

Investigating Youth's Motivation for Practising Traditional Martial Art – Vovinam: Moderating Role of National Identity

Research Article

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Abstract: In Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, young people are drawn to the martial art known as "Vovinam," which has deep cultural origins in Vietnam. Young people in the "capital of a thousand years of civilisation" are both dynamic in discovering new things and eager to preserve the culture of the nation. With an emphasis on the moderating influence of national identity, this study attempts to determine the variables influencing students' motivation to practice Vovinam. The current study examined the youth's decision to continue practising Vovinam by testing constructs such as consciousness of health, perceived workout benefits, the necessity of exercise and continuance intention and extended components like National Identity using the extended Uses and Gratifications Theory and Social Identity theory. An online survey was sent to over 350 valid students practising Vovinam. SmartPLS software was used to analyse data, and then partial least squares structural equation modelling techniques (PLS-SEM) were used to test the data statistically. The results show a moderating effect of national identity on the relations between exercise needs and intention to continue exercising in Vovinam. The findings also indicate that the factors, including consciousness of health, perceived workout benefits, and the need for exercise, have positive and significant effects on the youth's intention to continue exercising Vovinam. The study emphasises the cultural and motivational elements that influence Vietnamese students' engagement in practising Vovinam. The findings might be used as a foundation for governments and educational institutions to support Vovinam, which would boost youth physical health and national pride.

Keywords: Vovinam • National identity • Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) • Social identity theory

1. Introduction

Physical education at schools brings various positive values for people and society (Ghorbani et al., 2020). Hence, physical education is emphasised in educational programs in many countries (Baena-Morales & González-Villora, 2023). Physical education classes are considered as potential environments to increase students' motivation to participate in physical activities (Hosseini et al., 2020). Many studies have shown that physical education is a pedagogical process aimed at protecting oneself, improving health, and equipping individuals with necessary motor skills and a healthy lifestyle (Tappe & Burgeson, 2004). Moreover, physical education and physical activity at school may play a crucial role

in shaping a nation's public health (Siedentop, 2009). Last but not least, participating in some traditional sports not only brings health benefits but also strengthens national consciousness (Ma, 2023; Xiang, 2024).

Vietnamese universities are required to offer diverse kinds of sports for students in their physical education programs to achieve the national goals of developing both the physical and mental aspects of students (Khon, 2024; To et al., 2020; Van Dau et al., 2020). Since the 2000s, traditional martial arts (TMAs) like Vovinam have been included in the curriculum of physical education in universities, allowing students to be free to select to practice martial arts among other kinds of sports to develop their whole physical, mental, and moral development (Quang & Hoa, 2025). Moreover, the policy helps to create a solid foundation for the development of traditional martial

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arts in the educational sector and the community (Tung & That, 2025). Vovinam is one of the TMAs originating from Vietnam in the 1930s. During that time, Vovinam was considered partly as a nationalistic and patriotic response to political conflict (Green & Svinth, 2010). To develop its unique techniques, Vovinam combines the quintessence of many different martial arts in the world. With competitions such as the 3rd Asian Indoor Games in 2009 and its official status at the SEA Games in 2011, the TMA started to evolve into an official sport (Vovinam-SEA Games, 2011). In recent years, the TMAs have become an important component in the educational-physical program at many universities in Vietnam, contributing to spreading the national spirit and proud tradition of the country (Khon, 2024; Quang & Hoa, 2025). Research in the field of physical education found that for the younger generation, the TMAs like Vovinam play an important role in preserving the connection with the roots, while meeting the physical training and spiritual needs of modern people (Ma, 2023; Tripathi, 2024). The combination of cultural significance and discipline in practice highlights the role of the TMAs, like Vovinam, in preserving national identity in an increasingly changing world (Carr, 1974; Carruthers, 1998). Integrating traditional martial arts like Vovinam into universities' physical programs might be seen as a remarkable step forward in preserving and promoting the traditions and cultural heritage (Xiang, 2024). Moreover, previous studies in the fields of sports studies and traditional martial arts have highlighted the diverse benefits of practising traditional and martial arts for developing the youth, particularly in improving physical as well as mental health (Woodward, 2009). Martial arts have also been shown in a number of other studies to enhance self-confidence, discipline, and visibility (Binder, 2007). Such benefits may satisfy users' exercise needs when they continue practising or intend to continue practising the TMAs (Tappe & Burgeson, 2004; Tung & That, 2025). However, few studies have investigated the motivation of continuance intention in the case of practising Vovinam, which shows a knowledge gap. Furthermore, research has not yet examined the precise functions of TMAs, such as bolstering nationalism, national identity, and national pride when young people participate in them. Research that closes this gap could improve our understanding of how to stimulate students' exercise requirements and how those needs drive youth Vovinam practice. Additionally, training programs that take into account using this martial art as a physical exercise to communicate, preserve, and promote national identity may benefit from such studies. This highlights the pressing nature of the research challenge and offers a pragmatic perspective.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), developed by Katz et al. (1973), is frequently used to explain and forecast participant behavior based on the analysis of earlier research (Han et al., 2023; Le et al., 2024). The UGT is also used in this study to explore how individuals choose a TMA not only based on passivity but also based on their own needs, preferences, and expectations. In the study, the relationship between exercise needs, perceived health, and the advantages of practising Vovinam is investigated to increase commitment to continuing Vovinam participation. By taking into account the moderating effects of two variables – national identity and workout similarity – the UGT is expanded in terms of novelty. The current study is among the first in Vietnam to examine how national identity affects the connection between the necessary conditions for exercise and the desire to keep practising the TMA in the North of Vietnam; there are prior studies focused on the population in the South of Vietnam (Van Dung et al., 2016). The study also examined the similarities between Vovinam and other sports activities in promoting connections with national identity. Based on the findings, stakeholders in the field of sports, cultural, and educational management can mobilise traditional and national factors to foster youth's physical training and practice and utilise the TMAs to help youth build their national identity in a digital era.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 The Uses and Gratifications Theory

In the context of physical training in university curricula, the theory of uses and gratifications focuses on explaining students' active and intentional involvement in participating in physical activities. According to this theory, it is found that learning and practising a sport is not just a random activity but also has a specific purpose to achieve the satisfaction of specific needs, such as improving health, building joy, and building social relationships (Hamidou & Amara, 2024; Kutip et al., 2024). Other scholars also found that factors like self-defence, social engagement, fitness, or mental well-being motivate students to practice the TMAs (Green & Svinth, 2010; Ma, 2023; Theeboom & Knop, 1999; Xiang, 2024). These studies imply that students tend to be more careful and deliberate in their choices, as their exercise practice is driven by their motivation and expected satisfaction. Vovinam practice is similar to exercise in

improving participants' physical health (Woodward, 2009). According to the UGT, the demand for physical exercise and physical development can motivate students to continue practising Vovinam, because it provides benefits like physical exercise. For example, practising Vovinam can be viewed as a form of exercise that supports physical development in our study. Furthermore, the UGT suggests that psychosocial needs act as the main driving force behind human behaviour (Palmgreen, 1984). Vovinam practitioners need to know their health concerns, health consciousness, and the benefits of exercise, as well as the perceived benefits of Vovinam practice. Therefore, we model the factors of health consciousness and perceived health benefits as antecedents of the need to exercise.

The UGT asserts that psychosocial needs act as a motivator that leads individuals to choose to engage in activities that satisfy these demands (Palmgreen, 1984). Educational needs may be an important factor that motivates students to engage in activities that provide satisfaction (Gan & Li, 2018). Studies have shown that the need to exercise is not only for the purpose of improving health but also acts as a motivating factor for people to seek experiences that bring both physical and mental satisfaction (Gan & Li, 2018). In the Vietnamese context, there are studies applying the UGT theory to explain the intention to participate in exergames as a sport activity (Pham et al., 2020). As mentioned above, practising the TMAs, in addition to helping improve health, is also a means to deeply connect with national cultural values (Carr, 1974; Carruthers, 1998). This fosters harmony between physical activity and culture by supporting practitioners in maintaining their physical growth and flexibility and fortifying their ties to their country. Because it not only fulfils physical requirements but also spiritual wants in relation to national identity, the UGT has thus emerged as a valuable instrument for analysing Vovinam practice.

2.2 Consciousness of Health X Necessity of Exercise

The UGT is used to explain the continued participation in various activities. According to certain studies, perception about one's health can encourage one to engage in physical activity (Chiu et al., 2024; Muhammad Faizal et al., 2024). These elements that encourage motivation to engage in traditional martial arts practice activities like Vovinam, however, have not been taken into account in prior research. According to Ellison et al. (2013), a person's level of awareness about their health status is referred to as their "consciousness of health." Therefore, health literacy

promotes people to take better care of their health by empowering them to accurately assess their current physical condition and identify the steps they need to take to maintain or improve their health. According to UGT theory, individuals do not just passively participate in activities but also actively choose activities that are likely to meet their personal needs (Palmgreen, 1984). Through compulsory physical training courses at universities, students can better understand the positive values of physical training. From there, they have a high awareness of health and tend to recognise the value of studying and practising martial arts in a university environment, or can see practising Vovinam as part of a healthy lifestyle. People who have a high level of health consciousness are frequently more conscious of the value of exercise, which encourages participation in practices like Vovinam.

Hypothesis 1: Consciousness of health is positively related to the necessity for exercise of Vovinam in universities' physical education

2.3 Perceived Workout Benefits X Necessity of Exercise

According to Juarbe et al. (2002), an individual's impression of the advantages of physical activities or exercise is what is meant by the benefits of physical exercise. These advantages also show how well physical activity can be tailored to each person's needs. The UGT states that people are primarily motivated to engage in activities by their own needs. The UGT states that people are primarily motivated to engage in activities by their own needs (Palmgreen, 1984). In the context of higher education, physical education programs play an important role in helping students become more aware of the benefits of sports and physical training. In this study, we took the context of practising Vovinam – a Vietnamese martial art that appears in the curriculum at universities in Vietnam, also bringing positive benefits to both physical and mental health. Accordingly, students can perceive the benefits that this martial art has in relation to the need to practice Vovinam.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived workout benefits are positively related to the necessity of exercise of Vovinam in universities' physical education

2.4 The Necessity of Exercise X Continuance Intention

An individual's belief that physical activity is necessary in order to enhance their fitness and health is known as the

necessity of exercise. People who have a great need for exercise think that it will address their needs by improving their health (Pham et al., 2020). Exercise will meet their demands by enhancing their health, according to those who believe they have a strong desire for it. Vovinam training helps with health training and improves physical fitness (Carruthers, 1998; Van Dung et al., 2016). Exercise may be necessary because it helps people develop a positive self-image, which in turn promotes recurring behaviors (Chen et al., 2020). Vovinam is not just a physical training technique when it comes to university education programs; it also serves as a comprehensive educational subject that aids in students' mental and physical development (Tung & That, 2025; Van Dung et al., 2016). Moreover, practising Vovinam provides the youth with self-defense skills, which may help to strengthen their self-confidence and reduce fear of violence (Follo, 2022; Van Dung et al., 2016). In the current study, the need for exercise construct especially focuses on the characteristics of self-defence that the practice of Vovinam can equip the youth. Vovinam training is an effective way to improve physical fitness and promote health, according to the UGT. As a result, those who are highly motivated to exercise will plan to keep doing Vovinam.

Hypothesis 3: The necessity of exercise is positively related to the intention to continue training Vovinam in universities' physical education

2.5 The Mediator Role of National Identity and Vovinam's Resemblance to Physical Activity

Social identity theory proposes that an individual's identification with a social group is positively linked to the intention to participate in behaviours that reflect that group's identity, regardless of cultural context (Bliuc et al., 2007). According to this theory, people's actions in social settings are not only driven by their perceived benefits or costs but are also shaped by their social identity. Social identity plays a significant role in encouraging involvement in social activities, particularly those with cultural and community importance (Simon et al., 2000). In Vietnamese education, people take national identity as the centre; these values are conveyed through lessons on history, the independence movement, and traditional values into the curriculum (Van Dau et al., 2020). Vietnam's national identity is shaped by its cultural traditions, its long history, and its long-standing customs and practices (Long & Van, 2022; Murray, 2016). Over time, efforts to preserve unique cultural values and gain independence have become core elements in the process of forming this identity.

For the case of Vovinam, involvement in and sustained practice of this martial art are closely associated with national identity (Tung & That, 2025). A form of physical training with profound cultural and historical importance is called Vovinam. The essence of many martial arts schools across the world is expanded and incorporated, and the spirit of old Vietnamese martial arts is crystallised. Vovinam and other Vietnamese traditional martial arts are closely linked to the history and culture of the nation (Carruthers, 1998; Roe, 2020). The importance of national identification and its intimate relationship to TMA practice are therefore highlighted. Research on the mediating relationship between the urge for physical activity and the intention to continue practising Vovinam is limited, however. To bridge the gap between theory and practice, this study investigates the ways in which national identity and physical demands interact to generate and sustain the desire to continue practising Vovinam.

Hypothesis 4: Vovinam's resemblance to exercise moderates the positive relationship between exercise needs and intention to continue practising Vovinam at Universities.

Vovinam is rooted in the traditions of Vietnamese martial arts and national wrestling, emphasising adaptability, integration, and balance, particularly through the principle of "Hardness and Softness" working in harmony to enhance its technical foundation (Van Dung et al., 2016). In the context of higher education, Vovinam is not only an activity that helps students practice physical training, but also plays an important role in the development of comprehensive education (Carruthers, 1998). It helps students develop physical and mental health, and it also helps students develop life skills (Theeboom & Knop, 1999). Because of the positive effects it brings, it has become a comprehensive form of training and is suitable for the goal of physical education in universities (Xiang, 2024). Therefore, it is possible that practising Vovinam brings similar benefits to physical exercise and will also positively regulate the relationship between the need to practice and the intention to continue practising.

Hypothesis 5: National identity moderates the positive relationship between exercise needs in Vovinam practice and intention to continue practising Vovinam at Universities.

2.6 Intention X Continue Practice

Intention to keep practising is a crucial component that leads to actual behaviour in the Vovinam setting, in addition to being a cognitive component. The primary driver of

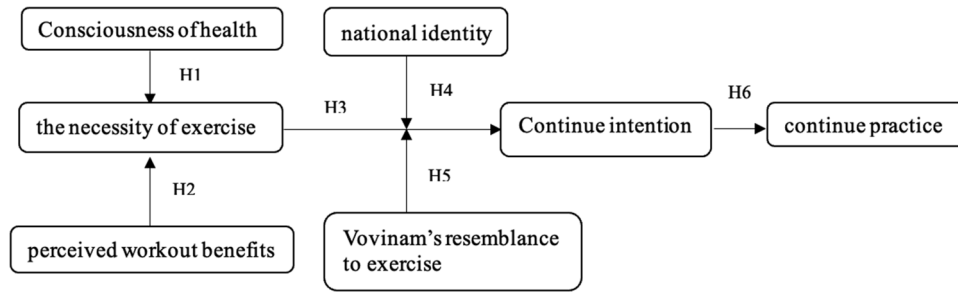


Figure 1. The theoretical and conceptual model (source: authors).

Source: Authors' contribution.

behaviour, particularly when an individual perceives the action's value favourably, is the notion of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). A strong bond with national cultural identity, humour from the training process, and perceived health benefits can all help Vovinam practitioners turn their intention to continue into actual behaviour. Along with increasing health, physical training, and preserving a deep connection to Vietnamese cultural traditions, the path of continuing to practice Vovinam not only shows positive personal results but also allows one to carry out personal work to realise clearly defined principles and goals. As a result, continuance intention serves as a link between cognitive states and actual conduct, demonstrating the significance of human needs and motivational elements in fostering sustainable practice behaviour. The connection between Vovinam practice conduct and continuance intention has never been studied before. This study looks at how continuing intention results in actual behaviour. The conceptual framework used in this investigation is summarised in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 6: Intention to continue practising has a positive influence on continuing to practice Vovinam.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design and Measurement of the Research

Three key components made up the questionnaire used in this investigation. The objectives of the study and the participants' freedom to leave the study at any moment were explained to them in the first part. The research team certifies that participant confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the project and that the study conforms with all relevant ethical requirements for human subjects. The study conforms with all applicable laws and rules pertaining to research involving human participants.

Demographic information, including age, gender, and occupation, was collected in the second portion of the questionnaire. The third component, which evaluated the factors influencing the intention to practice Vovinam, consisted of 24 items spread among seven constructs (Appendix 1). To make sure they were pertinent and suitable for our investigation, these constructs were carefully chosen based on prior research (Lee & Cho, 2017; Pham et al., 2020). These elements provided a solid and reliable foundation for the investigation. Likert scales with five points – 1 denoting “strongly disagree” and 5 denoting “strongly agree” – were used by participants to rate. This thorough method provided valuable insights into the reasons behind Vovinam practice decisions and examined the moderating effects of national identity and Vovinam's resemblance to exercise (Lee & Cho, 2017). The approach reduced knowledge biases, guaranteed thorough data collection, and enhanced understanding of the variables affecting young people's exercise preferences (Table 1).

3.2 Data Collection

This study employed convenience sampling, a non-probability sample technique. This strategy was chosen because it can handle logistical issues and speed up data collection (Stratton, 2021). The main instrument for gathering data was a Google Form survey that was

No.	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Gender	Male	202	56.6
		Female	155	43.4
2	Age	18–20 Years old	239	66.9
		21–23 Years old	62	17.3
		Over 23 years old	56	15.8

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of demographics (sources by authors).
Source: Authors' contribution.

disseminated via Zalo and Facebook. Regarding sample size, Roscoe (1969) proposed that fewer than 500 are deemed appropriate (Sekaran, 2016). Additionally, according to Hair et al. (2010), partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), which is deployed in the current study, can produce high-quality analysis with a larger sample size. Hair et al. (2010) stated that a sample size of at least ten times the number of scaling items is considered suitable for statistical analysis. The current study has 24 items ($24 \times 10 = 240$); hence, the sample size should be more than 240. As a result, 400 respondents received the questionnaire during the first two quarters of 2025. In the end, 395 respondents submitted their full surveys for review. Table 1 displays the attributes of the research participants. The research sample consisted of students from universities in Hanoi, including Vovinam in physical education, for students to select freely. The youth in the city were examined because they represent a generation that places a high emphasis on traditional values, national identity, and health consciousness (Dosti, 2025).

4. Results

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The results show that most participants were male (56.6%), while female participants made up 43.4% of the sample. In terms of age distribution, most respondents were between 18 and 20 years old (66.9%), followed by those aged 21–23 years old (17.3%). Participants older than 23 years accounted for 15.8% of the sample. These results suggest that the sample mainly consists of young individuals, with the largest group being in late adolescence.

SMARTPLS 4.0 and SPSS, two statistical programs that made regression, correlation, and moderator analysis easier, were used to analyse the data. The hypotheses were tested using partial least squares structural equation modelling, or PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019). Because it has been successfully applied to the framework and data evaluation in quantitative studies, the tools are selected (Khoa, 2022). For an observed variable to be considered reliable, its outer loading coefficient needs to be at least 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2

Construct	Items	Mean	Std deviation	Outer loadings	VIF	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
HC	HC1	4.373	0.672	1.288	1.249	0.677	0.681	0.823	0.608
	HC2	4.406	0.674	0.773	1.291				
	HC3	4.294	0.657	0.818	1.414				
CI	CI1	4.101	0.844	0.724	1.191	0.660	0.662	0.816	0.596
	CI2	4.006	0.760	0.783	1.371				
	CI3	4.053	0.785	0.807	1.383				
CP	CP1	3.975	0.754	0.734	1.295	0.711	0.724	0.839	0.635
	CP2	4.073	0.774	0.788	1.439				
	CP3	4.050	0.732	0.863	1.618				
NE	NE1	4.137	0.796	0.734	1.223	0.611	0.619	0.793	0.562
	NE2	3.986	0.818	0.788	1.197				
	NE3	4.020	0.787	0.863	1.224				
NI	NI1	4.036	0.824	0.802	1.342	0.704	0.706	0.835	0.627
	NI2	4.120	0.702	0.780	1.377				
	NI3	4.039	0.762	0.794	1.400				
PWB	PWB1	4.106	0.806	0.805	1.447	0.660	0.660	0.815	0.595
	PWB2	4.118	0.832	0.764	1.235				
	PWB3	4.171	0.779	0.744	1.295				
VRE	VRE1	4.154	0.790	0.849	1.690	0.751	0.751	0.858	0.668
	VRE2	4.132	0.848	0.796	1.411				
	VRE3	4.190	0.797	0.806	1.521				

Table 2. The construct reliability and validity values (source: authors).

Source: Authors' contribution.

shows that all observation variables' outer loadings were above 0.7. Moreover, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs were required to be greater than 0.7, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In Table 2, Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs ranged from 0.611 to 0.751, which are above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.6 in exploratory studies. Similarly, CR values were between 0.793 and 0.858, surpassing the recommended cut-off point of 0.7. These results indicate that the constructs have good internal consistency reliability. Additionally, the AVE values ranged from 0.562 to 0.668, all higher than the 0.5 benchmark, confirming convergent validity. Overall, the results in Table 2 show that the measurement model has good reliability and convergent validity, laying a strong foundation for hypothesis testing and structural model analysis.

The Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (Henseler et al., 2015) and the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria were used to evaluate the discriminant validity of the components (the results in Tables 3 and 4).

The bootstrapping technique was used to investigate the study's hypotheses (Table 5 and Figure 2). The findings reveal notable direct and indirect effects across the hypothesised relationships between variables. The findings indicate that Consciousness of health (HC) has a positive and significant influence on Need for Exercise (NE) (H1) ($\beta = 0.363$, $T = 6.877$, $p = 0.000$). This means that individuals with stronger discipline and self-regulation tend to feel a greater need for exercise. Thus, H1 is statistically supported. Perceived workout benefits (PWB) (H2) also significantly and positively affect Need for Exercise (NE) ($\beta = 0.268$, $T = 5.295$, $p = 0.000$). This demonstrates that when individuals perceive tangible benefits from practising Vovinam, such as stress relief and improved physical fitness, their motivation to exercise increases. Thus, H2 is supported. The results show that (H3) Need for Exercise (NFE) positively and significantly predicts Continuance Intention ($\beta = 0.289$, $T = 6.242$, $p = 0.000$). This means that a strong desire to engage in exercise activities encourages individuals to maintain their Vovinam practice. Therefore, H3 is supported.

	HC	CI	CP	NE	NI	NI (NExCI)	PWB	VRE	VRE (NExCI)
HC									
CI	0.626								
CP	0.457	0.613							
NE	0.714	0.711	0.479						
NI	0.612	0.723	0.542	0.763					
PWB	0.568	0.722	0.623	0.634	0.754	0.201			
VRE	0.443	0.592	0.496	0.495	0.620	0.122	1.152		
VRE (NExCI)	0.083	0.054	0.154	0.213	0.136	0.541	0.295	0.303	
NI (NExCI)	0.223	0.039	0.166	0.382	0.263				

Table 3. Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) (source: authors).

Source: Authors' contribution.

	CH	CI	CP	NE	NI	NI (NExCI)	PWB	VRE	VRE (NExCI)
CH	0.780								
CI	0.422	0.772							
CP	0.323	0.423	0.797						
NE	0.465	0.453	0.318	0.750					
NI	0.423	0.493	0.391	0.502	0.792				
NI (NExCI)	-0.180	0.006	-0.139	-0.295	-0.220	1.000			
PWB	0.379	0.480	0.434	0.406	0.519	-0.165	0.772		
VRE	0.316	0.418	0.365	0.334	0.452	-0.107	0.815	0.817	
VRE (NExCI)	-0.067	-0.036	-0.130	-0.162	-0.115	0.541	-0.240	-0.264	1.000

Table 4. The Fornell and Larcker (source: authors).

Source: Authors' contribution.

Hypo	Relations	Original sample (O)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	R-Square	F-Square	Results
H1	HC X NE	0.363	0.053	6.877	0.000	0.278	0.156	Supported
H2	PWB X NE	0.268	0.051	5.295	0.000		0.085	Supported
H3	NE X CI	0.289	0.046	6.242	0.000	0.363	0.091	Supported
H4	NI X (NE $\times$ CI)	0.143	0.035	4.085	0.000			Supported
H5	VRE X (NE $\times$ CI)	0.004	0.045	0.087	0.931			Rejected
H6	CI X CP	0.423	0.047	9.071	0.000	0.179	0.218	Supported

Table 5. Hypothesis testing result (source: authors).

Source: Authors' contribution.

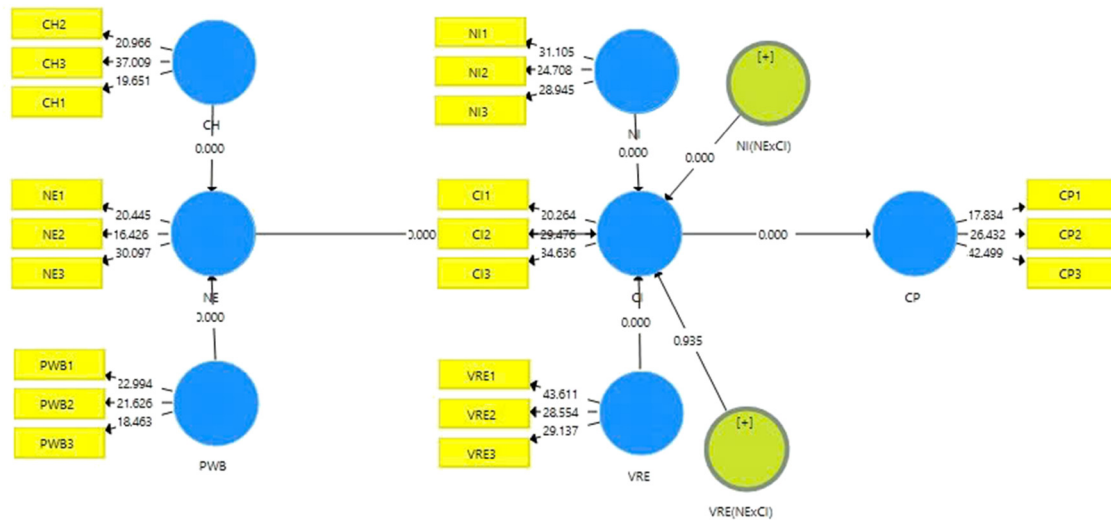


Figure 2. PLS-SEM linear structural model results (source: authors).

Source: Authors' contribution.

The results highlight the significant moderating role of National Identity (NI) in the relationship between Need for Exercise (NE) and Continuance Intention (CI). With a positive standardised coefficient ($\beta = 0.143$) and a statistically significant effect ($T = 4.085$, $p = 0.000$), the findings indicate that NI strengthens the connection between NE and CI. This means that individuals with a higher level of NI (who value being Vietnamese citizens, having Vietnamese nationality and having deep connections to Vietnam) are more likely to translate their perceived need for exercise into a stronger intention to continue practising Vovinam. H4 is supported. In contrast, the moderating role of Vovinam's resemblance to exercise (VRE) between Need for Exercise (NE) and Continuance Intention (CI) (H5) was found to be insignificant ($\beta = 0.004$, $T = 0.087$, $p = 0.931$). This suggests that perceived entertainment value does not strengthen this relationship. Therefore, H5 is not supported.

Finally, Continuance Intention (CI) shows a strong and significant positive effect on Continuance Practice (CP)

(H6) ($\beta = 0.423$, $T = 9.071$, $p = 0.000$). This finding underscores that individuals who express strong intentions to continue practising Vovinam are more likely to translate those intentions into consistent behaviour. Therefore, H6 is supported.

5. Discussion

This study presents findings on the factors influencing students' decisions to continue practising Vovinam alongside other kinds of physical educational activities at universities in the capital city of Vietnam, Hanoi. Using the extended UGT and Social Identity theory, the study strengthened the role of consciousness of health (CH), perceived workout benefits (PWB), and exercise necessity (NE) in motivating students to stick with the TMA in the context of universities' physical education. The study also investigated the moderator role of the novel construct, national

identity (NI), on students' intention to continue practising (CI), and then turn to continue practising (CP) the TMA.

The results showed how important students' perceived consciousness of health (CH) is in determining their need for exercise (NE) in the context of Vovinam practice. Previous studies showed that health-conscious people actively look for ways to enhance their physical well-being, with exercise playing a significant role (Ellison et al., 2013). The findings in this study contribute to the literature by clarifying that in the context of universities where students are supported with a physical education curriculum with diverse kinds of sports, with the TMAs like Vovinam, students who have a solid perceived consciousness of health tend to have more intention to practice them.

Meanwhile, students' intention to continue practising Vovinam is influenced by their perceptions of its benefits. These findings support earlier research and highlight the importance of perceived advantages in maintaining engagement with physical activity among university students. Studies have shown that when people understand the benefits of participating in traditional martial arts like Vovinam, they are more likely to want to continue (Pham et al., 2020; Zarrilli). In particular, individuals recognise the psychological and physical benefits of Vovinam – especially self-defence skills – which greatly motivate students to persist with this martial art (Juarbe et al., 2002). Therefore, to encourage sustained involvement in Vovinam, universities should communicate the benefits this traditional martial art offers within the context of physical education.

The significance of the need for exercise (NE) in fostering continuance intention (CI) during Vovinam practice is clarified in this study. Accordingly, those with a strong demand for physical exercise often consider Vovinam a useful tool for achieving health goals. These findings suggest that practising Vovinam not only fulfils the need for sports training but also promotes personal growth and physical fitness, such as ingenuity, perseverance, aesthetics, discipline, and more. This aligns with previous studies that found practicing Vovinam plays a vital role in developing both physical and mental health among young people (Tung & That, 2025; Tung et al., 2023; Van Dung et al., 2016). These studies focused on youth in some cities in southern and central Vietnam. The current research extends this knowledge by exploring youth in northern Vietnam, specifically Hanoi.

According to Hypothesis 5, there is no statistically significant moderating effect of Vovinam resemblance to exercise (VRE) on the relationship between continuance intention (CI) and the need for exercise (NE). This indicates that there is no evidence that students' intention to continue practising is affected by their belief that Vovinam is

comparable to other forms of exercise. This may contradict previous findings suggesting that people see physical activities as similar because they both offer health benefits (Noah et al., 2011). However, other studies have found no moderating relationship between VRE, CI, and NE (Thang et al., 2025). Consequently, further investigation is necessary.

A notable finding of this study is that national identity (NI) significantly moderates students' inclination to practice Vovinam. This implies that younger generations find strong appeal in the cultural and symbolic aspects of the activity, particularly within university physical education (Trost, 2006). Vovinam's cultural relevance stems from its historical significance, its embodiment of Vietnamese discipline and strength, and its communal ideals (Smith & Porter, 2004). These principles, discussed in the literature and introduction, underscore how vital Vietnamese customs are in shaping the identities and behaviours of today's youth. Thus, cultural values greatly influence the motivation to continue practising Vovinam. The findings align with other research demonstrating that social and cultural identification can influence behaviour (Bliuc et al., 2007; Brewer & Yuki, 2007). These results highlight the importance of national identity for the development and sustainability of traditional martial arts like Vovinam. Beyond its physical benefits, promotion efforts should emphasise maintaining and advancing its cultural values, customs, and patriotism (Long & Van, 2022). Historically, when Vovinam was founded, it was used to foster nationalism and patriotism in northern Vietnam. Today, it can help develop Vietnamese identity among expatriates and support diplomatic ties between nations (Carruthers, 1998). The current study demonstrates that Vovinam's Vietnamese character can foster a sense of national pride among younger generations, underscoring the importance of national identity and spirit in traditional martial arts.

These findings are supported by previous research emphasising behavioural intentions as a key motivator for real actions in the theory of planned behaviour. Clear progression systems like belt levels and competitions, which offer measurable goals, reinforce this within the structured environment of Vovinam. Participants benefit from observable milestones through belt rankings and contests. Moreover, the results show that perceived benefits such as improved endurance, stress relief, and enhanced physical and mental health enhance the desire to continue exercising. Vovinam is regarded by students as a holistic approach to fitness that addresses psychological and physical needs beyond simple physical training. These findings underscore the role of perceived benefits in maintaining engagement with physical activity (Juarbe et al., 2002). Students are strongly motivated to participate in Vovinam

because of its dual benefits for mental and physical health, highlighting the importance of promoting its many advantages to strengthen its reputation as an effective and worthwhile exercise.

6. Practical Implications

Some factors encouraging Vietnamese students to practise Vovinam at universities have been identified based on the findings. This traditional martial art needs to be promoted, and its ideals spread because of the benefits it offers to mental and physical health, as well as strengthening national identity. Since 2018, many universities in Vietnam have included this martial art in their curricula for students to choose freely. Expanding this training programme helps increase awareness and participation rates broadly, where students receive thorough instruction and guidance. Meanwhile, the results of this study might be used in marketing initiatives to promote participation by emphasising cultural values and health benefits to attract students. This supports the preservation of national identity and the enhancement of cultural values, alongside encouraging youth to engage in training activities that improve health.

7. Theoretical Implications

In addition to contributing to the use and gratification theory (UGT), this study lays the groundwork for future research on intrinsic motivation within the context of physical activity and sports participation. First, it extends the application of the UGT to analyse how perceived health advantages and health consciousness influence motivation and the intention to continue exercising. The findings highlight how the UGT draws attention to inherent values and broadens the analysis of the moderating role played by national identity in motivating Vietnamese students' physical activity behaviour. Second, the study illustrates how health consciousness and the perceived benefits of exercise are intrinsic motivational drivers with a notable impact on the need to engage in exercise. These factors also mediate the maintenance of Vovinam practice. The influence of goals and health considerations on Vovinam practice has been clarified through the lens of the UGT within the framework of physical activity motivation. Thirdly, the study emphasises how national identity moderates the relationship between the motivation to exercise and the intention to persist with it. This research suggests that, particularly in the case of practising Vovinam, cultural values play a crucial part in fostering long-term

physical activity. The exploration of the moderating role of national identity within the UGT has opened new perspectives on encouraging sustained sports participation.

8. Limitations and Recommendations

Several limitations faced by this study provide avenues for future research. First, the sample was limited to universities in Hanoi, which may not fully represent other regions or demographic groups. Variations in sociodemographic, geographical, and cultural factors could significantly influence perceptions of Vovinam and its connection to national identity. Second, the cross-sectional design of the study restricted its capacity to assess causal relationships between variables, as data were collected at a single time point. Thirdly, although these factors are significant motivators and influencers for practitioners, the study did not explore other key influences, such as social interactions with family and friends. Future research should broaden its scope by conducting surveys across different locations and regions of Vietnam to address these limitations and develop a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, longitudinal studies would help trace the changing patterns of engagement with traditional martial arts, providing insights into how motivation and participation in Vovinam evolve. To support and promote traditional values and national identity, the study's findings also recommend integrating Vovinam into physical education and cultural curricula. Implementing these suggestions in future research could strengthen and deepen the insights gained.

9. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that motivate students to choose to practice the traditional martial art, particularly Vovinam, for their selected physical education program at universities in Hanoi, Vietnam, with a focus on the moderating role of national identity. Consciousness of health and the benefits of workout (PWB) are found to have direct effects on NE, and then, NE is found to influence CI. The relations between NE and CI are moderated significantly by NI, and finally, they can be used to predict students' Vovinam practice at physical education time at universities. This outcome highlighted the significance of this martial art as a means of maintaining and promoting national identity in addition to being a physical fitness activity. The study's findings demonstrated the unique cultural significance of

Vovinam, one of the traditional Vietnamese martial arts, wherein national identification is found to be a favourable element bolstering the desire to continue practising. This shows that the policy of integrating Vovinam into universities' physical education programs for any student to choose is a progressive policy that not only benefits young people but also helps preserve and develop the national martial art. In addition to developing a large-scale study with a diversified topic matter and examining comparisons with other traditional martial arts, future research could delve deeper into the dynamics of national identity development and other physical activities. By doing this, Vovinam might be incorporated into educational initiatives to preserve and advance this art form for upcoming generations.

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Author contributions

All authors involved in the conception and design, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the data; the drafting of the paper; the critical revision of it for intellectual content; and the final approval of the version to be published. All authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Conflict of interest statement

The author(s) of a paper submitted to *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research* are required to declare competing interests for any commercial associations or financial interests held by the author.

Ethics approval and informed consent

The objectives of the study and the participants' freedom to leave the study at any moment were explained to them in the first portion. The research team certifies that participant confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the project and that the study conforms with all relevant ethical requirements for human subjects. The study complies with all applicable regulations governing research involving human participants.

Data availability statement

Data will be provided based on request.

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Appendix (source: authors)

Consciousness of health: CH	
HC1: I often reflect on my own health.	(Pham et al., 2020)
HC2: I always care about maintaining and improving my health.	
HC3: I pay attention to even the smallest changes in my health.	
Perceived workout benefits: PWB	
PWB1: I feel mentally sharper and more focused after each <i>Vovinam</i> training session	(Pham et al., 2020)
PWB3: Practicing <i>Vovinam</i> has helped me improve my endurance and stamina	
PWB3: <i>Vovinam</i> training sessions help me relieve stress and ease pressure	
necessity of exercise: NE	
NE1: Practicing <i>Vovinam</i> more often is very important to me, especially for my self-defense capability	(Pham et al., 2020)
NE2: I frequently worry about whether I have trained enough in <i>Vovinam</i> to achieve my fitness goals, including self-defense capability	
NE3: I want to practice <i>Vovinam</i> as much as possible	
Vovinam's resemblance to exercise: VRE	
VRE1: Practicing <i>Vovinam</i> shares similar characteristics with exercising	(Pham et al., 2020)
VRE2: Practicing <i>Vovinam</i> provides values similar to those of exercising	
VRE3: Practicing <i>Vovinam</i> is very similar to exercising	
National Identity: NI	
NI1: Being a citizen of Vietnam is very meaningful to me	(Pham et al., 2020)
NI2: My deep connection to Vietnam is highly significant	
NI3: Possessing Vietnamese citizenship is very important to me	
Continuance Intention: CI	
CI1: I plan to continue practicing <i>Vovinam</i> to improve my physical fitness	(Pham et al., 2020)
CI2: I plan to continue practicing <i>Vovinam</i> to learn new martial arts skills	
CI3: I plan to continue practicing <i>Vovinam</i> in the future	
Continuance practice: CP	
CP1: You will choose to practice <i>Vovinam</i> instead of other sports if their quality is comparable	(Ajzen, 2020; Rausch & Kopplin, 2021)
CP2: You will continue practicing <i>Vovinam</i>	
CP3: I will continue practicing <i>Vovinam</i> even if it requires more time and effort compared to other sports activities	