

The Theoretical Logic and Practical Pathways of National Health Development from the Perspective of Sports Culture

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Abstract: National health is widely regarded as an important indicator of national strength and social development. With the continued development of the Healthy China strategy, national health is no longer limited to the biomedical field. Greater attention is now being given to its social and cultural aspects. The relationship between sports culture and national health is examined from the perspective of sports culture. Sports culture is closely related to physical activity, social interaction and personal development. These functions are considered important in the change from passive medical treatment to active health promotion. A healthier understanding of the body can be developed through sports culture. Social cooperation and trust can also be strengthened through participation in sports. At the same time, positive social values and national spirit can be promoted. Physical and mental health can therefore be supported together. However, several problems can still be found in the development of national health. Traditional health preservation culture has received less attention in modern society. The educational role of school sports has also been weakened in some cases. In addition, differences remain between urban and rural areas in the provision of public sports and cultural services. Several measures are therefore proposed. Traditional sports and health preservation culture should be better protected and used in modern life. The educational role of school sports should be strengthened. Community health promotion should also be improved through closer cooperation between sports and health services. In addition, a healthy lifestyle should be encouraged through the positive values represented by Chinese sports culture. A health promotion model that is connected with Chinese culture, daily life and the needs of different social groups can be developed through these measures. The perspective of sports culture can therefore provide useful support for the further development of the Healthy China strategy.

Keywords: Sports Culture; National Health; Integration of Sports and Health Services; Healthy China; Cultural Logic

Published: Sep 22, 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62177/jetp.v3i3.1661>

1. Introduction

Health is regarded as an essential foundation for the survival and development of human society. Its importance to individual life and social progress has long been recognised in both Western and Chinese cultures. In ancient Athens, a healthy mind and a healthy body were considered closely connected. In traditional Chinese culture, health preservation was also developed through the idea of harmony between human beings and nature. These ideas show the important position of health in human development. In the new era, public health has been given greater strategic importance in China, and Healthy China has been established as a national strategy^[1]. Health is therefore no longer regarded simply as a medical or healthcare issue. It is also

related to sustainable economic development, social harmony and stability, and the development of national culture. Sport is a cultural activity based on physical movement. Its value is not limited to the improvement of physical fitness. Values and attitudes can be expressed through sport, while personal qualities and social values can also be developed. In this process, sports culture can influence how people understand health and how they behave in daily life. Long term improvements in national health can be supported when physical exercise becomes part of everyday life rather than being treated simply as a requirement. Such improvements can be further strengthened when participation in sport is accepted as a personal value and gradually becomes a common social practice. However, the cultural role of sport has not been fully developed in current national health promotion. Greater attention has often been given to the provision of sports facilities and the achievement of physical fitness standards. By comparison, the development and influence of sports culture have received less attention. The relationship between sports culture and national health therefore needs to be examined more closely. The ways in which sports culture can support national health should be clearly explained. Existing practical problems should also be identified, and suitable approaches based on cultural development should be explored. These efforts can provide further support for the implementation of the Healthy China strategy. The principle that development should serve the people can also be reflected through cultural development^[2].

2. The Theoretical Meaning of Sports Culture and Its Multiple Values for National Health

2.1 The Concept and Structural Levels of Sports Culture

Sports culture can be broadly understood as the material, institutional and spiritual achievements related to physical activity that have developed throughout human history. Its structure can be examined at three levels. The material level is represented by visible and physical forms, such as sports venues, public fitness facilities and smart wearable devices. These elements provide the physical conditions needed for sports activities. The institutional level is formed by rules and systems that guide and regulate sports behaviour. National sports policies, the Regulations on National Fitness, school sports systems and informal sports customs are all part of this level. Sports behaviour is guided and regulated through these systems. The spiritual level reflects the core meaning of sports culture. Values, aesthetic ideas, moral principles and shared social values are expressed at this level. Fair competition, teamwork, personal development and respect for opponents are regarded as important values. These three levels are closely connected rather than separated. The spiritual core influences institutional design, while institutional arrangements shape material development. Material forms, in turn, support and express the spiritual values of sports culture^[3].

2.2 The Basic Characteristics of Sports Culture

Sports culture has several distinctive characteristics that are not commonly found in other cultural forms. The first characteristic is bodily practice. Sports culture is experienced and passed on through direct participation in physical activities. Its meaning is internalised through bodily participation, including physical effort, movement and direct experience. It cannot be fully understood through verbal explanation alone. The second characteristic is social integration. Sport, especially team sport and mass sporting events, can create a strong sense of community. Individuals from different social backgrounds can be brought together under shared rules and common goals. Strong social connections can therefore be developed, while some social divisions in everyday life can be reduced. The third characteristic is spiritual development. Sport can also be regarded as a form of education in which challenges and setbacks are experienced under established rules. Individuals are taught to respond appropriately to success and to accept failure with dignity. Determination can be strengthened when physical and psychological limits are tested. Respect for others can also be developed through competition. In this process, personal character is shaped, and the educational function of sport is demonstrated.

2.3 The Multiple Values of Sports Culture in National Health

A positive view of the body and a healthy lifestyle can first be promoted through sports culture. Physical strength, flexibility and coordination are valued in sports culture. The public can therefore be guided away from the passive belief that health simply means the absence of disease. Greater attention can instead be given to physical fitness, physical well being and positive mental health. When healthy behaviour is supported by shared cultural values, stronger personal motivation can

be developed. Long term participation in healthy activities can therefore be encouraged more effectively than through external requirements alone. Social participation can also be promoted through sports culture, while mental health and social connections can be strengthened. Square dance groups in parks, community football teams and recreational running groups are examples of sports groups formed around shared interests. Social networks that support health can be developed through these groups in both urban and rural communities^[4]. A sense of belonging, mutual trust and supportive behaviour can be developed through regular participation. These social resources can help reduce loneliness and psychological pressure in modern society. Finally, a positive national spirit can be strengthened through sports culture and can provide cultural support for national health. Persistence and hard work are demonstrated in sporting competition, while the willingness to challenge oneself can also be encouraged in everyday life. Positive and active social values can be promoted through these practices. These values are regarded as an important cultural support for national health^[5].

3. The Theoretical Logic of Sports Culture in Promoting National Health Development

3.1 The Value of Body and Mind Unity in Health Philosophy

Modern health theory has gradually shifted from the biomedical model to the social ecological model. The biomedical model mainly focuses on biological intervention after disease occurs. In the social ecological model, health is regarded as the result of complex interactions among biological, psychological, social and environmental factors. Greater importance is placed on improving lifestyles and creating supportive social environments^[6]. Greater attention is therefore given to health promotion and disease prevention before illness occurs. Health is no longer regarded as something that is simply restored through medical treatment. Instead, health is actively maintained and improved through daily life and healthy behaviour. Sports culture is regarded as an important cultural influence in this shift from passive medical treatment to active health promotion. Different attitudes towards health can be shaped by the traditional medical model and sports culture. Concern about disease and dependence on professional treatment may be strengthened under the traditional medical model. In contrast, the desire to remain healthy and a stronger sense of control over personal health can be developed through sports culture. Positive physical and psychological experiences can be produced through regular exercise. For example, a morning run can create physical comfort, mental well being, a sense of achievement and greater self confidence. A positive cycle can then be formed. This internal reward is created through physical and cultural practice and cannot easily be replaced by medical treatment. As a result, the active desire to remain healthy can gradually replace the passive need to seek treatment after illness occurs. The integration of sports and health services should therefore not be understood simply as a combination of exercise and medical methods. A deeper integration between the values of sports culture and the medical approach is required. The active health values of sports culture should be introduced into a medical model that has traditionally focused on treatment and recovery. Healthier behaviour can then be encouraged across the population through this cultural integration.

3.2 The Role of Social Capital in Reducing Health Risks in an Individualised Society

The body and mind have often been treated as separate parts in modern health systems. This separation has also been reflected in medical practice, where physical and psychological problems are often treated separately by different departments. Different organs can therefore be viewed as independent parts rather than as parts of the whole person. However, this separation does not fully reflect the integrated nature of health. A different understanding is provided by sports culture, in which the close relationship between the body and mind has long been recognised. This principle can be found in both Eastern and Western forms of physical activity. Traditional Chinese practices such as Tai Chi and Baduanjin emphasise the close coordination of mental attention, breathing and physical movement. Psychological strength and awareness during competition are also considered important in modern Western sports. The close relationship between physical activity and psychological well being is therefore clearly shown. Both physical and psychological development can be supported through active participation in sport. Muscles and bones can be strengthened through exercise. Stress and anxiety can also be reduced, while concentration and self confidence can be improved. The goal of national health should therefore not be limited to achieving normal physical indicators while psychological well being is ignored^[7]. The development of individuals with good physical health, psychological well being and an active attitude towards life should also be supported. Sports culture provides a natural environment in which these qualities can be developed. The balanced development of physical and mental health

can therefore be supported through sport.

3.3 The Role of Social Capital in Reducing Health Risks in an Individualised Society

A high level of individualisation has become an important feature of modern society. As a result, individuals may become increasingly disconnected from wider social networks. Loneliness and social isolation have become important public health risks, while mental health and social adaptation can also be seriously affected. Social capital theory suggests that trust, shared norms and mutual support are developed through social networks. Practical and emotional support can then be provided to members of these networks. Sports culture is regarded as an accessible and relatively low cost setting in which modern social capital can be developed. Strong social relationships can be created through different forms of sports participation. Close friendships can be developed through long term participation in an amateur basketball team. Mutual support networks can also be formed through regular interaction in a community square dance group. A sense of belonging can be developed through online running groups created through fitness applications. These sports communities are connected through shared sporting interests rather than mainly through family relationships or employment. They can therefore become important social support networks through which individuals can receive support when facing difficulties in daily life. Sports skills are not the only resources shared among members of these communities. Practical information can also be exchanged, while emotional support can be provided. The promotion of national fitness can therefore be understood at a deeper social level. Wider social support for health can gradually be developed through widespread participation in sport. Social capital created through sports culture can help reduce the psychological vulnerability and social isolation associated with modern society. In this way, both mental well being and social well being can be supported^[8].

4. Current Challenges in the Development of Sports Culture for National Health

4.1 The Decline and Disruption of Traditional Sports and Health Preservation Culture

A rich tradition of health preservation has developed throughout Chinese history. Tai Chi, Wuqinxi, Baduanjin and traditional guiding exercises are important examples. The prevention of illness and harmony between human beings and nature are regarded as central ideas in these practices. They therefore represent an important cultural approach to active health promotion. However, their transmission has faced serious difficulties during modernisation. The connection between generations has gradually been weakened. The number of older practitioners and cultural inheritors with both practical skills and deeper cultural knowledge is declining. At the same time, limited interest is often shown by younger generations in traditional health practices that require slow movement and inner experience. Younger people are often more attracted to modern fitness activities that are faster and more visually stimulating. The cultural meaning of traditional practices has also been simplified in some forms of promotion. Certain traditional exercises are taught only as basic physical movements. Their deeper ideas, including breathing methods, body awareness and self reflection, are often removed. As a result, only the external form is retained, while the original connection between physical movement and mental condition is weakened. This weakening of cultural transmission has reduced the influence of traditional health knowledge that is deeply rooted in Chinese culture.

4.2 The Shift Away from the Educational Function of School Sports Culture

Schools are regarded as important places in which lifelong sports awareness and physical ability can be systematically developed. However, the educational function of school sports has been weakened in many cases. Examination based education has placed greater pressure on school sports. As a result, physical education classes may be designed mainly around safety or examination requirements. Sports teaching is often focused on separate and measurable technical skills. Repeated practice for specific examination tasks may receive greater attention than actual games involving cooperation, competition and enjoyment. For example, individual volleyball skills may be practised repeatedly, while students may have few opportunities to experience a real volleyball match. Technical ability can therefore be developed without a strong interest in the sport itself. This approach places greater emphasis on technical skills than on individual development. The educational value of sport is therefore reduced. Genuine interest in physical activity may not be developed, and negative feelings towards sport may even be formed among some students. When these experiences continue into adulthood, a lasting interest in lifelong sports participation becomes difficult to develop. The early motivation for maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle

can therefore be weakened during an important stage of personal development.

4.3 Unequal Public Sports and Cultural Services Between Urban and Rural Areas

Public sports services should not be limited to the provision of facilities. Cultural support and opportunities for participation should also be provided. However, clear differences remain between urban and rural areas. These differences can be found not only in sports facilities but also in the variety and quality of cultural services.

A wide range of sports activities is available in many urban areas. Yoga, Pilates and indoor cycling are provided in fitness centres, while running, frisbee and climbing communities are also widely developed. In contrast, public sports projects in some rural areas remain focused mainly on the installation of basic fitness equipment. Limited attention is given to later management, organised activities and cultural development. As a result, sports facilities may not be fully used for physical exercise. In some cases, equipment may even be used for daily non sports purposes. More importantly, standardised public services are not always connected with local lifestyles and cultural needs. Traditional ethnic sports such as wrestling and firecracker grabbing have strong local participation and cultural meaning in some areas. However, these activities are not always included in public sports service systems or given sufficient support. A situation can therefore be created in which facilities are available but activities are limited, and equipment is provided without a strong sports culture. The internal cultural motivation for rural health development has therefore not been fully activated.

4.4 The Narrow Representation of Sports Culture in Mass Media and the Influence of Consumerism

Mass media play an important role in shaping public understanding of sport. However, the cultural meaning of sport has often been presented in a narrow way. One problem is the strong focus on competitive sport. Media coverage is mainly given to professional competitions, medals and famous athletes. Sport can therefore be presented as an activity performed by a small number of elite athletes. Its connection with everyday life and public health is not always clearly shown.

Another problem is the growing influence of consumer culture. Sports culture is sometimes reduced to a form of symbolic consumption. An ideal body shape may be connected with ideas such as self discipline and personal success. Body anxiety can therefore be increased, while the physical and psychological enjoyment created through exercise receives less attention. Sport may gradually be treated as a way to display social identity rather than as a basic part of a healthy life. Such forms of cultural communication may fail to promote genuine health. Psychological pressure may even be increased when unrealistic body standards and consumer values are repeatedly promoted. The original health value of sport can therefore be weakened, and the wider goal of national health may be negatively affected^[9].

5. Practical Pathways for Promoting National Health through Sports Culture

5.1 The Renewal of Traditional Sports and Health Preservation Culture through Creative Transformation and Everyday Practice

Traditional cultural resources should be revitalised and adapted to the needs of contemporary society. First, deeper integration with digital technology should be promoted. Interactive teaching systems for Tai Chi and Baduanjin can be developed through virtual reality and motion capture technologies. The internal physical experience of traditional exercises can be presented in a more immersive and visible way. Traditional exercise can therefore be made more interesting, scientific and accessible. Greater participation among young people can also be encouraged. Traditional health preservation knowledge should also be integrated into everyday life in simpler forms. Short traditional exercise programmes can be introduced into workplaces during breaks. Community programmes related to seasonal health preservation can also be provided. Complex exercise routines can be divided into simple movements such as heel raising, abdominal massage and teeth tapping. These movements can then be included in short periods of daily life. Health preservation can gradually be developed as a natural part of everyday living rather than treated as a separate task. Traditional exercises should also be introduced into medical rehabilitation systems. Traditional exercise prescriptions can be provided by professionals with knowledge of both traditional Chinese medicine and modern medicine. These methods can be applied to chronic disease management, sports rehabilitation and mental health support. Cultural confidence in traditional health practices can then be strengthened through their practical health effects.

5.2 The Reconstruction of an Integrated School Sports Culture for Physical, Psychological and Character Development

The educational function of school sport should be restored, and greater enjoyment should be created through physical activity. The current evaluation system, in which teaching content can be strongly influenced by examination requirements, needs to be improved. A more comprehensive evaluation system should be established. Greater attention should be given to participation, contribution to the team, individual progress and health knowledge. A strong culture of sports competition should also be developed in schools. Competitions between classes and different year groups should be widely organised. Every student should be given opportunities to contribute to collective achievement. Teamwork, rules, respect and responsibility can be experienced through both victory and failure. Personal character can be shaped more effectively through such direct experiences than through verbal instruction alone.

School playgrounds and sports facilities should not simply be closed after classes. They should be developed as active centres of school culture. Sports clubs, sports festivals and health knowledge competitions should be organised throughout the school year. A shared value in which physical activity is enjoyed and health is respected can gradually be established among students.

5.3 The Reconstruction of Community Health Promotion Networks through the Integration of Sports and Health Services

Communities are regarded as an essential part of national health development. Connections should be strengthened among community health service centres, local sports organisations, social sports instructors and public fitness facilities. An integrated community health network can therefore be established. Exercise prescriptions provided by family doctors can be further supported by social sports instructors. People with chronic diseases and those with relatively poor health conditions can also be guided towards local sports groups. Running groups, walking teams and Tai Chi groups can provide accessible forms of participation. Collective exercise can then be carried out under appropriate medical guidance. In this process, health benefits can be combined with the cultural and social value of group participation. Greater support should also be provided for leaders of local community sports groups. Government support can be provided through service purchasing programmes, evaluation systems and other forms of encouragement. These community leaders can play an important role in the development of local sports culture. Healthy and active lifestyles can be continuously promoted through their influence. Community sports events should also be organised on a regular basis. Interesting activities suitable for different age groups can be designed. These events can be developed into community health festivals in which communication between neighbours is strengthened and a stronger sense of community identity is created.

5.4 The Promotion of a Healthy Social Culture through the Chinese Sports Spirit

The way sport is presented by the media should be further improved. Excessive attention to medals and elite competition should be reduced. Greater attention should be given to ordinary people who participate in physical exercise. Real stories showing how sport changes everyday life can be presented more widely. The experience of an older person whose chronic health problems have been improved through regular exercise can be presented. The experience of a young person whose depression has been reduced through long distance running can also be shared. Stronger emotional influence can often be created through such real experiences than through general health slogans. The Chinese sports spirit should also be further explored and communicated. Attention should not only be given to Olympic athletes who achieve success for the country. Persistence, teamwork and optimism shown by ordinary people during personal challenges should also be recognised. The wider social meaning of the Chinese sports spirit can therefore be demonstrated. New media platforms should be used to encourage public participation in health communication. Online activities related to personal health records and community sports participation can be developed. A social environment in which health is regarded as a positive achievement can gradually be created. Physical activity and healthy living can eventually be developed into important features of modern social culture.

6. Conclusion

Culture is regarded as an essential foundation of national health. Without the support of sports culture, national fitness may be reduced to the measurement of physical indicators. The integration of sports and health services may also remain a simple combination of exercise and medical methods. Sports culture should therefore be regarded as an important cultural foundation and a source of long term motivation for national health development. A positive understanding of the body can be developed

through sports culture. Social capital can also be strengthened, while a positive national spirit can be promoted. Through these processes, the transition from passive medical treatment to active health promotion can be supported. Several difficulties remain in the current development of national health. Traditional health preservation knowledge has not been fully passed on or applied in modern life. The educational value of school sport has been weakened in some cases. Cultural resources for community sports remain insufficient, while some media coverage of sport is still too strongly focused on competitive achievement. Traditional health preservation knowledge should therefore be adapted to the needs of the digital age. Interest in physical activity should be strengthened in schools. Community relationships should also be supported through sport, while a stronger social culture of healthy living should be developed. A strong and active sports culture is essential to the long term development of national health. Physical activity should become a natural part of everyday life. It should be recognised not only as part of a healthy lifestyle but also as a source of personal growth and psychological well being. Participation in sport should also be recognised as both a right and a social responsibility. The development of national health should therefore be understood as more than the achievement of a public health objective. It can also contribute to social and cultural development through improvements in physical health, psychological well being and social participation. Greater cultural awareness and long term practical efforts are therefore required. The combined educational value of culture and sport can support the development of healthier individuals and communities. A stronger foundation can then be established for a Healthy China characterised by physical strength, psychological well being and social vitality.

Funding

This study was supported by the 2023 Key Project of Philosophy and Social Sciences Research in Anhui Universities, Intelligent Assessment and Optimization of the Performance Quality of Huagudeng Dance (Grant No. 2023AH052517); the 2023 General Project for the Cultivation of Outstanding Young Teachers in Anhui Province (Grant No. YQYB2023126); and the 2023 University-Level Industry-Sponsored Research Project, Corporate Culture, Sports Activity Planning and Organization (Grant No. hfyzky20230604).

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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