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Modeling the Relationship of Need-Supportive and Need-Thwarting Behaviors with Subjective Vitality among Iraqi and Iranian Athletes: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being

Mahta. Eskandarnezhad[1*], Behzad. Behzadnia[2], Amir. Ghiami Rad[2], Ali Hatam. Ebrahimi[3]

[1] Professor, Department of Sport Movement Behavior, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran
[2] Associate Professor, Department of Sport Movement Behavior, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran
[3] PhD Candidate, Department of Sport Movement Behavior, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran

*** Corresponding author email address**: m.eskandarnejad@tabrizu.ac.ir

Editor	Reviewers
Hamid Reza Aghamohammadian sharbaf Professor of Psychology Department, Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran aghamohammadian@um.ac.ir	**Reviewer 1:** Ebrahim Shabani Department of Sport Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, University of Zanjan, Zanjan, Iran. Email: ebrahimshaabaniezdini@gmail.com **Reviewer 2:** Negar Arazeshi Department of Motor Behavior, CT.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. Email: negar.arazeshi@iau.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the instrumentation paragraph, the sentence “Data on need-supportive behavior were collected using the questionnaire developed by Lonsdale et al. (2007)” appears potentially problematic because the cited Lonsdale et al. instrument is the Athlete Engagement Questionnaire. The authors should verify that the cited instrument is in fact the questionnaire used to assess need-supportive behavior and provide the exact official name of the measure. If a different scale was adapted from another source, the citation and instrument description should be corrected. This issue is important because construct-measure mismatch threatens content validity and reproducibility.

Similarly, the description of “need-thwarting behaviors” using the Bartholomew et al. (2011) questionnaire should be more exact. Bartholomew et al. developed a measure of psychological need thwarting in sport, which assesses athletes’ experiences

of autonomy, competence, and relatedness frustration rather than necessarily "behaviors" enacted by others. The manuscript should clarify whether the construct under study is perceived need-thwarting behavior, psychological need thwarting, or need frustration. The terminology should then be standardized consistently throughout the title, abstract, introduction, methods, tables, figures, and discussion.

The manuscript reports that "three criteria were used to assess the fit of the reflective measurement model in PLS: indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity," but the measurement-model assessment is incomplete by contemporary PLS-SEM standards. The authors should report outer loadings, internal consistency reliability, AVE, and discriminant validity using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), in addition to or instead of relying solely on the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Cross-loadings may also be informative. Furthermore, whether all constructs were specified as reflective should be theoretically justified rather than assumed.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph describing Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale, the statement that the scale was "originally developed by Ryff and Singer in 1989 and revised in 2002 (Ryff & Singer, 2006)" requires verification and more precise sourcing. The authors should clearly identify the specific 18-item version used, explain its scoring method, specify which items are reverse-scored, and report the response scale anchors. Because the study includes athletes from Iran and Iraq, the manuscript should also state whether validated Persian and Arabic versions were used and provide evidence of cultural/linguistic adaptation.

The manuscript does not provide adequate information on translation procedures for the questionnaires across Persian- and Arabic-speaking participants. Given the cross-national design, this is a major methodological omission. The authors should specify whether measures were available in validated Persian and Arabic versions, whether forward-backward translation was performed, whether bilingual experts reviewed semantic equivalence, whether pilot testing was conducted, and whether measurement invariance across Iranian and Iraqi athletes was assessed. Without evidence of cross-language measurement equivalence, the conclusion that the two national groups did not differ may be difficult to interpret.

The factor-loading results require closer scrutiny. The manuscript states, "the factor loading of every item was greater than .40. Therefore, all items were retained in the research model." A threshold of .40 is relatively permissive for reflective measurement models, especially when several indicators appear to have loadings around .50–.60. The authors should explain why low-loading items were retained and report whether removing indicators with loadings below .70 would have improved composite reliability or AVE without compromising content validity. The decision should be guided by both statistical and theoretical criteria.

In the statistical analysis paragraph, the sentence "the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test [was used] to assess the normality of data distributions" should be reconsidered in light of PLS-SEM. PLS-SEM does not require multivariate normality in the same manner as covariance-based SEM, and relying solely on the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test is not sufficient for assessing distributional characteristics. The authors should report skewness and kurtosis and explain why normality was assessed. If the normality test was used specifically to justify the independent-samples t tests, that purpose should be stated directly.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.

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