

# Inheriting Chinese Traditional Sports: An Integrated Model for Promoting Emei Martial Arts Development

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## Abstract

Emei Martial Arts, as a symbol of China's rich heritage, holds immense cultural significance and offers numerous health benefits. This study seeks to explore the correlation between the motivation, sense of belonging, and commitment of individuals practicing Emei martial arts. Additionally, it examines the influence of Emei Martial Arts' cultural identity as a mediator and moderator in this relationship. A stratified sampling method was employed to survey Emei Martial Arts practitioners in 40 training centres, resulting in the collection of 445 valid questionnaires. Factor analysis was conducted on the data using AMOS 26.0. The study found that motivations for practicing martial arts (enjoyment, mastery, competition/ego, physical condition, psychological condition, and appearance) had a significant positive impact on adherence to Emei Martial Arts practice ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $t = 3.964$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). On the other hand, there was no notable connection between affiliation and the expectations of others when it came to adhering to martial arts practice. The cultural identity of Emei Martial Arts plays a significant role in motivating individuals and ensuring their commitment to practicing martial arts ( $\beta = 0.074$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It also influences the connection between perceived belonging and exercise adherence ( $\beta = 0.038$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The perceived belonging of Emei Martial Arts practitioners had a significant positive effect on adherence ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $t = 4.800$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). All research hypotheses were confirmed. This study aims to enhance the research perspectives on Emei Martial Arts, thereby contributing to its preservation and promotion. Additionally, it will provide valuable insights for investigating other martial arts and traditional sports.

**Keywords:** Emei Martial Arts, Motivation, Perceived Belonging, Martial Art's Cultural Identity, Exercise Adherence Behavior.

## Introduction

Wushu, also referred to as kung fu, is the recognised umbrella term for Chinese martial arts. It holds a significant position in China's traditional sports, encompassing both modern and traditional forms of martial arts (Han et al., 2022).

The martial arts originating from the Ba Shu region are known as Emei, representing China's traditional martial culture. The Ba Shu region includes both Sichuan and Chongqing. Wudang is one of the three main schools of Chinese martial arts, alongside Sichuan and Chongqing Feng et al. (2023). The civilization is regarded as a "living" one because of its rich history, distinctive techniques, and profound cultural significance. The martial art system is extensive, encompassing various styles, equipment, and practice methods. The martial art has been recognised as a

national intangible cultural heritage and is now regarded as a traditional cultural symbol with distinct regional traits (Fang et al., 2024).

Martial arts, as a significant cultural symbol of China, have garnered considerable academic attention in the context of the nation's pursuit of rejuvenation. Both central and local governments have implemented policies to highlight the significance of their objectives and directions. The implementation of the Martial Arts Industry Development Plan (2019-2025) and the Emei Martial Arts implementation has provided strong support for development at national and local levels (Lin & Tsai, 2022). In recent times, there has been a notable increase in research on this topic, resulting in a consistent academic interest and an elevation of the theoretical level of its study. The analysis conducted by Yang et al. (2023) indicates a requirement for an increased number of high-quality core journals that have

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fewer citations and reprints. Moreover, existing literature primarily emphasises theoretical content rather than empirical investigations, with a preference for qualitative research over quantitative research (Zhong & Han, 2024).

The research on traditional martial arts encompasses cross-disciplinary studies in sociology and anthropology. However, the sport psychology literature lacks coverage of these martial arts, particularly in terms of motivation and behavioural theories. Moreover, studies have indicated that traditional martial arts prioritise styles, emphasise routines, place less importance on applications, and often neglect cultural aspects, leading to a diminished cultural connotation and sense of identity. These factors have resulted in a significant decline in the practice groups and participants involved in this activity, as well as a weakening of the main body of inheritance (Ren & Wu, 2023). Hence, it is crucial to investigate the motor behaviours of individuals who practise it and the training methods used by those who pass it on.

This study examines the relationship between motivation for martial arts practice, perceived belonging, and practice adherence behaviours. It also explores the mediating and moderating role of Emei Martial Arts cultural identity. Drawing on motivation theory, perceived belonging, and cultural identity theory, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of these factors in the context of Emei Martial Arts. The study utilised structural equation modelling (SEM) to analyse the behavioural mechanisms influencing practitioners' adherence to martial arts. Research hypotheses were formulated, and objective statistical analysis was conducted using AMOS 26.0 software. This approach addressed the limitations of previous quantitative research.

The study expands the theoretical field by examining how participants' motivation level, perceived belonging, and cultural identity contribute to practitioners' adherence to martial arts. The transmission, development, and promotion of martial arts hold significant practical value. The study's research design and analytical methods are highly replicable and provide valuable references to related research fields, such as Wushu and Ethnic Traditional Sports.

## Literature Review

### Motivation and Exercise Adherence of Emei Martial Arts

Motivation plays a crucial role in maintaining an individual's

physical activity, serving as an internal driving force. Various theoretical frameworks have emerged within the field of sports (Olsen et al., 2023). One widely used theory is Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding athlete motivation. Behaviour can be explained by individual differences in motivation. SDT comprises three interconnected sub-theories. The first sub-theory, known as Cognitive Evaluation Theory, distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) propose a sub-theory that extends the traditional classification of motivation into a spectrum of five types, which includes autonomous and controlled motivation. The Basic Needs Theory suggests that self-determined behaviour and optimal functioning are dependent on the fulfilment of an individual's innate needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci et al., 1985).

The concept of "motivation," which refers to the energy and direction of behaviour, is essential in both influencing participation in physical activity (PA) and maintaining adherence to exercise (Ahn et al., 2023). The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a significant theoretical framework used to study motivation, particularly in the context of martial arts participation. Research suggests that motivations for participating in martial arts practice differ based on the training environment and individual practitioners (Patenteu et al., 2024a; Patenteu et al., 2024b). Garbeloto et al. (2023) identified the primary motivations for individuals to participate in judo and karate as their interest in the sport, the health benefits associated with it, and the opportunity for character development.

According to (Prasetyo et al., 2024), a study conducted on Brazilian judokas found that outcome motivation is a significant factor for highly skilled martial arts athletes. Borowiec et al. (2023) highlighted the significance of physical appearance and training for male and female high-level elite athletes in this population. Furthermore, Dube (2022) Dube (2022) conducted a survey on athletes and students involved in taekwondo in New York City. The study identified intrinsic motivations (value, enjoyment, self-esteem, and physical needs) and extrinsic motivations (developing skills, establishing prestige, building friendships, and achieving contest success) as significant factors

influencing participation. Based on the aforementioned finding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1:** The motivation to engage in Emei Martial Arts positively affects practitioners' exercise adherence.

### **Motivation, Martial Arts Cultural Identity and Exercise Adherence**

The theory of cultural identity, a prominent concept in social psychology, centres on the development of identity and the distinctions in culture among individuals and groups (Schachner et al., 2024). The impact of identity formation extends beyond individuals' self-perception, group affiliation, and social characteristics. It also plays a vital role in preserving the nation and its cultural heritage (Rios, 2022). Martial arts, as a prominent aspect of traditional Chinese culture, have received considerable scholarly attention due to their cultural significance and identity.

Stathopoulou et al. (2022) highlighted the impact of sports organisations and cultural identity on motivations for sports participation. The relationship between intrinsic motivation for sports participation and sports identity is positively correlated, and has the potential for personal growth, despite being relatively weak. In contrast, the association between extrinsic motivation and sports identity is weak and inconsequential. Simultaneously, identity motivation strongly predicts group identification. There is a correlation between cultural identity and exercise adherence. Albouza et al. (2022) identified significant associations between exercise behavioural regulations and the need for competence, specifically related to the exercise role identity component. The researchers examined the association between sociocultural factors and exercise dependency in young Asian/Asian American men. They discovered a positive correlation between adherence to Asian cultural values and exercise adherence. Bloch et al. (2022) also emphasised this correlation. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2:** Emei Martial Arts cultural identity mediates the relationship between the motivation to engage in this activity and exercise adherence.

### **Perceived Belonging and Exercise Adherence of Emei Martial Arts**

In addition to motivational factors, the sense of belonging

is important for understanding sports behaviour. The concept of "belonging" is crucial for comprehending individuals' connection to a particular location and their ability to coexist with others (Lefort, 2022). There is a general consensus in the literature about the essential nature of belonging as a fundamental human need. It is widely recognised that individuals seek belonging in order to achieve fulfilment (Dost, 2024a, 2024b). The sports field offers ample opportunities for social interactions among teammates, competitors, coaches, officials, and spectators. Athletes experience different levels of acceptance, respect, inclusiveness, and support in their sporting environments. Hence, a sense of belonging is crucial for comprehending the motivation behind engaging in physical activities.

Studies have indicated that the sense of belonging has a notable influence on physical activity levels (Tang et al., 2023). Emei Martial Arts possesses a distinctive cultural system as a traditional folk martial arts group. It is widely recognised and fosters a strong sense of camaraderie and connection. As a result, this feeling of belonging strengthens the unity within the practice group, which is crucial for encouraging practitioners to follow Emei Martial Arts exercises (Cao & Lyu, 2024). The study conducted by Squire et al. (2024) provides additional evidence supporting the impact of a sense of belonging on the commitment of international practitioners to their profession. As such, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H3:** Perceived belonging has a positive impact on practitioners' Emei Martial Arts exercise adherence.

### **Perceived belonging, Martial Arts Cultural Identity and Exercise Adherence**

Belonging plays a vital role in shaping one's cultural identity, serving as a fundamental element in the formation of identity and the process of finding meaning. Devotion, dedication, and common goals within sports programmes offer a meaningful platform for expressing a sense of belonging and preserving cultural identity (Gjestvang et al., 2023).

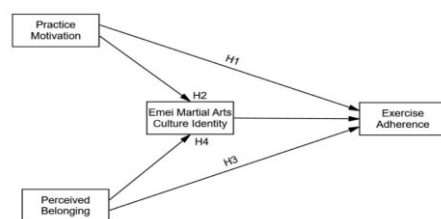
The literature also suggests a strong connection between a feeling of belonging and a sense of identity in sports activities. As an illustration, Vélez-Grau et al. (2023) proposed that a strong connection to a particular sports team can boost an individual's feelings of belonging and self-esteem. Likewise, a strong sense of belonging is

indicative of a close-knit team culture, where individuals feel acknowledged and valued. Thus, in the realm of communication, fostering a sense of group unity through sports activities can enhance cultural identity. In addition, the influence of cultural identity on exercise adherence has been discussed previously and will not be reiterated at this time. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4:** Emei Martial Arts cultural identity plays a mediating role in the relationship between practitioners' perceived sense of belonging and exercise adherence.

### Overview of Studies

This study utilises motivation theory, cultural identity theory, and the concepts of "perceived belonging" and "exercise adherence behaviour" to examine the correlation between the motivation of Emei Martial Arts practitioners to engage in martial arts and their perception of belonging and commitment to practice. In addition, this study examines the role of cultural identity in Emei Martial Arts by presenting four hypotheses (Figure 1). This study employs confirmatory analysis using structural equation modelling (SEM) to offer a fresh theoretical outlook on the study of Emei Martial Arts. It also compensates for the limitations of relevant quantitative empirical research, which holds significant practical importance for its wider dissemination, advancement, and endorsement. Finally, the research design and analysis methods of this study are highly replicable and can be a valuable reference for various fields such as martial arts, traditional national sports, and others.



**Figure 1:** Research Framework.

## Methodology

### Sampling and Data Collection

The objective of this study was to examine the correlation between the motivation of Emei Martial Arts practitioners, their sense of belonging, cultural identity, and their commitment to exercise. Data was collected from trainees who were registered at 40 training centres in Sichuan Province. Given the use of stratified sampling, it is

imperative that the respondents have engaged in continuous training for a minimum of six months. Throughout the survey period spanning from September to November 2023, a total of 494 questionnaires were distributed. Impressively, we received 445 responses, resulting in an outstanding response rate of 90.1%.

### Research Instruments

The scale was divided into four parts to meet the requirements of the study. These parts included the Motivation to Practice Martial Arts Scale, the Perceived Belonging Scale, the Emei Martial Arts Cultural Identity Scale, and the Exercise Adherence Scale.

This study utilised the Physical Activity and Leisure Motivation Scale (PALMS) to assess the motivation behind participation in martial arts training. The PALMS consists of 40 measurement items that cover five dimensions. The PALMS demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.99, using a 5-point Likert-type rating system.

The Perceived Belonging Scale, developed by Allen (2006), comprises 11 measurement items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all variables range from 0.70 to 0.91, except for external adjustment (0.68). This study utilises a 7-point Likert-type rating system that has been validated in other sports domains.

The Emei Martial Arts Cultural Identity Scale was derived from the Martial Arts Cultural Identity Scale used with middle school students. The construct consists of four dimensions and a total of 38 measurement items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for individual dimensions range from 0.74 to 0.81, with a total scale coefficient of 0.81. The study employs a 5-point Likert-type rating system.

The Exercise Adherence Scale, consisting of six items, was derived from the Youth Outdoor Sports Compliance Scale created by Liu et al. (2011). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.85, indicating high internal consistency. The scale utilises a 5-point Likert-type rating system.

### Analysis Methods

The analyses were conducted using SPSS 24.0. Descriptive statistics were used, and all scales were standardised to a 5-point scale. Cronbach's alpha and standard distribution tests were conducted. The researchers employed the Amos 26.0 software for conducting a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis. According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988),

a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the validity of each construct and the overall model. The CFA results were satisfactory, and the SEM was

conducted to test all proposed hypotheses in the model (Cheung et al., 2023).

## Results

### Sample Characteristics

**Table 1**

*Demographic characteristics (N=445)*

	Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	293	65.8
	Female	152	34.2
Age	Under 18 years old	252	56.6
	18-25 years old	98	22.0
	26-30 years old	15	3.4
	31-40 years old	47	10.6
	41-50 years old	14	3.1
	Above 50 years old	19	4.3
Educational	Junior high school and below	185	41.6
	High school/technical secondary school	107	24.0
	College diploma	44	9.9
	bachelor's degree	100	22.5
	Postgraduate degree and above	9	2.0
Practicing years	Within 3 years	238	53.5
	3—5years	103	23.1
	6—10years	68	15.3
	11—15years	16	3.6
	16—20years	6	1.3
Martial Arts Dan level	Over 20 years	14	3.1
	No rank	310	69.7
	Pre-dan level	44	9.9
	1—3 Dan	53	11.9
	4—6 Dan	32	7.2
Total	7—9 Dan	6	1.3
		445	100.0

The demographic characteristics of the participants are displayed in Table 1. The study included 445 participants, with 65.8% being male and 34.2% being female. The majority of participants were under 18 years old (56.6%), whereas individuals between the ages of 41 and 50 were the least represented (3.1%). The majority of participants were students from primary and secondary schools (41.6%), followed by individuals with undergraduate degrees (22.5%). The majority of participants (38.4%) reported practicing martial arts for less than 10 years. The study found that 69.7% of the participants had not yet undergone grading examinations, indicating a lack of effective

implementation of a martial arts grading system.

### Measurement Model

Reliability testing is necessary before validity testing to evaluate the consistency and stability of content within a questionnaire (Fang et al., 2024). Its purpose is to determine the final dimensions and questions of the research variables. Forné and Yuguero (2022) suggest a minimum Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.7. Items with a CITC value below 0.25 are typically considered for elimination. The final version of the questionnaire for Table 2 was developed.

Table 2

*CEA results*

Construct	Measurement	Sad. Coef.	T-value	Cronbach's $\alpha$	AVE	CR
Enjoyment	EN1	0.848		0.881	0.599	0.882
	EN2	0.773	18.207***			
	EN3	0.739	17.149***			
	EN4	0.766	17.990***			
	EN5	0.738	17.126***			
Mastery	MA1	0.855		0.883	0.604	0.884
	MA2	0.780	18.733***			
	MA3	0.742	17.496***			
	MA4	0.769	18.346***			
	MA5	0.735	17.266***			
Affiliation	AF1	0.900		0.892	0.737	0.894
	AF2	0.826	21.352***			
	AF3	0.848	22.016***			
Competition/Ego	CO1	0.891		0.901	0.700	0.903
	CO2	0.809	21.408***			
	CO3	0.826	22.138***			
	CO4	0.819	21.835***			
Others' expectations	OE1	0.909		0.895	0.746	0.898
	OE2	0.847	22.469***			
	OE3	0.834	22.201***			
Physical Condition	PH1	0.823		0.779	0.545	0.781
	PH2	0.694	11.665***			
	PH3	0.690	11.641***			
Psychological Condition	PS1	0.837		0.830	0.623	0.832
	PS2	0.798	15.411***			
	PS4	0.730	14.735***			
Appearance	AP1	0.900		0.876	0.644	0.878
	AP2	0.761	18.791***			
	AP3	0.762	18.801***			
	AP5	0.779	19.413***			
Perceived Belonging	ZPB1	0.939		0.936	0.681	0.937
	ZPB2	0.814	25.15***			

		ZPB3	0.788	23.42***			
		ZPB4	0.819	25.49***			
		ZPB5	0.809	24.76***			
		ZPB6	0.798	24.04***			
		ZPB7	0.800	24.19***			
		VJ1	0.887				
		VJ2	0.810	22.585***			
		VJ3	0.796	21.898***			
	Value Judgment	VJ4	0.848	24.679***	0.939	0.690	0.940
		VJ5	0.827	23.482***			
		VJ6	0.808	22.514***			
		VJ7	0.834	23.906***			
		EE1	0.893				
		EE2	0.805	21.816***			
Emei Martial Arts Cultural Identity	Emotional Engagement	EE3	0.822	22.617***	0.913	0.679	0.914
		EE4	0.792	21.227***			
		EE5	0.804	21.783***			
		BI1	0.899				
	Behavioral Involvement	BI2	0.834	22.749***	0.899	0.734	0.917
		BI3	0.789	20.748***			
		BI4	0.899	21.612***			
		IF1	0.887				
		IF2	0.808	21.823***			
	Identification	IF3	0.822	22.487***	0.915	0.687	0.916
		IF4	0.814	22.079***			
		IF5	0.809	21.869***			
		EA1	0.951				
		EA2	0.789	23.508***			
Exercise Adherence Behavior		EA3	0.825	25.908***	0.921	0.704	0.922
		EA4	0.805	24.515***			
		EA5	0.815	25.173***			

An assessment was conducted to determine the reliability and validity of the measurement model. The Cronbach's alpha values for all factors ranged from 0.779 to 0.939. This value exceeded the upper limit of 0.70 recommended by Hu et al. (2024). Convergent validity was assessed by examining the item loadings and the average variance

extracted (AVE). The item loadings for all variables exceeded the threshold limit of 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity (Kweon et al., 2024). The study analysed the composite reliability (CR) values, all of which were above 0.70, as presented in Table 2.

Table 3

**Discriminant validity**

	M ± SD	EN	MA	AF	CO	OE	PH	PS	AP	PB	EI	EA
EN	3.67±0.87	0.77										
MA	3.65±0.87	.51**	0.77									
AF	3.30±1.19	.18**	.22**	0.86								
CO	3.18±1.10	.40**	.41**	.18**	0.83							
OE	3.04±1.25	.11*	.16**	.16**	.29**	0.86						
PH	3.78±0.80	.47**	.42**	.21**	.37**	.16**	0.74					
PS	3.66±0.93	.42**	.43**	.12*	.41**	.15**	.44**	0.79				
AP	3.42±0.97	.48**	.46**	.17**	.43**	.25**	.41**	.45**	0.80			
PB	2.45±0.66	.26**	.31**	.11*	.25**	.02	.22**	.32**	.25**	0.82		
EI	3.28±0.86	.17**	.21**	.06	.16**	.07	.15**	.19**	.17**	.21**	0.75	
EA	3.17±1.06	.28**	.30**	.09	.25**	.002	.23**	.27**	.25**	.41**	.39**	0.84

Note. M=Mean; SD= standard deviation; EI=Emei Martial Arts cultural identity

The present research utilised the discriminant validity assessment approach proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The findings in Table 3 indicate that the average variance extracted (AVE) of our constructs exceeded the squared correlations between them, thus confirming the discriminant validity of our research. The research findings revealed no correlation between affiliation and others' expectations and exercise adherence behaviour. Thus, the variable was excluded from the structural model.



Figure 2 Second-order model of motivation for martial arts practice

Figure 2: Second-order model of motivation for martial arts practice.

The second-order validation of motivation among Emei Martial Arts practitioners resulted in the following model fit indices:  $\chi^2 = 423.576.713$ ,  $df = 246$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.722$ ; CFI = 0.97; NFI = 0.933, GFI = 0.929; and RMSEA = 0.040. The achievement of threshold values for other relevant coefficients indicates satisfactory model fit (Figure 2). The second-order validation of cultural identity among Emei Martial Arts practitioners resulted in the following model fit indices:  $\chi^2 = 376.211$ ,  $df = 185$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.034$ , CFI = 0.931, NFI = 0.950, GFI = 0.974, and RMSEA = 0.048. The achievement of threshold values for other relevant coefficients indicates satisfactory model fitness (Figure 3).

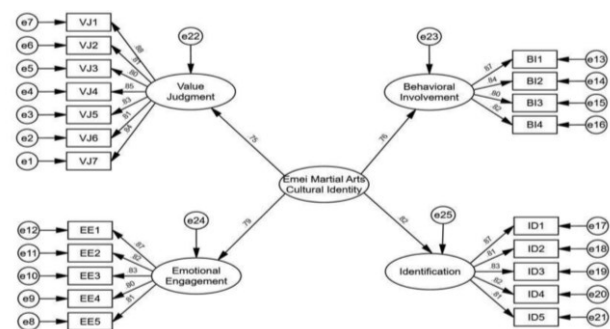


Figure 3 Second-order model of Emei martial arts cultural identity

Figure 3: Second-order model of Emei martial arts practice.



**Structural Equation Modelling and Hypothesis Testing Results**

Firstly, the conceptual model illustrated in Figure 1 was evaluated, and the resulting model fit indices were obtained. The model fit statistics indicate a good fit:  $\chi^2(203) = 385.713$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.90$ , CFI = 0.969, NFI = 0.937, GFI = 0.932, and RMSEA = 0.045.

The study also investigated the impact of motivation and a

sense of belonging on practitioners' adherence to martial arts. Earlier, we posited that the motivation to engage in martial arts and the feeling of belonging to a group would have a positive impact on individuals' commitment to practicing martial arts. The results verified the effects of motivation ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $t = 3.964$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and perceived belonging ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $t = 4.800$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) on sports adherence. Thus, H1 and H3 were supported.

**Table 4**

*Denotes the Results of Structural Model*

Hypothesis	Relationship	R2	$\beta$	t-value	Result
H1	PM → EA	0.31	0.22	3.964***	S
H3	PB → EA	0.31	0.24	4.800***	S

Note. \*\*\* Significant at  $p < 0.001$ ; S = Supported.

**Testing the Mediating Role of Emei Martial Arts Cultural Identity**

The study employed a covariance-based structural model and utilised bootstrapping to assess mediation effects. In addition, the study utilised the Brown (1997) method to validate the direct, indirect, and overall mediation effects. Mediation refers to the situation where an independent variable has a simultaneous effect on a dependent variable, which then influences a mediator and ultimately impacts the dependent variable.

The constructed model shows that the cultural identity of Emei Martial Arts has both significant minor mediating effects ( $H2 = 0.074$ ) and moderate direct effects ( $\beta = 0.217$ ) on motivation for martial arts and adherence to martial arts practice. The cultural identity of Emei Martial Arts had both indirect ( $H4 = 0.038$ ) and direct ( $\beta = 0.237$ ) effects on perceived belonging and adherence to martial arts practice, as shown in Table 5. Therefore, H2 and H4 were confirmed.

**Table 5**

*Denotes the results of Mediation Model*

Hypothesis	Relationship	Indirect effects	Direct effects	Total effects	Lower Upper (BC)	Result
H2	PM → ECI → EA	0.074	0.217***	0.291	0.079-0.284	S
H4	PB → ECI → EA	0.038	0.237***	0.275	0.014-0.177	S

Note: \*\*\* Significant at  $p < 0.001$ ; S = Supported.

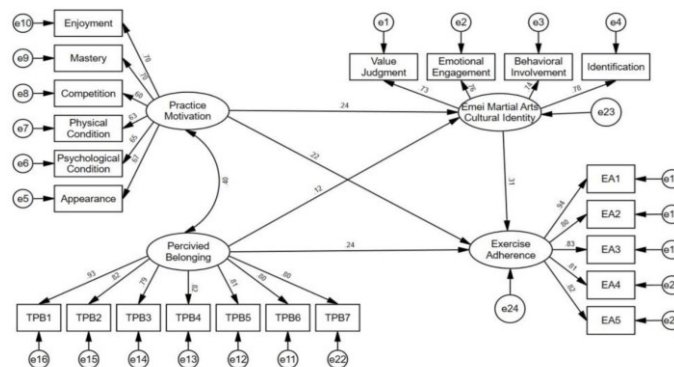


Figure 4 Structural model

**Figure 4:** Structural model.

## Discussion

### Key Findings of the Study

The state's focus on traditional culture has spurred the development of Emei Martial Arts. Nevertheless, there are still unresolved concerns regarding the lack of significant impact and a scarcity of professionals in this field (Cao et al., 2024). Currently, the challenges of enhancing the protection of cultural heritage and expanding the number of individuals involved in its practice remain unresolved. According to recent research conducted by Chen et al. (2021), it has been found that several important factors contribute to the preservation and promotion of the traditional martial arts culture of Emei. These factors include stimulating the motivation of practitioners, fostering a sense of group belongingness, and strengthening cultural identity. These factors also play a significant role in motivating practitioners to stick to their training routines. Thus, the current study sought to examine the impact of factors such as motivation to engage in martial arts, sense of belonging, and cultural identity in Emei Martial Arts on individuals' commitment to training. The research findings suggest that motivation for martial arts practice has a positive impact on adherence behaviour, providing support for H1. In addition to internal motivation, various factors like physical well-being, mental state, and self-image play a significant role in motivating individuals to stick to their exercise routine. Nevertheless, external social motivational factors, like the expectations of others and the desire for affiliation, have no impact on the commitment to martial arts. This finding deviates slightly from previous studies. Prior studies have indicated that variations in sports, participant demographics, and cultural backgrounds can lead to disparities in motivational factors and rankings (Diel et al., 2021). Additionally, the other three hypotheses underwent testing as well. Perceived belonging was found to have a minor yet significant positive impact on adherence to Emei Martial Arts practice (H3). Bringing together the "folk martial arts practice community" results in individuals developing stronger identities, both as individuals and as part of a group. This, in turn, deepens their sense of connection and belonging. Hence, it is crucial for Emei Martial Arts

practitioners to develop emotional competencies like security, identity, and satisfaction in order to stay motivated and committed.

The cultural identity of Emei Martial Arts serves as a moderating factor in the relationship between motivation to practise traditional martial arts and exercise adherence (H2), as well as between perceived belonging and exercise adherence (H4). Traditional martial arts, as a cultural phenomenon tied to the homeland, can contribute to the promotion of national cultural identity and the cultivation of patriotic spirit. Hsu (2024) emphasises the importance of identity and perceived belonging in fostering cultural identity. Strengthening practitioners' perceived belonging can enhance their understanding of the cultural essence and value of Emei Martial Arts. This, in turn, enhances their cultural identification with Emei Martial Arts and promotes exercise adherence.

### Limitation and Future Directions

The study has limitations. Prior research suggests that gender ratio variations can impact motivation in the context of martial arts (Patenteu et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the study did not address the gender ratio of Emei Martial Arts practitioners or its influence on adherence to martial arts. The study found that while martial arts motivation and sense of belonging had positive impacts on martial arts adherence, these effects were relatively small. The presence of unexplored variables may limit the findings of the present study.

Future research should aim to enhance interdisciplinary integration in order to broaden the research perspective and depth of Emei Martial Arts. Furthermore, it is recommended to enhance empirical research on Emei Martial Arts by employing qualitative research methods to investigate the factors that impact the adherence to training among practitioners of Emei Martial Arts. SEM can be used to analyse the effects of gender and other relevant variables on adherence to Emei Martial Arts training.

## Conclusion and Implication

### Conclusion

This study examined the impact of motivation and perceived belonging on adherence to Emei Martial Arts

practice, with a particular focus on the moderating role of Emei Martial Arts cultural identity. The study found that motivation and perceived belonging influenced adherence to Emei Martial Arts practice. Nevertheless, previous research findings are consistent with the observation that social motives, such as affiliation and others' expectations, do not have a significant correlation with adherence to Emei Martial Arts practice. The study revealed that the cultural identity of Emei Martial Arts played a moderating role in the relationship between motivation and adherence, as well as between perceived belonging and adherence. Enhancing the coaching content, fostering team culture, and reinforcing the cultural identity of the Emei Martial Arts Training Centre can contribute to increased adherence at the academy. This can lead to an increase in the training center's revenue, expansion of the practice group, enhancement of its influence, and facilitation of cultural inheritance.

### **Theoretical implication**

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of Emei Martial Arts culture, as well as the research, inheritance, and development of martial arts centres. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in research on cultural revival. Nevertheless, there is a lack of interdisciplinary theoretical research and limited availability of high-quality outcomes. Academics have recognised the significance of preserving the cultural identity of traditional martial arts. Prior research on the cultural identity of martial arts has been primarily theoretical, with a lack of empirical studies specifically focused on the cultural identity of Emei Martial Arts.

Secondly, researchers have highlighted the phenomenon of students finding enjoyment in martial arts while not necessarily enjoying martial arts classes (Yueyu et al., 2023). Researchers have delved into the reasons why individuals engage in martial arts, specifically focusing on the motivations of traditional Chinese martial arts students

and the motivational aspects of Emei Martial Arts. This study aims to bridge the gap in research and shed light on practitioners' participation in martial arts at a motivational level. Furthermore, gathering data through surveys on the motivations and behaviours of participants is crucial for informing the curriculum development of its centres.

Thirdly, it reinforces the significance of a sense of belonging in maintaining commitment to Emei Martial Arts training. It highlights the importance of nurturing a grassroots martial arts community, fostering a sense of belonging, and strengthening shared values and emotions. These findings have significant theoretical implications for the preservation and advancement of Emei Martial Arts.

### **Practical implication**

This study has practical implications that can enhance the operation and management of Emei Martial Arts training centres. It also offers valuable guidance for heritage and development purposes. Through an evaluation of individuals' enthusiasm to engage in Emei Martial Arts training, one can gain insight into the genuine drive of martial arts enthusiasts. Customising educational materials and curriculum to align with the needs of students can contribute to student retention and bring economic benefits to the Emei Martial Arts Centre and the surrounding community.

The study's findings validate the hypothesis that a sense of belonging and cultural identity have a significant impact on one's commitment to training. It is beneficial to establish a martial arts community, expand the cultural development ecosystem both internally and externally, enhance the training environment and system, foster shared values and emotions, and facilitate the transmission and spread of Emei Martial Arts. Furthermore, it fosters a sense of national cultural pride and confidence, which holds immense practical importance in the development and promotion of traditional Chinese culture.

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