

Current Status and Strategic Evolution of Grassroots Basketball Events in China: A Dual-Case Examination of Village BA and Lurenwang

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Abstract

In recent years, grassroots basketball Events have experienced unprecedented expansion, emerging as a critical driving force for national fitness initiatives and rural revitalization in China. However, systematic academic inquiries into their operational paradigms and sustainable development remain insufficient. To bridge this gap, this paper aims to address two primary research questions: What are the core developmental characteristics of contemporary Chinese grassroots basketball events, and what are the underlying constraints and strategic pathways for their sustainable evolution? Employing a comparative case study approach, this research strategically selects Village BA and Lurenwang as core analytical subjects to contrast two divergent paradigms: the rural, team-based, and public-welfare-oriented model versus the urban, individual-centric, and highly commercialized model. Through this comparative analysis, the study examines the current developmental status across four dimensions: tournament types and spatial distribution, demographic characteristics of participants, organizational and operational models and multidimensional societal impacts. Furthermore, the research identifies the core factors influencing this development, which encompass policy support and institutional guidance, regional economic levels, distinct cultural characteristics, infrastructure conditions, and media dissemination factors. In response to current challenges—namely, non-standardized organizational management, funding shortages coupled with inadequate commercialization, deficient protection of players' rights and a scarcity of professional personnel—this study proposes targeted strategic pathways, including strengthening standardized management frameworks, diversifying funding channels, enhance commercial viability, improving welfare mechanisms, strengthening the cultivation of professional talents and promoting the deep integration of events and cultural tourism. Ultimately, this research provides a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the grassroots sports for rural revitalization.

Keywords: Grassroots Basketball; Rural Revitalization; Village BA; Lurenwang

1. Introduction

Basketball, as a global sport, has captivated hundreds of millions of enthusiasts with its unique competitive charm. According to data from the International Basketball Federation, the global basketball community has expanded to encompass over one billion people, with its influence extending across virtually every country and region worldwide (International Basketball Federation [FIBA], 2019). In China, basketball also enjoys a profound grassroots foundation, standing as one of the most popular sports. Grassroots basketball, different from the highly specialized and commercialized professional basketball system, mainly refers to the general term of basketball activities and their cultural forms that are spontaneously organized by the local people, with low participation threshold and wide coverage. As a vital component of basketball ecosystem, grassroots basketball tournaments play an indispensable role in advancing the national athletic agenda. They serve as accessible platforms for public participation and athletic display, thereby stimulating civic engagement in physical activities while significantly facilitating the dissemination of basketball culture at the community level.

In recent years, China has witnessed the emergence of several prominent grassroots basketball events, with Village BA (Village Basketball Association) and Lurenwang (A basketball tournaments in Chinese) generating

the most substantial societal impact. In the early stage of the development of the event, such competitions are relatively simple in terms of site conditions and organizational level, and the infrastructure is relatively limited. However, the scene is often accompanied by high enthusiasm, which fully reflects the inherent vitality and development potential of folk basketball events. Taking Village BA as a primary example, the event originated in Taipan Township, Taijiang County, Guizhou Province. Initially structured as a spontaneous athletic gathering organized by local villagers to celebrate the Spring Festival, it has since evolved into a nationally recognized grassroots sports brand. Anchored in an operational model deeply embedded in daily community life, and enhanced by distinct regional cultural characteristics alongside a compelling competitive atmosphere, Guizhou's Village BA rapidly won nationwide acclaim. According to relevant statistics, the Village BA Finals in Guizhou Province in 2023 not only attracted approximately over ten thousand spectators to watch (Xinhua News Agency, 2023), but also exceeded thousands of times in its cumulative network broadcast. Conversely, the Lurenwang has adopted a completely different development path, mainly focusing on the 1V1 single-pick mode. The public information shows that Lurenwang has carried out activities in hundreds of cities across the country, with numbers of annual offline competitions. Individual events frequently attract audiences exceeding thousand of spectators, contributing to gain substantial online exposure through livestreaming and short-video platforms. This specific operational model effectively captures the personalized sports demands of young groups, and through the collaborative operation of online and offline, it promotes the Lurenwang to gradually form a highly recognized event brand.

From an academic research perspective, conducting a systematic study on Chinese grassroots basketball tournaments helps expand the research scope of sports sociology and provides a new vantage point for exploring the intersection of sports, society, economy, and culture. Specifically, this paper aims to address two primary research questions: (1) What are the core developmental characteristics and operational paradigms of contemporary Chinese grassroots basketball events? (2) What are the underlying constraints and strategic pathways for their sustainable evolution?

To systematically answer these questions, this paper employs a comparative case study approach, strategically selecting Village BA and Lurenwang as the core analytical subjects. These two cases were chosen for their distinct representativeness and contrasting developmental trajectories: Village BA epitomizes the rural, team-based, and public-welfare-oriented model deeply embedded in ethnic cultural revitalization; whereas Lurenwang represents the urban, individual-centric, and highly commercialized model driven by market dynamics and new media. Summarizing the main problems existing in these two divergent paradigms at present, the paper further explores and tries to put forward targeted future development strategies, and proposes targeted strategies for the sustainable and high-quality development of grassroots basketball tournaments.

2. Analysis of the Development Status of Chinese Grassroots Basketball Events

2.1. Tournament Types and Spatial Distribution of Events

With the increasing public attention to folk basketball tournaments, grassroots basketball tournaments in China are gradually characterized by morphological diversity and broad spatial distribution. These events diverge significantly in their organizational structures, target demographics, and geographic reach, thus forming a multi-level and multi-type coexistence development pattern.

From the perspective of the scale of the event, the current grassroots basketball events can be roughly divided into two types: regional and national events. Regional events are frequently carried out by townships, communities, enterprises and institutions or non-governmental organizations, gathering their participant in specific areas. Illustratively, the early village BA was mostly held in county and country, which were usually initiated to celebrate local traditional festivals. Consequently, the influence of village BA was relatively limited and had strong regional characteristics. In contrast, events like Lurenwang and China Amateur Basketball Open (CBO)

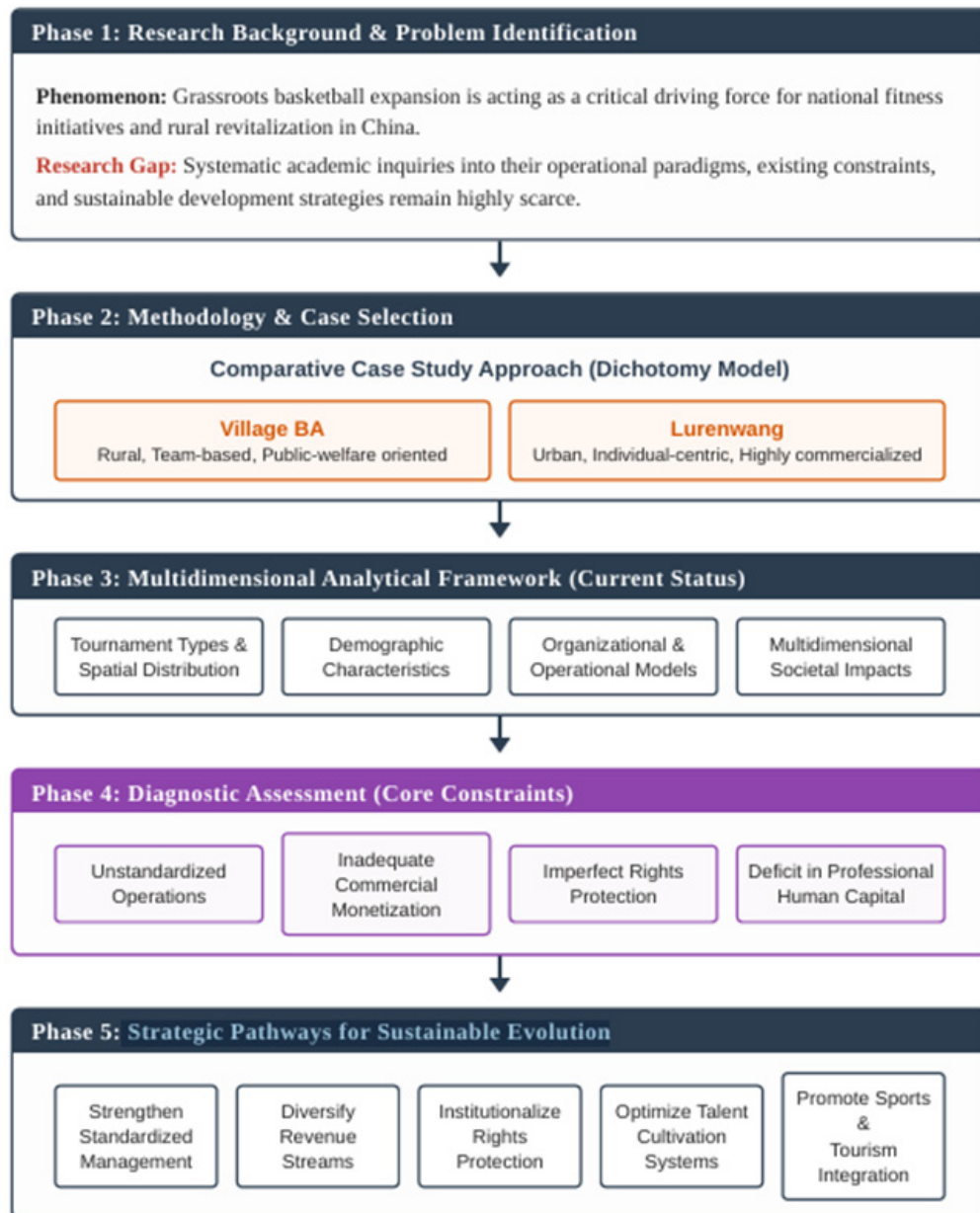


Figure 1. Technology roadmap

have gradually formed a nationwide event system in the development process. Such events have established sub-regions in multiple cities and formed a wide-ranging network across regions, which can attract basketball enthusiasts from all over the country to sign up.

According to the different rules of the competition, the grassroots basketball tournament bifurcates into two basic formats: group competition and individual competition. The team competition mostly adopts the conventional five-on-five competition framework, occasionally incorporating 3-person competition and other forms. Village BA, preserving the classic regulation of the five-a-side basketball game, relies highly on teamwork and overall tactical coordination during the game, which is highly consistent with the cultural atmosphere of rural society focusing on collective participation. However, individual events are mainly in the form of individual single-pick confrontation, with Lurenwang serving as the representative model. By emphasizing more on the performance of personal skills, this format precisely meets the psychological desire among younger for personal athletic expression. In addition, the 3x3 basketball format has gradually become an important part of grassroots basketball because of its fast pace of competition, flexible organizational form and low participation threshold,

which has achieved widespread popularity, notably within urban communities and university campuses.

From the point of the scene of the event, contemporary events operate within three primary spatial typologies: rural, urban, and campus-based competition. Rural events are deeply rooted in the countryside, frequently utilizing public cultural hubs within villages and townships. Occupying village squares or basic open-air courts, these gatherings are full of rural atmosphere. Urban events, however, tend to be located in residential communities, public sports venues or large commercial plazas. Considering the geographical location and audience characteristics, such events often attach importance to the viewing effect of the competition and the subsequent commercial operation potential. Meanwhile, the campus-based events take primary and secondary schools as the main positions, covering college basketball leagues, intra-school 3x3 tournaments, which fulfill the foundational role of popularizing the sport among the youth and fostering lifelong athletic habits.

In terms of regional spatial distribution, the domestic tournaments generally manifest a trend of urban-rural interaction and coordinated development in the eastern, central and western regions. Thanks to the high level of economic development and strong sports consumption demand, the events in the eastern coastal areas are not only more intensive, but also more mature in the organization and commercial operation of the events. To illustrate, metropolitan centers such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen collectively host a massive number of recurring events annually, attracting thousands of participants per city, whose frequency and scale of participation are at a high level in the country. Conversely, the central and western regions pay much more attention to unique cultural heritage to forge regionally distinct tournament brands. Village BA in Guizhou province is a successful practice of integrating local ethnic culture with sports activities. By seamlessly incorporating elements from the Miao and Dong ethnic minorities, the events foster a unique cultural charm. As of 2024, the Village BA series almost all administrative counties in Guizhou Province and promoted the construction of a vast number of grassroots basketball courts in local rural areas. At the same time, under the background of the continuous promotion of the rural revitalization strategy, these events have experienced exponential growth and a significant surge in frequency compared to the pre-2020 period. This change is gradually breaking the spatial distribution pattern of events dominated by cities in the past, thereby cementing a new trend of coordinated development between urban and rural areas.

2.2. Structural Attributes and Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The Chinese grassroots basketball tournament shows a strong inclusiveness in the composition of the participants, which cover different age stages, professional backgrounds and geographical sources, and the overall shows obvious popularization and diversification characteristics.

From the perspective of age and gender structure, adolescents and young adults aged 18 to 35 are the main competitors in the games. Possessing robust physical condition, a profound interest in the sport, and high receptivity to novel tournament formats, this age group accounts for a large proportion of the number of participants in the event. Consequently, these individuals actively engage not only in one-on-one-centric events such as Lurenwang but also join extensively in team-based competitions organized by local communities, corporate enterprises, and social organizations. Meanwhile, with the continuous popularization of the concept of national fitness, the proportion of middle-aged and senior people in grassroots basketball is experiencing a steady increase. To accommodate the physiological characteristics of these older demographics, some areas have begun to set up events with relatively moderate rhythm and low exercise intensity according to their dual needs for health maintenance and social interaction. In some local competitions, different age groups engage in the competition or watch the competition at the same time, thus fostering an atmosphere of universal participation. In terms of gender structure, although the current grassroots basketball tournament participants are still dominated by men, the number of female players has shown a gradual growth trend in recent years. In response, event organizers have increasingly introduced women's divisions and female-specific groups to provide a platform for women basketball enthusiasts. To a certain degree, this change reflects that grassroots basketball events gradually show a growing gender inclusiveness.

Beyond age and gender, the social occupation of these participants is from a wide range of sources, including industrial workers, farmers, students, enterprise staff and self-employed people and other different occupational groups. Such events usually do not set specific occupational restrictions, the fundamental ethos of these events is characterized by profound accessibility. For instance, in the Village BA event, the players are mostly local farmers and returning youth, most of whom lack systematic athletic basketball training but spontaneously form a team and join in the game by virtue of their interest in basketball. On the contrary, the participating groups of the Lurenwang event are relatively more diverse, including both amateur players with higher level, college basketball talented students and some retired professional athletes. Although the diversity of the overall competitive level is more obvious, but the identities are mostly folk basketball enthusiasts.

From the view of regional sources, the participants of grassroots basketball competitions are usually dominated by local residents, and there is also a certain degree of cross-regional mobility. For regional activities such as village BA, the participating teams are often composed of villagers from the village or surrounding villages. Similarly, the urban community events are also mainly based on community residents. This mode of local participation can strengthen the sense of belonging and community identity of participants. On the other hand, some influential national events, such as the Lurenwang Finals and the CBO National Finals, attract outstanding amateur players from different regions, thus promoting the exchange and integration of basketball culture in different areas.

2.3. The Main Subject and Mode of Event Organization and Operation

The operating entities of Chinese grassroots basketball tournaments are diversified, mainly consisting of three major forces: non-governmental organizations, government agencies, and corporate entities. Different entities assume distinct functions in the development of the events, jointly constituting the organizational system of current grassroots basketball tournaments.

Civic organizations typically serve as the primary initiators and driving forces behind these competitions. During the early stages of event development, most tournaments are spontaneously organized by basketball enthusiasts or local residents, funded through self-raised capital or social collection. For example, the early Village BA was independently organized by local villagers, whose allied logistical tasks, including schedule coordination, referee assignments, and venue layout, were entirely managed by the villagers themselves. Under this model, although the operating costs remain low and the organizational structure is relatively simple, it can effectively sustain normal operations by relying on local social networks. The Lurenwang event similarly originated within the grassroots basketball community, which was merely a small-scale 1v1 confrontation. As the event's influence expanded, its operating entity gradually evolved into a professional event management company, establishing a more standardized operational framework.

The participation of corporate entities injects a more pronounced market-driven momentum into grassroots basketball tournaments. Enterprises typically participate in event development through sponsorships or collaborative operations. Small and medium-sized enterprises sponsor local competitions through title rights or material donations to enhance corporate brand exposure, while large sports brands are more deeply involved in the collaborative operation of national events. For example, well-known sports brands such as Anta and Li-Ning provide financial and equipment support for events like Lurenwang and the China Amateur Basketball Open (CBO), expanding the events' influence through their own communication channels.

From the perspective of overall operational mode, current grassroots basketball events can be broadly divided into two categories: public-welfare and commercial. Public-welfare events are primarily aimed at promoting mass sports participation. They are usually jointly hosted by government agencies and non-governmental organizations, focusing heavily on social benefits, as seen in rural events and community public-welfare basketball tournaments. Commercial events, in contrast, are geared toward brand building and commercial value development, generating economic benefits through ticket sales, advertising sponsorships, live broadcasts, and the development of peripheral products. Illustratively, the Lurenwang has established a relatively mature

commercial operation paradigms, achieving sustainable event operation through online live-streaming traffic, offline event execution, and brand partnerships.

2.4. Assessment of the Multidimensional Impact of Grassroots Tournaments

With their unique charm, Chinese grassroots basketball events have exerted a significant multidimensional impact on society, culture, and the economy, emerging as a critical force in promoting national fitness and societal cultural development.

At the point of societal level, grassroots basketball tournaments have played a positive role in enhancing community cohesion and social identity. Local events represented by Village BA routinely attract a large number of local residents to take part in event organization, spectating, and volunteer services, which can enhance interaction among villagers to a certain extent, fostering a positive rural public cultural atmosphere and contributing significantly to the modernization of grassroots governance (Zidong & Yuhua, 2022). Simultaneously, the competitions held in urban communities provide a platform for residents to communicate and interact, which partially alleviates the relative alienation of neighborhood relationships in modern urban life. In addition, these tournaments stimulate the public's enthusiasm for physical exercise by organizing competitive activities. This aligns highly with the national policy goal of promoting the national fitness strategy, holding positive significance for improving the physical quality of residents and spreading the concept of a healthy lifestyle.

On the side of culture, grassroots basketball events also play an important role in the dissemination and localization of basketball culture. Compared with professional basketball tournaments, grassroots events are much closer to the daily lives of ordinary people, making it easier to generate broad influence within grassroots society. A large number of young people gradually cultivate an interest in basketball by participating in or watching grassroots games, which accumulates a broad mass foundation for the development of Chinese basketball. At the same time, some events integrate local cultural resources during their development to form basketball cultural expressions with distinct regional characteristics. For example, the Village BA event seamlessly interweaves the traditional singing, dancing, and festival customs of the Miao and Dong ethnic minorities into the competitions, transforming the basketball tournament from a mere athletic activity into an important platform for displaying and revitalizing local village culture (Li et al., 2024). Furthermore, the values of teamwork, hard work, and perseverance embodied in these basketball competitions have also played a positive role in cultural guidance.

From the aspect of economy, the development of grassroots basketball tournaments has brought new growth momentum to local economies. Taking Guizhou's Village BA as an example, this event not only enhances regional visibility but also promotes the development of the local cultural tourism industry. According to relevant research, the hosting of such grassroots events has attracted a massive influx of tourists and generated substantial tourism revenues for the local area. Concurrently, it has remarkably boosted the sales of local characteristic agricultural products, demonstrating its unique functional mechanism in promoting agricultural product circulation and county economic growth (Shao, 2024). In urban areas, grassroots basketball tournaments play an economic role primarily by stimulating sports consumption. Statistics show that these grassroots events significantly stimulate the per capita annual sports consumption among basketball enthusiasts in China, with expenditures mainly concentrated on basketball equipment purchases, venue rentals, and event participation fees. Moreover, the tournaments provide a new brand marketing platform for enterprises. For instance, 'Lurenwang' has established extensive partnerships with numerous leading brands such as Anta, Red Bull, and Meituan, securing substantial annual sponsorship revenues. Meanwhile, the development of these events also drives the growth of related industries such as event operation, refereeing services, coach training, and sports live broadcasting. Industry observations indicate that these events have created a substantial number of related flexible employment opportunities, which has structurally promoted the expansion of employment within the sports industry.

3. Influencing Factors on the Evolution of Chinese Grassroots Basketball Events

3.1. Policy Support and Institutional Guidance

Policy factors serve as a crucial guarantee for promoting the development of grassroots basketball events. In recent years, the state has issued a series of policies to support the national fitness initiative and the sports industry, thereby creating a highly favorable policy environment for grassroots events. For instance, the 14th Five-Year Plan for Sports Development explicitly outlines the objective to support the development of grassroots sports events and cultivate 100 characteristic grassroots athletic brands by 2025 (General Administration of Sport of China, 2021). Complementary macro-policies, such as the National Fitness Regulations and the Healthy China 2030 blueprint, universally encourage mass athletic participation, support civic organizations in hosting various sports events, and provide a solid policy foundation for grassroots basketball development. The local government has issued targeted support policies based on actual local conditions. The Guizhou provincial government, for example, has allocated dedicated financial funds for the development of 'village BA', covering court renovation, referee training and promotional outreach. Some city councils simplified the approval process of events, drastically reducing the administrative turnaround time, which greatly accelerates the implementation and promotion of these events.

Beyond mere facilitation, these policies also enact a guiding role in standardizing event operations. As grassroots circuits scale up, local authorities have introduced tournament management protocols to standardize organizational procedures, security guarantees, referee qualifications and other parts, thereby guiding events toward standardized and professionalized paradigms. Taking 'village BA' as an example, the local government has instituted relevant policies to regulate team registration, schedule arrangement and referee selection, so as to ensure the fairness and justice of the events. At the same time, it strengthens security measures and safeguards the rights and interests of participants and spectators. Concurrently, security measures were fortified to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of participants and spectators. This dual approach of proactive support coupled with rigorous regulatory oversight not only stimulates the enthusiasm of civic organizers but also provides the institutional bedrock necessary for the sustainable and healthy evolution of grassroots basketball.

3.2. Economic Factors

The level of economic development is the core factor affecting the development of grassroots basketball events, which directly determines the scale, quality and operation mode of the events. From the perspective of regional economic differences, grassroots competitions located within economically advanced regions exhibit a markedly higher degree of maturity. This superiority is sustained by robust localized sports consumption capabilities, abundant corporate sponsorships, and sufficient municipal financial resources allocated for infrastructure construction and event promotion. Consequently, grassroots tournaments along the eastern coastal seaboard are not only highly frequent and numerous but also operate with greater professionalism and deeper commercialization. Conversely, tournaments situated in economically underdeveloped territories frequently grapple with capital constraints, resulting in substandard facilities, under-resourced operational teams, and a relatively constrained sphere of influence.

Further, residents' personal disposable sports expenditure determines the willingness and consumption ability of mass sports participation. With the improvement of Chinese residents' income level, more and more people are willing to invest in physical exercise and event viewing, which provides a consumption basis for the development of grassroots basketball events. Importantly, it cannot be ignored that while macroeconomic development drives the prosperity of the broader sports industry, the development of related supporting sectors—basketball equipment, venue services and event operations to injects essential material and service provisions back into grassroots events, substantially elevating the overall competitive standards.

3.3. Cultural Factors

Cultural factors exert a profound impact on the development of grassroots basketball competitions, ultimately determining their atmospheric distinctiveness, characteristic features, and public recognition. Since

its historical introduction to China, basketball has continuously integrated with local social structures, forming a basketball culture with distinct Chinese characteristics. Particularly among younger demographics, the sport has long transcended being a mere physical activity, evolving into a frequent medium for social interaction and a lifestyle habit. This deep-seated cultural atmosphere provides the fertile mass foundation necessary for grassroots initiatives to take root and flourish. Once the regional heritage intersects with grassroots basketball, it endows the tournament with a unique cultural magnetism, enhancing its attraction and cohesion. As a typical national paradigm, Qiandongnan region relies on its profound ethnic culture to skillfully interweave indigenous folk singing and dancing, traditional festivals, and basketball confrontation to create a very authentic local event, which not only mobilizes the active participation of local villagers but also captivates the attention of netizens nationwide. In urban settings, the tournaments similarly integrate metropolitan cultural elements, emphasizing individualistic expression and contemporary fashion trends to satisfy the cultural appetites of modern youth. More important, the mainstream value promoted by the current society also promotes the development of grassroots basketball tournaments. Basketball contains the spirit of hard work, teamwork, higher and stronger. These intrinsic values align powerfully with the ideological ethos advocated by society in the new era. It has won wide recognition and support from all walks of life, creating a good cultural atmosphere for the expansion of grassroots basketball events.

3.4. Infrastructure Provisions and Professional Resources

Venue facilities serve as the fundamental conditions for hosting grassroots basketball tournaments. The adequacy of physical hardware infrastructure directly impacts the quality of event organization and the experiential quality for public participants. In recent years, propelled by the national fitness strategy, the domestic supply of various basketball venues has experienced a continuous increase. Whether it is the rural landscapes, urban residential blocks, or academic campuses, the renovation and expansion of both open-air and indoor courts are advancing steadily. Tracing the development of 'Village BA', reveals that its early matches were merely hosted on rough concrete surfaces; today, fortified by governmental and civic investments, these venues have been upgraded to standardized synthetic courts, which has drastically enhanced the physical competitive environment and significantly improving rural sports public services. Nevertheless, the problem of uneven distribution of venues and facilities is still prominent. Statistical observations indicate a stark spatial misallocation: urban core zones possess a relative abundance of courts per capita, whereas remote rural regions suffer from severe facility deficits. More seriously, a substantial proportion of existing rural courts suffer from severe surface degradation and infrastructural decay. Similar to physical limitations, an acute deficit in professional resources also constrains the development of the competitions. Currently, the industry is facing a massive labor deficit in certified grassroots referees and coaches, where the current supply falls severely short of the soaring actual demand. The lack of professional referees, coaches and event operators directly leads to the non-standard organization of these events and the low level of competition, which ultimately undermines the sustainable evolution of these grassroots circuits.

3.5. Media and Communication

In today's new media era, media communication has become an engine to promote the development of grassroots basketball tournaments. With the competitive atmosphere and real emotional expression, these competitions are in line with the characteristics of new media communication. Through short videos, live broadcasts, social platforms and other channels, they have won remarkable success. Relevant data statistics show that 'Village BA' has achieved exponential growth in views and viral dissemination on short video platforms in Douyin (TikTok in Chinese) or Kuaishou (Kwai in Chinese), frequently topping search trends with the extensive support of mainstream media. Similarly, the 'Lurenwang' online broadcasts consistently maintain a massive and stable viewer base, frequently achieving multi-million peak audiences during single sessions. Concurrently, the organizers carry out interactive activities through social platforms to enhance the topic and influence of the event.

This widespread media exposure not only enhances the popularity of the tournaments but also generates

commercial opportunities by attracting corporate sponsorships, allowing these grassroots leagues to garner widespread attention nationwide and even worldwide (Lu et al., 2025). Some excellent grassroots players have gained attention through the dissemination of events, and even been favored by professional teams to achieve a leap from grassroots to professional. Moreover, the linkage between traditional media and new media has further expanded the scope of influence of these competitions, allowing basketball culture to penetrate more groups and continuously ignite civic enthusiasm.

4. Current Challenges Restricting the Development of Grassroots Basketball

4.1. Deficiencies in Organizational and Administrative Standardization

The rapid expansion of the grassroots basketball ecosystem starkly contrasts with its lagging organizational infrastructure, a discrepancy that severely restricts high-quality development. On the one hand, the absence of uniform regulatory protocols allows numerous civic-organized tournaments to operate entirely without approval from relevant departments, and lack of effective supervision, which directly leads to a series of problems such as confusion of competition system arrangements and inconsistent implementation of rules. On the other hand, other organizers face overly bureaucratic and cumbersome approval procedures, drastically diminishing operational efficiency. However, the professional level of referees is uneven that the referees of events are mostly amateurs, lacking systematic professional training and qualification certification. They are prone to inaccuracies such as misjudgment and unfairness, severely compromising competitive fairness and frequently causing on-court disputes. Furthermore, driven by cost-reduction imperatives, numerous events lack the necessary medical security, security personnel and emergency facilities, which makes the participants unable to get immediate professional medical treatment after injury. At the same time, the disorder of the audience and the unreasonable site planning are also a huge security risk. Particularly in rural and lower-tier urban the out-of-control stand order and hardware security risks are intertwined, which can easily result in group conflicts. Ultimately, this crude organizational paradigm not only degrades the experiential quality for participants and spectators but also obstructs the long-term brand accumulation of grassroots events.

4.2. Shortage of Funds and Insufficient Commercialization

A shortage of funds is a common problem that plagues the development of grassroots basketball tournaments, manifesting most acutely within small-to-medium regional events. Currently, the capital operation of the events mainly depends on private financing, government subsidies, corporate endorsements, and these channels prove inadequate. Private civic funding lacks the requisite volume to support capacity expansion, while municipal subsidies are disproportionately allocated to a select minority of high-profile events in key regions. Corporate sponsorship tends to be well-known and commercially valuable national events, which makes it difficult for small and medium-sized regional events to obtain corporate investment, causing that the shortage of funds is serious.

Compounding this capital deficiency is a profound insufficiency in commercial monetization. Devoid of specialized marketing teams, organizers rarely exploit the latent intellectual property and commercial value of their events. Monetization strategies remain arrested at primitive stages, relying heavily on basic title sponsorships and static advertising placements. For instance, owing to a failure to fully cultivate commercial value, the utilization rate of live broadcast copyrights in most regional tournaments remains exceptionally low, and the development of peripheral products is virtually non-existent. Consequently, this persistent lack of financial liquidity paralyzes organizers' ability to reinvest in critical areas such as facility upgrades, referee development, and security protocols, which traps these tournaments in a cycle of low-level stagnation.

4.3. Vulnerabilities in Player Rights Protection

Given that the participant demographic primarily consists of amateur enthusiasts, the grassroots basketball sector suffers from a conspicuous absence of robust welfare and rights protection mechanisms. On the one hand, the most glaring vulnerability lies in medical security. Owing to the fact that most events fail to purchase accident insurance for participants, players need to shoulder their own medical expenses after injury. As a result, it is difficult to obtain corresponding compensation. Although some events are equipped with simple medical personnel and equipment, they cannot meet the needs of emergency treatment and increase the risk of athletes' injury. On the other hand, the integrity of the competitive environment is frequently compromised. Incidences of opaque registration practices and roster manipulation directly violate the foundational ethos of fair match, which damage the legitimate rights and interests of players and severely dampens their enthusiasm for participation. Additionally, the structural selection between grassroots circuits and elite professional leagues remains highly impermeable so that it is difficult for talented amateur players to capture professional team attention. Lacking of promotion channel from grassroots to career, it is too difficult for amateur players to achieve basketball dreams, which also reduces the attraction of events to outstanding talents. The imperfect protection of athletes' rights and interests not only affects the experience and enthusiasm of competitors, but also is not conducive to the long-term development.

4.4. Scarcity of Professional Personnel

A comprehensive deficit in professional talents, spanning the entire event lifecycle, poses another critical structural constraint, which is mainly reflected in the fields of event operation, referee, coach and so on. Within the administrative domain, tournament initiators are frequently passionate, who lack formal training in modern sports management. This pervasive absence of strategic planning, investment promotion, brand building and digital marketing operation consistently yields chaotic event execution and brand influence, ultimately resulting in chaotic event organization, difficult to tap commercial value, and limited influence. Turning to the court,

the number of professional referees is insufficient and the level is uneven. The referees of grass-roots events are mostly amateurs, lacking systematic professional training and qualification certification. Similarly, coaching expertise is remarkably scarce. In the absence of credentialed tactical instruction, grassroots competitors are compelled to rely on fragmented empirical knowledge for skill acquisition. This lack of scientific coaching guidance stagnates the collective tactical sophistication of participating teams. Ultimately, this comprehensive intellectual capital deficit heavily suppresses the trajectory of grassroots basketball toward standardized, professionalized, and branded paradigms.

5. Strategic Pathways for the Advancement of Grassroots Basketball

5.1. Strengthen the Standardization of Event Organization

Promoting the standardized development of grassroots basketball events is the key to elevating tournament quality and solidifying brand influence. Firstly, departments should simplify the event approval process, introduce a unified grass-roots basketball event management approach, clarify the event organization standards, safety norms, referee qualification requirements and implement classified supervision of the event to establish and improve the event management system, which not only guarantees the development of event compliance, but also stimulates the enthusiasm of non-governmental organizations to organize competitions. Simultaneously, grassroots basketball associations should be encouraged to enforce self-regulation, standardize operational conduct, and resolve localized logistical issues. Sports departments and industry associations should collaboratively establish a training and certification system for grassroots referees. By conducting targeted professional training, issuing formal qualifications, and implementing a tiered management system, organizers can match appropriate referees to the scale and level of specific events, thereby guaranteeing competitive fairness. Furthermore, improve the event safety guarantee system. All grassroots events must be required to provide professional medical personnel, emergency equipment and security staff. Organizers must purchase accidental injury insurance for participants

and formulate robust emergency response protocols to prevent accidents and enhance the overall sense of security for both participants and spectators.

5.2. Diversify Funding Channels and Enhance Commercial Viability

To resolve funding shortages, it is essential to diversify revenue streams and enhance commercial development capabilities, thereby achieving sustainable event operations. First, construct a diversified financial support system. Local governments should increase financial support and expand the coverage of subsidies, with a particular focus on small and medium-sized regional events and rural tournaments. Through policy guidance, social capital should be encouraged to participate, attracting enterprises, civic organizations, and individuals to invest in or sponsor grassroots tournaments to establish a win-win cooperation mechanism. Concurrently, organizers should explore innovative funding mechanisms, such as crowdfunding, to harness the enthusiasm of basketball fans. Second, strengthen the commercial development of the events by creating distinctive intellectual properties (IPs) and deeply exploring their commercial value to expand monetization channels. On the one hand, optimize traditional commercial models by elevating the quality of title sponsorships and advertising placements, offering tailored marketing solutions for enterprises based on tournament characteristics and target demographics. On the other hand, actively develop online and offline commercial resources. Organizers can generate revenue through digital broadcasting rights, short-video collaborations, and the fan economy, while simultaneously expanding offline operations such as ticket sales, peripheral merchandise development, basketball training clinics, and venue leasing. For example, by adopting the commercial operation model of the Lurenwang franchise, standardized IP management can attract broader business partnerships and significantly enhance profitability.

5.3. Safeguard Athlete Rights and Competitive Integrity

Institutionalizing participant welfare and rights protection serves as a critical guarantee for sustaining civic enthusiasm and attract excellent amateur talents. Foremost, closing gaps in medical liability is imperative. Organizers must be mandated to procure comprehensive injury insurance for all competitors, alongside establishing dedicated medical rapid-response channels to guarantee prompt trauma care and rational financial restitution. This must be paired with stringent preventative facility inspections to minimize injury risks. To preserve the sanctity of competition, administrative bodies must enforce rigorous roster verification mechanisms, aggressively eliminating opaque registration practices and roster manipulation. Establishing independent arbitration committees will provide a transparent grievance channel, effectively safeguarding participants' legitimate rights. Crucially, structural bridges must be built between the grassroots ecosystem and elite professional leagues. Facilitating institutionalized scouting networks, cross-tier exhibition matches, and formal talent pipelines will provide exceptional amateur athletes with tangible upward mobility. Coupled with appropriate civic commendations, these pathways not only validate individual athletic aspirations but significantly amplify the overarching prestige of grassroots tournaments.

5.4. Strengthen the Cultivation of Professional Talents

Remedying the pervasive deficit in intellectual capital necessitates a lifecycle approach to talent cultivation. To address the shortage of administrative expertise, higher education institutions should integrate specialized sports management curricula tailored to grassroots operations, deliberately producing graduates proficient in strategic planning, corporate acquisition, brand incubation, and digital marketing. Concurrently, regional basketball associations should organize targeted capacity-building workshops to elevate the operational acumen of existing civic organizers. Addressing the deficit in technical personnel requires formalized, ongoing education. Sports bureaus must institutionalize regular coaching and refereeing clinics, utilizing tiered certification systems to lower entry barriers for passionate amateurs while systematically upgrading their technical proficiency. Additionally, creating incentive structures to absorb retired professional athletes and coaches into the grassroots sector presents a massive opportunity. By funneling their elite tactical expertise and operational insights back into community courts, these veterans can instantly elevate both the competitive and administrative standards of localized tournaments.

5.5. Promote the Integration of Events and Cultural Tourism

Embedding grassroots basketball within broader regional cultural and tourism economies offers a profound avenue for expanding tournament influence and stimulating local economic growth. Tournament architecture must transcend pure athletic competition, deliberately synthesizing distinct regional cultural characteristics, leveraging platform branding strategies into the event's core identity to continuously revitalize local villages (Zhang & Qian, 2024). The Village BA paradigm perfectly illustrates this synthesis; by interweaving high-intensity basketball transitions with ethnic minority performing arts and indigenous agricultural exhibitions, a localized tournament was successfully elevated into a celebrated rural cultural festival. Urban counterparts can similarly hybridize competitions with historic districts and contemporary commercial hubs. To actualize these synergies, organizers must proactively forge cross-sector alliances with municipal tourism boards, hospitality providers, and regional attractions. By launching integrated sports-plus-tourism consumer packages, tournaments can seamlessly blend athletic spectatorship with immersive cultural exploration. This reciprocal framework utilizes the massive spectator traffic of grassroots sports to stimulate local retail and hospitality sectors, while concurrently leveraging tourism infrastructure to amplify the tournament's national visibility, thereby injecting sustainable economic vitality into the grassroots basketball ecosystem.

6. Conclusion

In recent years, Chinese grassroots basketball tournaments have entered an unprecedented era of prosperity, bringing new historical opportunities for the development of rural basketball (Miao, 2025), characterized by diversified event types, mass participant engagement, and hybridized operational models. From the village BA that transcended its rural origins in the rural field to the Lurenwang that set off a wave of confrontation in the urban commercial districts, which are profoundly affecting the social, cultural, economic and other fields with a very native vitality, reshaping the public's cultural leisure mode and local economic form. However, in the process of rising the level of the event, we have to face up to the growing pains exposed by it: irregular organization and management, shortage of funds and insufficient commercial development, imperfect protection of athletes' rights and interests, and lack of professional talents. Only by solving the existing shortcomings of the event can we speed up the process of high-quality development of Chinese grassroots basketball events.

The author believes that in order to promote the sustainable and healthy development of Chinese grassroots basketball tournaments in the future, it is necessary to focus on strengthening standardized event construction, diversifying revenue streams and commercial operations, improving rights protection mechanisms, cultivating professional talent, and synergizing events with cultural tourism (Han et al., 2025), so as to build a benign development pattern of government guidance, people-led, enterprise participation, social support. With the increase of policy support, economic and social development, continuous improvement of professional resources and maturity of business operation mode, the events are expected to transform from extensive development to standardization, specialization and branding, and transform into a mature and vivid sports culture IP. This sports boom from the grassroots level can promote the process of expanding the coverage and influence of basketball culture, lay a deeper mass foundation for the development of Chinese basketball, and contribute more to the construction of healthy China and a leading sporting nation, the revitalization of rural areas and the rejuvenation of urban vitality.

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