

Research on the Interaction Mechanisms between the Inheritance of Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture and Rural Cultural Revitalization

Xiaoxi Zhou, Xiang Chen*

The Second School of Clinical Medicine, Zhejiang Chinese Medical University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China

** Corresponding Author*

Abstract: This study centers on the interaction mechanisms between the inheritance of traditional Chinese medicine culture and rural cultural revitalization, and explores their mutual coordinated development path under the framework of China's Rural Revitalization Strategy through theoretical analysis. Findings indicate that as a vital component of China's fine traditional culture, traditional Chinese medicine culture shares an inherent logical link with rural cultural revitalization. The local and practical attributes of traditional Chinese medicine culture align closely with the cultural roots of rural areas, enabling it to empower rural cultural revitalization through four mechanisms: resource integration, industrial convergence, talent cultivation, and cultural identity. Going forward, it is essential to further establish a policy support system, deepen industrial integration chains, refine talent incentive mechanisms, and advance the sustainable development of both traditional Chinese medicine culture and rural cultural revitalization.

Keywords: TCM Culture Inheritance; Rural Cultural Revitalization; Interaction Mechanism; Industrial Integration; Cultural Identity

1. Introduction

As the overarching strategy for addressing issues related to agriculture, rural areas, and farmers in the new era, the Rural Revitalization Strategy aims to restructure the value system and enhance the sustainable development capacity of rural areas through the comprehensive revitalization of industry, talent, culture, ecology, and governance. As the core of rural revitalization, cultural revitalization is key to resolving rural "hollowing-out" and "homogenization" issues,

and serves as a critical pathway for modernizing rural social governance.

As a typical representative of China's fine traditional culture, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) culture is rooted in agrarian civilization and oriented toward public health, thus sharing natural compatibility with rural cultural revitalization. Currently, the inheritance of TCM culture faces dual challenges: adapting to modernization and weakening local foundations. Meanwhile, rural cultural revitalization urgently needs to leverage endogenous cultural drivers to avoid the risk of superficiality. Against this backdrop, studying the interaction mechanisms between TCM cultural inheritance and rural cultural revitalization helps explore practical pathways for the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture, and provides a new paradigm for cultural empowerment in rural revitalization.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1 Connotation and Characteristics of TCM Culture

TCM culture is a composite cultural system that integrates philosophy, medicine, agronomy, and ecology, with the Yin-Yang and Five-Element theory as its core. It embodies the understanding of life, nature, and society in Chinese civilization [1] the philosophical level, TCM culture takes "harmony between humans and nature" as its cognitive framework, emphasizing the dynamic balance among humans, nature, and society. The concept of "preventing diseases before they occur" (from The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon) establishes a prevention-oriented health philosophy, which aligns closely with the requirements of contemporary ecological civilization construction. At the practical level, TCM culture covers specific fields such as the cultivation and processing of Chinese medicinal

materials, acupuncture, tuina (massage), and health preservation. For instance, the “Pan Five Flavors” medicinal planting system in Zhejiang Province has been recognized as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System, and the production model of “authentic regional medicinal materials” embodies both ecological and economic value. At the level of epochal value, under the Healthy China Strategy, TCM culture has become a key carrier for disseminating TCM health concepts and fostering a national healthy lifestyle. The integration of the “preventive treatment” concept with chronic disease prevention needs has given rise to new community-based TCM health management models. The characteristics of TCM culture are manifested in locality, practicality, and inclusiveness: its knowledge system is closely tied to agricultural production and seasonal changes, realizing living inheritance through master-apprentice succession and clinical practice. It also absorbs Confucian ethics and Taoist health preservation concepts to form a unique cultural ecosystem[2]. This cultural gene anchors TCM culture deeply in rural society, making it a cultural bridge connecting tradition and modernity, as well as urban and rural areas.

2.2 Connotation and Goals of Rural Cultural Revitalization

As a core dimension of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, rural cultural revitalization activates endogenous momentum in rural areas through cultural reconstruction. At the policy level, guided by socialist core values, it emphasizes the protection of farming culture, traditional villages, and intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The Opinions on Empowering Rural Revitalization via Cultural Industries puts forward the initiative of “developing rural characteristic cultural industries.” Its core goals include: 1) Reshaping cultural confidence by excavating rural historical memories and folk traditions to enhance farmers’ sense of identity; 2) Realizing the economic transformation of cultural resources by developing cultural industries, rural tourism, and cultural and creative products; 3) Innovating social governance by optimizing rural governance models through traditional resources such as rural sage culture and family precepts. In practice, a balance between protection and development must be struck to avoid cultural alienation due to excessive commercialization or

cultural rigidity arising from “museum-style” protection. Although 6,819 traditional villages have been included in the national protection list, cultural activities in rural areas suffer from severe homogenization: 76% of rural cultural activities (e.g., square dancing, film screenings) lack uniqueness; 80% of rural cultural projects rely on government funding, resulting in low marketization. Additionally, the brain drain issue is prominent—rural practical talents account for only 4% of China’s total talent pool.

2.3 Theoretical Support and Interaction Logic

The interaction mechanisms between TCM cultural inheritance and rural cultural revitalization can be analyzed from three dimensions: cultural capital theory, sustainable development theory, and practical logic[3].

Cultural capital theory points out that, as a distinctive rural cultural asset, TCM culture can achieve value appreciation through brand building and the experience economy. For example, Bozhou in Anhui Province has built the “Capital of Chinese Herbal Medicines” cultural tourism brand, converting cultural resources into economic benefits.

Sustainable development theory emphasizes the unity of economic, social, and ecological benefits, calling for the establishment of a “culture-industry-ecology” collaborative development model (e.g., integrating medicinal material cultivation with ecological restoration).

On the level of practical logic, the interaction between the two is reflected in resource complementarity, industrial compatibility, and value symbiosis: TCM culture provides the content carrier, while rural cultural revitalization offers the dissemination context; medicinal material cultivation can extend to industrial chains such as health tourism and elderly wellness care; the TCM “preventive treatment” concept and the building of a healthy rural lifestyle reinforce each other, forming a two-way empowerment of culture and economy.

3. Current Situation Analysis

3.1 Current Status of TCM Cultural Inheritance

Currently, TCM cultural inheritance exhibits the coexistence of diversified models and structural contradictions.

In terms of inheritance models: master-apprentice education primarily revolves

around “learning from masters in clinical practice” (e.g., the “National TCM Master” inheritance studio system); Institutional education covers 80% of TCM colleges nationwide, but there is a tendency to “prioritize Western medicine over TCM”; Digital preservation has made progress, with the “TCM Ancient Books Digital Library” housing 32,000 types of ancient books.

However, structural contradictions persist: the average age of national ICH inheritors of TCM is 68, pointing to a severe shortage of successors; Traditional processing techniques conflict with modern quality standards (e.g., the “nine-steaming and nine-sun-drying” process struggles to meet industrial production requirements); Rural TCM clinics account for only 15% of China’s total medical facilities, and young people’s understanding of TCM remains vague, resulting in a disruption in local inheritance.

3.2 Current Status of Rural Cultural Revitalization

Driven by policies, rural cultural revitalization has yielded phased outcomes, but deep-seated problems demand urgent solutions.

In terms of achievements, 6,819 traditional villages have been placed under listed protection; 16 national cultural and ecological protection zones have been established; The coverage rate of township-level comprehensive cultural stations has reached 98%.

Nevertheless, prominent issues include cultural homogenization, insufficient endogenous momentum, and brain drain: 76% of rural cultural activities lack uniqueness; 80% of rural cultural projects depend on government investment; Rural practical talents make up only 4% of the national talent pool. The shortage of cultural talents hinders the inheritance of traditional skills. For example, although the Regong Art Ecological Protection Zone has revitalized local ICH, the attrition rate of young artisans remains as high as 30%[4].

3.3 Preliminary Exploration of the Correlation

The correlation between TCM cultural inheritance and rural cultural revitalization is reflected in three aspects: resource complementarity, industrial compatibility, and value symbiosis.

Resource complementarity: TCM culture can be

transformed into rural cultural products. For instance, Longxi County in Gansu Province has built standardized medicinal material bases, linking ecological resources with cultural resources.

Industrial compatibility: The integration of medicinal material cultivation and ecological agriculture has formed a composite “medicine-grain-tourism” model; the combination of TCM wellness and rural tourism has given rise to cases such as the “TCM Wellness Town” in Tonglu, Zhejiang.

Value symbiosis: The TCM concept of “great physicians with exquisite skills” reshapes medical ethics in rural areas, and folk activities (e.g., the Dragon Boat Festival herb-picking ceremony) have become carriers for cultural dissemination.

This interaction not only achieves the dual transformation of cultural and economic value but also provides sustainable endogenous momentum for rural revitalization.

4. Analysis of the Interaction Mechanisms

The interaction between TCM cultural inheritance and rural cultural revitalization is essentially a process of deep integration of cultural resources, industrial dynamics, talent elements, and value identity[5]. The resource integration mechanism lays the material foundation, the industrial integration mechanism activates economic momentum, the talent cultivation mechanism provides intellectual support, and the cultural identity mechanism builds the spiritual core. These four mechanisms support each other, forming a virtuous cycle of “cultural inheritance → economic revitalization → social development.”

4.1 Resource Integration Mechanism

Resource integration is the foundation of interaction between TCM culture and rural culture, with its core lying in the organic integration of the symbolic value and practical system of TCM culture with the natural ecology and cultural heritage of rural areas.

Digital integration of cultural resources: The profound heritage of TCM culture is converted into transmissible and experiential modern resources[6]. For example, Pan’an County in Zhejiang has established a digital archive for the cultivation techniques of “Zhejiang Eight Flavors” (a group of authentic TCM materials), integrated it with the rural ICH memory project,

and developed the “Cloud Medicinal Field” platform. This platform presents ancient books, literature, and processing techniques through 3D animation and virtual reality (VR), enabling visual dissemination and experiential learning of TCM cultural resources.

Coordinated development of ecological resources: This is key to resource integration. Medicinal material cultivation is combined with rural ecological restoration to form a “medicine-forest-field” composite ecosystem. For instance, Longxi County in Gansu promoted the cultivation of *Astragalus membranaceus* on the Loess Plateau, which not only curbed soil erosion but also established the “Longxi Astragalus” brand of authentic medicinal materials, achieving a win-win situation for ecological and economic value[7].

Activation and utilization of spatial resources: Abandoned rural ancestral halls and ancient residences are converted into TCM cultural experience centers and medicinal diet restaurants, providing carriers for cultural inheritance. For example, Simagou Village in Fangshan District, Beijing, restored a Qing Dynasty “Medicine King Temple” into a TCM cultural exhibition space, turning traditional architecture into vivid scenarios for TCM culture inheritance.

4.2 Industrial Integration Mechanism

Industrial integration is the core pathway for TCM culture to empower rural economic revitalization. Its logic resides in converting cultural resources into economic capital by extending industrial chains and upgrading value chains[8].

Integration of agriculture and health industry: The “medicinal material + ecological agriculture” model is advocated. For example, the *Panax notoginseng* (Sanqi) planting base in Wenshan, Yunnan, adopts “under-forest wild-simulation cultivation” technology, which not only ensures the quality of medicinal materials but also develops the under-forest economy, increasing the annual income of local farmers. Additionally, the development of “medicine-food homologous” products. e.g., Tongwei County in Gansu (which processes *Astragalus* and *Codonopsis* into health-preserving tea and wine) has achieved an annual output value exceeding 500 million yuan, forming a complete “cultivation-processing-sales” industrial chain.

Integration of tourism and cultural experience: TCM health tourism routes have been developed.

For instance, Bozhou in Anhui built the “Hometown of Divine Physician Hua Tuo” scenic area, integrating medicinal material markets, TCM diagnosis and treatment, and medicinal diet experiences to form a closed-loop industrial chain. In 2023, revenue from Bozhou’s TCM health tourism accounted for 32% of the city’s total tourism revenue.

Integration of creative industries and digital technology: This injects new momentum into rural cultural revitalization. Examples include: restoring ancient pharmacy scenes using VR/AR technology; developing TCM-themed animations and games; and launching digital collectibles of *Compendium of Materia Medica* (which sold well on NFT platforms at a price of 888 yuan per piece), realizing the commercial transformation of TCM cultural IP[9].

4.3 Talent Cultivation Mechanism

Talent serves as the key link between TCM cultural inheritance and rural cultural revitalization. A three-dimensional cultivation system comprising “local talents, professional talents, and communication talents” needs to be established.

Local talent inheritance programs: For example, Ya’an in Sichuan included medicinal material cultivation techniques in training courses for new professional farmers, cultivating interdisciplinary talents who possess knowledge of both agricultural technology and medicinal principles. The “master-apprentice” system has been revived, and tax reductions have been granted to inheritors recognized as “TCM families” to stimulate inheritance vitality[10].

Mechanisms for deploying professional talents to rural areas: Through models such as “medical consortia” and “special technology commissioners,” the flow of faculty, students, and researchers from TCM colleges to rural areas is facilitated. For instance, Zhejiang Chinese Medical University established a doctoral workstation in Quzhou, helping rural areas develop high-value-added products (e.g., TCM cosmetics and health foods) and realizing the integration of industry, academia, and research.

Cultivation of communication talents: “Rural TCM culture interpreters” and “medicinal diet livestreamers” are trained to disseminate TCM knowledge via short-video platforms. For example, the Douyin (TikTok of China) account “Rural Pharmacist Xiao Li” explains medicinal

material identification through livestreams, boasting over 2 million followers and driving a 40% growth in e-commerce sales of local medicinal materials—emerging as a new force in rural cultural communication.

4.4 Cultural Identity Mechanism

Cultural identity is the underlying logic of interaction between TCM culture and rural culture. It is essential to construct cultural subjectivity through educational infiltration, festival revival, and value reconstruction.

Integration of TCM culture into rural school curricula: For example, Taizhou in Jiangsu compiled Little TCM Enlightenment Reader (a school-based textbook for primary and secondary schools). Through activities such as medicinal herb identification and sachet-making, it sows the seeds of TCM culture in adolescents and nurtures future inheritors.

Revival of traditional folk activities: Activities such as the “Medicine King’s Birthday Ceremony” and “Dragon Boat Festival Herb-Picking” have been revived. For instance, Yuzhou in Henan has held the “Sun Simiao (the ‘Medicine King’) Cultural Festival” for 13 consecutive years, drawing over 1 million tourists annually. It has become a local cultural symbol, strengthening villagers’ cultural pride.

Linking TCM wisdom with modern health concepts: The ecological wisdom and health philosophy embedded in TCM culture are explored and integrated with modern health concepts. For example, Luofu Mountain in Guangdong transformed the epidemic prevention concepts from Ge Hong’s Handbook of Prescriptions for Emergencies into rural public health promotion content, which is popularized through murals, lectures, and other forms. This enhances villagers’ modern recognition of traditional culture and builds a cultural consensus for “healthy villages.”

5. Conclusion and Prospects

Through a systematic analysis of the interaction mechanisms between TCM cultural inheritance and rural cultural revitalization, this study uncovers the profound connections between the two in terms of theoretical logic and practical pathways. Theoretically, it constructs a four-dimensional interaction model of “cultural capital → industrial dynamics → talent network → value identity,” clarifying how TCM culture—as a distinctive rural cultural

capital—realizes value transformation from cultural inheritance to economic revitalization and social development via the four mechanisms mentioned above. This model not only enriches the theoretical connotation of rural revitalization but also provides methodological support for the creative transformation of traditional culture.

Looking ahead, the interaction between TCM culture and rural cultural revitalization needs to be deepened and expanded in three dimensions: Digital transformation: Leverage metaverse and VR technologies to build “virtual TCM villages,” overcoming physical space constraints and creating immersive cultural experience scenarios. Meanwhile, use blockchain technology to improve the traceability system for medicinal materials, ensuring the credibility of TCM cultural inheritance and industrial development.

International communication: Draw on the experience of Tongwei County to establish TCM cultural centers in countries along the “Belt and Road,” promoting health cooperation through cultural exchanges and contributing to the building of a global community of health for all. Ecological extension: Explore the “TCM + carbon neutrality” model, facilitating the integration of under-forest medicinal cultivation and ecological restoration, and converting the ecological value of medicinal materials into a carbon sink economy—achieving a win-win situation for TCM cultural inheritance and green development.

As a carrier of Chinese civilization’s genes, the interaction between TCM culture and rural cultural revitalization is not only a pathway for cultural revival but also a Chinese solution to global sustainable rural development. In the future, it is necessary to further break down the urban-rural dual structure, stimulate rural endogenous momentum, and enable TCM culture to continue thriving in the fertile ground of rural revitalization—contributing wisdom to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

References

- [1] Xiaopin, Y, Ruxue, D, Xinjin, Y, Tiantian, M, 2024. The current situation and improvement strategies of popular science of traditional Chinese medicine culture in grass-roots villages from the perspective of rural cultural revitalization. *Agricultural Development and Equipments* 13–15. <https://doi.org/10.16164/j.cnki.22-1062/c.20>

- 24.04.006
- [2] Changhai, M, Dexin, G, Yuxi, w, 2021. Inheritance and Innovation of Rural Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture under Rural Revitalization Strategy. *Journal of Nanjing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Social Science Edition)* 22, 177–180. <https://doi.org/10.20060/j.cnki.issn1009-3222.2021.03.005>
- [3] Xueqing, Z, Xiangyun, S, Shaowen, L, Huixin, H, 2022. On the Current Situation and Solution of the Inheritance and Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization—Taking Anguo City, Hebei Province as an Example. *Science & Technology Information* 20, 238–240. <https://doi.org/10.16661/j.cnki.1672-3791.2112-5042-8116>
- [4] Zhihui, Y, Mengmeng, G,. The significance and realization of traditional Chinese medicine culture to the revitalization of rural culture. *Encyclopedic Forum*, 2019(8). 752.
- [5] Xin, Y, 2023. The inheritance and innovation of rural traditional Chinese medicine culture under the strategy of rural revitalization. *International Development Cooperation* 202 3(29), 3 (136-138). <https://doi.org/10.12268/j.issn.2095-7181.2023.29.046>.
- [6] Sha, X, Huanlan, C, Yunru, W, 2023. From the perspective of healthy China, the realization path, value and problem reflection of traditional Chinese medicine culture to help rural revitalization - - A case study based on Y village in R city. *Rural Economy and Science-Technology* 2023, 34 (12), 4 (108-111). <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1007-7103.2023.12.031>.
- [7] Rikun, C, 2022. Research on the path of rural cultural construction based on the strategy of rural revitalization. *Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine*.
- [8] Xiaxia, H, Chengying, S, 2024. Investigation and Research on the Self-confidence of Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture of Rural Minority College Students in Gansu Province from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization. *Health Vocational Education* 42, 129–132. <https://doi.org/10.20037/j.issn.1671-1246.2024.13.38>.
- [9] Wei, X, 2023. The Dilemma and Countermeasures of Rural Public Cultural Service System Construction from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization. *Journal of Shandong Agricultural Administrators' College* 2023, 40(8), 5(105-109). <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1008-7540.2023.08.019>
- [10] Wenhua, L, 20180727. Thoughts on the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese medicine, in: *Proceedings of the 5th China Traditional Chinese Medicine Information Conference*. Presented at the The Fifth China Traditional Chinese Medicine Information Conference, Cheng Du, pp. 38–41.