



<https://asml.ui.ac.ir/>

## Embracing Tradition: Unraveling the Influence of Social Support and Identity on Indigenous Sports Participation

Javad Karimi<sup>1</sup> , Sajjad Pashaie<sup>2</sup> , Maziyar Kalashi<sup>3</sup> , Hamed Golmohammadi<sup>4</sup> 

1. Department of Physical Education, Lorestan University, Khorramabad, Lorestan, Iran  
Karimi3488@gmail.com
2. Department of Sports Management, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran  
sajjad.pashaie@yahoo.com
3. Department of Sport Management, Razi University, Kermanshah, Iran  
kalashi.maziyar@gmail.com
4. Department of Physical Education and Sport, Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Sivas, Turkey  
golmohammadi.hamed@yahoo.com (Corresponding Author)

### Article Info

### Abstract

#### Article type: Research Article

#### Received:

20 Sep 2024

#### Accepted:

06 Oct 2024

#### Published online:

20 Oct 2024

Sports participation is known to provide numerous physical and psychological benefits, yet indigenous populations often face unique barriers that limit their involvement in sports. This study explores how social support and identity impact participation in indigenous sports, reflecting the enduring embrace of tradition. Using Structural Equation Modeling and Partial Least Squares, the research analyzed 200 athletes from western provinces in Iran. The results suggested a positive correlation between social support and social identity, as well as social support and sports orientation. Moreover, social identity was found to play a mediating role in the relationship between social support and sports orientation. The findings highlighted the pivotal role of social support in fostering enthusiasm and participation in sports. The study's findings and practical implications can inform the development of strategies and interventions to promote and sustain participation in indigenous sports, their role in preserving culture and community cohesion, while fostering a supportive and culturally rich sporting environment.

#### Keywords:

Parental Support, Social Identity, Social Support, Sports Participation, Youth Sports

#### Cite this article:

Karimi, J. , Pashaie, S. , Kalashi, M. and Golmohammadi, H. (2024). Embracing Tradition: Unraveling the Influence of Social Support and Identity on Indigenous Sports Participation. *Archives in Sport Management and Leadership*, 2(2), 31-42. [doi: 10.22108/asml.2024.142863.1052](https://doi.org/10.22108/asml.2024.142863.1052)

© The Author(s).

Published by University of Isfahan



This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>).

## Introduction

The idea of social support is complex and covers many facets, including the structure and function of personal connections (Cohen, 2004). It involves supportive relationships and behaviors where resources are shared or made available to benefit the recipient (Bianco & Eklund, 2001). Social support pertains to the perception of assistance from one's social circle, such as friends, family, teammates, and coaches, who offer help if needed (Rees & Freeman, 2010). As outlined by Rees and colleagues (Murray et al., 2023), perceptions of support encompass four aspects: emotional (e.g., conveying love and care to an athlete), esteem (e.g., boosting an athlete's confidence), informational (e.g., giving guidance to an athlete), and tangible support (e.g., providing resources for athletic performance). These dimensions are often interconnected and can be combined to gauge overall perceived social support (Shang & Yang, 2021; Raedeke & Smith, 2004). Social support in sports can be understood through various dimensions, including emotional, informational, tangible, and appraisal support, each playing a distinct role in enhancing an athlete's experience and performance (Murray et al., 2023).

Studies have demonstrated variations in individuals' perceptions of support received, indicating the importance of examining both enacted support and the provision of support alongside its receipt (Marigold et al., 2014; Coussens et al., 2015; Barrera Jr, 1986). While current research primarily concentrates on the experiences of support recipients, exploring the viewpoints of support providers could yield valuable insights into how social support shapes sports involvement (Hartley, 2020). Engagement in sports functions as a mechanism for individuals to acquire social approval and assistance, fostering a greater sense of belonging and acknowledgment within their communities, thus facilitating meaningful relationships with others (Karimi et al., 2019). This participation in sports not only signifies their active engagement but also indicates their capacity to receive support from others in diverse situations (Pashaie et al., 2017). The social identity approach has the potential to address certain limitations in the current examination of social support in sports (Hartley, 2020). Firstly, this approach furnishes a theoretical framework for comprehending social support in the context of group dynamics, acknowledging both the provision (enactment) and receipt (perceived/received) of social support within groups, as evidenced in interdisciplinary support teams and sports organizations (Reid et al., 2004). Secondly, it can offer insights into how social factors may influence the impact of social support, considering how shared group affiliations affect the nature of giving and receiving social support. For instance, support from a member of a rival team may carry different implications compared to support from one's own team member (Foddy et al., 2009).

The social identity perspective in sports, as delineated by (Haslam et al., 2021), integrates social identity theory and self-categorization theory to collectively explain how social identity and its elements significantly influence cognition and behavior. Social identity theory emerged from a series of minimal group studies conducted by Tajfel (1970). Over the past decade, there has been a noticeable increase in research exploring the impact of social support on youth sports. The predictive influence of parents, coaches, and peers in creating an environment that values effort and improvement over winning has been identified as a crucial factor for maintaining participation in sports (Gardner et al., 2017). Scholars stress that positive developmental outcomes for youth engaged in sports are more probable when interactions involve constructive and informative feedback, appropriate role modeling, and supportive engagement styles that promote autonomy (Atkins et al., 2015). Moreover, research indicates the evolving nature of social support over time and its significant influence on sports participation patterns (Laird et al., 2016; Sheridan et al., 2014). Athletes consistently participate in sports within social groups (Haslam et al., 2021), thus an athlete's self-perception is partly molded by the group they belong to. In psychological discourse, this feeling of belonging to a group is termed social identity. Social identity is described as "the aspect of an individual's self-concept derived from their awareness of belonging to a social group, together with the value and emotional significance associated with that membership" (Tajfel, 1981).

The significance of sports orientation and its determining factors on sports performance and participation is widely acknowledged. Sports orientation involves an individual's commitment to confronting challenges, acquiring skills, overcoming obstacles, and surpassing others (Rezasoltani & Vahdani, 2016). Indeed, sports orientation is a critical factor for enhancing athletes' performance and attaining sports accomplishments

(Rumahpasal et al., 2020). Gill and Deeter (1988) defines sports orientation as individuals' inclination to strive for success in a task, demonstrate resilience in the face of failure, and achieve rewards. In addition, Gill identifies three aspects of sports orientation: competition, success orientation, and goal orientation. Research in this domain indicates that parental social support significantly influences athletes' sports orientation; however, gender does not exert a significant influence on athletes' sports orientation. Moreover, both parental social support and gender can predict athletes' sports orientation simultaneously (Rumahpasal et al., 2020). Evidence suggests that there is no significant difference between team sports and individual sports in sports orientation (Jamshidi et al., 2011).

Understanding the factors that influence sports participation among local people is crucial for promoting physical activity and well-being in these communities. Previous research has highlighted the significance of social support and social identity in sports participation, but there is a lack of studies that explore these dynamics within indigenous contexts, particularly in the western provinces of Iran. This study aims to fill this research gap by examining how social support and identity influence sports participation among indigenous athletes in this region. Sports participation is known to provide numerous physical and psychological benefits, yet indigenous populations often face unique barriers that limit their involvement in sports. Social support, defined as the assistance and encouragement received from family, friends, and the community, plays a vital role in overcoming these barriers. Additionally, social identity, which refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a particular group, can significantly impact their motivation and commitment to sports. Despite the established importance of these factors, there is limited empirical evidence on how they specifically affect indigenous athletes. By focusing on the western provinces of Iran, this study provides a unique cultural perspective that has been underrepresented in the literature. The region is known for its rich cultural diversity and a variety of indigenous sports, such as Pahlavani (traditional Iranian wrestling), local wrestling, and seasonal and festival-related games, which are prevalent there. This cultural diversity and the presence of indigenous sports make this region an ideal setting to explore the impact of social identity and support on participation in local sports. Utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis, we aim to uncover the direct and indirect effects of social support and social identity on sports participation.

In this study, we address the following research questions: (1) how does social support influence sports orientation among indigenous athletes? (2) How does social support influence social identity among indigenous athletes? (3) What role does social identity play in mediating this relationship? By answering these questions, we seek to contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural and social dynamics that promote sports orientation in indigenous communities.

This study's findings will provide valuable insights for policymakers and community leaders to develop strategies that enhance sports participation among indigenous populations by strengthening social support networks and fostering a strong sense of social identity.

### **Proposed model of the research**

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed research model, which is constructed on theoretical connections among social support, social identity, and individual sports orientation. This model advances hypotheses proposing that social support, mediated by social identity, shapes individuals' inclination towards indigenous local sports in Iran. Within this framework, social support is explored as an independent variable with a direct effect on social identity, and it additionally impacts individuals' sports orientation towards indigenous local sports in Iran through social identity. Furthermore, individual sports orientation is regarded as the dependent variable, directly influenced by both social support and social identity.

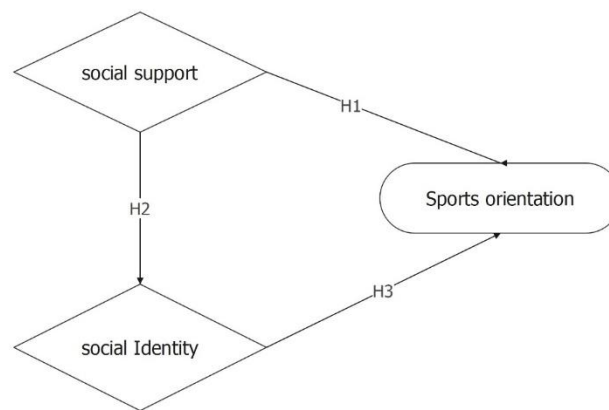


Figure 1. Hypothesized framework

## Research Methods

### *Research Design and Approach*

This study employs a cross-sectional research design to investigate the influence of social support and social identity on indigenous sports participation. The research method is descriptive-correlational in terms of its objective, and in terms of data collection, it is classified as survey research. The methodological approach combines Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis to examine the relationships among the variables.

### *Sampling and Participants*

The study involved 200 athletes hailing from the Western and Northwestern provinces of Iran (specifically Kermanshah, Kurdistan, East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, Qazvin, and Zanjan). The selection of **200 people** as the final sample size in the study can be explained by the need to account for **statistical power** and the **number of hidden variables**. Given that there were **9 hidden variables**, **20 participants were chosen for each variable**, resulting in a total of 180 participants. However, to further enhance the **statistical reliability** and ensure more robust findings, the sample size was increased to **200 participants**.

These athletes were selected using random sampling to ensure a representative sample of the population. In the above study, stratified random sampling was used; in this method, the statistical population is divided into different strata (provinces), and then a sample is randomly selected from each stratum to achieve better representation from each group. Participants were required to actively participate in indigenous sports and have resided in the region for at least five years.

### *Measures and Instruments*

The study employed validated questionnaires to assess social support, social identity, and sports participation. Social support was evaluated using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), which measures support from family, friends, and significant others, demonstrating high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 in previous research. Social identity was measured using the Social Identity Scale (SIS), which assesses the strength of identification with one's ethnic group and has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, indicating its validity. Sports participation was assessed through a self-reported measure of the frequency and duration of involvement in indigenous sports activities, with its reliability confirmed by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82. Each questionnaire included several components: for social support (Vaux et al., 1986), it encompassed support from friends, family, and others; for social identity (Bruner & Benson, 2018), it included in-group ties, cognitive centrality, and in-group affect; and for sport orientation (Martin et al., 1995), it assessed competitiveness, goal orientation, and win orientation. The sources for these questionnaires have been established in previous research, ensuring their validity and reliability for the study's objectives.

### *Validity and Reliability*

To ensure the cultural relevance of the questionnaires, linguistic and conceptual alignment with Iran's social values and norms, particularly considering sports cultural factors, was examined. Additionally, input from sports experts was utilized to revise and finalize the questionnaire. To ensure validity and reliability, several measures were implemented. For content validity, expert reviews were conducted, with specialists in sports psychology and indigenous studies providing feedback on the relevance and comprehensiveness of the items. Construct validity was verified through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), with all factor loadings exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. The reliability of the instruments was assessed by evaluating their internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha, with all scales demonstrating high reliability ( $\alpha > 0.80$ ).

### *Data Collection*

The data collection process was carried out systematically to ensure thorough and reliable data acquisition. The research instrument, a questionnaire, was distributed during sports events and community gatherings to reach a diverse group of participants. Prior to distribution, participants were briefed on the study's objectives, and any potential concerns were addressed to foster clarity and trust. To maintain the integrity of the process, anonymity and confidentiality were emphasized, ensuring that personal information would not be disclosed or linked to individual responses. In addition, informed consent was obtained from each participant before the questionnaire was completed, with a clear explanation of their rights and the voluntary nature of their participation. This careful approach helped to build rapport with participants and ensured ethical standards were met throughout the data collection process.

### *Data Analysis*

For assessing the established hypotheses, a quantitative research method was chosen. This approach enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between variables through generalized statistical evidence (Pashaie et al., 2023). SEM and PLS methods were employed for data analysis. SEMs are instrumental in testing and developing models and scales based on statistical data. SEM comprises measurement and structural models. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) as a measurement model evaluates dimensions, validity, and reliability before structural modeling. The model's power against observed data is first assessed using CFA.

To assess the fit of the measurement model, several criteria were utilized, including the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which gauges the variance in indicators explained by latent constructs. For evaluating structural validity, standardized factor loadings ( $\geq 0.50$ ), composite reliability (CR  $\geq 0.70$ ), and average variance extracted (AVE  $\geq 0.50$ ) were computed. Furthermore, alpha coefficients, serving as internal consistency measures, were presented for each scale or subscale to indicate the degree of association among its items. Values exceeding 0.70 are deemed adequate.

In the second stage, SEM was employed to test hypotheses regarding correlations between observable and latent variables. The first criterion for checking the structural model is the  $R^2$  coefficient related to the hidden endogenous (dependent) changes of the model. It illustrates the impact of an exogenous variable on an endogenous change, with values of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 serving as criteria for weak, medium, and strong influences, respectively. The second criterion for examining the structural model is  $Q^2$ , which has determined three values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 as low, medium, and strong predictive power. In assessing the overall model, the standardized root mean square residual index (SRMR) is used, which is suitable if the value of this index is less than 0.1 or 0.08.

IBM® SPSS® SEM with PLS<sub>3</sub> software was deemed reliable for this study. EndNote™20 software was used for bibliography creation and reference management.

## **Findings**

The demographic composition of the sample was as follows: 60% male and 40% female, aged between 18 and 35 years with an average age of 26.7 years. The majority belonged to indigenous ethnic groups in the area, with educational backgrounds ranging from high school diplomas to undergraduate degrees.

First, the validity and reliability of the research variables were examined according to [Table 1](#).

**Table 1. The results related to the validity and reliability analysis of the research variables**

Component	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Social Support	0.921	0.922	0.934	<b>0.614</b>
Social Identity	0.893	0.898	0.914	<b>0.542</b>
Sport Orientating	0.921	0.921	0.934	<b>0.613</b>

However, the statistics in the table reveal that the composite reliability for all variables is better than 0.8, and the mean variance for all variables is greater than 0.5. Also, Cronbach's alpha and Dillon-Goldstein's rho of variables are greater than 0.7, indicating a high degree of convergence. Then, in [Table 2](#), factor load values were checked.

**Table 2. The result of the factor loadings**

Component	Sub Component	Symbol	Factor Loading	Result
Social Support	Support from Friends	ss1	0.900	suitable
		ss2	0.907	suitable
		ss3	0.874	suitable
	Support from Family	ss4	0.923	suitable
		ss5	0.930	suitable
		ss6	0.861	suitable
	Support from Others	ss7	0.864	suitable
		ss8	0.880	suitable
		ss9	0.880	suitable
Social Identity	In-group ties	si1	0.900	suitable
		si2	0.907	suitable
		si3	0.874	suitable
	Cognitive centrality	si4	0.923	suitable
		si5	0.930	suitable
		si6	0.861	suitable
	In-group affect	si7	0.864	suitable
		si8	0.880	suitable
		si9	0.880	suitable
Sport Orientating	Win orientating	so1	0.900	suitable
		so2	0.907	suitable
		so3	0.874	suitable
	Competitiveness	so4	0.923	suitable
		so5	0.930	suitable
		so6	0.861	suitable
	Goal Orientating	so7	0.864	suitable
		so8	0.880	suitable
		so9	0.880	suitable

The results from the previous table indicate that all item factor loadings exceed 0.7, suggesting good validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Now the research model is tested and the relationships between the variables are examined.

**Table 3. Path coefficient values and t-values Hypotheses related to research model paths**

Independent		Dependent	Path coefficient	T Values	P Values
<b>Social Support</b>	→	Social Identity	0.629	14.228	0.001
<b>Social Support</b>	→	Sport Orientating	0.298	5.577	0.001
<b>Social Identity</b>	→	Sport Orientating	0.572	11.118	0.001

The results of the above table showed that dirhams in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional situations would lead to the intention to purchase the product, and the analysis of the coefficients also shows that there is a difference between these two situations. The bootstrap test was employed to explore the mediating role of the hope variable, with results outlined in Table 4.

**Table 4. Results of the Bootstrap test to investigate the mediating role of social identity**

Independent	Mediator	Dependent	Path coefficient	T Values	P Values
Social Support	Social Identity	Sport Orientating	0.360	9.277	0.001

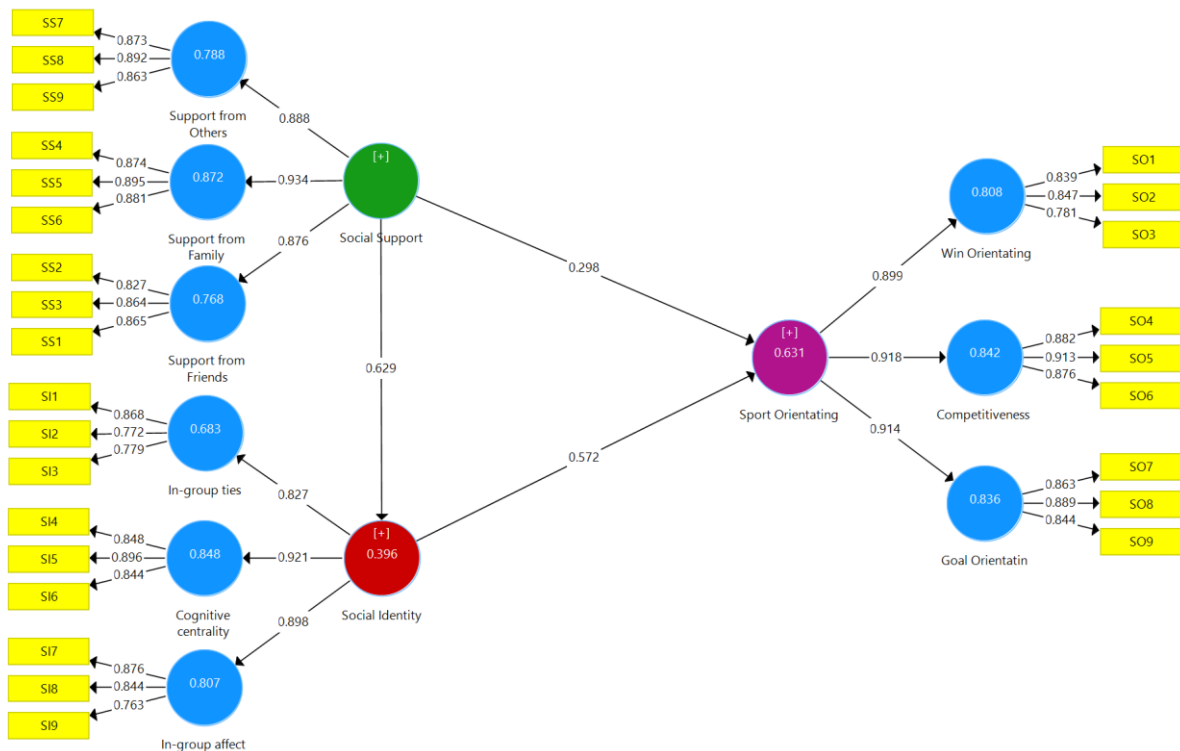
According to the results of Table 4 and since the mediating role of the social identity variable was statistically significant (0.001); As a result, it can be recognized that social identity acts as a mediator in the correlation between social support and sports orientation.

**Table 5. Research model fit indicators**

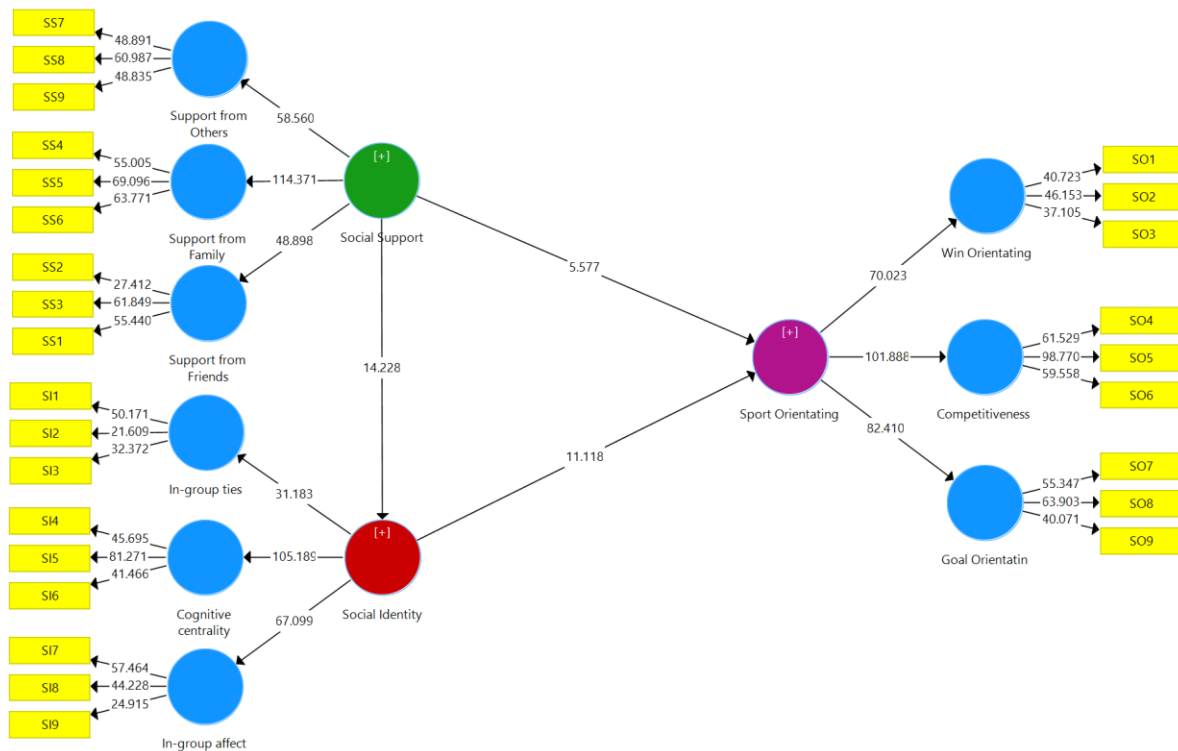
Variable	Q <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	SRMR
Social Identity	0.198	0.396	0.088
Sport Orientating	0.358	0.631	

Based on the table's data, the R<sup>2</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup> values fall within a medium to strong range. Additionally, the SRMR score is below 0.1, signifying the study model's suitable quality (Cangur & Ercan, 2015).

Figure 2 provides a visual representation of how the measurement model captures and quantifies the complex interplay between social support, social identity, and sports orientation among indigenous athletes in Iran. It underscores the methodological rigor of the study and offers insights into the specific dimensions influencing athletes' engagement in indigenous sports, crucial for understanding cultural dynamics and community cohesion in the context of sports participation.



**Figure 2. The final research model in the case of path coefficient and factor loadings**



**Figure 3. The final research model in the case of T-Value**

Figure 3 presents the results of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, focusing on the T-values associated with each path in the research model. The findings strongly support the hypotheses regarding the relationships among social support, social identity, and sports orientation among indigenous athletes in Iran. Firstly, higher levels of Social Support (SS) significantly predict stronger Social Identity (SI) ( $T = 14.228$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Secondly, greater Social Support (SS) correlates positively with increased Sports Orientation (SO) ( $T = 5.577$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Lastly, a stronger Social Identity (SI) is associated with higher Sports Orientation (SO) ( $T = 11.118$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These results underscore the critical roles of social dynamics in shaping athletes' engagement and participation in indigenous sports, providing insights into how support networks and cultural identity influence sports behaviors in this context.

## Discussion

The results expose the interrelations between social support, social identity, and sports orientation as delineated in our research framework and on importance the significance of indigenous sports in preserving cultural heritage and fostering community cohesion. This implies that supporting and promoting indigenous sports can contribute to the preservation of cultural traditions and the strengthening of community bonds. The path coefficients and corresponding t-values provide valuable understanding regarding the magnitude and importance of these connections.

The SEM analysis indicated a significant positive association between Social Support (SS) and Social Identity (SI) among indigenous athletes in Iran ( $T = 14.228$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding supports the hypothesis that athletes who perceive greater social support from family, friends, and substantial others also tend to exhibit a stronger identification with their ethnic group. It underscores how supportive social environments contribute to shaping athletes' cultural identities within the realm of indigenous sports. These results are consistent with previous research emphasizing the influential role of social support in shaping individuals' identities and sense of belonging within social groups (Guan & So, 2016; Haslam et al., 2005; Asanprakit & Limna, 2023). The study suggests that social support influences social identity across various dimensions, including family (Cutrona et al., 1994), friends and peers (Wang & Eccles, 2012), and substantial others, thereby fostering a sense of connection and mutual empowerment within group dynamics (Hogg & Smith, 2007). This interconnectedness reinforces both personal and collective identities (Besta, 2018), highlighting the environmental factors that influence athletes' participation in indigenous sports. The study advocates for



supportive coaching approaches that provide autonomy, constructive feedback, and role modeling from coaches, parents, and peers, which are crucial for enhancing athletes' orientation toward indigenous sports.

The study also identified a significant positive relationship between Social Support (SS) and Sports Orientation (SO) ( $T = 5.577$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that athletes who receive stronger social support are more likely to exhibit a heightened orientation towards active participation in sports activities. This finding supports the hypothesis that supportive social networks play a motivational role in fostering increased engagement in sports among indigenous athletes (Hartley, 2020; Gardner et al., 2017; Atkins et al., 2015; Laird et al., 2016). The importance of strong social bonds and a sense of belonging to specific cultural groups emerges as a notable motivator for sports involvement, as individuals perceive sports as a means to connect with their cultural heritage and affirm their identity. Acknowledging these dynamics empowers policymakers, community leaders, and sports organizations to develop targeted interventions that capitalize on existing social structures and cultural affinities to promote greater participation and commitment to indigenous sports. By cultivating supportive social environments and celebrating cultural diversity, such initiatives not only enhance physical well-being but also contribute to the preservation and propagation of indigenous cultures and traditions.

Moreover, the analysis revealed a significant positive association between Social Identity (SI) and Sports Orientation (SO) ( $T = 11.118$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding underscores the idea that a robust social identity within one's ethnic group correlates with heightened levels of sports orientation. Athletes who strongly identify with their ethnic background are more motivated and involved in sports that resonate with their cultural heritage, highlighting the cultural and social importance of identity in sports participation. These results align with theories such as Tajfel (1981) and recent studies by (Haslam et al., 2021) which emphasize the notable role of social identity in shaping individuals' self-concepts within sports contexts. Athletes' immersion in social groups within sports further shapes their sense of self and reinforces their commitment to activities associated with their cultural identity (Tajfel, 1981).

The results underscore the complex interplay between social support, social identity, and sports orientation among indigenous athletes in Iran. They highlight the importance of fostering supportive environments that enhance athletes' cultural identity and encourage active participation in indigenous sports. These findings provide valuable insights for developing targeted interventions and policies aimed at promoting sports engagement and preserving cultural heritage within indigenous communities.

### Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides significant insights, it is not without limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the data restricts our ability to establish causal relationships between variables. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to better understand how changes in social support and social identity influence sports behaviors over time. Additionally, expanding the study to include diverse cultural contexts and geographic regions would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, exploring the role of other factors such as cultural norms, economic factors, and gender dynamics in shaping sports participation among indigenous athletes would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the influences at play.

In conclusion, this study contributes to our understanding of how social dynamics impact sports participation and cultural identity among indigenous athletes in Iran. By elucidating these relationships, the research informs strategies for promoting sports engagement and cultural preservation within indigenous communities, thereby supporting the broader goal of enhancing well-being and community cohesion through sports.

### Practical Implications

This research's practical implications underscore the importance of considering both enacted support and the provision of support, along with its reception, within the dynamics of social interactions. It emphasizes how social factors influence the giving and receiving of social support within groups. Furthermore, importance the significance of indigenous sports in Iran for preserving cultural heritage and fostering community cohesion. The research model proposed offers a framework for understanding how social support

and social identity collectively shape athletes' participation in indigenous local sports in Iran. The study recommends that coaches, parents, and peers provide constructive feedback, serve as appropriate role models, and adopt supportive engagement styles that promote autonomy, thereby enhancing athletes' sports orientation. Additionally, suggests that sports organizations should recognize both the provision and receipt of social support within groups to cultivate an environment that prioritizes effort and improvement over mere victory. This approach can help foster sustained engagement in sports among athletes.

In conclusion, the practical implications of this paper importance the significance of adopting a supportive coaching approach, acknowledging social support within groups, preserving cultural heritage, and recognizing the interplay between social support and social identity in shaping athletes' involvement in indigenous local sports in Iran. These implications offer valuable insights for devising strategies and interventions aimed at encouraging and maintaining participation in indigenous sports, all while fostering a supportive and culturally vibrant sporting environment.

## Conclusion

This paper provides compelling evidence of the substantial relationships observed among social support, social identity, and sports orientation within the context of indigenous athletes in Iran. The findings underscore that higher perceived social support correlates positively with stronger social identity among athletes, affirming the pivotal role of supportive social environments in shaping cultural identity through sports participation. Moreover, the study establishes that athletes with a robust social identity are more oriented towards engaging in sports activities associated with their ethnic heritage, highlighting the profound cultural and social dimensions of identity in sports. These conclusions are supported by robust statistical analyses and theoretical frameworks such as (Tajfel, 1981) and contemporary social identity theories (Haslam et al., 2021), which emphasize the importance of group affiliation and identity in shaping individual behaviors and attitudes within sports contexts. The implications of these findings extend to policymakers, community leaders, and sports organizations, suggesting that fostering supportive environments and celebrating cultural diversity can enhance both participation in indigenous sports and the preservation of cultural traditions. By leveraging these insights, future research can further explore interventions that promote social support and strengthen social identity to enrich athletes' experiences and sustain engagement in indigenous sports.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

## Funding

This work was supported only by the authors.

## References

- Asanprakit, S., & Limna, P. (2023). Understanding the Role of Social Influence in Consumers' Intention to Use Social Commerce. *Rom Yoong Thong Journal*, 1(2), 103-121. <https://B2n.ir/m82222>
- Atkins, M. R., Johnson, D. M., Force, E. C., & Petrie, T. A. (2015). Peers, parents, and coaches, oh my! The relation of the motivational climate to boys' intention to continue in sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 16, 170-180. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.10.008>
- Barrera Jr, M. (1986). Distinctions between social support concepts, measures, and models. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(4), 413-445. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00922627>
- Besta, T. (2018). Independiente e interdependiente? Agencial y comunal? Autoconceptos de personas fusionadas con un grupo. *Anales de Psicología*, 34(1), 123-134. <https://dx.doi.org/10.6018/analesps.34.1.266201>
- Bianco, T., & Eklund, R. C. (2001). Conceptual considerations for social support research in sport and exercise settings: The case of sport injury. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 23(2), 85-107. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.23.2.85>
- Bruner, M. W., & Benson, A. J. (2018). Evaluating the psychometric properties of the Social Identity Questionnaire for Sport (SIQS). *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 35, 181-188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.12.006>

- Cangür, Ş., & Ercan, I. (2015). Comparison of model fit indices used in structural equation modeling under multivariate normality. *Journal of Modern Applied Statistical Methods*, 14, 152-167. <https://doi.org/10.22237/jmasm/1430453580>
- Cohen, S. (2004). Social relationships and health. *American Psychologist*, 59(8), 676. <https://psycnet.apa.org/buy/2004-20395-002>
- Coussens, A. H., Rees, T., & Freeman, P. (2015). Applying generalizability theory to examine the antecedents of perceived coach support. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 37(1), 51-62. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.2014-0087>
- Cutrona, C. E., Cole, V., Colangelo, N., Assouline, S. G., & Russell, D. W. (1994). Perceived parental social support and academic achievement: an attachment theory perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66(2), 369. <https://psycnet.apa.org/buy/1994-31441-001>
- Foddy, M., Platow, M. J., & Yamagishi, T. (2009). Group-based trust in strangers: The role of stereotypes and expectations. *Psychological Science*, 20(4), 419-422. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02312.x>
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104>
- Gardner, L. A., Magee, C. A., & Vella, S. A. (2017). Enjoyment and behavioral intention predict organized youth sport participation and dropout. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 14(11), 861-865. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2016-0572>
- Gill, D. L., & Deeter, T. E. (1988). Development of the sport orientation questionnaire. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 59(3), 191-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.1988.10605504>
- Guan, M., & So, J. (2016). Influence of social identity on self-efficacy beliefs through perceived social support: A social identity theory perspective. *Communication Studies*, 67(5), 588-604. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2016.1239645>
- Hartley, C. L. (2020). Investigating the mechanisms of social support's effects on sport-related outcomes: A social identity approach. Available at *STERRE*. <https://www.storre.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/31754>
- Haslam, C., Lam, B. C., Yang, J., Steffens, N. K., Haslam, S. A., Cruwys, T., ... & Fransen, K. (2021). When the final whistle blows: Social identity pathways support mental health and life satisfaction after retirement from competitive sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 57, 102049. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2021.102049>
- Haslam, S. A., O'Brien, A., Jetten, J., Vormedal, K., & Penna, S. (2005). Taking the strain: Social identity, social support, and the experience of stress. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(3), 355-370. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466605X37468>
- Hogg, M. A., & Smith, J. R. (2007). Attitudes in social context: A social identity perspective. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 18(1), 89-131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463280701592070>
- Jamshidi, A., Hossien, T., Sajadi, S. S., Safari, K., & Zare, G. (2011). The relationship between sport orientation and competitive anxiety in elite athletes. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 30, 1161-1165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.10.226>
- Karimi, J., Abbasi, H., & Eydi, H. (2019). Sociological Explanation of Social Consequences of Participation in Sport; Grounded Theory. *Research on Educational Sport*, 7(16), 285-306. <https://doi.org/10.22089/res.2018.6136.1500> [In Persian].
- Laird, Y., Fawcner, S., Kelly, P., McNamee, L., & Niven, A. (2016). The role of social support on physical activity behaviour in adolescent girls: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 13, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-016-0405-7>
- Marigold, D. C., Cavallo, J. V., Holmes, J. G., & Wood, J. V. (2014). You can't always give what you want: The challenge of providing social support to low self-esteem individuals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 107(1), 56. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036554>
- Martin, J. J., Adams-Mushett, C., & Smith, K. L. (1995). Athletic identity and sport orientation of adolescent swimmers with disabilities. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 12(2), 113-123. <https://doi.org/10.1123/apaq.12.2.113>
- Murray, R. M., Hartley, C., & Coffee, P. (2023). Only my group will do: Evidence that social support protects athletes from burnout when they identify with those who provide it. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 69, 102508. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2023.102508>

- Pashaie, S., Abbaszadeh, M., Abdavi, F., & Golmohammadi, H. (2023). Improving the Validity of Mixed and Multi-Methods through Triangulation in New Sports Management Research. *Research in Sport Management and Marketing*, 4(2), 16-27. [https://journal.uma.ac.ir/article\\_2220\\_a1a0475d5db58103f02b80d9408a4f4f.pdf](https://journal.uma.ac.ir/article_2220_a1a0475d5db58103f02b80d9408a4f4f.pdf)
- Pashaie, S., Mahmoodpour, P., & Khodadadi, M. R. (2017). The Mediating Role of the Sport Participation in Explaining the Relationship between the use of Communication Tools of the Information Technology by reducing the Depression of Adolescents. *Business Intelligence Management Studies*, 5(20), 209-235. <https://doi.org/10.22054/ims.2017.8630> [In Persian].
- Raedeke, T. D., & Smith, A. L. (2004). Coping resources and athlete burnout: An examination of stress mediated and moderation hypotheses. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 26(4), 525-541. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.26.4.525>
- Rees, T., & Freeman, P. (2010). Social support and performance in a golf-putting experiment. *The Sport Psychologist*, 24(3), 333-348. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.24.3.333>
- Reid, C., Stewart, E., & Thorne, G. (2004). Multidisciplinary sport science teams in elite sport: Comprehensive servicing or conflict and confusion?. *The Sport Psychologist*, 18(2), 204-217. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.18.2.204>
- Rezasoltani, N., Vahdani, M. (2016). Modeling the Effect of Athletic Identity on Sport Orientation in Athletes Participating in 11th Sport Olympiad of Male Students in Iran. *Sport Management Journal*, 8(4), 511-525. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jsm.2016.59536>
- Rumahpasal, O., Kristinawati, W., & Setiawan, A. (2020). Athletes' sports orientation viewed from parental social support and gender. *Journal Sport Area*, 5(2), 128-145. [https://doi.org/10.25299/sportarea.vol\(\).4775](https://doi.org/10.25299/sportarea.vol().4775)
- Shang, Y., & Yang, S. Y. (2021). The effect of social support on athlete burnout in weightlifters: The mediation effect of mental toughness and sports motivation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 649677. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.649677>
- Sheridan, D., Coffee, P., & Lavalley, D. (2014). A systematic review of social support in youth sport. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 7(1), 198-228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2014.931999>
- Tajfel, H. (1970). Experiments in intergroup discrimination. *Scientific American*, 223(5), 96-103. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24927662>
- Tajfel, H. (1981). Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology. *Cup Archive*.
- Vaux, A., Phillips, J., Holly, L., Thomson, B., Williams, D., & Stewart, D. (1986). The social support appraisals (SS-A) scale: Studies of reliability and validity. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(2), 195. <https://B2n.ir/b86535>
- Wang, M. T., & Eccles, J. S. (2012). Social support matters: Longitudinal effects of social support on three dimensions of school engagement from middle to high school. *Child Development*, 83(3), 877-895. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01745.x>