



# The Impact of the Basketball Africa League on the Development of Basketball in Rwanda

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## Abstract

Research on basketball development mostly focuses on North America, Europe, and Asia with little attention paid to African basketball. There is still a huge gap on research talk about basketball in African countries including Rwanda. Through literature review, data analysis, and questionnaire surveys, this study examines the current status of development of the Basketball Africa League (BAL) and explores its influence on the development of basketball in Rwanda, offering a clear African perspective. With feedback from Rwandan basketball players, coaches, referees and fans as research participants, we can comprehensively understand the impact mechanism and effect of the BAL on the development of Rwandan basketball. The results showed that the development of the league can promote the popularization of basketball nationwide, the competitive level of the league has a positive impact on Rwandan basketball, the league can provide financial support for Rwandan basketball, the league can promote international exchange and cooperation and also can inspire young generations.

## Subject Areas

Sports Development

## Keywords

Basketball, Basketball Africa League, Sport Development, Rwanda

## 1. Introduction

Missionaries brought basketball to Rwanda for the first time in the 1930s. Since basketball was popular among young people at the time, it was played in schools. Basketball was first introduced in secondary schools in the south of the country, since it was where the country's capital was at the time. This sport progressively

evolved after independence in 1962, expanding from being played only in secondary schools to the army and other government institutions, adding additional teams. In order to continue growing basketball in all of Rwanda's provinces, sports associations were created as a result. In 1974, the Rwanda Basketball Federation (FERWABA) was established, and in 1977, for the first time in history, a national league was organized for women and men. The FERWABA National League is currently the main competition organized annually and is played in two divisions (men and women), with members of the federation team and others from high schools and universities. The National League champion represents the country in the Basketball Africa League (BAL) [1]. BAL was established and is co-organized by NBA Africa and the International Basketball Federation (FIBA). According to the NBA Commissioner, this is the first league outside of North America that the NBA has invested in. Basketball clubs that have won the national championship in their home countries participate in this league to compete for continental titles, which makes it a significant club league on the African continent [2]. As the NBA announced, the main objective of this league is to promote basketball in Africa with an emphasis on youth talent, education, etc. Additionally, this league has brought a number of initiatives, such as BAL4HER, that promote women in sport to growth and BAL Future Pro which is encouraging young people to become future leaders in sports. Rwanda, as a country that has started investing in sports tourism, has signed a partnership agreement with the Basketball Africa League (BAL) through the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), which includes hosting BAL matches in Rwanda, cooperation in sports tourism, investment opportunities, and talent development [3]. As a country that is on the path of developing itself in all sports in general, the basketball sector in Rwanda is open to every opportunity and partnership to expand its collaboration with major basketball industries across the world in order to improve the level of competition, infrastructure, and the level of skill and performance of basketball players in Rwanda. This is a good opportunity for Rwandan basketball because hosting a big tournament is not only beneficial for the sports industry but also for the country. For instance, it will boost the game's popularity, improve game ticket revenues, etc. Due to the fact that the country is still developing in various sectors, including sports, basketball in Rwanda still needs a lot of work to advance its development. There is still a shortage of organized basketball development programs for young people due to insufficient basketball infrastructure (playing courts, training equipment and materials, and other facilities). This has increased the need for increased government support, private sector intervention (including sponsorship), and proactive and strategic training programs. Furthermore, recommendations have been made to integrate youth basketball into the national education curriculum [4]. Although several studies have been done on African basketball and Rwanda basketball [4] [5], however, several research gaps still exist. For instance, firstly, many studies have been conducted regarding the development of the Basketball Africa League because it is a new league on the continent (for example,

[6]). Secondly, few studies show a connection between basketball in Rwanda and other top professional basketball leagues [7]. Thirdly, as a developing nation, Rwanda is generally facing a problem of limited academic research on various sports, including basketball. Accordingly, the major objectives of this study were to examine the current status of development of the BAL and to analyze its impact on the competitive level, talent cultivation, popularization, and infrastructure development in Rwanda.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Growth and Development of Basketball in Rwanda

Despite the scant literature, a few studies have been done on the growth and development on Rwandan Basketball. A review of journal articles, sport industry reports, news reports, and academic papers on the recent development of the sport reveals that most of the concentration has been put on the following areas: development policy, resource strategy, popularization, infrastructure and talent development.

#### *Sport Development Policy*

Sports for development outcomes are tied with a clear vision, intentional thought through steps which are deeply grounded in country policies and processes that start during the preparation for the submissions of the bid and through to the implementation phase [8]. Also, sport is intentionally utilized to positively influence people's lives and generate development which includes, but is not limited to, economic growth, education, employment, gender empowerment, human socialization, intercultural exchanges, life skills and public well-being [9]. According to Barrie and Anita's study, the goal of sports development is to make sure that the systems and processes are in place to help people acquire fundamental movement skills, participate the sports they truly enjoy, improve their performance and competence, and achieve high standards [10]. According to the Rwanda Basketball Federation's development policy, the federation's primary objectives including to promote basketball across the nation, including creating a supportive atmosphere, talent cultivation and competition opportunities, upgrading basketball policy in Rwanda, developing youth basketball program, and increasing coaching level and Create competition opportunities [11]. This is in line with the development policy goals set by the Ministry of Sports in promoting long-term sports development. By 2020-2030, the Ministry of Sports hopes to accomplish the following particular goals. These include: to incorporate long-term talent development and mentoring programs, improve the administrative and management abilities of the different sports organizations, create and execute a long-term plan for identifying talented children, guiding them from elementary school through to the peak of competitiveness at the highest levels of competition and performance, observe how sports programs in schools and physical education programs are being implemented, boost the cooperative relationship with the business sector to assist the growth of sports as an industry that will boost both

the individual's ability to make a living and the country's economy, strengthen the ability of sports technical staff to increase their efficiency in supervising sporting events, enhance and expand the nation's sports infrastructure by adding more venues that fulfill international standards and finally raising public awareness of sports will encourage greater public participation and support from citizens [12].

### ***Resource Strategy***

Rwanda Basketball Federation Vice President Richard Nyirishema emphasized the need for supporting the basketball league's growth and also, he welcomed long-term and short-term investors to contribute on development to the basketball game in Rwanda [13]. He said this a year after FERWABA confirmed the partnership where BetPawa (the betting company) becomes the official sponsor of the national basketball league, and FERWABA President Desire Mugwiza mentioned that "this is about bringing over an incredible change to Rwandan basketball. BetPawa's outstanding investment represents a game-changing commitment to the advancement of our sport, players, and community" [14]. This indicates that Betpawa took the place of Bank of Kigali (BK). The National Basketball League was mainly sponsored by the Bank of Kigali [15]. However, this bank has triggered and attracted other commercial banks to invest in basketball; the Patriots basketball club and the Development Bank of Rwanda (BRD) signed a five-year sponsorship agreement. A statement from the bank claims that the cooperation will promote young talent, professionalize the team, and use commercial strategies to draw in private investors in order to achieve sustainable growth [16]. In addition, the government has continually demonstrated its commitment to sport, making significant public investment in sport activities. It is further reported that the sports development policy brings added focus and accountability to this area of work and recognizes its importance from a Rwandan perspective [12].

### ***Popularization and Sport Tourism***

Basketball is gaining popularity in Rwanda after hosting major events such as the men's and women's Afrobasket, the BAL, and pre-qualifiers of the 2026 FIBA Women's World Cup, which is the first time the Rwandan women's national basketball team showed up on a global platform [17]. According to the Methammem study, hosting sporting events improves host communities economically and greatly enhances their capacity for participation in other sports. This goes hand in hand with improving the well-being of the communities and can have long-term effects, including encouraging healthier lifestyles and creating new businesses and jobs [18]. In 2023, Rwanda held 27 sporting events, including the 73rd FIFA Congress, Basketball Africa League, Afrobasket Women, Giants of Africa, and other top global events. It was a fantastic year for the country's sports tourism industry and sports popularization [19]. In many countries, sport tourism is a significant component that has the potential to impact society. Mega-sport events have gained a lot of media attention and investment, which results in an essential platform for global exposure. One of the biggest sectors in the world, tourism is still

expanding in the sports sector as mega-games give host nations and cities opportunities to attract tourists to their sporting events, which benefits the local economy [20]. Michaella Rugwizangoga, the RDB Chief Tourism Officer, explains why Rwanda's tourism-spurring strategy now heavily relies on sports. One of the few regular events that has promoted Rwanda as a top travel destination is the BAL finals. This has created an opportunity to see the effective implementation of a national branding strategy based on sports [21]. As shown by Ibrahim's article, tourism has become a major driver of the country's economy. Through Visit Rwanda, sport partnerships have been instrumental for the tourism recovery in the post-Covid period. In 2022, the country attracted more than 1 million visitors, generating beyond \$240 million in income [22].

### ***Infrastructure***

People's desire for entertainment is growing as a result of the social economy's rapid development and the improvement in living standards. Around the world, sports participation is starting to gain popularity. The expansion of sporting venues, including stadiums, arenas, fields, courts, and related facilities, is in line with development. The growth of sports industries and businesses is also based on sports facilities [23]. As stated by MINISPOC, in order to promote the development of sports, efforts have been made to invest in infrastructure that will enable more people to participate in sports and in venues that are able to host international events while satisfying the necessary standards for public participation. Infrastructure is a very important factor in the development of the game of basketball; it is one of the factors that allows young talents to shine [24]. Rwanda began making significant investments in sporting facilities such as the Bank of Kigali (BK) Arena, which is currently home to the national basketball league and hosts major events, conferences, and concerts. These large infrastructure projects are not only important for sports but also for the country as a whole because they are part of the country's economic growth [22]. For example, this article highlighted by the African Development Bank Group shows that Kigali Arena, which was constructed in 2019, was renamed the BK Arena in 2022 after a six-year \$8 million sponsorship agreement with Bank of Kigali. This reveals the way large sports facilities can have advantages outside of the field of sports [25].

## **2.2. Rwanda's Basketball and the Development Challenges**

### ***Inadequate Basketball Facilities***

A study by Mukaruzima revealed that there is still a lack of sports infrastructure in this developing country, which includes modern and adequate basketball courts and other supporting facilities. This lack of sports infrastructure is one of the factors that reduces the participation of the population in sports and causes the development of young players' talents to be delayed [26]. This is in line with a report by MINISPOC, which shows that inadequate sports infrastructure is one of the obstacles that reduces the number of people participating in various sports activities, slowing down the development of sports in the country. Furthermore, young

people who aspire to play at the highest level are less likely to achieve so, and gifted athletes practice daily to improve their skills. Poor-quality facilities have an impact on them. In order to maximize athletes' potential for progress in any sport, modern facilities are essential [12]. Also, according to the MINISPOC report, the lack of adequate facilities has a negative and long-term impact on the development of sports in schools. The lack of adequate venues for young people to showcase their skills slows down school sports and affects the growth of grassroots in the different sports [27]. In line with the finding of Habimana, 39% of respondents in Rwanda expressed dissatisfaction with the state of the basketball facilities. Because it is difficult to survey rural residences in Rwanda, he noted that the majority of survey respondents probably reside in the city centers. In addition, in rural areas, there are significantly fewer courts [4].

#### ***Limited of Talent Development Programs***

As stated by Trunic & Mladenovic, the cultivation of basketball talents requires a systematic training plan and professional guidance from coaches [28]. Similarly, in line with MINISPOC, a systematic plan for developing young basketball talent is lacking, which limits our country's sports industry's sustained growth. The existing strategy, which primarily relies on players from other nations, is unsustainable due to a funding shortage. While having international players is not a negative thing, it must be balanced with the growth of young, talented Rwandans in order to keep the number of foreign players as low as possible and enable Rwanda to develop a sustainable basketball industry. We need young players to continuously grow in order to maintain the development and continuity of the national teams. Junior leagues are necessary to enable our young players to participate in regular competitions to gain experience and advance their careers, as junior teams must be able to reach the necessary quality that ensures ongoing success [12]. The RGB 2020 report on the governance assessment of the functioning of sports federations showed that none of the federations evaluated had strategic development plans with measurable goals and performance indicators to produce future athletes of the necessary caliber. The few unstructured talent identification programs the federations have are depending on private training centers and schools, who have limited funding to carry out their sports development programs [29].

#### ***Limited Expertise of Sports Technicians***

As stated by Habimana and Tian in their study, there is still a lack of such training programs, and also the selection and training mechanism for players is not good enough. The professional level and coaching experience of a basketball coach are crucial for the growth of athletes. More so, their research points out that the level and number of basketball coaches is still a problem [4]. There are very few trained and experienced sports technicians like coaches, technical officials, and referees who are key in the development of sports to international standards. Worse still, these are lacking in both skills and numbers to support all groups in need of their skills. On the other hand, schools also lack specialized teachers for physical education, further impeding the development of the sport [27].

### ***Lack of Administrative and Management Capacity***

The ability of sports organizations (federations, associations, and clubs) to manage their operations is lacking, which has an impact on how sports grow and develop in the whole country in a more sustainable way. These sports organizations' operations are limited to the national stage [27].

### ***Weak Link between Sports Bodies, Local Government and Schools***

Existing reports indicate that for the passionate and talented young people, particularly in the primary school and high school, to participate in sports and support talented individuals in their easy transition from college to professional career, the basketball federation, the local government, and the educational system must work together more closely. Since some schools still view sports as time wasters, they have not fully embraced the spirit of the game and its advancement. However, schools are crucial in identifying talent and helping young athletes reach their potential [12].

### ***Limited Financial Resources***

The study by Lela revealed that one of the main challenges to the development of sports is the current financial situation [30]. In Rwanda, the private sector's involvement in sports development is very limited, which could be related to issues such as lack of motivation to become part of the team, limited capacity of most private sector individuals, absence of an effective marketing strategy from the ministry and the federations, and perceived lack of confidence in the sports management system. Normally, the private sector's active involvement helps the development of sports in countries [12]. All in all, the development of basketball in Rwanda is likely to be delayed if these challenges are not effectively dealt with by the government and other key players in the game of basketball.

## **2.3. Basketball Africa League and the Development Challenges**

### ***Limited Funding and Support in African Basketball Industry***

The low GDP contribution of the sports sector in Africa can be related to the absence of financial support and commitment from major stakeholders [31]. This low investment in sports in developing countries consequently decreases the ability of sportsmen and women to build their talents [32]. In the upcoming years, Africa's sports sector needs to truly take off as a growth engine. Sport accounts for just 0.5% of global GDP on the African continent, compared to 2% on other continents, indicating that the continent is still falling behind [33]. The funding sources for some African teams are limited, hence the funding shortages, which is a big challenge for many teams to attract excellent players and coaches and provide better treatment and training opportunities [34].

### ***Insufficient Standard Basketball Facilities***

Africa is the world's least advanced continent in terms of infrastructure. Building world-class arenas and other facilities is a major key for African sports development. Investing in quality infrastructure will improve athletic performance, generate revenue, engage communities, and boost Africa's reputation on the

international stage [35]. According to Hallmann's study, there is still little return on investment in developing countries. However, investment by the public and private sectors in sports infrastructure is insufficient. Due to the lack of financial support for sports, sports development issues are not given much attention in national development plans. Developing countries, including African countries, still need to strengthen efforts to encourage investors to invest in sports infrastructure [36]. The majority of Africa's sports facilities are in poor condition, which required huge costs of renovation to enable them to meet international standards [32]. Henceforth, if these challenges persist, the BAL may find it hard to achieve its goals and objectives in the future decades. As demonstrated by previous studies as shown above, the lack of investors in the African sports industry has been contributing to the African basketball sport's poor economy, which is impeding its future development in a number of ways. In order to make these such competitions achievable, African nations must step up their efforts to support the growth of modern sports.

### 3. Research Design and Methods

Research method means the techniques for finding and evaluating data related to a certain study topic. It is a procedure by which researchers plan their investigation to enable them to use the chosen research tools to successfully achieve their objectives.

**Research approach:** To gather and analyze data, a quantitative research approach was used. This enabled the researcher a greater understanding of how each research participant felt about the Basketball Africa League's influence on the growth of basketball in Rwanda.

#### 3.1. Data Collection Techniques

Two methods of collecting data were used in this study: primary data collection methods and secondary data collection methods.

**Primary data collection methods:** Primary data was gathered to examine the influence of BAL on Rwandan basketball's competitive level, talent development, popularization, promotion, and infrastructure development.

**Secondary data collection methods:** Secondary data was collected in order to evaluate the current status of BAL development.

##### 3.1.1. Literature Research Method

Through the collection, collation, and reading documents on the Web of Science, Google Scholar, and EBSCO databases to understand more comprehensively and correctly the basic theory on the development history and current situation of the Basketball Africa League and Rwanda basketball.

##### 3.1.2. Questionnaire Survey Method

**Quantitative research approach:** A deductive method for data analysis where exact measurement is necessary and hypotheses are developed at the beginning of

the study. The techniques fall into two categories: descriptive and inferential. Descriptive analysis is used to explain the fundamental characteristics of various data kinds and display the information so that the patterns become understandable, while inferential analysis is used to predict an outcome of a larger population by analyzing data gathered from a smaller population [37]. Using this kind of methodology, the researcher was able to look at how the Basketball Africa League impacted Rwanda's basketball industry's growth.

90 questionnaires (see **Appendix**) were distributed via social media to the selected study participants. In order to investigate the Basketball Africa League's (BAL) influence on the growth of basketball in Rwanda, the questions asked were centered on Rwandan basketball and the BAL. All participants followed the BAL's four seasons from 2021 to 2024, and some of the participants had previous experience volunteering for this league in Rwanda.

Objective sampling was utilized during this study in order to select all the participants who would fill out the questionnaires (see **Appendix**). To encourage respondents to feel comfortable and secure enough to participate, the researcher avoided mentioning their identities.

**Table 1.** Number of all the participants.

Objects	Number
Coaches	40
Players	10
Referees and Fans	40

**Table 1** above shows a total of 90 participants who took part in this research, including coaches, players, referees, and fans.

#### *Distribution and collection of survey questionnaires*

**Table 2.** Questionnaire distribution and collection statistics.

Objects	distribution quantity	collection quantity	effective questionnaire	collection rate%	effective rate%
Coaches	40	38	38	95%	95%
Players	10	7	7	70%	70%
Referees and Fans	40	34	34	85%	85%
Total	90	81	81	90%	90%

**Table 2** above shows a total of 90 questionnaires (see **Appendix**) were distributed to the different participants. 90% response rate was achieved with 81 valid responses in total. This response rate can be considered as acceptable.

### **3.2. Data Analysis**

The Basketball Africa League and Rwanda Basketball-related information was

analyzed in order to generate a study that could be utilized to provide guidance suggestions for basketball's future growth in Rwanda and Africa as a whole.

## **4. Results, Findings and Discussion**

As already pointed out, the main objectives of this study include examining the current status of development of BAL and to analyze the impact of this league on the competitive level, talent cultivation, popularization, promotion, and infrastructure development in Rwanda.

### **4.1. Current Status of the Development of the Basketball Africa League**

This study reveals that since the league establishment in 2021, 30 basketball teams from 22 African nations have participated in the BAL regular seasons. It was further revealed that Rwanda is the only country with three teams that have participated in the BAL regular seasons. After examining the teams that have participated in all the four BAL seasons, it is evident that the teams and even the countries have changed since the second season. For instance, four teams from four new countries such as South Africa, South Sudan, Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo participated in the second season. In the third season, three other nations, including Ivory Coast, Guinea-Conakry, and Uganda, also made their first appearances. The fourth season also saw changes to the nations whose teams made it for the first time, including Libya, Burundi, and the Central African Republic. This indicates that the league is growing as new teams and nations are attracted every season. It is also evident that these countries are from different regions, so this is something to be proud of because the league is boosting the competitiveness of basketball across Africa. However, this study indicates that the northern African region has shown remarkable strength, as three of its teams have won the BAL championships in the first four BAL seasons. This is also evidenced by the northern region's efforts to strengthen local leagues and youth development programs, which allow local players to advance in their level of play. Apart from basketball, this has also been witnessed in other sporting disciplines, such as football, in which the northern region has also demonstrated excellent results due to well-organized local league structures. This study therefore suggests that in order to improve their performance and success, teams from other regions must also embark on strengthening the local leagues in their respective countries.

#### ***Number of Players and Experience***

The 2021 season (BAL roster) comprised 154 players from 24 countries across Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. In addition, it is also composed of 20 former Basketball Without Borders (BWB) Africa campers, 21 players with U.S. NCAA Division I experience, 9 players with NBA G League experience, one former NBA player, and others [38]. In the 2022 season, a total of 12 BAL teams collectively featured 156 players from 23 countries across Africa, Europe,

and the U.S. Furthermore, 19 players who previously participated in Basketball Without Borders (BWB), 30 former NCAA Division I players, 13 players with NBA G League experience, 3 former NBA players, and others also took part in this season's tournament [39]. The 2023 season has 12 BAL teams that collectively featured 156 players from 22 countries across Africa, Europe, Oceania, and the U.S. In addition to these were 34 former NCAA Division I players, 26 players who previously participated in Basketball Without Borders (BWB), 17 players with NBA G League experience, 2 former NBA players, and others [40]. In the 2024 season, 12 BAL teams collectively featured 154 players from 25 countries across the world, including 5 players with NBA experience, 19 players with NBA G League experience, 48 former NCAA Division I players, 18 former Basketball Without Borders (BWB) campers, 12 NBA Academy Africa prospects, and 39 players who have represented their national teams at the FIBA Basketball World Cup and FIBA AfroBasket [41]. This implies that between the 2021 and 2024 seasons, over 150 players from different countries across the world participated in the BAL each season, including elite players from different parts of Africa. For example, Khaman Maluach (2023 BAL Runner-Up), Majok Deng (2024 BAL Runner-up), and Nuni Omot (former BAL Champion and 2023 MVP) played for South Sudan in the 2024 Paris Olympics. This is in line with the remarks made by BAL President Amadou Gallo Fall in December 2019 that "our goal is to establish the Basketball Africa League as a destination for top players" [42].

### *Number of Games*

**Table 3.** Total number of games in the Basketball Africa League.

BAL season	Number of games	Host country
2021 season	26	Rwanda
2022 season	38	Rwanda, Egypt, Senegal
2023 season	38	Rwanda, Egypt, Senegal
2024 season	48	Rwanda, Egypt, Senegal, South Africa

**Table 3** above indicates that the number of games played per season was increased from 26 to 48 while the number of host countries was increased from one to four. Since its start in 2021, it is clearly shown that since the BAL started in 2021, the league has organized a total of 150 games. BAL continues to expand its presence across Africa in order to provide players with more opportunities, attract audiences from all over the continent, and boost economic growth via basketball. Every year, the league keeps expanding and developing in terms of the number of games played and host countries. This shows that the BAL has put a lot of support in the development of African basketball in the last four years; as seen above, 150 games have been played. This is a good experience for the players, domestic leagues, and host countries. It implies that BAL is increasingly becoming more competitive and has boosted the standards of African basketball.

## 4.2. Impact of the Basketball Africa League on the Competitive Level, Talent Cultivation, Women, Popularization, Promotion and Infrastructure Development in Rwanda

### 4.2.1. Basketball Africa League and Competitive Level of Rwandan Basketball Players

**Table 4.** The competitive level of Rwandan basketball players in the Basketball Africa League.

Option	Number of participants	Percentage (%)
Significant improvement	57	70.37%
Improved	23	28.4%
No significant impact	1	1.23%
The number of valid responses	81	

**Table 4** above indicates that 70.37% of the sampled population (coaches, players, referee, and fan) showed that the competitive level of Rwandan basketball players in the Basketball Africa League had significant improvement, while 28.4% of the sampled population said the competitive level of Rwandan basketball players in the Basketball Africa League improved and 1.23% said there is no significant impact. This signifies that the Basketball Africa League is a good platform for Rwandan basketball players where they can increase their competitive level, and the outstanding performance of Rwandan basketball players in the Basketball Africa League will attract more attention from domestic fans, stakeholders, and media. By providing a platform for African professional basketball players to showcase their skills and pursue their dreams, the BAL plays an important role in the growth and development of the game of basketball, as it is currently the largest league on the African continent that organizes club-level basketball tournaments and brings together players from all over the world.


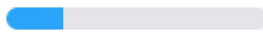
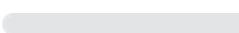
#### ***Analysis and Discussion***

It is evident that based on the BAL's competitiveness, performance is one of the most crucial factors. For this reason, this study also examined Rwandan players' performance in the Basketball Africa League. This is in line with the assertion by Ferioli *et al.* that for the highest-level players in the game of basketball, their strength and effort can be known by comparing what they offer and the performance requirements that match the different levels of competition [43]. As a result of their participation in the BAL, Rwandan basketball players have demonstrated a certain level of competitiveness in the BAL. However, due to the fact that the BAL brings together top basketball clubs and players from various African countries, the competitive level of Rwandan basketball players is still at a moderate level compared to strong African basketball clubs, for example, teams from North and Central Africa. But when it comes to the individual's performance, there are also some outstanding players in the Rwandan basketball clubs. These players with

outstanding skills and game experience contribute key points or good defense to the team during the game. However, the majority of players with high performance levels in the statistics are Americans; Rwandans still make up a relatively small percentage. This is due to the fact that basketball in the USA has developed and the players have a lot of experience. But the Rwandan players have the responsibility to improve their skills and learn from the top players. This study also affirms that the Rwandan basketball club's performance in the Basketball Africa League is not at the highest level when compared to the North African teams because the Rwandan team's best finish was fourth place, while the North African teams had already won three championships. However, there are a number of factors that can relate to their performance, like how strong other domestic leagues are, how well the coach has prepared the team, how well the players play and their experience, and how strong other teams are. On the other side, the Rwandan basketball clubs, even if they have not reached far, have shown that they have some outstanding individuals, and they have shown that teamwork is one of the most important things in the game of basketball that can make you compete with any team. In addition, the Basketball Africa League's elite players and games helped Rwandan players advance their technical and tactical abilities. The league not only attracted the best players from Africa but also introduced modern competitive games, which is crucial for raising the level of competition among Rwandan players. With all these experiences, the domestic basketball league in Rwanda is growing along with increasingly modern training techniques, with efforts made to choose the best players and coaches who are generally professional and experienced. As a result, this study reports that there is no doubt that Rwandan clubs will eventually compete at a high level in the upcoming years, basketball will continue to grow in Rwanda, and our national team will become sufficiently strong.

#### 4.2.2. Opportunities and Platforms Provided by the Basketball Africa League to Rwanda Basketball

**Table 5.** Opportunities and platforms provided by the Basketball Africa League to Rwanda.

Option	Number of participants	Percentage (%)
Significant improvement	63	 77.78%
There is some improvement	18	 22.22%
No significant impact	0	 0%
The number of valid responses	81	

**Table 5** above indicates that while 22.22% of the sampled population said there has been some improvement in the competition opportunities and platforms provided by the Basketball Africa League to Rwanda Basketball, 77.78% of the sampled population (coaches, players, referees, and fans) said there has been a significant improvement. This implies that the Basketball Africa League offers Rwandan

basketball players an entirely unique platform that allows them to continually improve their skills and compete against other strong teams across Africa. All of these opportunities and the platform that BAL has provided enable us to improve the skills, games, and competitiveness of basketball players in Rwanda. Actually, these are additionally helpful in the growth of basketball in terms of promoting the passion for the sport among Rwandans and ensuring its continued success. Based on recent news, basketball has become more popular in Rwanda since the country began hosting the Basketball Africa League finals, which it has done four times already. With the opportunity and platform provided by BAL, as this league continues to raise the level and consist of competitive matches on a regular schedule, the number of young people playing basketball will continue to rise and help the sport grow as a whole.

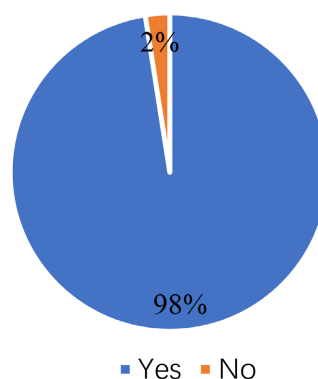
### ***Analysis and Discussion***

This research reveals that BAL stated that some of its goals are to focus on competitive opportunities for African players, off-court opportunities to develop communities through the game of basketball, and to create a platform for African basketball players where they can pursue their dreams without leaving the continent. Through expanding African players' access to the highest quality competition, the league aims to support the growth of basketball in Africa, which is crucial for players to advance to the next level. Following the opportunity to host the BAL, Rwanda's basketball game has seen an incredible boost in growth and development. This platform has brought about a lot of improvements, but Rwandan basketball clubs still have a lot of room for improvement, even though the opportunities for competitions have grown in number. By combining the top basketball clubs from different African nations, BAL has been providing Rwandan basketball players with a platform to compete against the continent's top players since 2021. Rwandan players gain practical experience from these opportunities, which also help them develop their tactical and technical skills. There is also the fact that around 12 clubs compete in the BAL each year, and all of them are leading in the leagues of their countries. This is among the factors that make this league competitive and a good way for Rwandan basketball players to learn from those who are better than them and improve their gameplay. As a result, basketball continues to grow. Every year, more than 150 players from around the world have the opportunity to compete in this league, and since it began in 2021, 150 games have been played. In order to provide off-court opportunities, BAL launched programs like "BAL Future Pros" aimed to cultivate talent across Africa with an emphasis on off-court job opportunities. Future leaders in the sports business will be empowered by this exceptional experience, which will cultivate local expertise. However, this study argues that African nations should also implement other initiatives that support all these programs. The BAL helps create a sustainable sports ecosystem that promotes long-term growth, economic prospects, and increased global representation for African sports by developing professionals within the continent. On the other hand, they started the BAL4HER program to support women

in sports by encouraging equality and confidence. Their objectives are to: support organizations that support women's programs financially; provide opportunities to attract women to participate in BAL activities; and recognize athletes who may serve as role models for young women.

#### 4.2.3. Basketball Africa League on the Rwanda Basketball Talents Cultivation

**Figure 1** below shows that 98% of the sampled population (coaches, players, referees and fans) agreed that the Basketball Africa League (BAL) has a positive impact on the young generations in Rwanda, while 2% of the sampled population disagreed that the Basketball Africa League (BAL) has a positive impact on the young generations.



**Figure 1.** Influence of Basketball Africa League on the talent cultivation.

BAL plays an important part in the growth of basketball among young people, according to the study's findings. This is evident from the different programs it has set up for younger generations that promote and develop their skills and talents. The league's objective is to be among the top in the professional basketball industry. Young African talent is aware of this and is given the chance to pursue careers as professionals. According to this study, Rwandan basketball will keep getting better if young players are properly prepared, increasing scouts in the process of finding capable talents and increasing youth competitions. This gives hope that with the good partnership that BAL has with Rwanda in the development of basketball talents, it will continue to improve their level. This is in line with a study by Xuexiang. People are paying close attention to the selection and development of outstanding talents as a result of the modern game of basketball's rapid growth in popularity, professional development, and high level of competition. Among these, the quality and caliber of youth training will be crucial to the competition's future [44].

#### *Analysis and Discussion*

BAL prioritizes youth development and education through basketball as part of its main goal. In this context, the league is concentrating on initiatives and plans aimed to promote young talent and offer opportunities for education. BAL's dedication to youth has been evident in recent years, and some of its objectives have


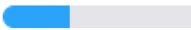

become stronger. These include developing basketball at the youth level, identifying and empowering young talent on the African continent through BAL activities, and encouraging coaching training and basketball clinics. BAL brings some hopes to many young basketball players in Rwanda; many of them aspire to play for clubs in the BAL. In order to promote and provide opportunities for young talents, BAL, through its partnership with NBA Academy, has set up a system to identify the most talented young African kids in basketball. These young athletes can then continue their basketball training and education in Senegal through NBA Academy Africa, and the top players get to play for the clubs that took part in BAL each year. Some of them have advanced to the highest levels and are currently playing in the NBA, NBA G League, NCCA, and even national teams as a result of these opportunities. Growing and advancing basketball in Rwanda has been the Rwanda Basketball Association's main goal. However, as is well known, young people are the initial ones to develop any sport. In this regard, BAL and Rwanda Development Board (RDB) have announced a collaboration that will strengthen youth development through basketball as a core component of its mission. BAL actively promotes youth basketball and the development of new skills through coaching training and basketball clinics. They have arranged competition games, improved the abilities of young players with talent, and offered opportunities for players. Also, BAL is contributing to education and the development of future leaders through the initiative of the BAL Future Pros program, which focuses on life skills education and off-court job opportunities for young talent across Africa in order to prepare them to be future leaders in the sports industry. Nowadays, in Rwanda, basketball is obviously highly popular. It is impossible to overlook the part that BAL plays in the lives of some young players. In order to continue to develop the talents of young players. However, the findings of this study indicate that Rwanda and Africa in general face a number of problems and obstacles that are limiting young people's basketball development. The first is the African basketball industry's lack of funding sources, which has been linked to limited programs for young players. Second, there aren't many highly qualified coaches, which could cause some talented young people to go unidentified and their professional development to be delayed. Thirdly, young people in many African countries are growing up without a venue where they can show their skills because there are not enough basketball facilities.

#### **4.2.4. Popularization and Promotion of Rwanda Basketball in the Basketball Africa League**

**Table 6** below shows that 71.6% of the sampled population (coaches, players, referees, and fans) agreed the Basketball Africa League (BAL) made significant promotion of basketball in Rwanda, while 25.93% of the sampled population shows there is a certain promotion on Rwanda basketball, and 2.47% said there is no significant impact. According to the table above, the BAL competition has been one of the primary factors influencing basketball promotion in Rwanda in recent years. This is evident from the growing popularity of basketball in Rwanda since

the BAL started, which has also been accompanied by an increase in the number of spectators attending basketball games in stadiums. This is encouraging for the growth of basketball in Rwanda since, as the basketball sport gains popularity, both the infrastructure and the opportunities for basketball continue to improve and grow. Additionally, as basketball's popularity grows, it boosts the growth of the sports sector and strengthens the broader national economy. For instance, holding big events like the BAL, selling tickets to watch the games, and having these businesses advertise during the games will all help the sports sector and the nation as a whole.

**Table 6.** The level of popularization and promotion of Rwandan basketball.

Option	Number of participants	Percentage (%)
Significant promotion	58	 71.6%
There is a certain promotion	21	 25.93%
No significant impact	2	 2.47%
The number of valid responses	81	

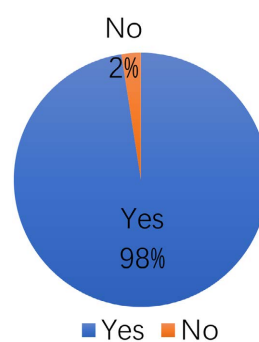
### ***Analysis and Discussion***

The findings of this study reveal that every season, basketball fans from all over the world watch BAL finals, which Rwanda has successfully hosted four times. These games have grown to be a significant platform for Rwandan basketball. As well-known, community participation plays a key role in the growth of sports, including stadium attendance, online streaming, etc. Because it has been held in Rwanda multiple times, BAL, the most significant tournament on the African continent, has increased the number of basketball fans in Rwanda. Additionally, as the game's fan base keeps growing, the investors continue to grow and expand in that sport too. On top of that, four new teams have joined the Rwandan basketball league since the BAL started to be played in Rwanda as well, indicating a rise in the number of investors in this sport, and it is in line with the growing popularity of basketball fans. The government of Rwanda understands what popularity in any sport means because the country invests heavily in sport tourism, as seen by its investments in BAL, Arsenal, and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG). For this reason, it is putting in place a number of initiatives to encourage its population to participate in sports. The national leadership's efforts to promote sports are also noteworthy, and this will eventually produce remarkable outcomes in a number of areas, including stadium attendance, the development of young talent, and investment attraction. However, comparing the way that the population attends BAL games to the Rwanda basketball league, this study states that numerous improvements still need to be made in order to boost participation. This is closely related to raising the quality of the coaches, players, and games. Because, compared to the BAL fan base, it is frequently built on the fact that only good teams attend the tournaments, which indicates that the players, coaches, and

level of play are all at a high level. Also, providing more different and high-quality services at the stadiums in addition to successfully advertising basketball games on radio, TV, and social media in general are also crucial. Due to how big the league is and the professional background of BAL administrators, the BAL competition offers an abundance of experience. Which can raise the standard of basketball in Rwanda by increasing its popularity and promotion. There is a need for the RBF leaders to put more effort into the following areas: increasing understanding of the advertising industry, particularly with regard to social media, as a lot of people have shifted to technology nowadays. The ability to understand the target market is essential for those who are capable of managing social media platforms. Improving creative content is another way to create an unforgettable experience that fans who attend stadium games will always remember, encouraging them to attend again and motivating other people to participate in. Also, in order to keep encouraging people to participate in basketball activities, federation authorities must aim to implement programs that promote community development through basketball.

#### 4.2.5. Infrastructure and Improvement of Rwanda Basketball through Basketball Africa League

**Figure 2** below indicates that 98% of the sampled population (coaches, players, referees, and fans) agreed that the Basketball Africa League (BAL) has a positive impact on the basketball infrastructure in Rwanda, while 2% of the sampled population said there is no impact the Basketball Africa League (BAL) has on the basketball infrastructure.



**Figure 2.** Improvement of the infrastructure through the Basketball Africa League.

The study findings indicate how the BAL, the most important league on the African continent, has contributed to Rwanda's basketball infrastructure and basketball as a whole. There is still lots of work to be done until Rwanda and Africa in general have adequate sporting facilities, which means we have to consider full advantage of every opportunity to expand our international network of partnerships. This means that every project to develop Rwandan basketball infrastructure through BAL is a comprehensive process that requires the combined efforts and support of the government. As a result of the improvements BAL has made to Rwandan basketball, more people participate in the sport, and the government is

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investing money in basketball's infrastructure. It is also expected that as the league's role continues to grow and develop, Rwanda's basketball infrastructure will get even better. This is in line with a study by Feflea *et al.*, which reported that strong sports infrastructure supports basketball's growth and expansion at the local, state, and national levels. Players can train in a modern and advanced, well-equipped facility to improve their playing skills and experience. Due to the fact that infrastructure is one of the factors that gives players the chance to demonstrate their talents and advance their skills. Because the quality of the training infrastructure a player uses and the frequency of their access to it might affect how well they perform [45].

### ***Analysis and Discussion***

As a result of Rwanda and BAL's tight cooperation, infrastructure, a key factor of sports development, is expanding to promote the growth of basketball in Rwanda. This study reveals that BAL is making contributions to the improvement of basketball infrastructure in addition to promoting basketball in Africa, mentoring young players, and raising player level. Rwanda has also made investments in the growth of the sport tourism sector in order to promote economic development as infrastructure expands in line with economic growth. The country has started making significant investments in new infrastructure and sports tourism development. This is among the factors that have allowed them to host the BAL finals four times. The nation's economy benefits from sports infrastructure in a number of ways, including game tickets, advertising revenue for these facilities, venue rentals for big conferences and artists' concerts, etc. This means these infrastructures not only meet the needs of basketball games but also have the ability to host other large-scale sports events to improve the utilization rate and economic benefits of the venue. BAL has been helping in contributing to the infrastructure growth of basketball in Rwanda by collaborating with FERWABA to construct a basketball court that will help nurture young talent players. Supporting the growth of young and vibrant talent will be the first step towards establishing an effective sport that competes on an international level. As the body that regulates basketball in Rwanda, FERWABA has stepped up its efforts to upgrade basketball facilities by working with other programs like NBA Africa and Giants of Africa. However, due to the fact there are still barriers limiting young people from finding a place where they can improve their talents, this study reports that additional work is still required to meet the country's basketball infrastructure demands. Another is the neglect of rural areas and the concentration of sports facilities in urban areas. This implies that many talented young people aren't given the chance to showcase their potential. The expansion of sporting facilities around the whole country is the duty of the government. Another is that in order to attract investors to basketball infrastructure, FERWABA needs to expand its approaches. Young athletes will have a lot of space to develop their skills, and the sports industry's economy will benefit as well. This is among the factors that will contribute to the overall improvement of Rwandan basketball.

## 5. Conclusion

BAL has contributed significantly to the growth and development of basketball in Rwanda. According to this study, this league has provided many opportunities that have contributed to the growth of Rwandan basketball. These include competing against the top African basketball clubs, which has enhanced Rwandan players' level of competitiveness, supported young talent through its programs, increased the game's popularity, offered the chance to host finals, and promoted basketball around the nation. BAL has also helped to mentor female players through its BAL4HER program and contributed to the building of state-of-the-art basketball infrastructure. All of these opportunities have facilitated the growth of Rwandan basketball through elevating local league competitiveness and advancing the level of professionalization of the sport. In equal measure, the growth of basketball has resulted in increased ticket and advertising revenues, which has boosted the commercial viability of the game in Rwanda. However, there is still a need to strengthen efforts in various development aspects due to the various emerging challenges, including inadequate basketball infrastructure that meets international standards, shortage of professional human resources with the required expertise, knowledge, and skills, shortage of investment support, absence of enough talent development programs, and other pertinent issues. In response, FERWABA needs to develop a sustainable strategy for boosting the promotion of the Rwandan basketball league, which includes finding more sponsors for the league and putting strict development measures in place. However, generally speaking, the Basketball Africa League has a positive influence on the general development of basketball in Rwanda and across the entire African continent. Possibly, Rwandan basketball will grow much more as long as this league keeps going strong and expanding to the global market.

## 6. Suggestions

1) This study therefore suggests that in order to improve Rwandan player's performance and success, the basketball federation must also embark on strengthening the local leagues. Also, investing in young players' programs along with paying careful attention to each of the aspects will help them become effective players in the future.

2) As the foundation of any sport's growth, coaches require particular focus, especially those who mentor young players. It is important to consider the caliber of the training they offer as well. In order to improve the level of young coaches and expand their understanding of modern coaching techniques and styles, these coaches should additionally get more training. This will make it possible for Rwandan basketball to have more competent and skilled coaches as a result.

3) A key aspect of sports development is infrastructure; therefore, Rwanda basketball federation should concentrate on expanding the number of good and modern basketball courts across the country to make it easier for players to find a good place to practice. This will also provide favorable conditions for young, talented

athletes.

4) In order to boost the economy of Rwandan basketball, those in charge must put in place long-term strategies that go hand in hand with increasing efforts to encourage investors to invest in this sport by establishing modern policies to attract entrepreneurs to advertise their products during the game. By putting in place various programs to attract fans to attend the stadiums because the more fans come, the more revenue from tickets increases.

## 7. Limitations

The following limitations were identified in conducting this study: First, very few studies have been conducted regarding the development of the Basketball Africa League because it is a new league on the continent. Secondly, few studies show a connection between basketball in Rwanda and other top professional basketball leagues. Future research should continue to explore the cooperation between African basketball and other world-class professional basketball leagues.

## Data Availability

All data regarding the research work is clearly mentioned in the research work.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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## Appendix

### Survey on the Impact of Basketball Africa League (BAL) on the Development of Basketball in Rwanda

Dear participant, the overall goal of this research is to explore in depth the impact of the Basketball Africa League (BAL) on the development of basketball in Rwanda. I understand that this questionnaire will take up some of your time, so I appreciate your precious contribution towards the successful completion of this study. I thank you in advance for your patience and overall cooperation in filling out this survey.

1. What impact do you think the Basketball Africa League (BAL) has on the competitive level of Rwandan basketball players?

- Significant improvement       Improved       No significant impact

2. What impact do you think the Basketball Africa League (BAL) has on the opportunities and platforms for Rwandan basketball?

- Significant improvement       There is some improvement.  
 No significant impact

3. What impact do you think the Basketball Africa League (BAL) has on the popularization and promotion of basketball in Rwanda?

- Significant promotion       There is a certain promotion.  
 No significant impact

4. Do you think the Basketball Africa League (BAL) has a positive impact on the young generations in Rwanda?

- Yes       No

5. Do you think the Basketball Africa League (BAL) has an impact on the basketball infrastructure in Rwanda?

- Yes       No