

Research on the Popularization Strategies of Water Polo among Teenagers

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the popularization of water polo among teenagers, deeply analyzes its development differences on a global scale, with a particular emphasis on the situation in China. By analyzing the impacts of factors such as social culture, school physical education curriculum setup, club training models, and family and community support on the popularization of water polo, it is found that the popularity of water polo among teenagers in China is relatively low, facing issues like a shortage of professional teachers, a lack of training facilities, and low social awareness. Therefore, the paper proposes targeted popularization strategies, including optimizing school physical education courses, improving club training models, strengthening family and community support, and enhancing media publicity, aiming to increase the participation rate of Chinese teenagers and promote the long-term development of water polo.

KEYWORDS

Water polo; Teenagers; Popularization strategies; Influencing factors

1 Introduction

Water polo is a water sport that combines swimming skills, teamwork, and competitive confrontation. Its development shows significant regional differences globally^[1]. In regions such as Europe and America, water polo has gained considerable attention among teenagers due to its profound historical heritage and extensive mass base. In the United States, there are numerous water polo teams in universities, which occupy an important position in campus sports culture. This provides an abundant talent reserve for the continuous development of water polo. Moreover, through participating in water polo, teenagers' teamwork spirit, competitive awareness, and physical fitness can be effectively cultivated. In some European countries like Hungary and Italy, water polo also plays a crucial role in adolescent sports education. Its professional youth training system and extensive campus popularization activities have promoted the vigorous development of water polo in these regions, making it an important part of adolescent sports activities^[2].

However, the popularity of water polo among teenagers in China is relatively low. Although water polo has gradually received some attention with the advancement of sports undertakings in recent years, the participation rate of teenagers remains unsatisfactory^[3]. Currently, the number of schools offering water polo in China is limited, mainly concentrated in a few economically developed regions, while schools in the vast central and western regions as well as remote areas rarely involve water polo courses or related activities. In addition, the promotion of water polo among teenagers faces many problems, including a shortage of professional teachers, insufficient training facilities, and low social awareness. The limited number of professional water polo coaches, with uneven distribution, fails to meet the needs of adolescent water polo training. The high construction cost of facilities such as swimming pools required for water polo training makes it difficult for many schools and clubs to afford, which greatly restricts the popularization of water polo^[4]. Meanwhile, the general public has relatively little understanding of water polo, and parents' support for teenagers' participation in water polo is also insufficient. These factors pose obstacles to the promotion of water polo among teenagers^[5].

Given the important value of water polo among teenagers and the various problems in its current popularization situation in China, it is particularly necessary and urgent to conduct research on the popularization strategies of water polo among teenagers. Thoroughly exploring the factors affecting the popularization of water polo and proposing practical popularization strategies can not only help improve the participation of Chinese teenagers in water polo and enrich the content of their sports activities, but also lay a solid foundation for the long-term development of water polo in China, cultivate more outstanding reserve talents for water polo, and promote Chinese water polo onto the international stage.

2 Popularization Status of Water Polo among Teenagers

In recent years, the popularity of water polo among Chinese teenagers has grown slightly, yet it remains in its infancy overall. In China, water polo promotion is concentrated in a few economically developed areas like Shanghai, Guangdong, and Sichuan. Shanghai, a pioneer in Chinese water polo, has made notable progress in youth water polo promotion^[6]. The number of participating teams and athletes in the Shanghai Municipal Games' water polo event has been rising annually. In 2023, over 30 teams and more than 300 young athletes took part, setting a new record. The Shanghai Water Polo

Association drives the sport's development in social clubs by organizing teaching and training and deploying retired athletes as part-time coaches. Additionally, Shanghai boosts teenagers' interest in water polo through activities such as youth water polo summer camps and campus experience events. Still, water polo is a niche sport in most Chinese regions, lacking systematic youth training. Despite this, regions like Guangdong and Sichuan are making efforts to popularize water polo and engage teenagers.

Overseas, water polo enjoys relatively high popularity among teenagers, especially in Europe and America. College water polo in the US offers teenagers ample participation opportunities and a high-quality training platform^[7]. The Mid-Atlantic Water Polo Conference (MAWPC) provides a competitive stage for college teams in the eastern and central regions, facilitating the sport's spread. The involvement of international athletes has enhanced water polo's technical level and diversified its tactics. American college sports institutions attract top athletes by offering scholarships, upgrading training facilities, and hosting international events, fueling water polo's growth. In Europe, water polo's popularity among teenagers has also seen great success. Countries like Hungary and Italy have trained numerous outstanding players through professional youth training systems and widespread campus activities. These countries' water polo programs emphasize not only technical training but also teamwork and mental strength cultivation. Hungary's youth system focuses on basic skills from an early age and provides young players with practical experience via regular youth leagues. Italy introduces water polo in school PE courses to spark teenagers' interest and enhances their skills through club training^[8]. However, despite these achievements in international water polo popularization, challenges persist. In some countries, economic constraints limit water polo's reach due to high facility costs. Moreover, the emergence of other new sports has somewhat diminished water polo's appeal among teenagers. Thus, finding ways to expand water polo's influence while retaining its traditional strengths is a crucial task for countries worldwide.

3 Analysis of Factors Affecting the Popularization of Water Polo

3.1 Socio-cultural Factors

The socio-cultural environment plays a fundamental role in the popularization of water polo. In countries where water polo is well-developed, such as those in Europe and America, water polo, as a traditional sport, has a profound cultural heritage and high social recognition. The sports culture in these countries emphasizes teamwork and the spirit of competition, which highly aligns with the characteristics of water polo, making it quite attractive to teenagers. Moreover, extensive media coverage and frequent professional competitions further increase the social attention to water polo, stimulating teenagers' enthusiasm for participation. In contrast, in China, water polo has low social awareness, and the public has limited knowledge of it. Water polo has a short development history in China, lacking a broad social foundation and cultural tradition. Additionally, in Chinese sports culture, popular sports like football and basketball receive more attention, and water polo has relatively less media exposure and fewer organized events, which restricts its popularization among teenagers to some extent.

3.2 School Physical Education Curriculum Setup

The school physical education curriculum is an important way for teenagers to get exposed to and participate in water polo. In countries in Europe and America, many schools incorporate water polo into their physical education curriculum. Through systematic teaching and training, teenagers' interest in and skills in water polo are cultivated. For example, in Hungary, water polo, as an important water sport, is widely introduced in school physical education courses, and students start to learn the basic techniques and tactics of water polo from middle school. This curriculum setup not only increases teenagers' participation but also nurtures potential talents for the long-term development of water polo. In China, school physical education courses mainly focus on popular sports, and the curriculum penetration rate of water polo is low. Most schools lack professional water polo coaches and suitable training facilities, making it difficult to carry out systematic water polo teaching. Furthermore, the arrangement of school physical education courses is usually restricted by class hours, making it hard to ensure the continuity and systematicness of water polo teaching. These factors collectively lead to the marginalization of water polo in school physical education and limit its popularization among teenagers.

3.3 Club Training Model

Club training is an important supplementary form for the popularization of water polo. In European and American countries, there are numerous water polo clubs with a mature training model. Through professional coaching teams and well-equipped training facilities, clubs provide high-quality water polo training for teenagers. For instance, water polo clubs in Italy cooperate with schools to carry out extracurricular water polo training activities, attracting a large number of teenagers to participate. Additionally, clubs organize various youth leagues, providing young athletes with opportunities

for practical training and further enhancing their competitive level. In China, the development of water polo clubs lags behind. On one hand, the number of professional water polo coaches is limited and unevenly distributed, failing to meet the training needs of teenagers. On the other hand, the construction costs of facilities like swimming pools required for water polo training are high, and many clubs can hardly afford them, which significantly restricts the scale and quality of club training. Moreover, the relatively high training fees of clubs also affect teenagers' participation to some degree.

3.4 Family and Community Support

The support from families and communities plays a crucial role in promoting teenagers' participation in water polo. In European and American countries, parents generally have a positive attitude towards teenagers' participation in sports activities and are willing to provide necessary support, including financial, time, and emotional support. Communities also create a favorable environment for teenagers to participate in water polo by organizing various sports activities and providing public facilities. In China, the support from families for teenagers' participation in water polo is relatively low. On one hand, parents have limited knowledge of water polo and insufficient understanding of its value and significance, making it difficult to provide effective support for their children. On the other hand, the shortage of community sports facilities also restricts teenagers' opportunities to participate in water polo. Many communities lack suitable swimming pools and water polo training facilities, making it hard for teenagers to access and participate in water polo within the community environment.

4 Popularization Strategies for Water Polo

4.1 Popularization Strategies in School Physical Education Courses

Incorporating water polo into the school physical education curriculum system is a crucial step in popularizing water polo. Schools should design water polo course content suitable for different grades according to students' age characteristics and physical conditions. Secondly, in terms of curriculum setup, water polo can be offered as an elective or featured course, gradually increasing its proportion. Improving physical education teachers' teaching ability in water polo is the foundation for promoting water polo. Schools should regularly organize physical education teachers to participate in water polo teaching training, and invite professional water polo coaches and experts to give lectures to enhance teachers' teaching level and professional quality. Equipping suitable water polo training facilities for teenagers is an important guarantee for carrying out water polo teaching. Schools should actively seek support from the government and society to build or renovate swimming pool facilities suitable for water polo training.

4.2 Popularization Strategies in Club Training

Designing water polo training courses suitable for teenagers is an important means to improve their participation. Clubs should develop diversified training courses according to teenagers' physical and mental characteristics and interests. Strengthening the professional training and management of coaches is the key to enhancing the quality of club training. Clubs should regularly organize coaches to participate in professional training to improve their teaching and training capabilities. Reducing the participation threshold for teenagers through government subsidies and corporate sponsorships is an effective way to expand the scope of water polo popularization. The government should increase its investment in youth sports activities, establish special funds, and subsidize the training programs of water polo clubs.

4.3 Family and Community Support Strategies

Enhancing parents' awareness and support for water polo is an important guarantee for promoting teenagers' participation in water polo. Schools and clubs should regularly organize parent training activities to introduce the characteristics, value, and training methods of water polo to parents, helping them establish correct educational concepts. Utilizing community resources to carry out water polo activities is an effective means to expand the influence of water polo. Promoting the popularity of water polo through media publicity is an important way. The media should increase its coverage of water polo, and publicize water polo competitions and activities through various channels such as television, newspapers, and the Internet.

5 Conclusion

Water polo is crucial for teenagers' growth, cultivating their physical fitness, teamwork, and competitiveness. However,

its popularity among teenagers shows marked regional differences globally. In Europe and America, with deep - rooted cultures, sound school sports systems, mature club models, and strong family - community support, water polo is highly popular. In contrast, in China, it has a low popularity and faces many hurdles.

Analysis shows that differences in social - cultural perception, flawed school curriculum setups, underdeveloped club training, and insufficient family - community support jointly block the promotion of water polo among Chinese teenagers. Socially, it lacks recognition and attention. In schools, the curriculum is ill - designed, and a lack of teachers and facilities weakens teaching quality. Clubs have coach shortages, high - cost facilities, and expensive training, reducing teenagers' participation. At home and in the community, parents' limited knowledge and scarce sports resources limit teenagers' access to water polo.

Therefore, this study proposes targeted strategies. Schools should incorporate water polo into the curriculum, design suitable courses, train teachers, and equip facilities to build an educational platform. Clubs should develop diverse courses, strengthen coach training and management, and lower the participation threshold with subsidies and sponsorships. Also, by training parents, integrating community resources for events, and using media for publicity, a favorable development environment can be created.

If effectively implemented, these strategies will increase Chinese teenagers' participation in water polo, enrich sports activities, nurture talent for the sport's development in China, and help it thrive globally. The research can also guide other regions facing similar challenges.

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