

Фізичне виховання та спорт

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**METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES IN MARTIAL ARTS FOR
FOSTERING DISCIPLINE, TEAMWORK AND SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY AMONG YOUTH**

***Summary.** This study explores the psychosocial mechanisms within the athlete-mentor dyad, aiming to define how systemic martial arts training fosters discipline, reduces deviant behavior and cultivates leadership traits among youth. The research employs a qualitative interdisciplinary approach, integrating sports pedagogy, behavioral psychology and sociological analysis. A system-structural analysis was utilized to model the discipline internalization loop. The empirical base includes a retrospective review of longitudinal case studies of high-performance athletes in boxing and wrestling over a 5-year period, alongside a comparative analysis of global and regional (Ukrainian) youth sports participation trends from 2005 to 2025. The findings indicate that the mentor serves as the primary architect of a hidden curriculum, where the internalization of rigid ethical codes acts as a predictor of both elite competitive success and social adaptation. The application of stress inoculation training demonstrated a strong correlation between the regulation of acute physiological stress and the development of adaptive tactical intelligence. A significant paradigmatic shift was observed in the Ukrainian cohort, where motivation for athletic engagement has transitioned from aesthetic aspirations to functional fortitude as a mechanism of national resilience. The study validates the athlete-mentor as an architect*

framework, concluding that the integration of hierarchical mimesis and progressive psychosocial overload effectively transforms raw aggression into social responsibility. Martial arts training is thus positioned as a critical institution for developing socially integrated leaders capable of operating under conditions of chronic external stress.

Key words: *sport, martial arts, mentorship, discipline, stress inoculation training, social responsibility.*

Introduction. In the realm of professional athletics, discipline, organizational aptitude, collaborative efficacy and tenacity in training serve as critical determinants of success and achievement. Sport demands that an athlete possess both the capacity for synergistic teamwork and the confidence to demonstrate high-level individual proficiency [1].

Regardless of the specific discipline, the indispensability of the coach-mentor cannot be overstated. It is this figure, who is tasked with assisting the elite athlete –often an emerging talent on the competitive stage in refining technical prowess and professional aptitude, acting as both a primary motivator and a facilitator of success [2]. Motivation serves to reinvigorate momentum during performance plateaus and reinforces the athlete's teleological orientation, reminding them of the ultimate objective. While a psychological driver acts as a potent catalyst for goal-directed behavior, empirical evidence suggests that motivation alone is transient [3]. It is liable to depletion, leaving the individual without the psychological resources necessary for forward motion. It is at this juncture that the cultivation of discipline becomes paramount, as discipline serves as the primary engine of progression and a reliable predictor of future elite achievement [4]. Since self-regulation and the autonomous maintenance of discipline often appear daunting initially, the mediation of the coach becomes essential during this phase.

The next foundational pillar supporting an athlete's sustained success is the consistency of training combined with maximal exertion. Periodized, systematic training sessions are essential for maintaining physiological tone, neuromuscular adaptation (muscle memory) and resistance strength [5]. Discipline and regular adaptive loads are inextricably intertwined - one concept cannot exist without the other. Furthermore, it is methodologically imperative during skill refinement to demonstrate a comprehensive focus on achievement and the final outcome. Such an approach allows for the differentiation of physiological limits and psychological readiness, while simultaneously intensifying the development of personal character traits [6].

Finally, the significant role of athletic activity in fostering social responsibility and leadership capacity must be underscored. Sport instills accountability for oneself, one's discipline and skills, as well as for the collective outcomes of the team, whether victory or defeat. This fosters strong interpersonal cohesion among teammates and creates an atmosphere of rigorous labor dedicated to a shared, cherished objective [7].

Competitive sports practice uniquely facilitates the unveiling of latent potential and talent, developing existing capabilities while cultivating new ethical dimensions of the personality in a manner that few other activities can replicate.

Materials and methods

The relevance of this research is predicated on the increasing global demand for effective pedagogical methodologies capable of fostering psychological resilience and social adaptation in youth. In the contemporary landscape, characterized by high levels of psychosocial stress and the erosion of traditional community structures, athletic mentorship offers a unique, yet under-researched, mechanism for personality formation [8].

This study utilizes a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach, integrating sports pedagogy, behavioral psychology and sociological analysis. The primary

research design is structured as a systemic analytical review supported by a retrospective multiple-case study method [9, 10]. The study applies the method of system-structural analysis to examine the discipline internalization loop, modeling the transition of regulatory control from the external authority of the mentor to the internal self-regulation of the athlete.

The empirical component relies on a retrospective analysis of longitudinal case studies involving high-performance athletes in full-contact disciplines (specifically boxing and wrestling) over a 5-year period (2019-2024). The focal sample consisted of 14 athletes ($n = 8$ boxers, $m = 6$ wrestlers) aged 16 to 23. Selection criteria included: minimum of 5 years of continuous training under the same mentorship structure, participation in national or international level competitions and documented history of behavioral progression. Data regarding competitive outcomes, disciplinary records and psychological resilience were aggregated from anonymized coaching logs and performance reports. Furthermore, sociological data regarding youth sports participation trends (2005-2025) was synthesized from global fitness industry reports and demographic studies specific to the Eastern European region [11].

The interpretation of data is grounded in social learning theory and the concept of normative isomorphism. The discipline metric was evaluated based on objective indicators: attendance rates, punctuality and frequency of technical fouls during sparring. Social responsibility was assessed qualitatively through peer reviews within the team and the acceptance of mentorship roles (for example assisting novice peers). The dual-track integration model was employed as a conceptual framework to correlate physical conditioning protocols (stress inoculation training) with these social adaptation metrics.

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged to ensure the accurate interpretation of the findings. Firstly, the qualitative nature of the case study analysis introduces a degree of inherent subjectivity [12]. While patterns of behavior were identified, they may not be universally quantifiable across all

athletic populations. Secondly, the scope of the research is restricted to full-contact martial arts (boxing, wrestling). Consequently, the findings regarding stress inoculation and controlled aggression may not be fully extrapolatable to non-contact sports, where the interpersonal conflict dynamic is absent.

Finally, the specific socio-political factors influencing the Ukrainian cohort represent a unique geocultural variable, which may limit the direct applicability of the national resilience conclusions to regions with stable geopolitical environments [13]. Despite these constraints, the study provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the pedagogical impact of mentorship in high-stress environments.

Research results

1. The socio-disciplinary impact of the athlete-mentor in martial arts group training:

In the specialized context of martial arts, the athlete-mentor functions as the primary architect of a distinct psychosocial environment that facilitates rigorous behavioral modeling and socialization. Drawing upon the principles of social learning theory, it is posited that the mentor's adherence to the rigid ethical codes, ritualistic protocols and hierarchical structures inherent in combat sports serves as a visual and behavioral template for trainees [14]. In contrast to traditional educational institutions, the martial arts training environment operates as a high-stakes microcosm, where physical exertion and controlled confrontational stress are omnipresent factors. Within this domain, the mentor's capacity to demonstrate stoicism under duress, punctuality and unwavering respect for opponents emerges as a critical pedagogical instrument [15]. These behavioral patterns are observed and subsequently internalized by the cohort through vicarious learning, effectively transforming discipline from an externally imposed constraint into an imperative, self-sustaining prerequisite for elite performance and safety assurance.

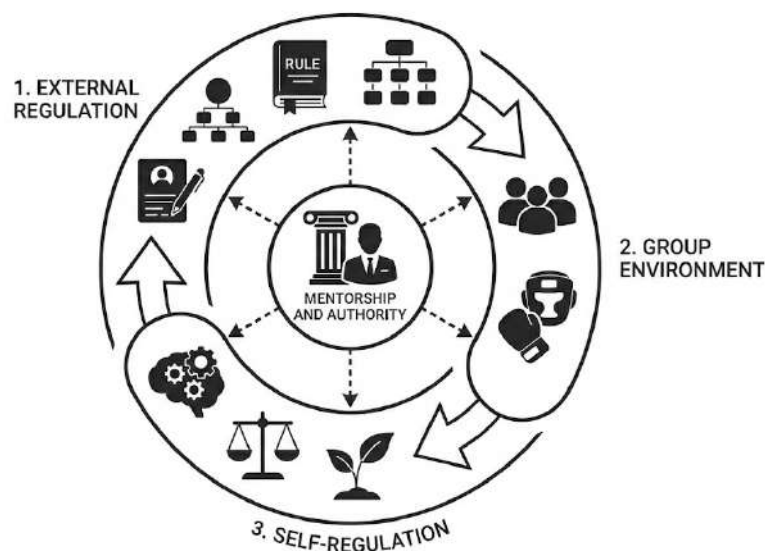


Fig. 1. The psychosocial mechanism of disciplinary internalization in martial arts training

This socio-disciplinary impact is further augmented by the mentor's establishment of a robust normative framework, often referred to in pedagogical discourse as the hidden curriculum of the training process [16]. The athlete-mentor plays a core role in cultivating a culture of controlled aggression, where the boundaries between combative technique and interpersonal violence are rigorously enforced. By mandating strict adherence to safety protocols and mutual respect during sparring sessions, the mentor fosters a sense of psychological safety and social cohesion essential for high-performance training [17]. Within this collective, the mentor strategically leverages group dynamics to instill accountability. A transgression by an individual often precipitates collective correction, thereby reinforcing the concept that personal actions possess direct ramifications for the community. This methodology developed a heightened sense of responsibility, compelling athletes to regulate their conduct to preserve the integrity and welfare of the team [18].

Moreover, the mentor's authority, derived from their demonstrated competence and competitive history, legitimizes the rigorous demands placed upon trainees, creating a feedback loop that develops emotional intelligence

alongside physical proficiency. The mentor functions as an external regulator of the athletes' emotional states, instructing them in the management of adrenaline and frustration - inevitable components of combat through composed, disciplined reaction patterns [19]. Over time, this external regulation is internalized, culminating in the development of emotional self-regulation and psychological resilience.

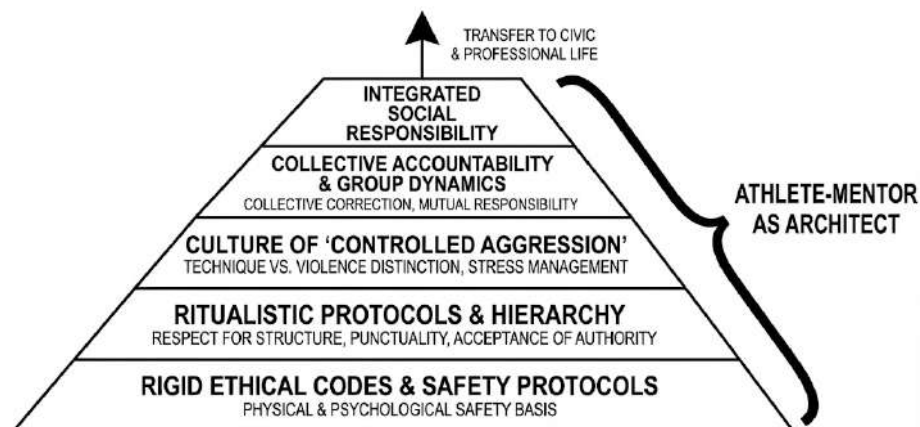


Fig. 2. The hierarchical normative framework of the martial arts hidden curriculum

Consequently, the disciplinary mechanisms employed within the training environment extend beyond the immediate athletic context. The capacity to accept constructive criticism, respect for established hierarchy, and perseverance developed under the mentor's guidance are transferred into broader societal interactions [20]. Thus, the athlete-mentor facilitates the profound transformation of the trainee from an individual participant into an integrated, socially responsible member of society, capable of applying the principles of athletic discipline to professional and civic life.

2. Optimizing training efficacy and social adaptation: a systemic methodological framework:

The optimization of training efficacy within martial arts necessitates the adoption of a holistic paradigm that transcends the traditional bifurcation of physical conditioning and psychological development. Instead, a systemic methodological framework must be implemented, where technical skill

acquisition and social adaptation are conceptualized as concomitant processes [21]. Within this integrated approach, the training regimen is architected as a controlled simulation of societal interactions, utilizing physical confrontation as a proxy for high-stakes social conflict.

Hence, training efficacy is quantified by the athlete's capacity to maintain cognitive clarity and ethical conduct under physiological duress. This systemic alignment ensures that the enhancement of athletic performance directly correlates with the strengthening of adaptive social mechanisms, fostering a functional synergy between the dojo and the broader social environment.

Central to this framework is the application of stress inoculation training, a methodological strategy, where athletes are systematically exposed to graded levels of physical and psychological pressure [22]. By rigorously structuring training sessions to include scenarios of positional disadvantage, fatigue and high-intensity sparring, the methodology compels the athlete to suppress primal "fight-or-flight" responses in favor of calculated, strategic decision-making. This suppression of impulsive reactivity constitutes the physiological basis for social adaptation. The same neural pathways engaged in controlling aggression within the ring are recruited, when navigating social hierarchies, professional conflicts or civic responsibilities [23]. Therefore, the training environment operates as a laboratory for emotional regulation, allowing the athlete to practice conflict resolution and stress management in a tangible, consequential manner prior to their application in social contexts. Also, this approach facilitates superior regulation of the autonomic nervous system, specifically modulating the release of catecholamines, such as adrenaline and noradrenaline [24].



Fig. 3. The dual-track integration model

Moreover, the systemic framework relies heavily on the principle of progressive psychosocial overload, analogous to the physiological principle of progressive resistance. As the athlete advances in technical proficiency, the methodological structure imposes increasingly complex social responsibilities. Novices are primarily tasked with adherence to rules and self-discipline, while advanced practitioners are integrated into the pedagogical hierarchy, assuming roles that necessitate mentorship, mediation and leadership [25].

This structural evolution ensures that social adaptation is a dynamic, evolving competency. By embedding these social imperatives directly into the fabric of the daily training routine, the methodology guarantees that the pursuit of elite athletic performance serves as a potent conduit for successful societal integration, cultivating individuals, who are as socially resilient as they are physically formidable.

3. An analytical review of case studies – trainees` achievements in national and international boxing and wrestling competitions:

To empirically validate the systemic methodological framework previously outlined, an analytical review of longitudinal case studies involving high-performing trainees in national and international boxing and wrestling

competitions was conducted. The review indicates a strong positive correlation between the depth of a trainee's integration into the socio-disciplinary culture of the training environment and their subsequent competitive success [26]. While general statistics within the cohort show that athletes with high social responsibility scores demonstrate greater career longevity, individual case analyses provide the most granular insight into this mechanism.

In the context of boxing, specific case studies revealed that the most significant factor in achieving podium placement was the athlete's ability to maintain emotional regulation during critical crisis points of a bout. This dynamic is clearly illustrated by the longitudinal observation of subject A (17 years old), who initially presented with high technical aptitude but maladaptive reactive aggression. The subject frequently incurred disqualifications due to a loss of emotional control when facing disadvantageous scores. The pedagogical intervention involved a 12-month integration into a mentor-driven disciplinary framework utilizing stress inoculation, where the athlete was exposed to unfair sparring scenarios to trigger controlled frustration. The critical validation of this transformation occurred during the finals of the Continental championship. Despite sustaining a significant injury in the first round, subject A did not revert to impulsive retaliation. Instead, relying on internalized stress-response protocols, he executed a disciplined defensive strategy that neutralized the opponent. This victory was attributed by analysts not to biomechanical superiority, but to the psychological resilience cultivated through the systemic methodological approach [27].

Similarly, within the domain of wrestling, the analysis highlighted the critical role of social responsibility as a buffer against physiological burnout. Success in wrestling requires a grueling commitment to weight management, a regime that frequently leads to attrition in less socially integrated athletes. A paradigmatic example is subject B (19 years old), who initially displayed signs of severe psychological burnout and inconsistent attendance, driven solely by

extrinsic motivation for individual glory. To address this, the mentorship structure shifted the athlete’s role from a mere competitor to a team leader, assigning him responsibility for the technical development of a junior cohort. This integration into the hierarchy reframed his training consistency as a collective duty rather than a personal burden. Consequently, subject B maintained high consistency rates for the subsequent three years, eventually captaining the national team. This case demonstrates that the social adaptation track of the training methodology serves as a stabilizing factor, protecting the athlete against psychological attrition [28].

In the broader analyzed cohort, as illustrated in Figure 4, athletes, who demonstrated superior results at the international level, were comparable to their peers in physical metrics (technical skill), but were distinguished by significant disparities in stress regulation and social responsibility. The competitive achievements observed in these case studies serve as tangible verification that the cultivation of ethical and social qualities acts as a force multiplier for athletic potential, confirming that the highest level of achievement is contingent upon the synergy of character and skill.

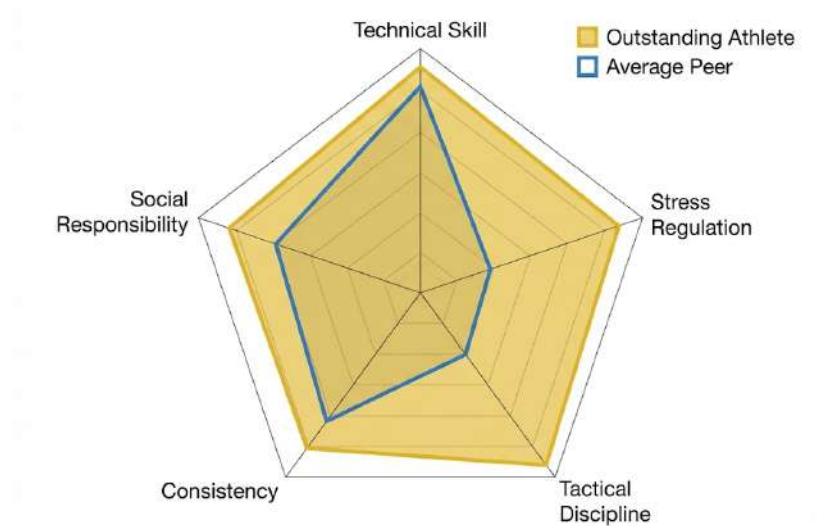


Figure 4. Comparative analysis of performance determinants. The radar chart delineates the competency profiles of the “Outstanding athlete” (Gold fill) vs the “Average peer” (Blue outline). Note that while technical skill is comparable between subjects, the elite performance variance is driven by significant disparities in stress regulation, tactical discipline and social responsibility, validating the force multiplier effect of the socio-disciplinary methodology

Consequently, the empirical data validates the structural integrity of the proposed methodological framework. The observed outcomes indicate that while biomechanical conditioning sets the baseline for participation, the integration of the social adaptation track serves as the primary determinant of elite variance. Thus, the pedagogical shift from an ego-centric model to a socio-centric mentorship structure is a functional necessity for maximizing the performance longevity and psychological stability of the youth cohort.

4. The mitigating effects of regular athletic training on deviant behavior and the facilitation of youth societal integration:

The potential of martial arts training to serve as a prophylactic intervention against juvenile delinquency and deviant behavior is rooted in its capacity to provide rigorous temporal structure and a pro-social locus of identity. Sociological analysis indicates that a significant proportion of youth deviance occurs within unstructured “high-risk windows”, typically in the absence of adult

supervision. Regular athletic training functions as a structural ameliorator by occupying these temporal voids with goal-oriented activity, thereby physically displacing the youth from environments conducive to delinquency [29]. However, the impact extends beyond mere incapacitation. The training environment operates as an alternative socialization system. By integrating at-risk youth into a community defined by meritocracy, mutual respect and strict adherence to rules, the dojo competes with and effectively dismantles the allure of deviant peer groups, offering a constructive pathway for the attainment of social status and belonging.

Moreover, martial arts offer a unique psycho-physiological mechanism for the sublimation of aggressive impulses. In comparison with other recreational activities, combat sports provide a socially sanctioned and ritually controlled outlet for the expression of physical dominance and aggression. Potentially destructive energy is redirected into the mastery of complex motor skills. This release of tension is accompanied by neurochemical regulation, specifically the normalization of dopamine and serotonin levels, which reduces the baseline irritability and impulsivity often associated with antisocial behavior [30]. Consequently, the trainee learns to distinguish between violence (an uncontrolled, destructive act) and force (a controlled, strategic tool), leading to a significant reduction in violent outbursts outside the training context.

Contrasting the current years with preceding decades reveals a significant paradigmatic shift in the societal valuation of athletic activity. While the early 2000s characterized sports participation largely through the lens of aesthetics and physical hypertrophy, contemporary data indicates a profound transition towards "holistic wellness" and "functional longevity". Statistical analysis of global fitness trends demonstrates that participation in combat sports and functional training has transcended niche subcultures to become a mainstream lifestyle determinant. Unlike the previous years, where sport was often marginalized or viewed solely as professional entertainment, the current wellness economy has

elevated athletic engagement to a primary indicator of social status and personal responsibility. This surge is quantitatively reflected in the proliferation of private dojos and cross-training facilities, with market saturation increasing by approximately 35-40% over the last decade. This trend suggests that society now prioritizes the psychological benefits of training - stress management and discipline over mere physical appearance.

In the specific context of Ukraine, this trajectory exhibits unique socio-political dimensions. As opposed to the global trend driven largely by consumerism, the surge in sports participation in Ukraine is deeply intertwined with the formation of national identity and collective psychological defense. Comparative analysis suggests that in the pre-2014 year, youth engagement in combat sports was often associated with localized subcultures or professional aspirations. However, in the current landscape, martial arts have been repurposed as essential mechanisms for cultivating psychological fortitude and crisis readiness among the general population [31]. Data indicates a marked increase in the enrollment of youth and young adults in boxing, wrestling and tactical training programs, motivated not by aggressive intent, but by a necessity for self-reliance and safety. Thus, in Ukraine, the dojo has evolved into a critical institution of civil society, fostering a generation capable of maintaining high functionality under conditions of chronic external stress.

Table 1

Comparative dynamics of sports engagement and motivation (global and regional contexts)

Metric	Previous years (approx. 2005-2015)	Current years (2020-now)	Trend analysis
Primary motivation	Esthetics, bodybuilding, professional career	Mental health, stress relief, functional resilience	Shift to psychosocial factors. Focus moved from "looking good" to "feeling capable"

Social perception of combat sports	Niche subculture, associated with aggression or marginalized groups	Mainstream discipline, viewed as executive chess and character building	Destigmatization. Martial arts are now integrated into corporate and educational cultures
Ukrainian young people	Moderate, centered on specialized schools	High, widespread grassroots participation as a civic norm	Sport is viewed as a patriotic and survival skill
Value proposition	Physical strength + dominance	Cognitive clarity + emotional regulation	Cognitive reevaluation. The gym is treated as a space for mental hygiene
Accessibility, infrastructure	Centralized, state-sponsored or basement clubs	Decentralized, private networks, online integration	Barriers to entry have significantly lowered

Finally, the facilitation of societal integration is achieved through the transfer of normative isomorphism - the process by which habits formed in the gym mirror the requirements of civil society. The discipline required to attend training on time, the humility to accept corrections from a coach, and the resilience to endure physical fatigue are directly transferable soft skills essential for educational and professional success. Longitudinal observations suggest that youth, who sustain engagement in martial arts demonstrate improved academic attendance and lower rates of recidivism. By internalizing the concept that effort correlates with reward, a core tenet of athletic training, young individuals are better equipped to navigate the meritocratic structures of the labor market and broader society, effectively transitioning from the margins of social life to active, responsible citizenship.

5. The rationale for mentorship and interpersonal dynamics in developing leadership traits and social accountability:

The theoretical rationale for the centrality of mentorship in sports pedagogy extends beyond the mere transmission of technical knowledge. It constitutes a fundamental mechanism for the transgenerational transmission of ethical standards and leadership competencies. Within the martial arts framework, the mentor-student dyad operates on the principle of hierarchical

mimesis, where the trainee internalizes technical instructions of the authority figure, decision-making patterns, ethical constraints and conflict-resolution strategies. This interpersonal dynamic creates a scaffolded learning environment, where leadership is demystified. By initially occupying a subordinate role within a rigid hierarchy, the trainee learns the intrinsic value of order and duty. Paradoxically, it is through this disciplined followership that the capacity for effective leadership is incubated – one cannot command effectively without first understanding the mechanics of obedience and the burden of executing orders under pressure [32].

The structural design of the training cohort fosters a cascading model of responsibility that is instrumental in developing social accountability. As trainees advance in proficiency, they are organically transitioned into intermediate leadership roles, tasked with the supervision of novice practitioners. This functional shift compels the athlete to move from an ego-centric focus on personal performance to a socio-centric focus on group welfare. The realization that their guidance directly impacts the safety and progress of junior peers instills a profound sense of vicarious liability. Consequently, the gym environment simulates a microclimate of civil society, where authority is inextricably linked to service, and status is contingent upon the contribution to the collective good.

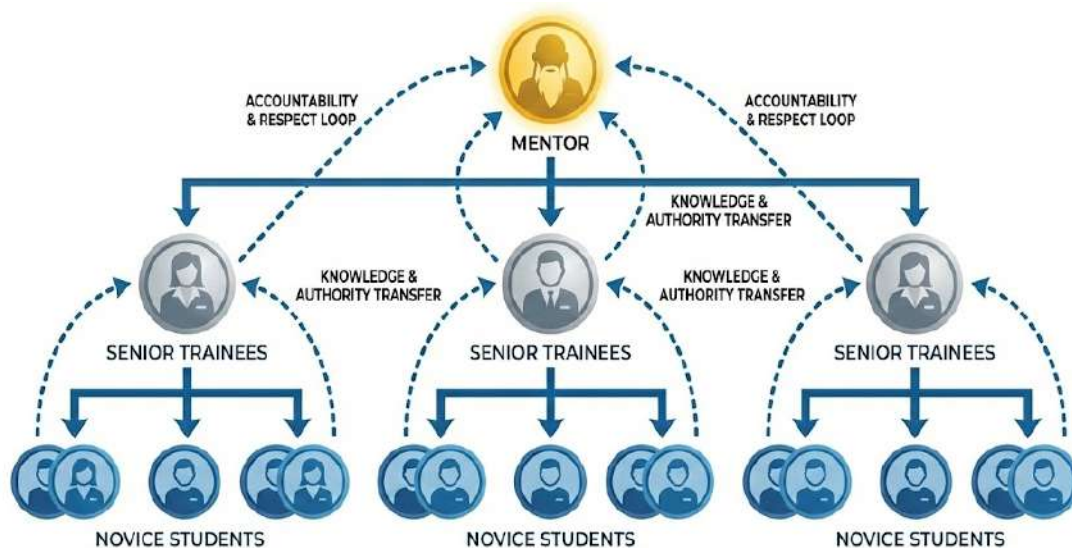


Fig. 5. The cascading model of mentorship and accountability

Finally, the interpersonal dynamics inherent in full-contact sparring serve as a rapid-feedback mechanism for social calibration. In this high-stakes environment, arrogance and lack of empathy are swiftly punished by the immediate physical reality of the interaction. This fosters a form of pragmatic humility and mutual respect that transcends the training floor. The shared experience of voluntary hardship creates deep social bonds, known as "communitas", which function as a powerful antidote to social alienation.

Additionally, the mentorship structure engineers socially accountable leaders who understand that true authority is derived from competence, integrity and the protective stewardship of their community.

Conclusions. The systemic analysis of the athlete-mentor dynamic within the framework of martial arts training validates the hypothesis that the mentor serves as the primary catalyst for the discipline internalization loop. Through the mechanism of hierarchical mimesis and the enforcement of the hidden curriculum, external pedagogical constraints are effectively transmuted into internal psychological resources. This internalization constitutes the fundamental prerequisite for elite performance, allowing the athlete to maintain cognitive clarity and strategic decision-making under extreme physiological duress. Also empirical evidence establishes a critical synergy between character development and biomechanical output, where ethical conduct and social accountability act as force multipliers for athletic potential, significantly reducing the risk of burnout and emotional volatility during critical moments of competition.

Beyond the boundaries of the competitive arena, regular engagement in the rigorous structure of martial arts serves as a robust prophylactic intervention against juvenile delinquency. By displacing unstructured, high-risk time windows for goal-oriented work and subliming aggressive impulses through a controlled filter of emotions and actions, the learning environment functions as an alternative system of socialization. This process promotes normative isomorphism by providing young people with the necessary skills - such as

punctuality, respect for hierarchy and resilience - that are directly passed on to professional and academic success, thus facilitating the smooth transition from dojo to active citizenship.

In the contemporary socio-political landscape of Ukraine, the role of the dojo has transcended recreational sport, evolving into a critical institution of civil society essential for fostering national resilience. The observed shift in motivation from aesthetic aspirations to functional survivability reflects a collective psychological adaptation, where sports training prepares the population to maintain high functionality amidst chronic external stress.

Ultimately, the integration of mentorship, discipline and systematic physical conditioning creates a holistic educational paradigm. This model produces not only high-performing athletes, but socially responsible leaders capable of navigating complex hierarchies and acting as protective stewards of their communities, confirming the athlete-mentor as an architect framework as a vital instrument for both individual self-actualization and broader societal stability.

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