



THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENT IN MENTAL TOUGHNESS IN WUSHU: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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Abstract:

Mental toughness is a crucial aspect of success in Wushu, a traditional Chinese martial art that requires physical and mental discipline. The environment in which Wushu athletes train and compete plays a significant role in shaping their mental toughness. This review aims to explore the relationship between environment and mental toughness in Wushu, examining the impact of factors such as training facilities, coaching, and social support on athletes' mental resilience and performance. A comprehensive review of the literature reveals that the environment can have a profound impact on mental toughness in Wushu, and that athletes, coaches, and organizations can take steps to create supportive and challenging environments that foster mental toughness and promote success in the sport.

Keywords: Mental toughness, Wushu, environment, training facilities, coaching, social support, performance, literature review.

Introduction:

Wushu is a physically and mentally demanding sport that requires athletes to possess high levels of mental toughness to perform at their best. Mental toughness refers to the ability to withstand pressure, overcome obstacles, and maintain focus and motivation in the face of adversity. The environment in which Wushu athletes train and compete can have a profound impact on their mental toughness, influencing their confidence, motivation, and overall performance. This review aims to explore the relationship between environment and mental toughness in Wushu, and to identify the key factors that contribute to the development of mental toughness in Wushu athletes.



The Role of Environment in Mental Toughness

With the rising interest for the measuring of mental toughness in different sports, Bull's research team came with a crucial assumption (Bull, Shambrook, James & Brooks, 2005). They suggested that there are actually different kinds of mental toughness, not only one applicable to everyone and every sport. An example has been made: in the game of golf there are needed different skills than for car racing. And thus we are still talking about mental toughness. In this case, there could be an absolute control in a critical moment versus being mentally tough enough to take risks.

As it was also mentioned, not only the discipline of sport matters. Another difference could be for example sport or athlete level with one peak performance (Olympics) and in contrast athlete, who has a season full of important competitions. In the term of endure the regular pressure during the training there may be different skills needed.

Bull et al. (2005) therefore suggested to further examine mental toughness not only as a general construct, but also as specific one for the kind of sport or athlete. According to this assumption there is nothing such as one unified type of mental toughness. Crust (2007) noted this may be important in the future researches not only to clarify the definition of mental toughness but mainly in the measurement.

In order to search for specific attributes of mental toughness Bull et al. (2005) conduct their study in the field of cricket game. The aims of this research were to understand what is mental toughness in the cricket concretely and to find out how mentally tough players developed their mental toughness. The authors have asked coaches to write down the names of the most mentally toughest players in the 1980's and 1990's. The result was a list of 101 individuals out of which 15 athletes have been finally chosen. 12 individuals out of 15 were willing to join the research and were interviewed in focus groups. Final themes were gained from the analysis of this qualitative research.

“Developmental factors, personal responsibility, dedication and commitment, belief and coping with pressure” became general dimensions for structuring global themes of this study (Bull et al., 2005, p. 216). Further, general dimensions and global themes were structured toward a framework including tough character, tough attitudes and tough thinking. As Bull and colleagues noted, correlation with these three categories can be found in the studies of other

researches. “The global themes presented here can readily be compared to Jones et al.”s attributes of self-belief, desire/motivation, dealing with pressure and anxiety, focus (performance related and lifestyle related), and pain/hardship” (Bull et al., 2005, p. 217). The authors as well say the similarity to Jones's study can serve as trustworthiness of their own work.

The result of this study suggested focusing on the opposite part of the development process and that is the environment. The athletes should be given such environment they could develop strong character, attitude and thinking. Bull et al.

(2005) named this approach “indirect” and put a strong emphasis on the athlete as individual.

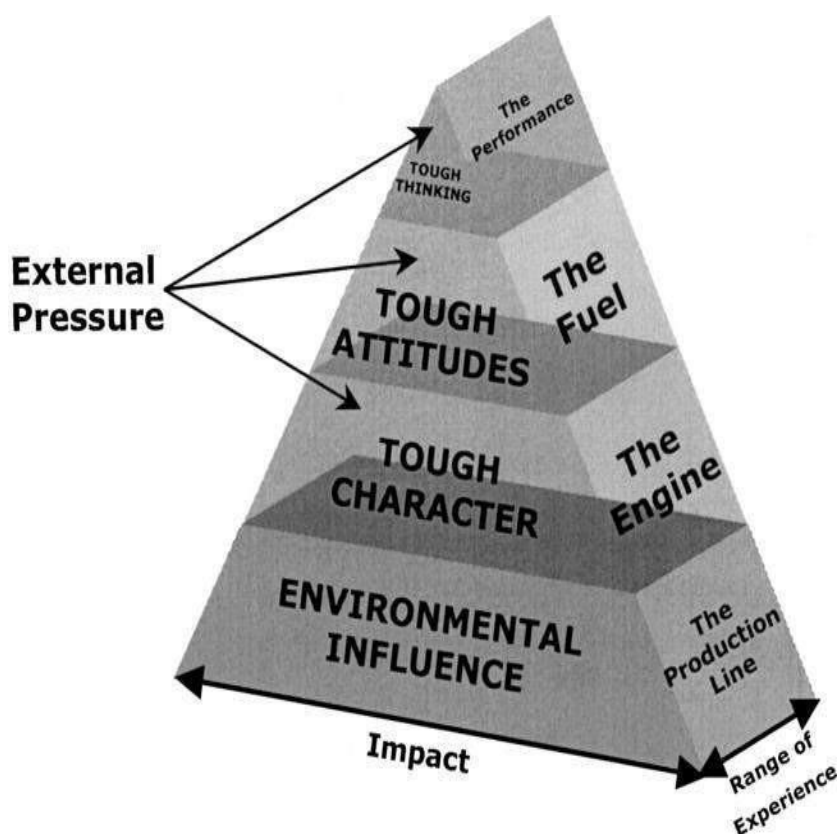


Figure 2: Mental Toughness Pyramid (Bull et al., 2005, p. 216).

To summary, the first attempt to identify mental toughness was made by Cattell in 1957, however not yet in the sport field. Loehr in 1986 explored mentally tough athlete and described them as those who can remain energized and calm under pressure (Loehr, 1986). In the modern era, Jones focused on soccer players and defined them as following: “Generally, cope better than your opponents with the many demands (competition, training, lifestyle) that sport places on a



performer. Specifically, be more consistent and better than your opponents in remaining determined, focused, confident, and in control under pressure” (Jones, 2002, p. 209). In 2004, Middleton defined 12 components of mental toughness (Middleton et al., 2004a). Clough and his team (Clough et al., 2002) took another existing model, the 3 C's model, which was originally an existential psychological theory of hardiness (Kobasa, 1979), and by adding one more component of “confidence” Clough used it in the sport field. The final 4 C's model consisted of: commitment, challenge, control and confidence. In 2005, there was a pioneer work about how much is the environment influencing the athletes and their ability of being mentally tough (Bull et al, 2005). These are the attempts of discovering the mental toughness in the sport field.

Conclusion:

The environment plays a significant role in shaping mental toughness in Wushu, with factors such as training facilities, coaching, and social support all influencing athletes' mental resilience and performance. The literature review reveals that athletes who train in supportive and challenging environments tend to have higher levels of mental toughness than those who train in less optimal environments. Furthermore, the review highlights the importance of coaching and social support in the development of mental toughness in Wushu athletes. By understanding the impact of environmental factors on mental toughness, athletes, coaches, and organizations can take steps to create environments that foster mental toughness and promote success in the sport.

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