URBAN IDENTITY AS A FACTOR IN INCREASING URBANIZATION EFFICIENCY IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The urban identity of the migrant population in the citizenship process is a key factor in determining whether they are willing to stay in the city. This paper examines the relationship between identity and the willingness of rural migrants to stay using the Data of China Migrants Dynamic Survey. The results show a significant positive correlation between the urban identity of the agricultural transfer population and their willingness to stay, and the urban identity can increase the probability of their stay. A moderating variable, the improvement of personal skill level, however, increases the probability of rural migrants returning to their hometowns. Based on the above findings, we suggest improving the urban identity of rural migrants to promote the two-way flow of labor between urban and rural areas, which will help narrow the urban-rural gap further and promote the equalization of urban-rural identity in China.

Keywords: urban identity, rural migrants, China, urbanization, rural areas

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INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, despite the polluted air, noise, crowds of people, and high risk of health impairment, etc., the standard of living in the city significantly attracts young people because many prospects for improving their financial situation and career growth can be found. For example, although China has addressed absolute poverty in rural areas through poverty eradication, the per capita disposable income of rural residents, especially those in poor areas, has increased significantly, reaching 18,931 yuan in 2021, real growth of 9.7%, 2.6 percentage points higher than the growth rate of urban residents' income. Even, at the beginning of 2022 in China, the wage rate in rural areas was less than 31% of urban households, while the total spending in the

countryside is more than 55% of urban residents (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022).

Comprehensive reforms to the household registration system and other aspects of promoting equality between urban and rural residents could allow for the integration of mobile populations into the cities where they live and the movement of human capital across regions, which could lead to significant efficiency gains and economic growth (Zhong et al., 2020). The transferred population from agriculture provides the necessary labor force for urban development and improves the efficiency of resource reallocation (Fang, 2020; Sassin, 2019a). According to the results of the Seventh National Census, China's migrant population has reached 376 million people (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022). The Chinese Communist Party maintains that urbanization has occurred without civil unrest, despite the fact that the country has been using the hukou household registration system since 1958 (Jaramillo, 2022). The importance of the hukou system lies in controlling urbanization in the country – filtering the more qualified labor force to create a new middle class (Boquen, 2022).

During 2021-2025 (the 14th Five-Year Plan), China will be laying the foundation for achieving two key strategic goals: doubling GDP by 2035 and achieving the status of a high-income country (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022). Against the background of a general slowdown in the population growth of the Republic, the strategic goals are quite achievable, provided, however, that the growth rate of domestic consumption will increase (National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), People´s Republic of China, 2022). It is assumed that by 2025 the urbanization rate in China will be 65%; that is, within five years, more than 10 million Chinese will move from rural to urban areas annually (Yiwei & Xuechen, 2021). However, the hukou registration system implies linking social services to the place of residence. Consequently, rural migrants are forced to spend cash on insurance and social services and keep the rest as savings to support relatives living in rural areas, thereby significantly reducing consumer demand in China.

The existing household registration system complicates the process of urbanization in China due to social discrimination against rural migrants, which manifests itself in limited access to municipal services (public health, education, social insurance, etc.). The new generation of internal migrants (children of Deng Xiaoping's reforms), unlike the older generation (growing up in line with the "cultural revolution" of 1966-1976), socially identify themselves with professional and career development, rather than with the satisfaction of basic everyday needs (Jaramillo, 2022). Therefore, social discrimination generated by the functioning hukou system provokes an increase in social tension among internally displaced migrants and threatens to develop a sense of a general political challenge (Boquen, 2022). For this reason, in the 14th Five-Year Plan, the Chinese authorities are focused on reforming the household registration system with an emphasis on the legalization of rural migrants (Liu & Jia, 2021). The dualistic urban-rural household registration system in China is the root cause of the identity problems of the migrant population (Hou & Yao, 2016). Due to the difference in household registration, the migrant population flows into cities with large differences among residents in education, social security, health care, and housing, which in turn further contributes to the difficulty of social integration of the migrant population (Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important to study the factors influencing the willingness of the migrant population to stay in the city to truly integrate into the city, become true locals, improve management and services for the migrant population, and increase the efficiency of reforming the household registration system in the country.

The possible marginal contributions of this paper are reflected in the following three aspects. First, it is the first study to examine the residency intention of the agricultural transfer population from the perspective of identity, confirming that identity is a key variable influencing the residency intention of the agricultural transfer population and providing a systematic explanation of the influence mechanism. Second, it is the first study to examine the subjective integration of the agricultural transfer population and employment-occupational identity, which hinders factors of identity and basic rights protection. An identity index is constructed, and the parameters are estimated from two perspectives - comprehensive effect and heterogeneity - by combining the skill level of the agricultural transfer population. Third, this paper confirms that the improvement of the

identity of the agricultural transfer population is beneficial to the people who to improve their urban residence and allow them to participate equally in the construction and development process of the city.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: the second part provides a review of the relevant literature on residency intentions, identity, and personal skills; the third part describes the data sources and illustrates the strategy design of the empirical study; the fourth part presents the results of the empirical study (and includes heterogeneity analysis and robustness tests); and the fifth part concludes the paper with policy recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity is an important dimension reflecting the social integration of the population. Basu (2013) stated that an individual's identity in a group and his or her sense of integration into society determine the individual's ability to engage in productive activities. Whether the dynamics of social integration in cities can be truly activated depends on whether the agricultural transfer population becomes the builders and new citizens of the city (Yunsong & Yi, 2016). Identity contributes to the increase in labor supply of the agricultural transfer population (Lu & Liang, 2016) and has a positive incentive for the career orientation and planning of the agricultural transfer population (Sassin, 2019b, Kasych & Vochozka, 2019). Juhua et al. (2016) showed that the higher urban identity of the agricultural transfer population helps to promote the necessary adjustments in employment policies, protection of basic rights and interests, and public services by the governments in the inflow areas so that it can receive more equal treatment as citizens. It can be seen that after the agricultural transfer population enjoys equal citizenship treatment, they are more willing to choose residence.

It is worth noting that identity, as an important dimension for measuring the social integration of the population, has been addressed in both domestic and international studies and surveys. Basu (2013) pointed out that an individual's identity in a group and his or her sense of integration into society determine the individual's ability to engage in productive activities. This is corroborated by domestic scholars' studies, which point out that identity contributes to the increase in the labor supply of rural migrants and has positive incentives for the career orientation and planning of rural migrants (Lu & Liang, 2016). Further, Juhua et al. (2016) argued that the higher urban identity of the agricultural transfer population helps to push the government in the inflow areas to make necessary adjustments in labor and employment, rights and benefits, and public services so that it can receive more equal treatment as citizens. This means that a higher identity of the migrant population has a positive effect on their labor intentions, career planning, and reasonable career choices and motivates the government to introduce corresponding policies to protect the basic rights of the migrant population. These are important guarantees for the citizenship of the floating population, and after it enjoys equal treatment as citizens, their willingness to stay will increase. Based on this, this paper will study the residency intention of rural migrants from the perspective of identity and propose policy recommendations to improve the residency intention of rural migrants based on the empirical results.

Wu and Chen (2010) found that household settlement thresholds constitute the institutional and systemic basis of barriers to population mobility, and Wei and Chen (2018) showed that high household settlement thresholds established by large cities create serious exclusion of basic education resources and other resources for the non-domiciled population, which makes children of the migrant population stay in their domicile. This shows that the "threshold effect" of the household registration system has a considerable negative impact on the identity of the mobile population. At the same time, ownership of housing is also an important factor affecting the urban identity of the migrant population. For the migrant population, owning housing property rights in the inflowing city means a foothold and stability, which positively contributes to their identity. Therefore, both housing status and social status directly affect the urban identity of the agricultural transfer population (Hou & Yao, 2016). A study by Zhu and Leng (2018) found that owned housing has a significant positive effect on the formation of the urban identity of the agricultural transfer population, but policy housing does not have a significant effect on the urban identity of the agricultural transfer population. Besides, the level of human capital,

past work experience, the ability to bear risks, and social capital and economic and socio-cultural environmental factors are all influential factors for the residence of the agricultural transfer population (Wang, 2014; Han & Denise, 2013; Vasiljeva et al., 2020; Megits et al., 2020).

The above literature reveals that despite the low urban identity of rural migrants, they still have a relatively strong desire to stay. This suggests that rural migrants have more employment opportunities, stronger externalities and complementarities of human capital, and higher income returns in cities, but the identity inequality caused by institutional barriers undermines equity and efficiency. Therefore, analyzing the effects of identity and personal skills on rural migrants' willingness to stay can help better understand the identity issues of different groups of people in urban development and the importance of cities' corresponding efforts in promoting equity and justice, as well as help make more targeted policy recommendations in reforming the household registration system in China.

DATA AND METHODS

Data source

The data used in this paper are from the 2017 Mobile Population Dynamic Monitoring Survey, which is derived from a stratified sample survey of the mobile population conducted by the National Health and Family Planning Commission in 31 provinces of China. The overall sample was the inflowing population who came to live locally one month before the survey, who were not residents in the district (county or city), and were aged 15-59 years old. The survey contains basic information on the household and population of the agricultural transfer population, mobility and employment characteristics, as well as health and family planning and social integration. In this paper, we first retained the data of rural household registration according to the research needs and limited the sample to those with complete completion of age, education level, ethnicity, political outlook, land income, and indicators related to identity. After the above processing, 15242 samples from 31 provinces were finally selected.

Variable selection

1. *Dependent variable:* The dependent variable selected in this paper is the residence intention of rural migrant *i* in city *j* ($Willingness_{ij}$), which is based on the questionnaire questions "Do you intend to stay in the local area in the future?", and "If you do not intend to stay in the local area, do you choose to return to your hometown or go elsewhere?", and "If you do not intend to stay in the local area, do you choose to return home or go elsewhere?" In this paper, according to the actual situation of the study, the data without clear intention to return or stay in the local area and those who choose to move to other places are excluded, and the final value of 0 indicates the intention to return to the local area, and the value of 1 indicates the intention to stay in the local area.

2. *Explanatory variables:* The core explanatory variables in this paper are the *identity* (hereafter referred to as the "identity index") of the migrant agricultural population after their inflow into the city. The identity index was calculated using data of the 2017 Mobile Population Dynamic Monitoring Survey.

Based on the review of existing literature, this paper selects specific indicators (nature of employment unit, employment status, temporary residence permit/residence permit processing, love of inflow place, concern of inflow place, willingness to actively integrate, acceptance by locals, and customary dependence) from the questionnaire of Mobile Population Dynamic Monitoring Survey to construct the identity index of rural migrants after their inflow to cities identity index (Zhu & Leng, 2018; Bayramov et al., 2021).

These indicators used to construct the identity index system in this sample (15242) were subjected to KMO and Bartlett's test. After testing, the KMO statistic of this data was 0.758, the chi-square value of Bartlett's spherical test was greater than its chi-square critical value, and the significance value was less than 0.05, so this data was suitable for principal component analysis (Liu & Wang, 2021). The number of principal components was determined based on the Kaiser criterion. Principal components were interpreted in terms of the variables that had formed them. These are variables that have factor loadings with the corresponding principal component not less than |0.7| (Menke, 2018).

An identity index is a synthetic indicator

calculated on the basis of additive convolution of partial indicators of identity – values of principal components. The weight of each component is the percentage of the variance contribution of the component to the cumulative variance contribution (Menke, 2018). The STATISTICA 12.0 program was used for PCA and the determination of their values and variance.

3. Control variables. The control variables in this paper include two major categories. The first category is individual characteristics variables $X_{ij,}$ including variables: age, gender (*sex*), ethnicity (*nation*), political outlook (*party*), marital status (*marriage*), and education level (*edu*). The Mobile Population Dynamic Monitoring Survey was a source of the values of these indicators. The second category is the urban characteristics variable Z_j, which includes the log of year-end population, log GDP per capita, log of the average wage of employees, log of financial expenditure on education, and the number of hospitals and health centers per 10,000 people in 2016. The city statistics were obtained from the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics and the statistical bulletins on each region's national economic and social development (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022).

Model design

Based on the literature review and the data selected for this paper, the following regression models were set up (Chesneau et al., 2020):

$$Willingness_{ij} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 identity_j + \alpha_2 X_{ij} + \alpha_3 Z_j \quad (1)$$

$$Willingness_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 identity_j + \beta_2 identity_j \times edu_{ij} + \beta_3 edu_{ij} + \beta_4 X_i + \beta_5 Z_j \quad (2)$$

where:

$Willingness_{ij}$ - the residence intention of rural migrant *i* in city *j;*

$identity_j$ - the identity of the migrant agricultural population after their inflow into the city;

edu - education level of rural migrant;

X_{ij} – migrant's individual characteristics;

Z_j - urban characteristics variables;

α_0, β_0 – constants;

α_1 - α_3, β_1 - β_5 – coefficients at independent variables.

Model (1) examines the effect of identity on the residence intention of rural migrants. Model (2) examines the effect of skill bias of identity on the willingness to stay in the agricultural transfer population. This paper uses the education level edu_{ij} as a proxy variable for the skills of rural migrants, and the higher the education level of rural migrants, the higher the labor skills, which are positively correlated. The explanatory variables of each model in this study are all 0-1 variables, and Probit regression is used for analysis. STATISTICA 12.0 software package was applied to construct models.

RESULTS

First, this section analyzes the results of assessing the principal components, which form the basis for calculating the urban identity index, and analyzes the results of the regression models to examine the relationship between the identity index and the willingness to stay off the agricultural transfer population, and finally discusses the impact of the skill bias of the identity on the willingness to stay off the agricultural transfer population.

Components of the identity of the migrant agricultural population

Based on the PSA results, four components of the identity of the migrant agricultural population with eigenvalues greater than 1 were identified (Table 1). These components explain 70.58% of the original information, and this value can reflect all the index information in general (Menke, 2018).

Table 1: Characteristics of the principal components of the identity of the migrant agricultural population

Principal components	Variables that have formed principal components	Eigenvalue	Variance percent, %
Subjective integration of the agricultural transfer population	Temporary residence permit/residence permit processing, love of inflow place, concern of inflow place, willingness to actively integrate	2.81	30.14
Employment occupational identity	Nature of employment unit, employment status	1.44	15.46
Hindering identity factors	Customary dependence	1.28	13.76
Basic rights protection	Acceptance by locals	1.04	11.15
Identified principal components			70.58

The four extracted principal components can be categorized as subjective integration of the agricultural transfer population, employment occupational identity, hindering identity factors, and basic rights protection. Through dialogue with the literature, the four dimensions extracted in this paper can reflect the main characteristics of identity in a more comprehensive way (Zhu & Leng, 2018; Bayramov et al., 2021; Guliyeva et al., 2021).

Based on the variance values of the principal components, the weighting factors of the partial indicators for the identity index were determined. The weights of the four components are as follows: the weight of subjective integration of the agricultural transfer population is 0.427, the weight of employment occupational identity is 0.219, the weight of hindering identity factors is 0.195, and the weight of basic rights protection is 0.158.

Baseline regression

Table 2 examines the relationship between the urban identity index of the agricultural transfer population and the agricultural transfer population's willingness to stay.

The results of regression (1) show that the higher the urban identity is, the higher is the willingness to stay of the agricultural transfer population. By calculating the elasticity index, this paper concludes that when the urban identity index increases by 1 compared to the average value of the indicator for the sample, the probability of rural migrants choosing to stay increases by 4.3%. The identity index is an expression of individual's subjective perceptions of their own identity, but it is also influenced by certain urban characteristics, so this paper adds control variables: the log of the year-end population; the log of GDP per capita; the log of average wages of employees; the log of financial expenditure on education; and the number of hospitals and health centers per 10,000 people in regressions (2) to (6), in that order.

The results of regression (2) indicate that the larger the urban population size is, the lower the willingness of the agricultural transfer population to choose residence will be accordingly. This is because when only the population size of the city is considered, the pressure of survival and the difficulty of establishing a foothold are greater in cities with large population sizes, and it is difficult for rural migrants to obtain a corresponding identity, thus reducing their willingness to choose residence. When considering the log of year-end population and the log of GDP per capita in regression (3), however, the willingness of rural migrants to choose residence increases because the larger the population size and the more economically developed the city is, the more inclusive the city is and the more comprehensive employment opportunities are, which is also one of the important factors for rural migrants to choose residence.

Table 2: Regression models for assessing the relationship between the urban identity and willingness to stay in the agricultural transfer population (dependent variable: willingness to stay in the agricultural transfer population)

Variable	Models					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Identity index	0.688**	0.679**	0.697**	0.697**	0.698**	0.702**
	(0.038)	(0.039	(0.039)	(0.039	(0.040	(0.026
Log of year-end population		-0.042**	0.004**	0.014**	0.052*	0.011*
		(0.023	(0.024	(0.025	(0.061	(0.062)
Log GDP per capita			0.295**	0.343*	0.317*	0.242*
			(0.043)	(0.055)	(0.065)	(0.066
Log of average wages of employees				-0.159	-0.008	0.155
				(0.116)	(0.156)	(0.160)
Log of financial expenditure on education					-0.058*	-0.070*
					(0.067	(0.068
Number of hospitals and health centers per 10,000 people						-0.204**
						(0.039
Age	-0.019***	-0.020***	-0.019**	-0.019***	-0.018***	-0.018***
	(0.002)	(0.002	(0.002)	(0.002	(0.002	(0.002
Sex	0.199**	0.201**	0.205**	0.204**	0.188**	0.186**
	(0.040	(0.041	(0.041	(0.041	(0.042	(0.042
Nation	-0.181*	-0.216*	-0.250*	-0.266*	-0.283*	-0.276*
	(0.070)	(0.074	(0.074	(0.075)	(0.080	(0.081)
Party	-0.204*	-0.202*	-0.199*	-0.198*	-0.207*	-0.200*
	(0.078	(0.079	(0.080	(0.080	(0.081	(0.082
Education level	0.141**	0.138**	0.136**	0135**	0.143**	0.148**
	(0.028	(0.023	(0.024)	(0.024	(0.024)	(0.024)
Marriage	0.029**	0.021**	0.022**	0.022**	0.026**	0.029**
	(0.031	(0.032)	(0.032	(0.032	(0.033	(0.033
Constant	0.002	-0.139	-3.257	-2.060	-2.901	-3.404
N	15242	14827	14820	14820	14481	14435
p-value	0.025	0.043	0.027	0.005	0.080	0.057

Note: *, **, *** - Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% confidence levels, respectively, with standard errors in parentheses; N – the number of observations. Same as below.

In addition, this paper adds another urban control variable in regression (4): the log of the average wage of employees, to examine the effect of the income level of the agricultural transfer population on the identity of the agricultural transfer population. In addition, the abundance of educational and medical resources in the city can also affect the identity index of the rural migrant population. Therefore, this paper adds two variables about education resources and medical resources in regression (5) and regression (6) in turn: the ratio of year-end population to financial expenditure on education, and the ratio of year-end population to the number of hospitals and health centers. Comparing regression (3) with regression (5), the coefficient of the identity index changes from 0.697 to 0.698 after adding the variables the log of the average wage of employees and the ratio of year-end population to financial expenditure on education, i.e., higher income levels and abundant educational resources also increase the willingness to stay off the agricultural transfer population. The coefficient of regression (6) becomes 0.702 after adding the variable on medical resources, indicating that the willingness to stay off the agricultural transfer population has further increased.

Heterogeneity analysis

The above analysis suggests that a higher degree of urban identity raises the probability of residency among rural migrants. At the city level, there are important mechanisms in which abundant economic benefits and rich educational and medical resources play a role in the high identity of rural migrants. The results of the baseline regression reflect the combined effect of identity on the choice of residence of the agricultural transfer population. However, the heterogeneity analysis conducted below shows that the economic development status of the region from which the agricultural transfer population flows into the city, the mobility range of the agricultural transfer population, and the age and income level of the agricultural transfer population all affect their willingness to return to their hometown.

According to the economic region division of the National Bureau of Statistics of China, this paper divides the inflow of cities into four regions: the eastern, central, western, and northeastern regions and the empirical results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression model for assessing the relationship between the willingness to stay of the rural migrant population and the region and mobility range of the mobility city

Variables	Full Sample (1)	Eastern (2)	Central (3)	West (4)	Northeast (5)	Cross-Provincial Mobility (6)	Intra-Provincial Inter-City (7)	Intra-city Cross-county (8)
Identity index	0.702**	0.765*	0.737*	0.628*	0.795*	0.768*	0.628*	0.577
	(0.026	(0.062	(0.098	(0.071	(0.072	(0.055	(0.077	(0.102
City Characteristics	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal Characteristics	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Constant	-3.404	1.273	-5.488	-12.012	-18.810	-3.340	0.564	-4.555
N	14435	7656	2059	3743	977	7510	4841	2084
p-value	0.021	0.094	0.006	0.013	0.051	0.011	0.017	0.082

Note：√- control variables available in the models (city characteristics and personal characteristics).

The coefficients of the identity index in the eastern, central, western, and northeastern regions are 0.765, 0.737, 0.628, and 0.795, respectively, which indicate that the rural migrant population flowing into the western region with the same identity index is less likely to choose residence. Also, the probability of choosing residence is higher for agricultural transfer population flowing into economically developed regions than economically less

developed regions. This result is logical, as the infrastructure and various resources in the cities of economically developed regions are relatively abundant, and the employment opportunities and labor compensation are higher than those in less economically developed regions, the probability of rural migrants choosing to return to their hometowns will be lower.

Table 3 shows the regression results of the three types of samples: inter-provincial mobility, intra-provincial inter-city mobility, and intra-city inter-county mobility, with the coefficients of the identity index being 0.768, 0.628, and 0.577, respectively. A reasonable explanation for the above results is that, compared with intra-city mobility and intra-provincial mobility, and intra-provincial mobility compared with inter-provincial mobility, the cultural bases and resource endowments of the domicile and inflow areas of the rural migrants are more or less the same, the geographical distance is closer, the economic gap is smaller, and the identity is more consistent, so to a certain extent their willingness to stay is not as strong.

Moderating effect of personal skills

Personal skills are a concrete manifestation of the level of human capital, and the level of skills affects the willingness of rural migrants to return to their hometowns to a certain extent. By introducing an interaction term between the identity index and the education level of the agricultural transfer population for regression, this paper expects that the agricultural transfer population with high skill level tends to choose residence more than the agricultural transfer population in the low-skill group.

As shown in Table 4, the coefficient of the identity index is significantly positive in the full-sample regression conducted in this paper, controlling for the urban characteristics variable and the personal characteristics variable, which is consistent with the previous results.

Table 4: Regression model for assessing the relationship between personal skills and residence of agricultural transfer population

Variables						N	p-value
Identity index	Identity index × Education level	Education level	City Characteristics	Personal Characteristics	Constant		
1.004**	-0.098**	0.422*	√	√	-4.230	14435	0.025
（0.023）	（0.038）	（0.099）					

Note：√- control variables available in the models (city characteristics and personal characteristics).

The coefficient of the identity index is significantly positive and the estimated coefficient of the interaction term between the identity index and education level is significantly negative, which indicates that the higher the level of education, the higher the willingness to stay of the rural migrant population with comparable identity. This is because of China's specific country decision, with the effective implementation of the precise poverty alleviation strategy and the orderly promotion of the rural revitalization strategy, the infrastructure in rural areas has come to be significantly improved again, and coupled with the Chinese government's introduction of a series of policies to attract highly qualified talents to return to their hometowns to start their own businesses, some highly skilled rural migrants will choose to return to the countryside for employment and business.

The adequacy of the constructed models (Tables 2-4) and the reliability of the results obtained are confirmed by (Chesneau et al., 2020):

– Statistical significance of explanatory and control variables (variables for which p-value does not exceed 0.1);

– Statistical significance of the models (for all models, the p-value does not exceed 0.1);

– Normal distribution of model residuals;

– Deviation of the predicted values of the resulting variable from the actual values by no more than 7%.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper draws the following three conclusions. First, identity significantly affects the willingness to stay of rural migrants. The higher the identity index, the higher the willingness to stay of rural migrants. This indicates that the boundary between the identity and citizenship of rural migrants has been broken, the urban-rural duality system has been gradually dismantled and social security and public services have been improved. At the same time, cities still have considerable advantages in terms of expected compensation, employment opportunities, and resource endowment, which make rural migrants identify more with urban values.

Second, regressions using individual skills as a moderating variable found that the probability of choosing to return home was greater for rural migrants with high skill levels when their identity levels were comparable. This is because, with the promotion of China's precise poverty alleviation policy, the government has introduced a number of policies to attract highly skilled people to return to their hometowns for employment and entrepreneurship, and in such a context, a portion of highly skilled rural migrants have a higher willingness to return to their hometowns.

Third, the heterogeneity analysis shows that the economic development status of the cities into which the agricultural transfer population flows, the mobility range of the agricultural transfer population, and the income level and age of the agricultural transfer population all affect their willingness to stay.

The above findings show that currently, China's rural migrant population prefers to stay in cities. This has provided a continuous supply of human capital for the development of new urbanization in China. It can be expected that with the deepening of the reform of the household registration system and the breaking of the urban-rural dual system, a general trend for the agricultural transfer population, mainly the agricultural transfer population, will be to settle in cities and gradually become citizens, and the urbanization rate will further increase.

To this end, this paper proposes the following recommendations.

First, the government should improve the system and mechanism of labor mobility, eliminate various obstacles and barriers to labor mobility, eliminate the gap between urban and rural areas, promote the equalization of public services in all aspects, and realize the equalization of rural and urban identities. Such policy measures can ensure the reasonable and orderly flow and efficient gathering of rural migrants to cities, further enhance the human capital returns and health and education levels of rural migrants clustered in cities, promote the shift of China's production factor allocation from factor input-driven to efficiency and innovation-driven, and thus improve the total factor productivity of China's economic development.

Second, one of the findings of this paper is that a higher urban identity promotes better rooting of the agricultural transfer population in cities. This requires that new urbanization should focus on comprehensive human development, and urban development should be more inclusive. The agricultural transfer population should be guaranteed stable employment and life in cities, their skill level should be continuously improved, they should enjoy the same social security and public services as urban residents, participate equally in the development process of new urbanization, and identity discrimination should be eliminated. Prevent them from becoming a marginal population or relatively poor people after entering the cities, and enable them to enter the middle-income group smoothly. At the same time, their sense of security, access, and happiness are continuously enhanced, providing a greater impetus to raise consumption levels, promote sustainable economic development, and cross the middle-income trap.

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