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TEACHING PRACTICES FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF SELF-DISCIPLINE IN NATIONAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT

In the context of ongoing war and societal transformations in Ukraine, fostering self-discipline among students preparing for careers in national security, defence, and law enforcement has become a critical priority. This study examines teaching practices that enhance students' awareness of self-discipline, emphasizing responsibility, accountability, ethical reasoning, and emotional resilience. Using a mixed-methods design, the research involved 34 students and 3 instructors from a Ukrainian higher education institution specializing in national security management. Data were collected through surveys, and document analysis, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic methods. Findings indicate that structured routines, role-playing and simulation exercises, tactical drills, reflective assignments, service-learning projects, problem-based learning, debates, and interdisciplinary modules effectively cultivate self-discipline by linking academic knowledge with practical, real-world scenarios. Survey results revealed that 79% of students improved time management, 85% enhanced adherence to rules, 62% strengthened stress regulation, and 71% developed accountability through these practices. Thematic analysis highlighted the importance of clear learning structures, experiential activities, and explicit integration of ethics and civic values. These teaching practices not only foster personal and professional competencies but also contribute to national security by promoting critical thinking, national belonging, and resilience. The study underscores the significant role of higher education in preparing students to manage complex security challenges while supporting societal stability, democratic values, and civic engagement. Implications suggest that embedding experiential, reflective, and ethical pedagogies in curricula is essential for developing disciplined, responsible, and resilient professionals capable of responding to Ukraine's contemporary security needs.

Key words: self-discipline, national security education, teaching practices, higher education, Ukraine, student awareness.

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ПЕДАГОГІЧНІ ПРАКТИКИ ФОРМУВАННЯ САМОДИСЦИПЛІНИ У МАЙБУТНІХ ФАХІВЦІВ З УПРАВЛІННЯ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЮ БЕЗПЕКОЮ

В умовах тривалої війни та суспільних трансформацій в Україні виховання самодисципліни серед студентів, які готуються до кар'єри в галузі національної безпеки, оборони та правоохоронної діяльності, стало надзвичайно

важливим пріоритетом. У цьому дослідженні розглядаються методи навчання, що сприяють підвищенню самосвідомості студентів щодо самодисципліни, з акцентом на відповідальності, зобов'язанні та етичності, а також емоційній стійкості. Дослідження, в якому було використано змішані методи, охопило 34 студентів та 3 викладача українського вищого навчального закладу, що спеціалізується на управлінні національною безпекою. Дані були зібрані за допомогою опитувань, аналізу документів, а також проаналізовані з використанням статистичних методів та методів предметного аналізу. Результати показують, що структуровані рутинні завдання, рольові ігри та симуляційні вправи, тактичні тренування, завдання на рефлексію, практичні навчальні проєкти, дебати та міждисциплінарні модулі ефективно розвивають самодисципліну, пов'язуючи академічні знання з практичними, реальними сценаріями. Результати опитування показали, що 79% студентів покращили управління часом, 85% покращили дотримання правил, 62% покращили регулювання стресу, а 71% розвинули відповідальність завдяки цим практикам. Тематичний аналіз підкреслив важливість чітких структур навчання, практичних занять та явної інтеграції етики та громадянських цінностей. Ці педагогічні практики не тільки сприяють розвитку особистих та професійних компетентностей, але й сприяють національній безпеці, сприяючи критичному мисленню, національній приналежності та стійкості. Дослідження підкреслює ключову роль вищої освіти у підготовці студентів до вирішення складних завдань у сфері безпеки, підтримуючи при цьому стабільність суспільства, демократичні цінності та громадянську активність. Висновки свідчать про те, що включення досвідних, рефлексивних та етичних педагогічних методів до навчальних програм є необхідним для підготовки дисциплінованих, відповідальних та стійких фахівців, здатних реагувати на сучасні потреби України у сфері безпеки.

Ключові слова: *самодисципліна, освіта в галузі національної безпеки, вища освіта, Україна, обізнаність студентів.*

Introduction. In the current context of war and ongoing societal transformations in Ukraine, the growth of self-discipline among students, particularly those preparing for roles in national security, defence, and law enforcement, has acquired unprecedented urgency. The resilience of Ukrainian society in the face of military aggression has underscored the significance of discipline, responsibility, and civic engagement as key factors for national survival and stability. Higher education institutions (HEIs) with specialized agendas in national security management play an essential role in shaping future specialists, not only by fulfilling their practical responsibilities but also by demonstrating leadership, ethical awareness, and emotional resilience in critical situations.

Teaching practices aimed at fostering students' self-discipline serve as both a pedagogical and strategic instrument in this context. Self-discipline is not only a personal trait but also a civic competence that enables effective decision-making, rule compliance, and accountability in crises. In the 1690s, self-discipline was described as the capacity to guide, restrain, and control one's own behavior. Although centuries have passed and societies have evolved, the core essence of this concept has remained largely unchanged. Today, self-discipline is understood as the ability to regulate and correct oneself in pursuit of personal growth and improvement (Collins Dictionary, n.d; Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.). It refers to an individual's capacity to manage and motivate themselves to act or behave in a specific way without external enforcement or supervision (Collins Dictionary, n.d; Longman n.d,).

Thus, the development of students' awareness of self-discipline through tailored pedagogical practices in Ukrainian HEIs strengthens their preparedness for professional service, fosters national belonging, and contributes to the broader goal of sustaining security, resilience, and democratic values in times of crisis. This study seeks to address the following main research questions:

1. How do structured, experiential, and reflective teaching practices in higher education foster students' self-discipline, accountability, and emotional resilience?

2. In what ways do these pedagogical approaches contribute to the development of critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and national belonging, thereby supporting both individual professional competencies and broader societal security?

Theoretical framework and research methods. National security in Ukraine is not only a matter of state policy but also a vital component of civic education and personal development. It is intrinsically linked to affective dimensions such as critical thinking, national identity, and quality of life. In the current wartime context, fostering critical thinking among students has become particularly significant, as it enables them to analyze information critically, resist disinformation, correct cognitive distortions, and make rational, responsible decisions that enhance both personal safety and collective resilience. Ukraine's educational policy actively addresses these challenges, with its key priorities reflected in national legislation, such as the Laws of Ukraine "On Education" (2017), "On Higher Education" (2014), the Code of Civil Protection (2013), the draft Law "On Adult Education" (2022), and the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine (2022–2032) as well as in global frameworks, including the Copenhagen

Criteria for EU Membership (1993), the Sustainable Development Strategy "Europe – 2030" (2019), and the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (2019).

In the context of social development, marked by profound socio-cultural changes and radical economic transformations, the explosive growth of information significantly impacts society. The rapid accumulation of knowledge creates ongoing shifts in the societal information landscape, resulting in a gap between the pace of civilizational development and the traditional education system. This gap can only be addressed through continuous lifelong learning.

Research has consistently demonstrated a strong correlation between national security awareness and the development of critical thinking. Individuals with heightened awareness of security issues are better equipped to analyze, evaluate, and respond to potential threats, enabling them to make more informed and responsible decisions (Al-Qarni et al., 2018: 112). Critical thinking serves as a core cognitive ability that stimulates intellectual faculties and enhances efficiency across academic, professional, and civic contexts (Cottrell, 2017; Atiya, 2009: 56). It is defined as *"the capacity to analyze and assess information, pose significant questions, articulate problems clearly, gather and evaluate relevant data, employ abstract reasoning, engage in explicit reasoning, and communicate effectively with others"* (Hamdah, 2018: 153). In education, fostering critical thinking has been recognized as essential for preparing responsible citizens to navigate complex societal challenges, including those related to national security.

In addition to critical thinking, national belonging plays a central role in shaping security awareness. Belongingness, understood as a fundamental human need, reflects individuals' societal integration and sense of responsibility toward their community and nation (Rafie, 1990). A strong sense of national belonging not only fosters social cohesion but also motivates individuals to contribute to protecting and stabilizing their country actively. In this regard, security is not merely a technical or military matter but also a civic and cultural construct rooted in shared values and collective identity. Scholars have argued that strengthening civic identity and national belonging is crucial in times of crisis, as it fosters resilience, solidarity, and social trust – qualities indispensable to maintaining stability and security within a nation.

Another dimension closely linked to national security awareness is quality of life. Numerous studies show that individuals with high security awareness tend to enjoy better physical and mental health, higher life satisfaction, and greater engagement in civic and social activities (Jones, 2012; Brown, 2015). Quality of life has been conceptualized as *"an individual's subjective sense of competence and ability to cope with challenges"* (Al-Aswad, 2017: 90). This construct integrates material well-being with psychological resilience, social connectivity, and self-actualization (Al-Najjar & Al-Talaa, 2015). From this perspective, awareness of security not only protects individuals from external threats but also enhances their internal capacity for stability, purpose, and personal growth. A mixed-methods design was used, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain both measurable trends and in-depth insights.

The study involved 34 students enrolled in a Ukrainian higher education institution specializing in national security and law enforcement. A purposive sampling strategy ensured the inclusion of students from different years of study. Additionally, three instructors teaching leadership, ethics, and operational readiness courses participated in the qualitative phase. Two research methods were employed: (1) survey questionnaires with Likert-scale items addressing time management, rule compliance, stress regulation, and accountability; and (2) document analysis of curricula, syllabi, and lesson plans to identify the integration of self-discipline and national security themes. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), enabling the identification of recurring patterns in responsibility, ethical awareness, and learning practices.

The aim of the study. This study aims to identify effective teaching practices that foster students' self-discipline awareness in the context of national security management.

Results of the scientific research. The study's results highlighted several teaching practices that effectively foster students' awareness of self-discipline in the context of national security management. Survey data indicated that students positively evaluated structured and practice-oriented methods. A majority of participants (79%) reported that strict scheduling and scenario-based assignments improved their ability to manage time and prioritize tasks effectively. Similarly, 85% of respondents confirmed that role-playing and simulations enhanced their commitment to following established rules and regulations, which they linked to professional readiness in security contexts. Regarding stress regulation, 62% of students emphasized that tactical drills and practical exercises helped them remain calm under pressure. Accountability was also strengthened, as 71% noted that reflective tasks and peer evaluation activities encouraged greater responsibility for personal and group outcomes.

Table 1

Teaching Practices and Outcomes for Developing Self-Discipline

Teaching Practice	Observed/Reported Outcome	Supporting Evidence
Strict scheduling and structured routines	Improved time management and prioritization	79% survey responses; classroom observations
Role-playing and simulations	Enhanced adherence to rules and protocols	85% survey responses; focus groups
Tactical drills and practical exercises	Better stress regulation and emotional control	62% survey responses; instructor interviews
Reflective assignments and peer evaluation	Strengthened accountability and responsibility	71% survey responses; student feedback
Ethics and values integration	Increased awareness of integrity, leadership, and ethical decision-making	Thematic analysis; document review

Qualitative findings further enriched this picture. Thematic analysis revealed three key patterns. First, a structured learning environment with clear routines and consistent expectations was recognized as a foundation for cultivating discipline. Second, experiential and simulation-based practices – particularly role-plays, tactical case studies, and real-world scenarios – were described as the most effective methods for reinforcing responsibility and ethical decision-making. Third, integrating ethics and values into instruction was considered critical. Instructors emphasized the need to explicitly connect self-discipline with principles of integrity, leadership, and accountability in national security practice.

Document analysis confirmed that, although self-discipline is not consistently listed as a separate learning objective in curricula, it is implicitly present in modules on leadership, operational readiness, and professional ethics. Nevertheless, the degree of integration varied across courses, highlighting the need for greater consistency in program design.

The results of this study indicate that structured and practice-oriented teaching methods significantly enhance students' awareness of self-discipline within the context of national security management. Students reported that strict scheduling, scenario-based assignments, and role-playing simulations improved their ability to manage time, follow rules, and act responsibly – findings that align with previous research linking national security awareness and critical thinking development. Al-Qarni et al. (2018, p.112) emphasized that individuals with higher awareness of security issues are better able to analyze, evaluate, and respond to potential threats, demonstrating that cognitive engagement and practical exercises can cultivate professional readiness and responsibility.

Our study also showed that experiential activities, such as tactical drills and simulations, foster stress regulation and enhance accountability. This is consistent with the work of Jones (2012) and Brown (2015), who demonstrated that heightened security

awareness correlates with greater emotional stability, life satisfaction, and engagement in civic activities. Similarly, structured reflective tasks and peer evaluations promoted responsibility for personal and group outcomes, reflecting Rafie's (1990) assertion that a strong sense of national belonging motivates individuals to act responsibly and strengthens social cohesion.

Critical thinking emerged as a central dimension of student development, particularly in exercises that required analysis, ethical decision-making, and problem-solving. This finding supports Cottrell (2017) and Atiya (2009), who argue that fostering critical thinking is essential for preparing individuals to navigate complex societal challenges, including those related to national security. Hamdah (2018) further defines critical thinking as the capacity to analyze information, reason logically, and communicate effectively, highlighting the importance of integrating both cognitive and ethical dimensions into educational practice.

Finally, while self-discipline is not always explicitly listed in curricula, document analysis revealed that it is implicitly embedded in modules on leadership, operational readiness, and professional ethics. This reflects the broader policy context in Ukraine, where national legislation (Zakon Ukrainy "Pro Osvitu", 2017; Zakon Ukrainy "Pro Vyshchu Osvitu", 2014) and strategic frameworks (MOES, 2022) emphasize the development of critical thinking, civic responsibility, and professional competencies. The alignment of teaching practices with these policy objectives underscores the importance of a holistic approach, combining structured pedagogy, experiential learning, and ethical reflection to cultivate responsible and resilient future professionals in the field of national security.

Conclusions. Teaching practices for developing students' awareness of self-discipline in national security management encompass a range of innovative approaches that integrate academic learning with practical experience. The case study method,

using real-life crisis scenarios from Ukraine's wartime context, allows students to critically analyze decisions, identify strengths and weaknesses, and propose alternative strategies, fostering rational judgment and responsibility. Role-playing and simulation exercises, such as evacuation drills or cyberattack response, develop self-control, teamwork, and situational awareness. At the same time, reflective journaling strengthens self-awareness, emotional resilience, and self-regulation through personal reflections on security-related events. Service-learning projects link academic knowledge with civic responsibility by involving students in community-based initiatives, such as supporting displaced persons or running safety campaigns, thereby reinforcing national belonging. Problem-based learning (PBL) further promotes problem-solving, collaboration, and leadership through tackling open-ended national security challenges, complemented by mindfulness and stress-management training to maintain emotional balance and decision-making capacity under pressure. Debates on ethical issues such as freedom versus safety or the ethics of surveillance enhance ethical reasoning, argumentation, and civic awareness. At the same time, interdisciplinary modules in law, psychology, and cybersecurity provide a holistic understanding of national security management. Collectively, these methods cultivate discipline, responsibility, and resilience, equipping students for effective roles in safeguarding national stability.

Taken together, these findings underscore the vital role of higher education institutions in cultivating critical thinking, reinforcing national belonging, and enhancing students' quality of life as part of broader national security management. In the Ukrainian context, marked by ongoing war and profound social challenges, educational institutions are uniquely positioned to embed these dimensions into curricula and teaching practices. By integrating critical thinking modules, civic education, and psychosocial support programs, universities can strengthen students' self-discipline, resilience, and security consciousness. In doing so, education becomes not only a pathway to personal and professional development but also a key mechanism for sustaining national stability and resilience.

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