



**The current situation and prospect
of China's rural revitalization
research: A quantitative analysis
based on literature**

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Abstract

As an important development strategy, the rural revitalization strategy is being vigorously promoted in China. This paper has researched into the existent conditions and trends with a quantitative analysis on 4,935 journal papers related to rural revitalization in China via CiteSpace. The result shows a rapid upward. However, the institutional cooperation is low and the core research group has not been formed. The research topics mainly focus on rural governance, poverty alleviation, integrated development of urban and rural areas, etc. The topics, perspectives and methods of the research show the characteristic of interdisciplinary intersection. China's rural revitalization research is transitioning from theoretical interpretation and theoretical analysis to empirical research and micro-research. In the future, it is very necessary and meaningful for China's rural revitalization to strengthen academic research cooperation, deepen research topics, broaden research ideas and enrich research methods.

Keywords: The rural revitalization strategy, China's rural revitalization research, Citespace software

The rural revitalization strategy was proposed by Chinese government in 2017. It aims at achieving the basic modernization of agriculture and rural areas by 2035, and the grand goal of a strong agriculture, a beautiful countryside and well-off farmers by 2050. Since the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy in China, not only do great changes have taken place in the rural landscape, but also the research results of rural revitalization are increasing. By analyzing the research results, it is found that some scholars have commented on the research on rural revitalization in China. Unfortunately, few scholars have used quantitative research methods to

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analyze the current status quo. This is also an important reason why we do this study.

Sample sources, analysis tools, and study steps

The sample of this paper comes from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database. In order to ensure the quality of the research sample and the academic research level, the Chinese social sciences citation index (CSSCI) journal papers in the CNKI database are selected as the sample of this study. Conducted under the theme of rural revitalization, data collection started from October 25, 2017 to June 25, 2021 and a total of 5,191 documents were initially retrieved. After excluding those with low correlation, 4,935 CSSCI journal papers were finally identified as the research samples of this paper. It should be noted that CSSCI journal papers belongs to the top level of papers in China. CNKI is not only one of the largest knowledge databases in China, but also the main database for Chinese scholars to obtain research literature.

The analysis tools in this paper are mainly CiteSpace, Data Park and Co-Occurrence. Among them, the CiteSpace is called the Citation Space. The software was created by Professor Chen Chaomei of Drexel University in American. Its theoretical basis mainly includes five aspects: scientific development model theory, scientific frontier theory, structure whole theory, information foraging theory, knowledge unit dispersion and reorganization theory. Data Park and Co-Occurrence software were invented by XueShu DianDi in China. CiteSpace, Data Park, Co-Occurrence, the three software have both common characteristics and their own analytical advantages.

From a certain perspective, the creation process of any kind of science is a process of first separating the crystallized knowledge unit and then recrystallizing in a new thinking field (Zhao & Jiang, 1984). Fortunately, in the era of big data, Citespace software makes it possible for us to use existing data to produce new knowledge (Li & Chen, 2017). Specifically, CiteSpace plays a methodological role in exploring the academic frontier, scientific research direction, and scientific decision-making (Chen et al., 2015).

In terms of research steps, samples were first collected from the CNKI database to select the best samples. Secondly, the filtered samples are imported into CiteSpace, and the relevant threshold in CiteSpace software is set to ensure that the analysis results are more scientific. Finally, the data and knowledge map obtained from CiteSpace operation are counted and analyzed.

Publication of the research papers

According to the CNKI database, there are 4,935 CSSCI journal papers in. Among them, 23 papers (0.46%) in 2017, 984 papers (19.94%) in 2018, 1,609 papers (32.60%) in 2019, 1,556 papers (31.52%) in 2020, 763 papers (15.46%) were published from January 1 to June 25, 2021. The output of the research results from 2017 to 2020 generally showed a significant upward trend (see Fig. 1).

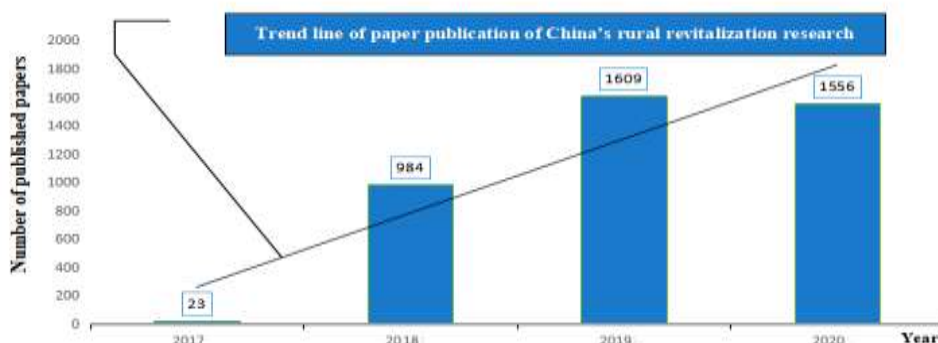


Fig. 1 Annual number of papers published from 2017 to 2020

Affected by the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020, not only the practice of rural revitalization, but also the theoretical research work was affected to some extent. Therefore, compared with 2019, China's rural revitalization research results in 2020 are slightly reduced. However, as China achieves major strategic achievements in the fight against COVID-19, people's lives are gradually returning to normal, and scholars are also conducting academic research work in an orderly way. Studies show that the current popularity of rural revitalization research in China is very hot and is in a period of rapid rise.

Papers supported by funds

Scientific research fund plays an important role in national scientific research and social development. According to the funding of China's rural revitalization research results, 3,349 out of 4,935 papers were supported by scientific research funds. Among them, 1,596 (32.34%) were supported by the national social science fund of China, 540 (10.94%) by the national natural science foundation of China, 324 papers (6.57%) by the humanities and social sciences research project of the ministry of education, 136 papers (2.76%) by the special fund of central universities, and 66 papers (1.34%) by the postdoctoral science foundation of China, Other funds accounted for about 46% of the total (see Fig. 2).

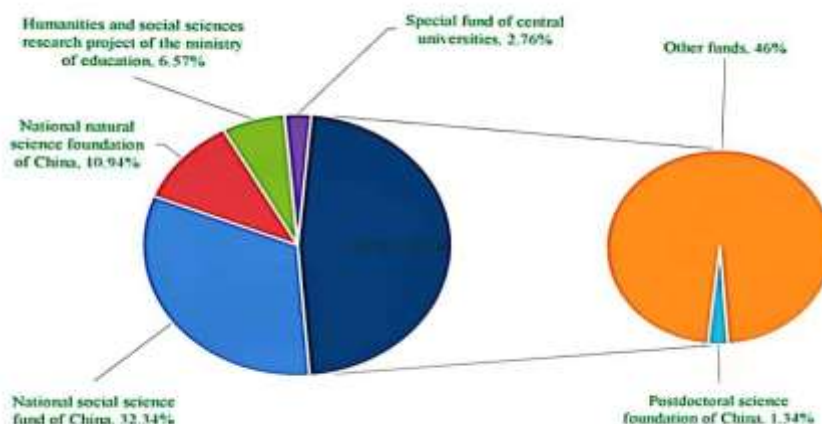


Fig. 2 Proportion of fund

In addition to the above fund projects, many papers have also been supported by other funds, such as philosophy and social science planning and research project of Shandong Province, philosophy and social science fund of Hunan province, social science fund project of Jiangsu province, soft science research program of Henan province, philosophy and social science planning project of Beijing, philosophy and social science planning project of Chongqing, etc.

The research shows that the funding of published papers presents the following characteristics. Firstly, the national social science foundation and the national natural science foundation of China supported the largest number of published papers. Although many local governments support rural revitalization research, the funding is less. This also reflects the direct relationship between China's administrative level and resource authority. Secondly, the regional distribution of funds varies greatly. The research results show that developed provinces have invested more in rural revitalization research, especially in the eastern coastal areas, such as Shandong, and other provinces. In the western region, except for Shaanxi, Sichuan and Chongqing, other provinces (autonomous regions) have made very little investment.

Disciplines distribution of published papers

The results of study show that scholars mainly focus on agricultural economy, politics, culture, society, education, tourism economy, urban economy, environment, public management, finance, news and communication, geography, law, urban planning and municipal administration, regional economy and other fields (see Fig. 3).

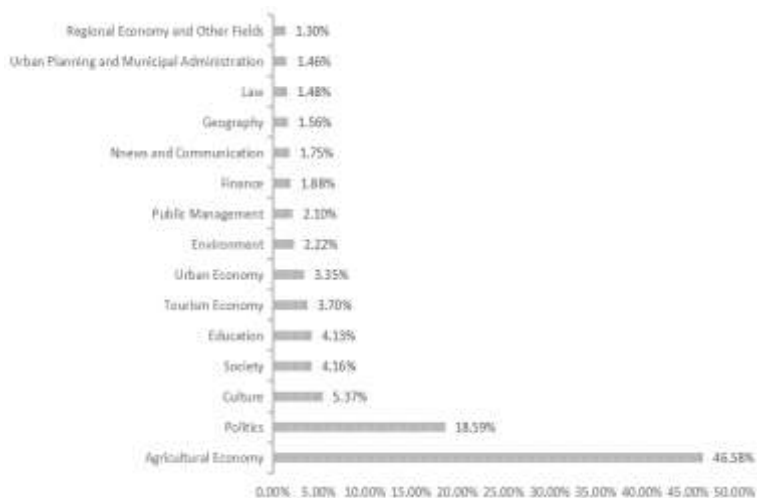


Fig.3 Proportion of research area

According to Fig.3, the research on China's rural revitalization embodies the interdisciplinary characteristics of agriculture, economics, politics, sociology and other disciplines, and multidisciplinary theories and methods are gradually highlighted in the field of rural revitalization in China, which is conducive to promoting the formation and development of the comprehensive research paradigm of rural revitalization in China.

Research institutions, author of published papers

Renmin University of China, China Agricultural University, Central China Normal University, Wuhan University, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Southwest University, Beijing Normal University, Sichuan University, Tsinghua University, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Jilin University, Nanjing Agricultural University, Sun Yat-sen University, Peking University, Nanjing University and other units have signed many research results, and the average number of signed articles of each unit has exceeded 45.

It is clear that Chinese universities play an important role in participating in rural revitalization research. In other words, the current institutions that focus on rural revitalization are mainly Chinese universities, especially universities under the jurisdiction of China's ministry of education. Relatively speaking, universities under local governments publish fewer papers. The results show that Scholars Liu Yansui, long Hualou, Li Yurui, Jiang Changyun, Zhou Li, Kong Xiangzhi, Ge Dazhuan, Zuo Ting, Gao Qiang, Wen Fengang, Tu Shuangshuang, Wen Tiejun, He Xuefeng, Wang Yi, Gui Hua, He Yang, Zhang Qi, Zhou Yang, Wei Houkai, Shen Feiwei, Song

Caifa and others have relatively more research results, and each author has published more than 10 papers. To some extent, this shows that these scholars have been concerned about China's rural revitalization for a long time and conducted in-depth research.

Papers published in journals and papers are cited

Research shows that People's Tribune, Rural Economy, Chinese Journal of Agricultural Resources and Regional Planning, Issues in Agricultural Economy, Economic Geography, Journal of Nanjing Agricultural University(Social Sciences Edition), Journal of Northwest A&F University(Social Science Edition), World Agriculture, Journal of Yunnan Minzu University(Social Sciences), Chinese Rural Economy and other journals have published a large number of papers on China's rural revitalization. On the one hand, it shows that the above journals are an important platform for the publication of the current research results of rural revitalization in China. On the other hand, it also reflects that these publications have played a positive role in promoting the dissemination of the theoretical knowledge of rural revitalization in China.

From the citations of the author's paper, the papers of scholars Liu Yansui, Ye Xingqing, Huang Zuhui, Zhang Jun, Liu Huguang, Chen Xiwen, Zhang Qiang, Guo Xiaoming, Suo Xiaoxia and He Xuefeng were cited more frequently, and their single papers were cited more than 240 times (see Table 1). This fully shows that the research results of the above scholars have not only been fully affirmed and recognized by the academic circle, but also reflects that they have played an important role in the field of rural revitalization research in China.

Table 1: The top 10 cited papers

Author(s)	Title of paper	Source	Publication date	Total citations
Liu Yansui	Research on the Urban-Rural Integration of Rural Revitalization in the New Era in China	Acta Geographica Sinica	2018	917
Ye Xingqing	The General Principles of the China's Rural Vitalization Strategy in the New Era	Reform	2018	523
Huang Zuhui	On the Strategy of Rural Revitalization in China	Chinese Rural Economy	2018	381
Zhang Jun	Village Value Orientation and Rural Revitalization	Chinese Rural Economy	2018	372
Liu Huguang	The Key Points, Development Path and Potential Traps in Promoting Rural Vitalization Strategy	Journal of Nanjing Normal University(Edition of Philosophy and Social Science)	2018	301
Cheng Xuewen	The Rural Revitalization Strategy and the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Areas	Journal of China Agricultural University Social Science	2018	289
Zhang, Q., Zhang, H., Liu, Z.	Rural Revitalization Strategic Choice From Decline to Revival	Economy and Management	2018	269
Gao, X., Zhang, K., Yu, H., Gao, J., Zhou, X., Su, Y.	Systematic Understanding and Path Selection of Implementing Rural Vitalization Strategy	Rural Economy	2018	261
Suo Xiaoxia	The Understanding of Local Cultural Value under the Rural Revitalization Strategy	Guizhou Social Science	2018	253
He Xuefeng	Some Issues in Rural Thriving Strategy Implementation	Journal of Nanjing Agricultural University(Social Science Edition)	2018	248

Major topics of China's rural revitalization research

Analysis through CiteSpace shows that keywords such as rural revitalisation, rural revitalisation strategy, rural governance, targeted measures in poverty alleviation, anti-poverty war, urban-rural integration and development, new urbanization, rural tourism, rural culture, urban-rural integration and industrial development are used more often by scholars (see Fig. 4).

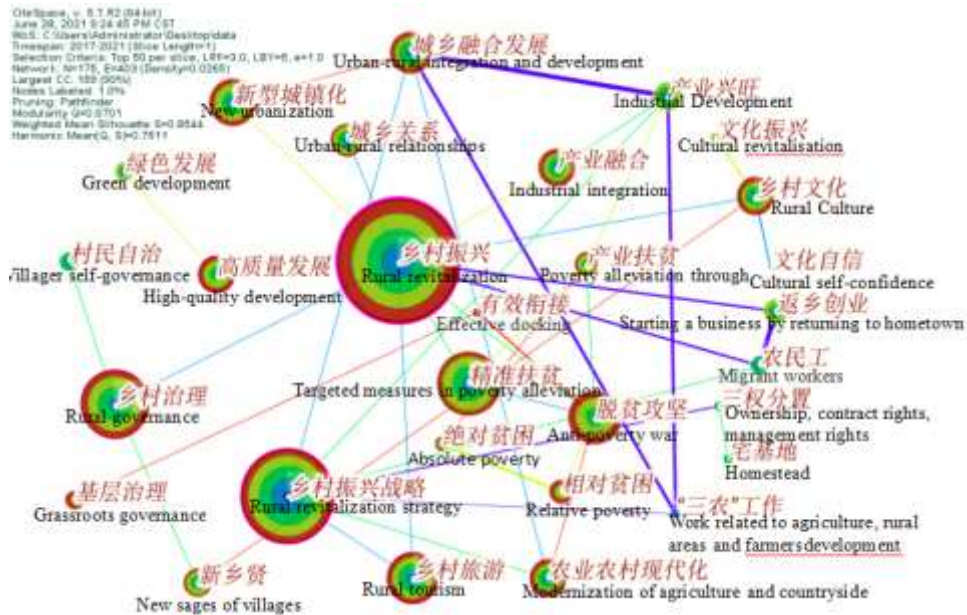


Fig.4 Key words co-occurrence network map

The results show that scholars mainly focus on the following research topics:

Firstly, linkage mechanism between rural revitalization and targeted poverty alleviation. By implementing the targeted poverty alleviation strategy, China has eliminated 'absolute poverty' by the end of 2020. However, after eliminating 'absolute poverty', it does not mean that China has completely eliminated poverty. In fact, the central government has long been aware of some problems in the post-targeted poverty alleviation era, and has made strategic deployments in top-level design. Among them, the rural revitalization strategy is an important starting point for solving the problems in the post-targeted poverty alleviation era, and it is also a decision-making deployment to consolidate the effectiveness of poverty alleviation and promote the comprehensive revitalization of the countryside.

From the perspective of the top-level design of strategic deployment, the targeted poverty alleviation strategy and the rural revitalization strategy are inherently consistent in their value orientation and realistic goals. From the perspective of their practical logic, both of them are coupled in practice. From the perspective of the target dimension, the targeted poverty alleviation strategy focuses on solving the problem of 'absolute poverty', and the rural revitalization strategy can not only further consolidate the effectiveness of eliminating poverty and prevent the return of poverty, but also solve China's 'relative poverty' problem and comprehensively promote rural revitalization. Although they two took place at different time and under different background, there is a close connection between the two. There is both a policy basis and a practical basis for cohesion. The necessity of the connection between rural revitalization and poverty alleviation is mainly reflected in three aspects: the practical needs of grassroots practice, the theoretical demands of institutional connection, and the essential requirements of socialism. The relationship has laid a theoretical feasibility for the connection between rural revitalization and poverty alleviation. Of course, there are also some problems in the process of connecting the two, such as no good connection between systems and mechanisms, difficulties between development and upgrading of industry, and difficulties of stimulating endogenous power. Therefore, it is exactly essential to continuously improve the system and mechanism, encourage diversified development of rural industries, and vigorously cultivate the consciousness of the main body of rural revitalization (Dou &Ye, 2019).

Secondly, integrated urban-rural development. For a long time, the integration of urban-rural development has been a concern of the academic community, and its research heat often changes with the changes in national policies. At present, the unbalanced and uncoordinated development between urban and rural areas is still the biggest bottleneck restricting China's development (Li, 2017), and understanding countryside from the perspective of urban-rural relationship is an important paradigm for China's rural research (Zhang & Wang, 2017). Judging from the existing urban-rural integrated development research results, whether it is a theoretical discussion or a practical case analysis, it can be said to be fruitful, and many research results have become an important basis for China's policy formulation and institutional arrangements of urban-rural integration development. China's vigorous promotion of the rural revitalization strategy involves not only comprehensive rural revitalization, but also urban development. How to further integrate the development of urban and rural areas has become the most direct problem facing the practice of rural revitalization.

In 50s-60s of the 20th century, Chinese government had focused on heavy industry development, which led to the formation of barriers between urban and rural areas. In the 1980s, the Chinese economy began to shift from a planned economy to a market one, and the barriers between urban rural areas were gradually broken down, and China's development went on a road toward urban-rural integration development. Although the current system and mechanism about China's integrated development of urban and rural areas has taken shape, there are still many problems, such as the household registration system barriers, the unreasonable dual economic structure, the unsmooth mechanism for rational flow between urban and rural areas, the large gap of public services between urban and rural areas, and the decline of countryside. The phenomenon of increasing intensification is widespread. Therefore, it is of importance to deepen the household registration system reform, vigorously promote basic public services equalization, accelerate the integration of urban markets and rural markets, and establish and consolidate the foundation for integrating urban and rural industry development (Zhang, 2019).

As for China's urban-rural coordinated development, some scholars have analyzed in China's nine agricultural areas and the temporal and spatial evolution characteristics by using the three-phase regional statistical data in 1992, 2000, and 2010. Their research results show that the phenomenon of uncoordinated and unbalanced development among regions in China's rural areas is relatively common. Therefore, they proposed to promote the coordinated of rural revitalization and urbanization in China's rural areas through endogenous forces, external aid forces, and interactive forces (Ma et al., 2018). In the practice of urban-rural integrated development, on one hand, it is necessary to consolidate the institutional guarantee of rural revitalization and give play to the gradual diffusion of the 'point-axis' to the countryside. On the other side, it is exactly essential to promote the National Rural Revitalization and refine the rural development model in different regions (He, 2018).

Thirdly, construction of governance system in rural areas. China is still an agriculture country, and rural areas development level and governance capacity directly affect the overall level of development in China. The central government has always attached great importance to the rural areas development, and also has successively introduced a series of policies. Rural governance is a complex and systematic project, involving a wide range of aspects. Any 'state presence' behavior involving rural areas can be regarded as government-led rural governance.

When discussing the structural transformation of China's rural governance, some scholars suggested the construction of a governance

structure of 'county government, township faction, and village governance (Xu, 2002), so as to meet the needs of China's marketization and modernization. In addition, some scholars have systematically analyzed the ability of Chinese villages to produce autonomous production order, the types of rural relations, the role of village cadres, the role and limitations of the villager self-governance system, and have defined the types of rural governance. There are four types of rural governance such as the primary order type, the secondary order type and the rural collusion type (He & Dong, 2005).

From the perspective of goal logic, there are many value couplings between the rule of law and the revitalization of rural areas. From the practical logic perspective, the rule of law is the guarantee of rural revitalization (Wang, 2020). Although China's rural governance has achieved certain results, the tools of rural governance lack practical relevance, and the phenomenon of rural organizations and public power being alienated or weakened still exists (Song & Zhang, 2019). Therefore, it is really of great importance and necessity to construct the rural governance system of 'Three Governances Integration', which integrates self-governance, rule of law, and rule of virtue and strive to build a new rural governance pattern (Zuo & Li, 2019). Among them, autonomy is the body and core of rural governance, the rule of law is the basic strategy and important guarantee of rural governance, and the rule of virtue is the value foundation and moral support of rural governance (Huang & He, 2019).

Fourthly, work on 'agriculture, rural areas and rural people'. Dealing with people's livelihood work, CPC always insists using Chinese Marxist theory on people's livelihood to guide practical work, always pays attention to and correctly grasps the fundamental interests of the people, always insists on combining the leadership of the party with respecting the dominant position of the people, always adheres to the development of the economy in the first place and strives to provide a solid material basis for solving people's livelihood problems, and always adheres to the fundamental method of overall planning (Li & Zhou, 2011).

The work on 'agriculture, rural areas and rural people' in the new era should focus on the following aspects: first, strengthen the constructor of rural areas infrastructure, start countryside markets and increase farmers' income. Second, deepen the innovation of agricultural products circulation system, create a unified national market and narrow the regional gap. Third, accelerate technological and institutional innovation and promote the development of agricultural modernization. Fourth, expand employment channels through the development of labor-intensive small and medium-sized enterprises, and speed up the adjustment of farmers' labor structure (Lin, 2003). In addition,

reshaping the subjectivity of rural people is really vital to solving the problem of ‘agriculture, rural areas and rural people (Wang & Deng, 2010). Specifically, it is to improve farmers’ identity, occupation identity and cultural identity through the full empowerment of policy, market and society, (Mao, 2019), so as to stimulate and mobilize farmers’ enthusiasm and creativity in rural revitalization.

Fifth, construction of ‘tourism-oriented villages’ and rural revitalization. In the course of revitalizing rural industries and building an industrial system, ‘Insight into the realization mechanism and social support of tourism to promote rural revitalization is crucial to the final realization of the comprehensive rural revitalization (Lu & Deng, 2020). ‘Countryside tourism is a vital platform to realize the accurate connection between the multi-functional value of agriculture and the diversity of tourists experience needs. It has a good coupling with rural areas revitalization and it is also a very important path to realize rural areas revitalization (Cai, Young & Ma, 2018). China’s rural space is huge and tourism resources are abundant. The development of rural tourism helps to improve the rural living environment, optimize the rural industrial structure, inherit the local culture, and improve the level of rural governance.

Tourism is not only an economic industry, but also a cultural industry. From a certain perspective, tourism is an experience and exploration of ‘other culture’. Under the background of the strong intervention of modernization, it is impossible for rural tourism to break away from modern culture and escape into traditional farming, but blindly introducing modern cultural symbols and letting them flood the rural tourism space will inevitably dilute the farming meaning of rural tourism (Yin, 2004). Therefore, handling the integration and development of traditional culture and modern culture is the direction of China’s new round of rural tourism development.

Sixth, reconstruction of rural culture. ‘Culture has never been fixed. Facing the modern world, the transformation of rural culture will be inevitable (Zhao, 2018). Driven by the rural revitalization strategy, rural culture is bound to make new adjustments. Through the revitalization of rural culture, on the one hand, it can give the villagers a sense of meaning, happiness, and well-being. On the other hand, it can stimulate the enthusiasm of the villagers to take an active party in rural revitalization. At the same time, it can vigorously promote the cultural supply-side reform to provide people with incremental high-quality public cultural products and services, thereby realizing the comprehensive revitalization of rural culture (Xu, 2018).

Rural cultural revitalization and rural revitalization strategies have many couplings in value goals, such as the coupling between rural cultural

industry revitalization and industrial prosperity, the coupling between rural ethical and cultural revival and rural customs and civilization, and the reconstruction of rural autonomous culture and the effectiveness of governance (Wu & Xie, 2019). However, with the changes of society, the inheritance and development of rural culture also faces many difficulties, such as the alienation of rural cultural values, the gradual decline of rural culture, the loss and absence of the main body of rural cultural construction (Lv, 2019) and the weakening or differentiation of rural cultural charm caused by extreme urbanization (Jia, 2017) and other phenomena such as the marginalization of local culture, the narrow public cultural space, and the imperfect rural cultural construction system are common (Qi & Ren, 2019). In view of the above problems, on one side, we should try to awaken the subject consciousness of rural culture and improve cultural consciousness and cultural self-confidence. On the other side, in combination with the comprehensive strategic layout and requirements of the rural areas revitalization, we should do a good job in policy design and institutional arrangement of rural cultural construction.

Conclusions and Recommendations

By analyzing the knowledge network map of China's rural revitalization research, the paper objectively presents the external and internal characteristics of the research results, and accurately captures the current hot topics and evolution trends of China's rural revitalization research. This is not only an overall review and a phased summary of China's rural revitalization research, but also provides more useful logical ideas for reshaping China's rural revitalization research themes and research paradigm shifts in the future.

From the focus of scholars, analyzing China's rural revitalization policies and building a theoretical system of China's rural revitalization are the core topics of current research on China's rural revitalization. Specifically, current scholars mainly focus on the connection between rural revitalization and poverty alleviation, integrating development of urban and rural areas, construction of rural governance system, working on 'Three Rural Issues' in the 21st century, constructing 'tourism-oriented villages', reconstruction of rural culture, etc. Scholars generally believe that agriculture, rural areas, rural people are three interrelated and interacting organism. Stress is the significance of solving 'Three Rural Issues' in China's rural areas revitalization. At present, there are many disputes on the rural areas development model and villages types construction, and a consensus has not yet been reached. It is gratifying that some scholars have considered and discussed this issue, for example, some scholars have proposed the construction of 'tourism-oriented villages'.

From the disciplinary classification of research results, it is mainly distributed in agronomy, economics, political science, sociology and other disciplines, that is, the research results have obvious discipline tendency. In the field of agronomy research, the 'Three Rural Issues' is still an important topic, and CPC proposed to urged all-out efforts to achieve the goal of poverty alleviation and realize rural areas revitalization. In economics research field, rural areas resources and rural markets have become important topics in the academic circle. China's rural areas are rich in resources, with a large population and great consumption potential. However, how to make good use of rural resources and stimulate rural consumption has become a major problem at present. In the field of political science research, organizational construction and rural governance have become the focus of academic attention. In the field of sociological research, the remodeling of rural culture and the reconstruction of rural community are the main topics of discussion.

Judging from the cooperation of scholars, the cooperation rate of authors of published papers is 0.56. In general, the current situation of cooperation between authors of China's rural revitalization research is relatively good, but further cooperation is still needed. The current cooperation rate of academic institutions is only 0.37, which is obviously very low. Cooperation between academic institutions needs to be further strengthened in future research.

From the perspective of the influence of the research results, papers of Liu Yansui, Ye Xingqing, Huang Zuhui, Zhang Jun, Liu Huguang, Chen Xiwen, Zhang Qiang, Guo Xiaoming, Suo Xiaoxia, He Xuefeng have been cited more frequently. On the one hand, it shows that the research results of the above scholars have been generally recognized by the academic community, and on the other hand, it fully shows that their research results have had a positive impact on the research of rural revitalization in China.

For China's future rural revitalization research work, on the one hand, we should learn from past research results and research experience, and on the other hand, we should make efforts in the following aspects:

Firstly, enriching the research methods constantly. It is important to use both social science research methods and to combine qualitative and quantitative research.

Secondly, the topics of the research should be more specific. Rural revitalization requires theoretical analysis, but more importantly, empirical research and micro-research. So, we should expand and deepen research topics, and strengthen research on rural subjectivity, rural community, rural revitalization evaluation mechanism and other fields.

Thirdly, strengthening collaboration between authors and between research institutions. Although the rural revitalization strategy is initiated and led by the government, the development of the countryside should not be ignored by scholars. In addition, the role of modern technologies such as Internet e-commerce, Internet education, Internet medical care, and Internet finance should give full play in rural revitalization. In short, 'Internet + rural revitalization' is a meaningful field of research in the future.

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