilities usually used for trainings in different sports.

Since it is the biggest world pandemic in the last decades, this study is to research the possibilities for interactive online taekwondo education and trainings of elite taekwondo athletes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Taekwondo is a traditional Korean martial art and an Olympic sport⁶⁾. The research was conducted among taekwondo coaches (instructors, educators), elite athletes and active taekwondo students on how the COVID-19 pandemic affected taekwondo education and trainings.

The main goal of this study is to examine the possibilities for taekwondo education and training of athletes – beginners and advanced – including elite athletes and taekwondo university students, under a pandemic situation. The research also shows the effect of the pandemic and the lockdowns on the number of students that practice taekwondo in Bulgaria.

The design of the study puts all students under different types of trainings suitable for practicing taekwondo with a view to conducting sports activities in safe conditions at all levels as indicated by the Council of EU Sports Ministers⁷⁾:

1. Interactive online training and education through a website or an application;
2. Written training programs sent to the students via email or social media channels;
3. Video trainings sent to students via internet;
4. Video challenges sent to students through internet channels – YouTube, Facebook, Viber, or WhatsApp groups;
5. Telephone conversations.

Most of these types of trainings could be described as e-learning. The e-student.org site⁸⁾ enumerates 10 types of e-learning:

1. Computer Management Learning (CML)

2. Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI)
3. Synchronous Online Learning
4. Asynchronous Online Learning
5. Fixed E-learning
6. Adaptive E-learning
7. Linear E-learning
8. Interactive Online learning
9. Individual Online learning
10. Collaborative Online learning

Furthermore, the same source describes another classification of e-learning which is also available identifying two primary types of e-learning: computer-based e-learning and internet based e-learning.

Methods

The study was conducted through online questionnaires, telephone and online interviews completed by coaches, elite athletes and regular taekwondo students. The subjects of the research are members of the Bulgarian Taekwondo Federation – WT (BTF-WT) – coaches, university students, national team players and regular taekwondo students (Figure 1). The survey covered the period from the end of March 2020 to the end of June 2020. The organization and the outcomes of the first online taekwondo championships were also a subject of this study. The data analysis was done through MS excel.

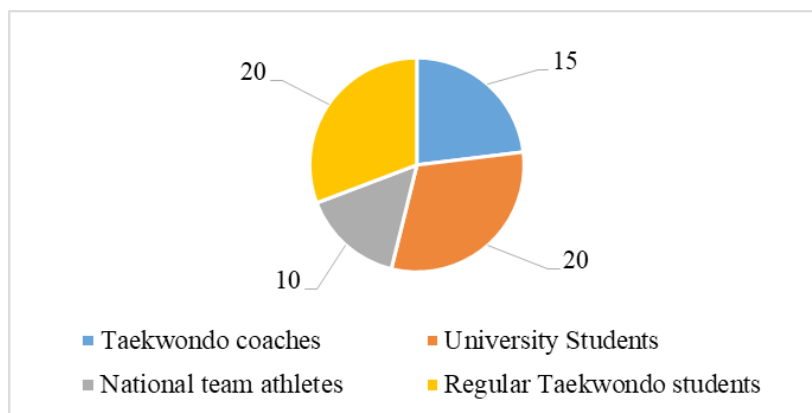


Figure 1. Participants in the study

Figure 1 shows the number of participants in the research and their roles in taekwondo. 15 taekwondo coaches, 20 university students, 10 national taekwondo athletes and 20 regular taekwondo students took part in the surveys.

Results

During my research I identified several types of taekwondo trainings that were possible for taekwondo students. Figure 2 shows the possibilities for taekwondo trainings and education during the pandemic.

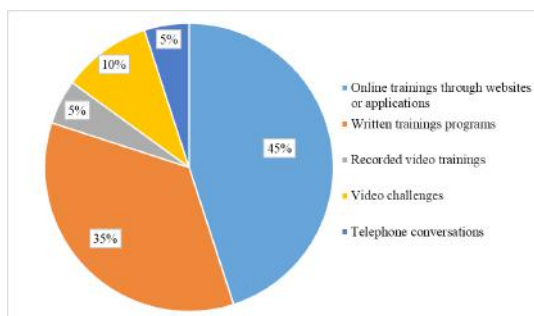


Figure 2. Taekwondo trainings during COVID-19

Online trainings through websites or applications

The chart shows that the most common type of taekwondo education and training during the COVID-19 pandemic were online trainings through websites or applications. In this type of e-trainings, 70% of the respondents used the Zoom platform through a computer, a laptop or a mobile device, 20% used the Facebook application, 5% used Viber and 5% used other applications.

90% of the users of this type of e-training and e-learning were regular taekwondo students, i.e. beginners and intermediate level of taekwondo students. The other 10% included the elite athletes as well as those who competed at national or international level championships.

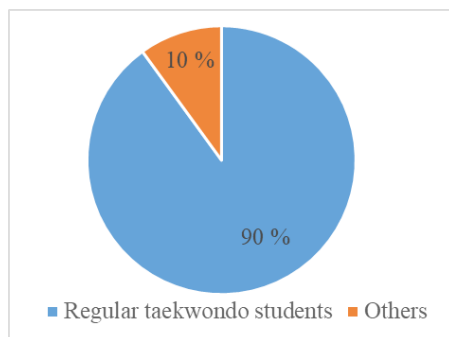


Figure 3. Students in online taekwondo trainings and education

All taekwondo students at the National Sports Academy “Vassil Levski” used an online platform – Facebook through a website or a mobile device for their education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lectures were delivered online in real time. This type of e-learning is referred to as synchronous learning⁹⁾.

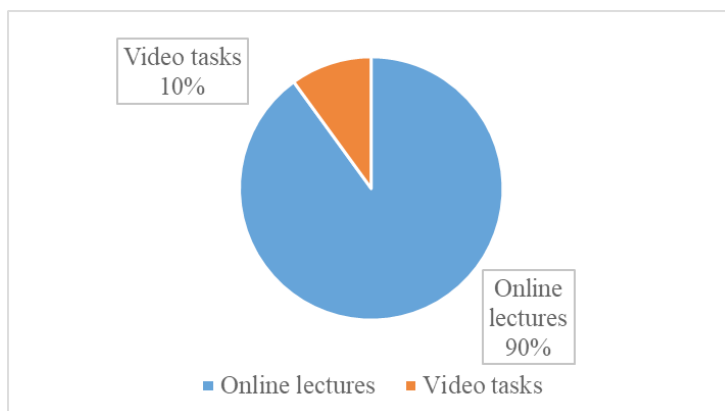


Figure 4. Taekwondo education at the National Sports Academy “Vassil Levski”

Written training programs

The survey reveals that 35% of the respondents in the study used training programs prepared in advance and sent by the coaches. Typically, those were day-by-day training programs. Figure 5 shows that 80% of the users of those programs were elite athletes, i.e. national team players and competitors on the national and international level). The other 20% were taekwondo students that practiced taekwondo regularly as a physical activity and a martial art.

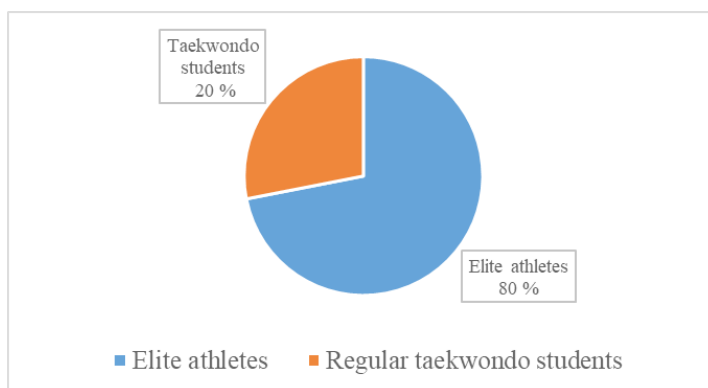


Figure 5. Written training programs

Video challenges

10 % of the participants in the study used video challenges for practicing taekwondo under the pandemic situation. Usually the coaches developed a challenge for the students. The students then tried to meet or exceed the challenge. They recorded their performances and shared them, using different internet options. Most of the users of this method for training and education during the lockdowns were elite taekwondo athletes and those who were most keen on competing. Beginners and middle-level taekwondo students showed little interest in joining video challenges.

Prerecorded training videos

A small percentage of the participants in the study answered that they used prerecorded training videos. Coaches using this type of training preferred it so that they could prepare the training session in advance and avoid the need for being online at a certain fixed time. In the same vein, it was the choice of students who preferred to access the training at a different time and place.

Telephone conversations, emails and chats

5% of the respondents used telephone conversations, emails or chats for their training sessions. No coach indicated the use of emails for sending their training programs to the students. Sometimes they used telephone conversations to discuss specific training matters either before or after the training session.

Number of taekwondo students

This study shows that there was a decrease in the number of people practicing taekwondo during the COVID-19 pandemic – around 65 % of the students continued to train taekwondo during the pandemic and the lockdowns, using some of the taekwondo training methods described above. This research shows that only 35 % of the regular taekwondo practitioners continued to practice taekwondo after the lockdowns.

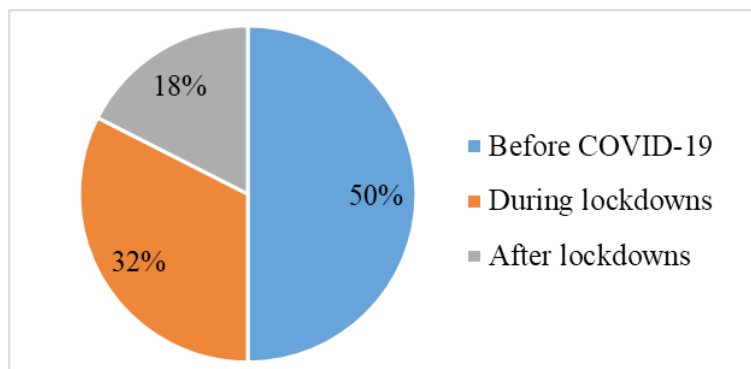


Figure 6. Number of taekwondo students before, during and after lockdowns

The first online taekwondo championships in Bulgaria

The Taekwondo Department of the National Sports Academy “Vassil Levski” organized and hosted the first online taekwondo championship in Bulgaria. The tournament was conducted in real time using the Zoom platform and all taekwondo students took part in it. Referees were invited to judge the performance of the students. It was one of the first competitions to be done online.

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic is new to the world with its huge impact on all aspects of life. However, people have to continue their normal lives. In order to do so, they have to change and adapt to the challenge. Sports and education are of great importance to young people who have to continue with their normal educational and sports activities¹⁰. Even in the situation of local lockdowns and social distancing, there are various ways for students to do taekwondo and sports and to advance in their education. However, the number of students practicing taekwondo was higher before the pandemic. This study shows that most of the students switched to online trainings under the social distancing rules and local lockdowns. Still, after the end of the lockdown not many taekwondo practitioners returned to normal activities. A plausible explanation of these reduced numbers is that parents and students are still afraid of getting infected with the COVID-19.

NOTES

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