

# The Heritage Crisis of Traditional Chinese Medicine Exercise Therapy from the Perspective of Cultural Identity

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**Abstract:** *Research objectives:* China attaches great importance to carrying forward, developing, and innovating the excellent traditional Chinese culture. This is to inherit and carry forward the excellent traditional Chinese culture that is important. Traditional Chinese medicine exercise therapy is an important part of traditional Chinese medicine that should also be preserved. However, under the diversified impact of modern society, its cultural identity is lacking and the inheritance predicament is difficult. Therefore, this paper explores the inheritance crisis of traditional Chinese sports therapy from the perspective of cultural identity. *Research methods:* Literature, interviews, and logical analysis are performed. *Results and analysis:* There are some problems in the process of inheriting traditional exercise therapy, such as a fuzzy sense of identity, anxiety about inheriting identity, and over-commercialization. *Suggestion:* The inheritance of TCM traditional exercise therapy needs the concerted efforts of all sectors of society, strengthening the construction of teaching staff, coordinating the relationship between inheritance and modern education, multi-directional, multi-angle, and multi-level publicity, and telling the story of TCM traditional exercise therapy well.

**Keywords:** Traditional exercise therapy of Chinese medicine; Cultural identity; Inheritance

**Online publication:** January 23, 2025

## 1. Introduction

Traditional Chinese medicine culture is the quintessence of China and a unique national cultural heritage. As an integral part of the Chinese traditional culture, TCM traditional sports therapy includes the subtlety of the Five Poultry plays, the mystery of Taijiquan, the elegance of eight sections of brocade, the Yi Jin Jing, and the Six Character Formula. They carry the traditional Chinese culture and the principle of life and integrate the essence of TCM theory into one move and one style. They are the unique and tenacious cultural gene marks in the inheritance

of Chinese civilization that protect the health and well-being of the nation from generation to generation.

In the contemporary social landscape of accelerated globalization, the breadth and depth of cross-cultural exchanges have reached an unprecedented level. The young generation has grown up in the Internet era of information explosion and multi-cultural symbiosis. Under the intensive impact of Western pop culture and emerging life trends, local culture has been eroded, and the young generation lacks immersive exploration and understanding of the profound cultural heritage and subtle philosophical implications of traditional Chinese sports therapy, let alone cultural identity<sup>[2]</sup>. In such a complex and diverse cultural ecological field, traditional Chinese sports therapy, which is deeply rooted in the thick soil of Chinese civilization and embodies the wisdom crystallization of the Chinese nation for thousands of years, is facing severe challenges.

From multiple dimensions such as deep cognition of cultural identity, social and cultural ecological changes, and educational inheritance mechanism innovation, it has become an urgent and duty-bound core task for the academic community to explore the root causes of traditional Chinese sports therapy inheritance difficulties in an all-round and three-dimensional manner, enhance the public's sense of identity of traditional Chinese medicine culture, and systematically plan the path strategy of breaking the situation.

## **2. Development status of traditional exercise therapy in Chinese medicine from the perspective of cultural identity**

### **2.1. The displacement of value orientation leads to the ambiguity of identity**

The fast pace, high efficiency, and intelligent lifestyle pursued by modern society have significantly changed people's value orientation. In the prevailing environment of efficiency, utilitarianism, and pragmatism, people are more inclined to pursue immediate and definite results. The fast pace and high pressure of modern lifestyle make people more inclined to choose convenient and efficient exercise methods<sup>[4]</sup>. Traditional Chinese sports therapy focuses on inner cultivation, physical and mental harmony, and long-term subtle health improvement. This relatively "recessive" value, which requires deep experience and patient persistence, is difficult to quantify and perceive in a short period, resulting in its marginalization in the modern value system, and people's psychological identity with its cultural value is gradually blurred.

### **2.2. Identity anxiety and loss reduce people's willingness to inherit**

In the process of globalization, multiple cultures collide and blend with each other. Western culture and its sports model have come in large numbers. With its strong visual impact, standardized rules, and extensive commercial promotion, it has attracted the attention of many people, especially teenagers. On the other hand, there is a gap in the connection between inheritance and innovation in local culture. Traditional Chinese sports therapy, as the essence of local culture, failed to fully demonstrate its unique charm and adaptability when competing with foreign cultures<sup>[5]</sup>. In the face of many cultural choices, people have choice anxiety and identity anxiety, and they do not know how to position their relationship with traditional Chinese sports therapy, and then they appear wavering or even lost in cultural identity, which weakens the will to inherit traditional Chinese sports therapy<sup>[6]</sup>. Marathons and basketball games are held in many places, and the number of participants is increasing year by year. However, few people participate in traditional Chinese sports therapy competitions. In the sports goods market, western brands of sports equipment occupy most of the market share, while the sales of traditional Chinese sports equipment such as Taiji sword and Tai chi fan are very limited, which also makes traditional Chinese sports therapy marginalized.

### **2.3. Cultural imbalance and inheritance fault in education system**

Education plays a key role in cultural inheritance, but the current education system has obvious deficiencies in traditional cultural education. Physical education in schools focuses on western modern sports items, and the teaching content of traditional Chinese sports therapy is insufficient, the class time is short, and the teaching method is single, often staying at the level of movement imitation, and the lack of in-depth interpretation of the deep cultural heritage, philosophical thoughts, and health wisdom behind it <sup>[7]</sup>. As a result, the young generation has no opportunity to systematically understand and contact the cultural connotation of traditional Chinese sports therapy in the process of growing up, and it is difficult to establish emotional resonance and identity, resulting in the break of the inheritance chain, the gradual loss of cultural identity in the intergenerational transmission, and the low awareness of students to traditional Chinese sports therapy. According to the survey by Wang Jialian and others, the cognition level of college students of traditional Chinese medicine sports therapy is at a low level (low 34.5%, average 33.8%, high 31.8%) <sup>[8]</sup>.

Teachers' teaching level is also the reason that affects students' low cognition level of traditional Chinese medicine exercise therapy. The teaching task of TCM traditional sports therapy is mainly focused on PE teachers, and most of the PE teachers in schools are more specialized in modern sports events and lack traditional Chinese cultural background, which makes PE teachers stay in the shallow teaching of action demonstration and imitation when teaching TCM traditional sports therapy <sup>[9]</sup>. It is difficult for them to deeply explain the TCM theories and philosophical thoughts behind these sports. As a result, students' understanding of TCM traditional sports therapy is limited to body movements, unable to comprehend its unique essence of health and fitness as well as its profound cultural heritage. In terms of teaching methods, due to the lack of accurate grasp of the cultural connotation of traditional Chinese sports therapy, PE teachers may not be able to carry out personalized and systematic teaching designs according to the physical and mental characteristics of students and the principles of traditional Chinese medicine, and it is difficult to give professional and vivid guidance to the key elements such as "meaning", "qi" and "spirit" in the process of exercise. As a result, students cannot truly appreciate the state of physical and mental integration required by traditional Chinese sports therapy during practice, which affects students' interest in learning and the cultural identity of this traditional treasure, and also hinders the effective inheritance and development of traditional Chinese sports therapy in school education to a certain extent.

### **2.4. The popularity of electronic equipment reduces the proportion of time spent on traditional Chinese sports therapy**

The popularization of electronic devices and the diversification of entertainment methods also make people's spare time more occupied by mobile phones, computers, and other electronic devices, reducing the time and opportunity to participate in physical exercise. According to the relevant survey, 50% of China's teenagers use electronic equipment for more than 6 hours a day on average and take part in physical exercise for less than 1 hour. Another survey showed that more than 60 percent of adults participate in physical exercise less than three times a week, and fewer people choose traditional exercise therapy of Chinese medicine.

### **2.5. Over-commercialization harms the image**

Some training institutions in the market under the banner of traditional Chinese sports therapy charge high fees, but the quality of teaching is uneven. Even for the pursuit of economic interests, TCM traditional exercise therapy is over-commercialized packaging, exaggerating its therapeutic effect, misleading consumers, and damaging the

reputation of TCM traditional exercise therapy<sup>[11]</sup>. The teaching uses rapid teaching methods, only paying attention to the imitation of the movement, while ignoring the inner spirit and cultural inheritance. This utilitarian teaching method cannot reflect the essence of traditional Chinese sports therapy and is not conducive to its inheritance and development.

## **2.6. Psychological barrier to social communication and promotion**

In the age of information communication, the publicity and promotion of traditional Chinese sports therapy fails to fully consider the psychological needs and cognitive characteristics of the audience. Traditional promotion methods mainly focus on the teaching of technical movements, the language description is difficult to understand, lacks interest and resonance, and it is difficult to attract the attention of the public, especially the young group. In addition, the depth and breadth of mass media reports are not enough, and they fail to create an atmosphere of public opinion conducive to cultural identity. This psychological gap between communication and audience makes traditional Chinese sports therapy unable to penetrate deep into the hearts of the people, and it is difficult to inspire extensive cultural identity and participation enthusiasm at the social-psychological level, which aggravates its inheritance crisis and lack of identity.

## **3. Suggestions for promoting the cultural identity and inheritance of traditional Chinese sports therapy**

### **3.1. Strengthen cultural publicity, improve cultural identity, and cultivate the national sense of cultural inheritance mission**

From the perspective of cultural identity, the institution should strengthen cultural publicity and improve cultural identity. The government can use various media channels, such as TV, newspapers, short videos, public accounts, etc., to publicize the cultural connotation, historical origin, and fitness value of traditional Chinese medicine and sports therapy, and improve the public's awareness and understanding of traditional Chinese medicine sports therapy. Hold a variety of cultural activities, such as traditional Chinese sports therapy competitions, exhibitions, science popularization, lectures, etc., so that the public can personally feel the charm of traditional Chinese sports therapy and enhance cultural identity<sup>[12]</sup>. TCM traditional exercise therapy should be incorporated into the physical education curriculum of primary and secondary schools and the curriculum system of colleges and universities. In particular, TCM colleges and universities should make TCM traditional exercise therapy a compulsory course to cultivate students' interest in TCM traditional exercise therapy and their sense of mission in inheriting TCM traditional exercise therapy.

### **3.2. Expansion of international communication**

With the promotion of the "Belt and Road" initiative, traditional Chinese exercise therapy will go to the world and gain more cultural recognition. The unique charm of TCM traditional exercise therapy can be shown to the world through international academic exchanges, cultural exhibitions, and training courses. For example, training courses on traditional exercise therapy of Chinese medicine may be held overseas to attract foreign friends to learn and experience. Network anchors and experts in traditional Chinese sports therapy will be trained to spread and demonstrate traditional Chinese sports therapy at home and abroad. China will cooperate with international sports organizations and medical institutions to promote the international development of traditional Chinese sports therapy.

### **3.3. Internet + information construction, online and offline coordinated development to meet modern needs**

On the one hand, combined with modern information technology, the development of traditional Chinese medicine exercise therapy digital resources, such as video tutorials, mobile phone applications, online courses, digital textbooks, digital books, virtual teaching, and other types of teaching and learning resources, to facilitate the public to learn and practice. At the same time, improve the digital public service platform and pay attention to network connectivity, to avoid the formation of information islands. Traditional Chinese sports therapy organizations and fitness sites should be established offline, and traditional Chinese sports therapy should be promoted in colleges, universities, communities, villages, and towns. Through innovative sports forms, traditional Chinese sports therapy is combined with modern sports events, such as Tai Chi yoga and Baduanjin fitness exercises, to make them more interesting and attractive and increase the participation of the public <sup>[13]</sup>. On the other hand, educators can use the short video platform to make exquisite short videos, tell the story of traditional Chinese sports therapy, invite Chinese medicine experts and sports experts to appear together, and use plain language to break down the moves and forms of Taijiquan, Baduanjin and other sports, and explain the operation principles of meridian, qi and blood in detail; Create interesting animation science popularization, transform ancient TCM theories into vivid animated characters and plots, so that children can understand the mysteries of traditional sports in joy. Live interaction is used to answer the audience's questions in the practice process in real time so that the public can feel that traditional Chinese sports therapy is not a remote "spring snow", but a practical and effective health "magic" close to daily life, to narrow the distance with the public, enhance its cultural affinity, and attract more people to join the ranks of inheriting and promoting traditional Chinese sports therapy.

### **3.4. Strengthen the construction of teaching staff and train professional talents**

The government should increase the investment in the education of traditional Chinese medicine exercise therapy, strengthen the construction of teachers, and improve the teaching quality. In the recruitment of physical education teachers, the assessment of traditional Chinese medicine literacy should be increased <sup>[14]</sup>. A sound personnel training system should be established to train traditional Chinese medicine exercise therapy instructors and coaches adapted to different levels of education through vocational training. Physical education teachers in schools are mainly responsible for the teaching and popularization of traditional Chinese medicine exercise therapy in residential areas, villages, towns, and streets, and teachers of relevant majors in traditional Chinese medicine colleges are responsible for popular science. To meet the needs of different types of people in traditional Chinese medicine sports therapy.

### **3.5. Strengthen market supervision and standardize the development of the industry**

Supervision of traditional exercise therapy training institutions and merchants should be strengthened to regulate market behavior and crack down on false publicity and fraud. It will guide training institutions and merchants to establish correct business concepts, pay attention to the inheritance of cultural connotations and traditional values, and promote the healthy development of the industry <sup>[15]</sup>. To formulate industry standards, standardize the teaching content, teaching methods, and assessment standards of traditional Chinese medicine exercise therapy, and improve the overall level of the industry.

## 4. Concluding remarks

The heritage crisis of traditional exercise therapy in Chinese medicine at the level of cultural identity cannot be ignored. However, the crisis has a turning point, educators must soberly realize that regaining cultural identity is the key to overcoming the situation. On the one hand, the education system should carry out educational reform, integrate the cultural education of traditional Chinese medicine sports therapy into the curriculum system, and train teachers with sports skills and traditional Chinese medicine cultural literacy, so that the growth of the young generation can be steeped in traditional wisdom and build a solid cultural foundation. On the other hand, with the help of modern media, the story behind traditional Chinese sports therapy should be told in an innovative form, to strengthen domestic and international communication, make it close to life and go to the world. Moreover, educators should strengthen market supervision, standardize the development of the industry, and maintain the image of traditional Chinese sports therapy. All sectors of society also need to make concerted efforts to organize a variety of activities, create an atmosphere for the participation of the whole people, let the public feel its charm in the personal experience, and reshape the cultural identity of traditional Chinese sports therapy. Traditional Chinese sports therapy is the shining pearl of the Chinese nation's thousand-year-old health concept and spiritual pursuit. Only with the concerted efforts of all parties can it shine in the tide of time, transcend the boundaries of time and space, and continue to inject vitality into the health, well-being, and cultural prosperity of mankind.

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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