

Holistic Health Model: Physical Education, Sports, and Martial Arts

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ABSTRACT: Lu (2022) proposed a holistic health model integrating three core dimensions: (1) Dimension, (2) Status, and (3) Approach, aiming to provide new perspectives and methods for future holistic health research. This paper extends the perspective of Lu's (2022) Holistic Health Model to systematically explore the conceptual definitions, historical evolution, contemporary cultural implications, and interactive relationships of "Physical Education", "Sports", and "Martial Arts" within the "Approach" dimension. Firstly, it clarifies the essential distinction between "Sports" (as physical activity) and "Physical Education" (as a sociocultural category), and further differentiates the fundamental differences in origin, purpose, value logic, and organizational form between "Sports" and "Martial Arts", as well as their modern integration trends. Secondly, it traces the development of Western Physical Education from the Classical period to the modern era, analysing how it evolved from an ancient Greek ritual for worshipping gods, through the transition of the Middle Ages, and during the Renaissance and modernization process, into a global phenomenon with multiple functions including education, competition, leisure, and economy. This study points out that Physical Education is essentially a comprehensive sociocultural system encompassing education, competition, and leisure; Sports serve as the core means for promoting individual health; and Martial Arts are a typical example of transformation from practical "tools" to diversified "cultural practices". Within the framework of Lu's (2022) Holistic Health Model, the three exhibit increasingly prominent intersection and integration, jointly promoting the all-round development of individuals in physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. Finally, this paper suggests that future research could focus on directions such as the impact of digital technology and cultural globalization on traditional physical culture.

KEYWORDS: Physical Education; Sports; Exercises, Martial Arts; Holistic Health; Olympics

I. INTRODUCTION

Lu (2022) proposed an integrated holistic health model: (I) Dimension: including body, mind, spirit and society, (II) Status: health, sub-health, disease and recovery, and (III) Approach: Western medicine, Eastern medicine and folklore therapy, religion and belief, sports and martial arts methods. Among the four ones of (I) Dimension: physical, mental, spiritual and social, he emphasized that health should not be limited to the disease-free state of the body, but should include the following four interrelated dimensions: (1) Physical health: normal function of organs and systems to meet the needs of daily life. (2) Mental health: clear thinking, emotional stability, and the ability to effectively cope with stress, sadness and anxiety. (3) Spiritual health: having self-belief, harmonious worldview, values, and outlook on life with society, and the ability to love and sympathize. (4) Social health: being able to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships, adapt to the social system, and actively participate in social life. In (II) Status, which includes health, sub-health, disease and recovery, he added "recovering" as the fourth state based on the three states of "health-sub-health-disease" proposed by WHO, forming the following classification: (1) Health (first state): The four dimensions of physical, psychological, spiritual and social are all in good condition. (2) Sub-health (second state): Between health and disease, it can be further divided into: physical sub-health (functional decline, susceptibility to disease); psychological sub-health (high stress, emotional instability); spiritual sub-health (confused values, lack of belief); social subhealth (alienation of interpersonal relationships, low social participation). (3) Disease (third state): The disease state confirmed by medical diagnosis. (4) Recovering (fourth state): The stage of transition from disease or sub-health to health, which requires appropriate intervention (such as traditional Chinese medicine conditioning, exercise therapy) to promote recovery. He pointed out that if the "recovery state" is handled properly, the individual can return to health; if it is not handled properly, it may return to sub-health or disease state. This dynamic process highlights the importance of continuity and intervention strategy in health management.

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In (III) Approach, he systematically sorted out the current major health and medical systems and summarized them into the following categories: (1) Western medicine: Based on anatomy, biology and modern technology, it emphasizes symptom diagnosis and intervention methods such as drug treatment, surgery, and radiation. It attaches importance to clinical evidence and standardized processes, but has limitations in the treatment and prevention of chronic diseases. (2) Eastern medicine: Including traditional systems such as Chinese medicine and Indian Ayurveda. Chinese medicine emphasizes the circulation of "qi" and the balance of yin and yang. Treatment methods include acupuncture, Chinese medicine, massage, Tai Chi, Qigong, etc. It emphasizes "preventive treatment" and overall balance, rather than just targeting local organs. (3) Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is divided into five categories: natural products (herbs, vitamins, etc.); mind-body medicine (meditation, yoga, hypnosis, etc.); body manipulation therapy (massage, chiropractic, etc.); energy medicine (qigong, magnetic therapy, touch therapy, etc.); holistic medical system (Ayurveda, Chinese medicine, Tibetan medicine, etc.). Although CAM is still controversial in Western countries, it is widely used in pain management and auxiliary treatment of chronic diseases. (4) Religion and faith: Religion and belief systems provide individuals with a sense of meaning, belonging, and psychological support, and have a positive effect on mental health. (5) Sports and martial arts: Promote health through physical exercise, such as Tai Chi, Qigong, and other traditional martial arts that combine physical and mental training.

This study focuses on "Sports" and "Martial Arts" within the "Approach" dimension of Lu's (2022) Holistic Health Model. It clarifies the essential distinction between "Sports" (as physical activity) and "Physical Education" (as a socio-cultural category), and further differentiates the fundamental differences in origin, purpose, value logic, and organizational form between "Sports" and "Martial Arts", along with their modern integration trends. Additionally, it traces the development of Western Physical Education from ancient Greece to the modern era, analyzing how it evolved from an ancient Greek ritual for worshipping gods, through the Middle Ages, and during the Renaissance and modernization, into a global phenomenon with multiple functions including education, competition, leisure, and economy. In the 21st century, various practices centered on physical activity have become an indispensable part of human life worldwide. Whether it is the extreme competition showcased at the Olympic Games, the physical and character development of students in school physical education classes, the daily exercise of the public in community parks, or the inheritance of traditional skills and spirits in martial arts halls, these phenomena all demonstrate the complex spectrum formed by concepts such as "Physical Education", "Sports", and "Martial Arts", which profoundly influence individual health and social culture. However, these terms are often misused or ambiguously defined in daily discourse and even academic discussions, leading to ambiguities in theoretical research and practical applications. The rise of the "holistic health" concept provides a more integrated perspective for understanding these physical practices. Holistic health emphasizes the balanced development and optimal state (Wellness) of individuals in multiple dimensions (physical, psychological, social, and spiritual), rather than merely the absence of illness (Dunn, 1961; Hettler, 1980). Within this framework, simple physical activity (Sports) is only one part of health promotion, while systematic practices rich in cultural, educational, and social significance (Physical Education and Martial Arts) can more comprehensively meet humans' pursuit of a high-quality life.

Based on this, the research objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. Systematically sort out and define the core concepts and interrelationships of "Physical Education", "Sports", and "Martial Arts".
2. In-depth analyze the historical evolution of Western Physical Education from ancient Greece to the modern era, and explore the changes in its concept of the human body and social functions.
3. Under the framework of holistic health, explore the intersection, integration, and future trends of Physical Education, Sports, and Martial Arts in contemporary society.

This paper will first conduct a conceptual analysis to clarify the basic connotations of the research objects; then outline the development context of Western Physical Education through a review of historical literature; and finally conduct a comprehensive discussion to propose conclusions and suggestions for future research.

II. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS: PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORTS, AND MARTIAL ARTS

Clear conceptual definition is the cornerstone of academic discussion. This section defines "Sports", "Physical Education", and "Martial Arts" respectively, and compares their similarities and differences. In the Chinese context, the term "Yùndòng" corresponds to two English concepts that are often confused but have distinct emphases: Exercise and Sport. In a broad sense, "Sports" refers to "all physical activities performed by the human body through muscle contraction that increase energy expenditure" (Caspersen, Powell, & Christenson, 1985). The core of this definition lies in the "dynamic participation of the body" and its resulting physiological effects, such as improving cardiopulmonary function, enhancing muscle strength, and optimizing body composition. In this sense, the essence of Sports is more of an "individual behavior", whose primary purpose is health

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promotion and physical fitness maintenance, and it does not necessarily involve rules, competition, or organization. Examples include jogging, swimming, or weight training performed alone.

On the other hand, "Sports" also refers to organized and competitive physical activities, i.e., "competitive sports". The definition proposed by the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSPE), a subsidiary of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is authoritative and inclusive: "Any physical activity that has the characteristics of play and is conducted in the form of competition with others or self-struggle is called Sport" (International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education, 1995). This definition emphasizes the "playfulness", "competitiveness", and "challenging nature" of Sports. The Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1949) profoundly demonstrated the importance of play as the matrix of culture in his book *Homo Ludens*, and modern Sports are precisely the institutionalized manifestation of this "play instinct". The sociologist Allen Guttmann (2004) further pointed out that modern Sports are characterized by "secularization", "equality", "rationalization", "bureaucratization", "quantification", and "the pursuit of records". Therefore, Sports as competition have connotations far beyond simple physical activity; they are embedded with rules, organization, the spirit of fair competition, and specific socio-cultural logic.

Compared with "Sports", which focuses on the activity itself, "Physical Education" is a broader and more complex socio-cultural category. It is not only a collection of physical activities but also a comprehensive system including education, institutions, culture, and ideology. This study summarizes that Physical Education mainly includes three core dimensions: (1) Physical Education (Formal Education): This is the most original and core connotation of Physical Education. It takes educational institutions (primarily schools) as the main venue and imparts knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to physical activity to students through systematic and planned curriculum design. Its purpose is not only to promote physical health but also to cultivate students' sportsmanship, teamwork, rule-abiding awareness, and other socialization abilities and civic literacy (Kirk, 2010). For example, learning basketball passing skills and tactical coordination in physical education classes is not only skill acquisition but also a process of teamwork education. (2) Competitive Sports: This dimension takes the pursuit of excellent athletic performance as its primary goal. It is built on a highly organized and institutionalized system, including the identification and long-term training of athletes, professional coaching and refereeing systems, unified competition rules, and various levels of event organization (from local competitions to global events such as the Olympic Games) (Coakley, 2021). Competitive Sports emphasize the Olympic spirit of "Citius, Altius, Fortius – Together", reflecting humanity's continuous challenge to its own potential, and are also closely linked to national honor, commercial interests, media communication, and other complex social factors. (3) Mass Sports: Also known as social sports or public sports, it targets all members of society, with the core goals of promoting national health, enriching leisure life, and enhancing social cohesion (Houlihan & Green, 2011). Mass Sports take diverse forms, from individual spontaneous morning jogging and gym workouts to community-organized square dancing and amateur football leagues, and are highly accessible, voluntary, and leisure-oriented. It is an important indicator of a society's public health level and quality of life.

Physical Education is "the sum of educational, competitive, and leisure systems related to physical activity". It not only includes the behavior of "Sports" itself but also covers the complete logic of rule-making, organizational management, cultural inheritance, and educational practice behind it. Both Sports and Martial Arts are treasures of human physical culture. Both emphasize the refinement of physical skills, the cultivation of discipline, the tempering of the spirit, and can develop competitive forms. However, there are fundamental differences between them in origin, essential purpose, and organizational logic.

- (1) Both attach importance to physical coordination, strength, endurance, and skills.
- (2) Both emphasize concentration, perseverance, courage, self-discipline, and respect for opponents (or mentors).
- (3) Some martial arts disciplines (such as Judo, Taekwondo, and Boxing) have been included in international sports events such as the Olympic Games, following standardized competition rules (Green & Svinth, 2010).
- (4) Both are widely applied in school education and public fitness fields.
- (5) Origin and Essence: Sports originated from games, rituals, and leisure, and their essence is "play" – competition and selfchallenge conducted within an artificially set fair framework (Guttmann, 2004). In contrast, Martial Arts originated from military combat, personal self-defense, and religious practice, and their essence is a "tool". Their original purpose was to subdue or defeat opponents to cope with real violent conflicts, with practical utility and survival as their core (Bowman, 2019).
- (6) Value Logic: Sports advocate "fair competition", emphasizing defeating opponents under equal conditions. Traditionally, Martial Arts follow the "logic of survival", pursuing the most efficient way to eliminate threats in the shortest time, and may not exclude the use of various techniques to achieve the goal (the so-called "all's fair in war").
- (7) Organizational Form: Modern Sports mostly operate in modern organizational forms such as clubs and associations. Traditional Martial Arts, however, are mostly centered on the "master-disciple system", "schools", and "families", emphasizing oral teaching, secret transmission, and specific cultural rituals, and have strong blood, geographical, and inheritance ties (Kennedy & Guo, 2005).

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Globalization and social changes have blurred the boundaries between Sports and Martial Arts, forming a rich intersection: (1) Competitive Martial Arts: Such as Olympic Judo, Taekwondo, Sanda (Sanshou), and Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). These disciplines originally originated from practical Martial Arts but have formulated strict rules (prohibiting many lethal techniques such as eye poking and groin kicking) to adapt to the visibility and safety of modern sports events. At this point, they are both modern branches of Martial Arts and strict Sports (Garcia & Malcolm, 2010). (2) Performing Martial Arts: Such as Chinese Wushu routines. Their evaluation criteria focus on the difficulty, stability, and artistic expressiveness of movements, similar to the standards of difficulty-aesthetic sports such as gymnastics and diving. Their goal has shifted from practical combat to artistic expression and the demonstration of physical aesthetics. (3) Fitness-Oriented Martial Arts: Such as Muay Thai, Kickboxing, and martial arts fitness classes popular in gyms. Participants' main purposes are fat reduction, body shaping, and stress relief, rather than combat or self-defense. At this point, Martial Arts have become an efficient and interesting fitness activity.

The Martial Arts system is vast, with more than 400 schools worldwide. Taking Asia as an example, it can be divided into the East Asian system (Chinese Wushu, Japanese Judo and Karate, Korean Taekwondo, etc.), the Southeast Asian system (Muay Thai, Burmese Bando, Filipino Arnis, etc.), and the South Asian system (Indian Kalaripayattu, etc.) (Green & Svinth, 2010). Driven by the rise of MMA, these schools are accelerating exchanges and integration globally, and top combat athletes often need to integrate multiple martial arts techniques.

III. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF WESTERN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The history of Western Physical Education is a microcosm of changes in humanity's concept of the body, social values, and cultural ideals. Its trajectory is not a linear progression but full of fractures, transitions, and rediscoveries. Ancient Greece is the cradle of Western Physical Education, where Physical Education was elevated to a sacred cultural height. The Ancient Olympic Games, which began in 776 BCE, were the highest embodiment of the ancient Greek sports spirit. They were not purely sports competitions but a religious celebration dedicated to Zeus and other gods. Athletes' victories were seen as manifestations of divine grace; winners received not only olive wreaths but also supreme glory. Poets sang their praises, and sculptors created statues for them, which were placed around temples as a medium for communication between humans and gods (Golden, 1998). Archaeological discoveries of altars and sacrificial remains confirm the close connection between Physical Education and religion. The "sacred truce" during the Games reflected the cultural power of Physical Education to transcend inter-city-state conflicts and unite Greek national identity (Scanlon, 2002).

Athens represented the ideal of "harmonious development of body and mind". In Athens' educational system, Physical Education and music were regarded as the two pillars of education, aiming to cultivate citizens with both sound bodies and noble souls. Plato clearly pointed out in *The Republic* that Physical Education was used to train the body, and music to cultivate the mind, and neither could be neglected (Plato, trans. 2000). Gymnasiums and wrestling schools were not only training venues but also public spaces for young people to socialize and engage in philosophical discussions. Sparta, on the other hand, represented an extreme physical training model aimed at military service. Its educational system (Agoge) sought to train every citizen into a fearless warrior, emphasizing absolute obedience, endurance, and collectivism, with physical activities fully serving military purposes (Hodkinson, 2006). The ancient Greeks held a lofty aesthetic sentiment towards the ideal human body shaped by Physical Education. The sculptor Polykleitos elaborated on the perfect proportions of the human body in *Canon*, which became the model of the time (Pollitt, 1972). Athletes competed nude in the arena, not only for freedom of movement but also to display and praise the beauty of the human body. They believed that a temperate, brave, and wise soul must reside in a strong, harmonious, and beautiful body, forming a unique concept of "body-morality unity".

With the decline of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christian culture, the praise of the body in the Classical period was replaced by the concept of the soul-body dualism. Early patristic philosophy (e.g., Augustine) viewed the body as the source of desire and a prison for the soul, emphasizing asceticism and endurance of worldly suffering. The once-flourishing Olympic Games were abolished in 393 CE due to their pagan background. However, this does not mean the complete disappearance of physical activity. On the one hand, chivalry gave rise to the unique "Seven Chivalric Arts" of the Middle Ages, which included military physical activities such as equestrianism, swimming, and fencing. These activities served the war and class identity construction of feudal society (Kaeuper, 2016). On the other hand, the folk retained a large number of rough and dynamic folk games such as the prototype of football, although they were often prohibited by the authorities for disrupting order. The physical culture of this period presented a complex picture of religious suppression and feudal practical needs coexisting.

The Renaissance rediscovered the cultural heritage of ancient Greece and Rome. Humanists advocated human-centeredness, reaffirming the value of secular life and the beauty of the human body. Artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo rediscovered the perfect human body through anatomical research and artistic creation. Educators such as Vittorino da Feltre and François Rabelais began to reintroduce Physical Education into their educational practices, regarding it as an essential part of

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cultivating "holistic individuals". The Enlightenment further laid the ideological foundation for the birth of modern Physical Education. John Locke put forward the famous assertion that "a sound mind resides in a sound body". Jean-Jacques Rousseau strongly advocated natural education in *Emile*, emphasizing the promotion of children's physical and mental development through physical activity and manual labor. These ideas shook the medieval concept of despising the body and laid a theoretical foundation for the establishment of Physical Education in the modern educational system.

The 19th century, particularly in the United Kingdom, is regarded as the birthplace of modern competitive Sports. British public schools used Physical Education as an important means to cultivate gentlemanly character, exercise leadership, and teamwork, and developed team sports with clear rules such as modern football, rugby, and cricket (Mangan, 2000). The principle of "amateurism" initially dominated British sports ethics, emphasizing that sports participation should be based on interest rather than financial reward. With the advancement of the Industrial Revolution, the development of urbanization, and the increase in leisure time, Physical Education began to spread from the upper class to the working class and gradually became organized, standardized, and professionalized. The modern Olympic Games were revived in 1896 under the promotion of Pierre de Coubertin, becoming the most important catalyst for the globalization of Sports. The characteristics of modern Sports described by Guttmann (2004) – secularization, rationalization, bureaucratization, quantification, and the pursuit of records – were fully established in this process. Finally, Physical Education moved from the altar of ancient Greece to the world, becoming a complex social phenomenon integrating education, health, entertainment, commerce, and national competition.

IV. PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORTS, AND MARTIAL ARTS UNDER THE HOLISTIC HEALTH FRAMEWORK

Examining Physical Education, Sports, and Martial Arts from the perspective of holistic health reveals that each contributes to different dimensions of individual development and is increasingly converging in contemporary society. Sports, as "physical activity", are the core intervention method for the "physical health" dimension in holistic health. Their role in preventing chronic diseases and maintaining physical functions has been supported by a large number of empirical studies (World Health Organization, 2020). The Physical Education system, especially physical education (formal education) and mass sports, not only promotes physical health but also plays a key role in the "psychosocial health" dimension. It teaches rule awareness, teamwork, and frustration tolerance, and provides opportunities for social participation and a sense of belonging, serving as an important path for individual socialization. Traditional Martial Arts emphasize "the integration of internal and external cultivation" and "the unity of body and mind". Their training involves not only the refinement of physical skills but also often includes breathing control, meditation, and the cultivation of moral norms (martial ethics). This inherently endows them with the potential to promote "psychological health" and "spiritual health", helping to reduce stress, improve concentration, and enhance self-awareness.

When Martial Arts are integrated into modern Physical Education and fitness systems in the forms of "competitive Martial Arts", "performing Martial Arts", and "fitness-oriented Martial Arts", they essentially present their traditional value of body-mind integration in a way more adapted to the needs of modern society. For example, Tai Chi has been widely used in fall prevention and mental health promotion for the elderly; yoga (which can be broadly regarded as a form of physical practice) has become popular worldwide, reflecting people's pursuit of body-mind balance. Therefore, future health promotion strategies should no longer view these physical practices as isolated fields but recognize their complementarity and synergy under the holistic health framework. An ideal community health program may simultaneously include physical fitness training based on sports science (Sports), group competitions with social functions (Physical Education), and martial arts or yoga classes integrated with mindfulness elements (Martial Arts).

V. COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS: PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORTS, AND MARTIAL ARTS

With the advancement of the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) "Olympic Agenda 2020+5" and UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, physical education/sports and martial arts—two types of physical activities originally belonging to the fields of competition and cultural practice—have experienced unprecedented overlap and tension at the institutional and discursive levels (IOC, 2021; UNESCO, 2020). For example, competitive wushu has been an official event of the Asian Games since 1990 and will be a demonstration event at the 2026 Dakar Youth Olympic Games; however, traditional martial arts are still regarded as "cultural heritage" rather than pure "sports." This section adopts comparative historical analysis and institutional field theory, with Asian experiences as the main empirical field, to systematically sort out the physical techniques, value systems, and governance structures of the three domains. The goal is to transcend the traditional dualistic opposition and view "traditional martial arts—competitive martial arts—modern physical education" as an interactive tripartite system, in-depth analyzing its complex process from cultural origin to competitive transformation and then to universal development. Sports sociology generally accepts the "game-sport continuum" theory proposed by Suits (1978), which defines sports as "games with institutionalized rules and quantitative goals achieved through inefficient means." Guttmann (2004) further pointed out that

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modern sports are characterized by seven features—"secularization, equalization, rationalization, bureaucratization, quantification, and the pursuit of records"—reflecting modern society's pursuit of efficiency and measurability. Coakley (2021) emphasized that sports, as institutionalized competitive physical activities, focus on realizing educational and socialization functions through a unified rule system.

As a polysemous concept, the connotation of "martial arts" has evolved with history and social context. Ni (2016) divided martial arts into four quadrants—military lethal techniques, self-defense/fitness, artistic performance, and competitive sports—based on the "purpose-institution" dual axis, providing a clear analytical framework for understanding the multiple dimensions of martial arts. Judkins and Nielson (2015) pointed out from the perspective of knowledge genealogy that the term "martial arts" in East Asia had no fixed corresponding concept before the 19th century, and its modern meaning is actually the product of the interaction between colonial modernity and body politics. In Chinese official discourse, martial arts are defined as "traditional physical education based on Chinese culture and with combat methods as the core content" (General Administration of Sport of China, 2009)—this definition not only affirms its sports attribute but also implies its cultural differences from modern physical education. The competitive transformation process is often accompanied by the simplification of techniques and the dilution of spiritual connotations. Taking karate's entry into the Olympic Games as an example, Theeboom and De Knop (1999) proposed the concept of "de-killing," pointing out that de-violence leads to the distortion of traditional combat logic. A similar critique can be seen in the "routine-sanda dichotomy" of Chinese martial arts; Brownell (2008) argued that this reflects the co-optation and reconstruction of traditional physical culture by the national sports system. Lin (2018) further pointed out that in the pursuit of "aesthetic difficulty," competitive martial arts have absorbed a large number of elements from gymnastics and dance, leading to a deviation between its technical system and the principle of "integration of form and function" in traditional martial arts.

This study mainly draws on Bourdieu's (1984) field theory to conduct a comparison from three levels: "field logic," "capital forms," and "physical techniques." Field logic refers to the internal rules governing different practice fields (e.g., the competitive logic of physical education and the inheritance logic of martial arts); capital forms include the accumulation and transformation of physical capital, cultural capital, and social capital in different fields; and physical techniques refer to specific training methods, movement paradigms, and physical perception models. All three domains take systematic and repetitive physical practice as their core means, achieving the accumulation of physical capital and the infiltration of micro-power through the technical exercise of "repetition-difference" (Foucault, 1977). Whether it is the decomposed training of starting in track and field, the practice of "chansi jin" (silk-reeling energy) in tai chi, or the spinning movements in changquan (long fist), all reflect the precise control of body posture, strength, and rhythm, which are internalized into bodily habits through repeated practice. This physical discipline not only improves physiological qualities such as muscle strength and cardiopulmonary function (long-term practitioners can achieve a 15%-25% improvement) but also shapes specific physical perceptions and movement patterns, forming the so-called "muscle memory."

Competitiveness is an inherent driving force shared by the three domains, but its manifestations vary. Sports externalize and quantify competition, establishing its legitimacy through the "myth of records" (Guttmann, 2004). Although traditional martial arts advocate "stopping violence with martial arts," they still involve implicit competitive forms such as "inter-school competitions" and "exchanges through martial arts" (Kennedy, 2010). Competitive martial arts further introduce electronic scoring and rule-based refereeing, converting physical confrontation or routine performance into visible data, thereby approaching the competitive logic of modern sports. From the historical evolution perspective, from the "martial arts challenges" of ancient times to modern sanda events, the competitive attribute has always been an important force driving the standardization and dissemination of techniques.

In contemporary education and social governance systems, sports and martial arts jointly undertake multiple functions. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sport for Development and Peace lists "sport" and "martial arts" as important tools for life skills education and sustainable development (UN, 2018). In the field of East Asian school education, both the cultivation of teamwork and fair competition awareness in physical education classes and the "martial ethics" education and "respect for mentors" rituals in martial arts courses reflect the close integration of physical activity and moral shaping (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). In terms of health promotion, all three domains have been proven to effectively improve cardiopulmonary function, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and alleviate stress and anxiety, thus being collectively incorporated into national fitness strategies worldwide.

Sports take "pursuing the best performance" as their inherent goal, and their moral legitimacy stems from the "myth of records" and the principle of fair competition, reflecting a social attribute of "all-round development" (Coakley, 2021). Traditional martial arts take the gentleman's ideal of "self-cultivation—regulating the family—governing the state" as their ultimate concern, emphasizing the practice path of "entering the Dao through art" and the unity of body and mind. Their core values lie in the dual dimensions of practicality ("self-defense against enemies") and cultural nature ("self-cultivation") (Ruan, 2023). Competitive

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martial arts exhibit "dual loyalty": on the one hand, they need to win medals in international events; on the other hand, they bear the role of cultural spokespersons, leading to ongoing value tension and identity anxiety within them (Brownell, 2008). Sports transform potential violence into acceptable risks through rule-based encapsulation (Elias & Dunning, 1986)—for example, weight classes and prohibited striking areas in boxing—thus constructing a controlled form of confrontation. Traditional martial arts retain "lethal techniques" at the technical core as their core practical value, but suspend and restrict them through "martial ethics," emphasizing the combat wisdom and ethical consciousness of "controlling others without being controlled by others." Competitive martial arts take "safety—visibility—quantifiability" as the highest principle, deleting practical techniques such as elbow strikes and knee strikes to meet Olympic standards (International Wushu Federation [IWUF], 2022), leading to the selective simplification of the technical system and the trend of "de-killing."

The knowledge system of sports is based on empirical sciences such as biomechanics, exercise physiology, and psychology, emphasizing data-driven, efficiency optimization, and repeatable verification. Traditional martial arts rely on the authority of "oral teaching by mentors," "classic interpretation," and individual insight, focusing on contextual understanding and ineffable "physical sense." Their knowledge legitimacy stems from inheritance lineages and cultural traditions. Competitive martial arts must respond to both "scientific research" and "intangible cultural heritage" review mechanisms, forming the "dual translation" dilemma proposed by Liu (2021)—that is, continuous translation, negotiation, and compromise between scientific discourse and cultural discourse. Sports are governed by a vertical management system composed of international sports federations and national Olympic committees, emphasizing global standardization, bureaucratic management, and industrialized operation. Traditional martial arts are governed horizontally by folk associations, temples, or ancestral halls, relying on local networks, mentor-disciple relationships, and informal authority, showing characteristics of "inheritance" and "diversity of schools." Competitive martial arts adopt a "dual-track system" led by the IWUF and national sports administrations, resulting in an overlapping "administrative-cultural" structure (Tan, 2019), which reflects its mixed identity and institutional dilemma between the national sports system and cultural inheritance.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Through conceptual differentiation and historical review, this study systematically explains the connotations, evolution, and relationships of physical education, sports, and martial arts. The main conclusions are as follows: (1) "Sports" focus on physical activity itself and its physiological effects, and can be divided into "Exercise" (for health promotion) and "Sport" (for competition); (2) "Physical education" is a comprehensive socio-cultural system encompassing education, competition, and leisure; (3) The essence of "martial arts" is a "tool" originating from practical combat, but it has evolved into a "cultural practice" with diversified development in modern society.

Western physical education has undergone an evolution from the sacred body worship in ancient Greece, to the suppression and transformation of the body under the soul-body dualism in the Middle Ages, to the return of humanity and the emphasis on education during the Renaissance and Enlightenment, and finally to the formation of a rationalized and globalized modern form after the Industrial Revolution. Within the holistic health framework, physical education, sports, and martial arts focus on the social, physical, and body-mind integration dimensions of individual development, respectively. They complement and integrate with each other, collectively forming an important path for promoting the all-round health and well-being of humans. Sports, traditional martial arts, and competitive martial arts are not mutually exclusive categories but physical practice systems that continue to negotiate under the dual drivers of globalization and national politics. Through systematic comparison, this study reveals their commonalities in physical discipline, health promotion, and competitiveness, as well as their fundamental differences in teleology, violence boundaries, knowledge systems, and institutional logic. Traditional martial arts are the "root" carrying Chinese culture, competitive martial arts are the "bridge" connecting tradition and modernity, and modern physical education provides the "carrier" for international dissemination. The three form a symbiotic system of mutual complementarity and learning. Based on the above research, this study proposes the following recommendations for future research: Further explore the specific impact mechanisms and effects of different sports and martial arts styles on various dimensions of holistic health (psychological, social, spiritual) through quantitative and qualitative research. Future studies can conduct empirical surveys to explore the specific interaction mechanisms and influencing factors of the three domains in different regions, styles (e.g., Shaolin, Wudang), and social groups. At the same time, cross-cultural comparisons (e.g., comparing the modernization paths of East Asian martial arts with Western fencing and boxing) are also worthy of in-depth exploration, thereby providing richer theoretical and practical references for the sustainable development of physical culture from a global perspective. In-depth explore how traditional martial arts and local sports adapt culturally and reshape their identities in the context of globalization and digitalization, as well as the challenges and opportunities they face. Introduce a "Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA)" mechanism: before modifying rules, transforming competitively, or applying for intangible cultural heritage status for martial arts, international martial arts federations or national

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sports authorities should systematically assess the potential impact on technical symbol systems, ethical narratives, mentor-disciple relationships, and community practices. This helps preserve the cultural core and diversity of martial arts during innovation and standardization. Study how to more effectively integrate the integrated concept of physical education, sports, and martial arts into public health policies, school education curricula, and community health promotion programs. Implement parallel competitive and inheritance evaluation systems in schools, communities, and competition fields. For example, in martial arts teaching, courses can include both "sanda" or "routine" classes oriented toward competition and "inheritance classes" focusing on cultural insight and traditional skill practice. Learners should be allowed to choose paths based on their own goals, avoiding using competitive performance as the sole criterion for measuring the value of martial arts. Establish interdisciplinary degree programs and talent training initiatives: In higher education systems, cultivate "martial arts engineers" or "physical culture coordinators" who possess both sports science literacy, cultural research perspectives, and management capabilities. Such talents can act as bridges between technological innovation and cultural inheritance, using modern scientific methods to improve training efficiency while understanding and preserving the in-depth value of traditional physical culture. An in-depth understanding of physical education, sports, and martial arts not only helps clarify academic concepts but also provides valuable theoretical foundations and practical insights for designing more effective and humanistic health promotion programs in an era pursuing holistic health.

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