

## Analysis on the Effects of the Jeong-jwa Activity Based on Toegye Yi Hwang's Idea of Gyeong on Creative Personality of High School Students

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**Abstract.** This study conducted an experiment on students attending an academic high school by setting a Jeong-jwa activity, which is one of the practices of Toegye Yi Hwang's idea of Gyeong, as part of regular classes, and examined the changes in creative personality. Participants were 155 students and divided into two groups (experimental group: 2 classes, 59 students, 38.1%; control group: 3 classes, 96 students, 61.9%). Creative personality test developed by the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) in 2011, which is consisted of 6 sub-factors (curiosity, task commitment, aesthetics, risk taking, open-mindedness, and independence of judgment) with a total of 27 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale, was utilized for measuring the level of creative personality of students. The pretest and posttest were analyzed with One-way ANCOVA, excepts for 'open-mindedness' and 'independence of judgment' among sub-factors because of lower reliability. The results showed that the main effect on creative personality, and task commitment, aesthetics, and risk taking among the sub-factors of creative personality were statistically significant differences between the two groups. However, the main effect on curiosity was no statistically significant difference between the two groups.

**Keywords:** Gyeong, Toegye Yi Hwang, Jeong-jwa, Creative Personality, High School Students

### 1 Introduction

Gyeong (敬, reverent seriousness) has been discussed as a study method in the traditional sense, which is for moral training. Since Gyeong was used in various contexts, not all of them can be listed; and yet Gyeong can be understood as concentrating on the object in order to value it and treat it carefully whether it is a person or a task, and as coming to one's senses at all times in order to concentrate.

When the task at hand is an academic activity, Gyeong is an important attitude for learners. ‘Coming to one’s senses’ and ‘concentration’ are both crucial elements necessary for learners to control and focus on their learning process.

Meanwhile, creative personality, characterized by such hallmarks as curiosity, task commitment, aesthetics, risk taking, and open-mindedness, is emphasized as one of the important competencies of learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, it is necessary to establish and implement specific teaching-learning methods to nurture such competency through a school learning process.

This study conducted an experiment on students attending an academic high school by setting a Jeong-jwa (靜坐, jìng-zuò; quiet-sitting) activity, which is one of the practices of Toegye Yi Hwang’s idea of Gyeong, as part of regular classes, and examined the changes in creative personality between the experimental group and the control group.

## 2 Brief Literature Review

The significance of Gyeong lies in its aim of fashioning a human person that always concentrates on all kinds of problems in life with a serious and calm attitude. Toegye stated that Gyeong is always required whether it is *weifa* (the state before being aroused) or *ifa* (the state after being aroused), or whether there is something to do or not [1]. Gyeong draws the study on *weifa* to the study on *ifa*, or vice versa. Toegye demanded *jusa*, which is convergence of body in *ifa*, more than anything from beginners, but what he truly emphasized was *jujeong* (aiming at quietness), concentration of mind in *weifa*. Toegye emphasized the importance of bodily convergence because it was ultimately his way to concentrate his mind. The external features of convergence such as adjusting the collar, taking heavy footsteps or making polite hand gestures were all preparations for concentration of the mind.

What Toegye valued as a way to achieve a pious attitude was ‘Jeong-jwa’. Toegye recommends Jeong-jwa as a specific way of implementing Gyeong that presides over the mind. He believed that the body and mind are collected and gathered together in one place only after Jeong-jwa. Thus, if the body is thoughtlessly left in a state of disorder, the body and soul will be in confusion, and focus on righteous duty cannot be achieved [2].

Toegye focuses on Jeong-jwa that calms the mind down. In the study of Gyeong, substantial and constant practice is more important than a few theoretical statements or pieces of knowledge. Toegye’s life involved consistent practice of Gyeong from getting up in the morning to falling asleep at night, with convergence of being properly ordered and controlled on the inside by adjusting the outward appearance, study of how to be grave and quiet, cultivation of the mind and introspection of the interior life through Jeong-jwa, and reading based on the above.

‘Doin Gigong technique’, which is known as a daily exercise of Toegye, takes the traditional form of Eastern Gigong technique. Eastern Gigong is characterized by its emphasis more on the inner world than outer movements. As it originates from *gèn guà* (艮卦, Hexagram 52 of *I Ching*) [3], the Eastern discipline of meditation focuses on being calmly seated, discontinuing emotions toward external objects, and emptying

the mind. 'Doin Gigong technique' begins from feeling vitality from deep inside the mind by 'calming the mind down'. And it ends by 'closing the eyes and quietly waiting for the vitality that slowly surges from the center of the abdomen'. However, the stage that Toegye aims to reach through Jeong-jwa is quite different from that of Buddhism.

Toegye said 'Gyeong' is the beginning and end of seonghak (sage learning). Gyeong is the first principle of a discipline to cultivate the moral foundation of character on the inside and controlling the kind of behavior that reveals evil on the outside. The study of mind to follow and practice the order of heaven in the human mind according to the principle of Gyeong is the starting point as well as the goal of moral philosophy for Toegye [4]. Through Gyeong, Toegye emphasized that the mind in quietly sitting down and being engaged in an activity becomes consistent, and that consistent behavior on the inside and the outside must become a habit. Once someone embodies the study of Gyeong, he can naturally develop behavioral patterns to suitably deal with events and objects that are encountered on the inside and the outside. To this end, it is necessary to constantly pay attention to the mind and be aware of the signs that signify wriggling deep inside the mind. The fact that Toegye valued 'Hwal-in-sim-bang' and practiced it every day is also closely related to his method of study focused on Gyeong.

### 3 Research Method

This study focused on 155 students in 5 freshman classes in Y Girls' High School in Gyeonggi-do. To verify the effects of Jeong-jwa on the creative personality of high school students, this study divided students taking the ethics class into an experimental group (2 classes, 59 students, 38.1%) and control group (3 classes, 96 students, 61.9%) for comparative analysis. The experimental group that participated in class that includes the Jeong-jwa activity was told to participate in the Jeong-jwa activity for 5 minutes at the beginning of the ethics class that takes up an hour every week for 8 weeks, and then the rest of the class took place in the manner it was normally conducted in. The control group participated in the usual class adopting the current teaching method without such Jeong-jwa activity. After the 8-week experiment, the testing tool similar the one used for pre-testing purposes was used for post-testing the high school students in the experimental group and control group.

To measure the level of creative personality of students, this study used the creative personality test for secondary school developed by the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) in 2011. This is a test for middle and high school students consisting of 6 sub-factors (curiosity, task commitment, aesthetics, risk taking, open-mindedness, and independence of judgment) with a total of 27 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale. The reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) of the creative personality test in this study was .85 in the pretest and .86 in the posttest.

Reliability of the pretest and posttest for 'open-mindedness' and 'independence of judgment' among sub-factors was lower than .60, and thus the two factors were excluded from analysis. The data collected through the pretest and posttest were

analyzed with One-way ANCOVA using the SPSS 22.0 Windows program. The significance level set in this study was  $p < .05$ .

## 4 Results

To examine the effects of class activities including Jeong-jwa on the creative personality of high school students, the pretest and posttest results of the experimental and control group were analyzed for each group.

To determine whether there was a difference in the creative personality scores between the two groups depending on the application of class activities including Jeong-jwa, the pretest score was set as covariate and the posttest score was set as the dependent variable for analysis of covariance. The results showed that the main effect on creative personality was  $F = 9.06$  ( $p < .01$ ); thus, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups with the pretest score controlled. Therefore, in general, it can be seen that the Jeong-jwa activity is effective in promoting the creative personality of high school students.

Meanwhile, to determine whether there was a change in the sub-factor score of creative personality between the two groups with slight differences depending on whether class activities including Jeong-jwa were applied and among sub-factors, the pretest score was set as covariate and the posttest score was set as the dependent variable for analysis of covariance. The results showed that the main effect on task commitment among the sub-factors of creative personality was  $F = 5.08$  ( $p < .05$ ), the main effect on aesthetics was  $F = 4.61$  ( $p < .05$ ), and the main effect on risk taking was  $F = 10.04$  ( $p < .01$ ); thus, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups with the pretest score controlled. Therefore, it can be seen that class activities including Jeong-jwa affect task commitment, aesthetics and risk taking with regard to creative personality. However, the main effect on curiosity was  $F = 3.57$  ( $p > .05$ ), the main effect on open-mindedness was  $F = 2.94$  ( $p < .05$ ), and the main effect on independence of judgment was  $F = .23$  ( $p > .05$ ); thus, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups with the pretest score controlled. Meanwhile, curiosity ( $p = .061$ ) did not show a statistically significant difference at the significance level of  $p < .05$  but showed a statistically significant difference at the level of  $p < .10$ , which indicates that this sub-factor is also affected by class activities including Jeong-jwa.

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