


Research Article

Mechanisms of Agricultural Land Transfer Influence on the Urban Settlement Intention of Rural Floating Population in China

Yu Xie ¹, Yin Yao ¹, Bingbing Zhang ¹, Xiongying Chen ², Xinyu Wang ²,
Tsang-Kai Hung ³ and Zijun Wang ³

¹School of Management, Beijing Union University, Beijing 100101, China

²Institute of Human Resource Management, Beijing Union University, Beijing 100023, China

³National Changhua University of Education, Changhua 50007, Taiwan

Correspondence should be addressed to Xinyu Wang; wxy006@buu.edu.cn

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In order to promote the citizenship of China's rural floating population and improve the level of new urbanization, as an important source of property income for rural floating population, the transfer of agricultural land or not has an important impact on whether they choose to return to their hometowns or settle in cities. Based on data from the 2017 China Migrants Dynamic Survey (CMDS), this paper explores the mechanism of the impact of agricultural land transfer on the urban settlement intention of rural floating population by constructing a structural equation modeling and bootstrap test. The results show that agricultural land transfer has a significant positive impact on the urban settlement intention of rural floating population, with occupational prestige and identity recognition playing a part in mediating the effect. Actively promoting the identification and orderly transfer of agricultural land rights, improving the quality of urban employment for rural floating population by strengthening vocational skills training, and accelerating the equalization of urban public services to enhance the identity recognition of rural floating population are important in promoting the orderly and effective integration of rural floating population into cities and their genuine citizenship.

1. Introduction

The China 2022 Government Work Report proposes to promote a new type of urbanization with people as the core and improve the quality of urbanization. The primary task of promoting new-type urbanization is to accelerate the civilization of the agricultural population who transfer from rural areas to urban areas [1]. China's rural floating population generally refers to those rural-to-urban migrants without official transfer of household registration status (Wang et al. 2010 [2], and Huang et al., 2020 [3]), and their urban settlement intention directly affects the development process of China's new-type urbanization level. According to the data of the seventh national census released by the National Bureau of Statistics, the total floating population in China is 375.82 million, among which the rural floating population accounts for about 45%. The influx of a large

number of rural floating populations into cities has rapidly advanced the level of urbanization and also changed the urban-rural structure and regional development pattern to a large extent (Xiao et al., 2021) [4]. The rural floating population settling in cities has played an important role in promoting changes in the social structure and accelerating the urbanization process in China [5].

Agricultural land is the most important source of property for rural floating population [6]; its transfer or not has an important impact on whether rural floating population choose to return to their hometowns or settle in cities, after the influx of rural floating population to cities [7]. In order to improve the efficiency of land resources utilization and accelerate the construction of new urbanization, the Chinese government has also taken multiple measures to promote the transfer of agricultural land, as stated in China Central Government's Document No. 1 in 2021 and 2022,

respectively, “to promote the construction of modern agricultural operation systems and encourage the development of various forms of moderate scale operations” and “to carry out a pilot project to standardize the construction of a market for the transfer of rural property rights.” The movement of the rural population to cities and nonagricultural industries is an inevitable trend in China’s socio-economic development process and an important fulcrum for urbanization in China (Zhuang 2021 [8]; Li 2022 [9]). In the continuous construction of new urbanization, the research on the relationship between agricultural land transfer and rural population’s urban settlement intention has also received more and more attention from scholars. By combing through the relevant literature, it is found that scholars have mainly focused on the impact of rural labor migration on land transfer. He [10] argues that agricultural labor migration is the initial motivation for land transfer. And with the advent of the Lewis turning point, modern factors of production such as capital and technology continue to transfer to the rural areas, Liu and Zhang [11] proposed that the transfer of agricultural land also affects rural labor mobility in reverse, and the higher the degree of agricultural land transfer, the stronger the tendency of citizenship of rural floating population (Zhao et al. 2016 [12]; Du et al., 2018 [13]), and Li et al. [14] measured that for every 1% increase in the degree of agricultural land transfer, the rural population’s urban settlement intention increases by 0.777 percentage points accordingly. Furthermore, some scholars have shown that after transferring their agricultural land, rural floating population are more inclined to enter the city to work in nonagricultural industries [15], and their occupational prestige is enhanced after entering nonagricultural industries compared to working in agriculture [16], and at the same time, in the city, rural floating population broaden their horizons and have more opportunities to contact new things and understand new knowledge, and their human capital level can be improved to a certain extent [17], which helps them enter higher-level occupations and promotes occupational prestige; after gaining higher occupational prestige, it also enhances rural floating population’s intention to live in the city for a long time and promotes the process of citizenship of rural floating population [18].

Several scholars have shown that agricultural land transfer can contribute to the occupational prestige of rural floating population in different ways. On the one hand, the transfer of agricultural land implies that farmers’ ties to the land are minimized for the time that the contract stipulates the transfer [12], which enhances farmers’ tendency to nonfarm and promotes their entry into nonfarm jobs [15]. On the other hand, agricultural land transfer can make poor rural household members more inclined to work in cities or enter public administration by promoting their human capital level [19]. At the same time, farmers invest more in human capital to better access nonagricultural jobs and to pursue higher status and income level occupations [18], all of which are conducive to improving rural floating population’s occupational prestige. When rural floating population has entered the cities and achieved nonfarm employment as well as urban-rural and sectoral transfers,

this does not guarantee the smooth integration of rural floating population into cities [20]. Western studies on immigrant assimilation theory have shown that how to adapt and integrate into the local social environment is the primary problem faced by immigrants after moving in [21]. Identity recognition responds to the degree of immigrants’ integration in the place of migration [22]. In the process of social integration of rural floating population, through the continuous interaction with local residents in terms of life and work, rural floating population form their urban identity recognition, which in turn affects their willingness to settle and become citizens in the city [23]. Therefore, after rural floating population transfers their agricultural land out, improving their occupational prestige and enhancing their identity recognition play an important role in promoting their urban settlement intention.

Previous studies have focused more on the impact of agricultural land transfer on the urban settlement intentions of rural floating population, quantifying the extent to which agricultural land transfer affects the urban settlement intentions of rural floating population. According to the push-pull theory, the urban settlement intentions of rural floating population will be influenced not only by the rural push of the land transfer that weakens their attachment to the land but also by the pull effect of the city on their urban settlement [24]. As mentioned earlier, occupational prestige and identity recognition play an important role in attracting rural people to settle in cities and determine the stability of urban settlement and the quality of urban integration. However, the effects of occupational prestige and identity recognition on rural floating population’s urban settlement intentions under the agricultural land transfer decision are unclear. It is necessary to clarify the relationship between the agricultural land transfer decision, occupational prestige, identity recognition, and rural floating population’s urban settlement intentions and to examine the extent of the effects of occupational prestige and identity recognition. Based on this, this paper selects the data from the 2017 China Migrants Dynamic Survey (CMDS) to explore the impact of agricultural land transfer on rural floating population’s urban settlement intention and introduces occupational prestige and identity recognition as mediating variables to analyze the mechanism of the impact of agricultural land transfer on rural floating population’s urban settlement intention. The purpose of this study is to provide a reference for promoting the rational transfer of agricultural land, promoting the citizenship of rural floating population, and improving the new urbanization level.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Agricultural Land Transfer and Urban Settlement Intention. To settle in cities, rural floating population associated with land must first have the will to settle in cities, and secondly, they should have some ability to support their urban settlement. Traditionally, the land is the “lifblood” of farmers, and farmers are tightly linked to it [25]; therefore, this part of the rural floating population has a low intention

to settle in cities. In the context of agricultural land rights, the transfer of agricultural land has reduced the excessive bondage of land to the rural floating population and also eliminated the psychological cost of farmers' land attachment to a certain extent by retaining their land contracting rights [12], which have promoted the tendency of non-agriculturalization of the rural floating population, and has improved farmers' part-time status of "farming in busy times and working in idle times" [26]. Based on the increased leisure time after the agricultural land is transferred out, the rural floating population will choose to move to the city to obtain more economic income and a better living environment [27]; therefore, agricultural land transfer improves the motivation of the rural floating population to move to the city, enhances their willingness to citizenship and urban integration opportunities, and makes the rural floating population more inclined to settle in the city. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: There is a significant direct positive effect of agricultural land transfer on rural floating population's urban settlement intention.

2.2. *The Mediating Role of Occupational Prestige.*

Occupational prestige is a subjective evaluation of various occupations and is a measure of social prestige (Treiman 1976 [28]; Inkeles and Rossi 1956 [29]). After rural floating population transfers their agricultural land, their connection with the land is weakened; they are "liberated" from the bondage of the land; there is no more agricultural labor; farmers have more free time; and they also reap a certain amount of transfer rent, which to a certain extent will also enhance their tendency to invest in human capital [19]. Their propensity to nonfarm will be enhanced to some extent; in order to obtain higher nonfarm income, they will be more willing to enter nonfarm industries to find jobs [30], and nonagricultural industries generally have higher occupational prestige scores than agriculture-related occupations [16], so entering nonfarm jobs is beneficial to the occupational prestige of rural floating population. Further research found that the transfer of agricultural land prompted farmers to go out to work in cities, and by living in cities and working in secondary and tertiary industries, rural floating population also acquired new knowledge, new ideas, and new concepts, which contributed to the improvement of human capital levels of rural floating population [11]. With an increased level of human capital, they will continue to strive to enter higher-level occupations [31] and obtain higher employment income, which in turn also facilitates their acquisition of higher occupational prestige. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: There is a significant positive effect of agricultural land transfer on the occupational prestige of rural floating population.

Lu [32] proposed that occupational division can be used as the basis to classify the corresponding social classes using the possession status of organizational, economic, and cultural resources as criteria, and the resources that individuals can master through their own occupations can be

expressed in the form of elements of human capital such as skills and knowledge and can be translated into factors that determine the level of occupational prestige, such as dominance, power, income, and so on [33]. According to Xu [34], the criteria that determine the level of occupational prestige are proximity to political authority, job stability, and opportunities for promotion. Regardless of the viewpoint, occupational prestige can, to some extent, reflect the socioeconomic status possessed by an individual [35], and the socioeconomic status of rural floating population in turn affects their urban settlement intention [36]. At the same time, the increase in occupational prestige can also bring certain social reputation to the rural floating population and strengthen their ties with the local area [37], which makes their relationship with the city stronger and has a strengthening effect on their ability and willingness to settle in the city [38]. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed in this paper.

H3: There is a significant positive effect of occupational prestige on the rural migrant population's urban settlement intention.

In summary, this paper further infers that there is a mediating role of occupational prestige in the relationship between agricultural land transfer and rural floating population's urban settlement intention. Therefore, this paper proposes the following hypothesis.

H4: Occupational prestige plays a mediating role in the relationship between agricultural land transfer and rural floating population's urban settlement intention.

2.3. *The Mediating Role of Identity Recognition.*

Identity recognition reflects the degree of integration of rural floating population in the city [22] and is the highest level of urban integration of rural floating population [39]. "Push-pull theory" suggests that migration is the result of the interaction of two forces (Lee, 1966 [40]; Cohen and Robinson 1996 [41]), where socioeconomic conditions that are not conducive to the realization of individual values in the outflow location become push forces and those factors that are conducive to the improvement of living conditions and the enhancement of personal growth space in the inflow areas become pull forces [42]. After rural floating population transfer their agricultural land, their personal development space will be limited to a certain extent in rural areas [43], while a better living environment and more employment opportunities in cities will "pull" rural floating population into cities [44]. At the same time, in the past, due to the need to carry out farming work, rural floating population were unable to stay in the city to live and work for a long time, and the degree of urban integration was low. After the transfer of agricultural land, rural floating population can reduce their behavior of pendulum movement between urban and rural areas [12], and the weakening of ties with the countryside increases the possibility of rural floating population working and staying in the city for a long time, which in turn is conducive to promoting rural floating population's integration into cities [45]. In summary, the transfer of agricultural land has contributed to the improvement of their

urban identity recognition. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed in this paper.

H5: There is a significant positive effect of agricultural land transfer on the urban identity recognition of rural floating population.

There are differences in the urban settlement intention of rural floating population under recognition of different identities [46], and in the process of urban migration, identity recognition plays an important role in maintaining their psychological security and preventing identity anxiety, and so on. Once they feel rejected by the urban society they live in, rural floating population will develop a “nomadic” identity recognition, develop a sense of marginalization, and fail to integrate into the local society [22]. Only when rural floating population identify with their urban identity and develop a strong sense of emotional attachment and belonging to the local community can they be considered to have achieved urban integration [47]. Related studies have also found that respect and identity recognition can lead to more optimistic emotions and thus more positive integration into the group [48]. The respect and recognition that rural floating population receive in urban life and work determine whether they will develop an emotional attachment and a sense of belonging to the city where they live, which directly affects whether they are willing to truly integrate into the city and affects the willingness of rural floating population to settle in the inflow city. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed in this paper.

H6: Identity recognition positively affects rural floating population’s urban settlement intention.

In summary, this paper further infers that identity recognition plays a mediating role in agricultural land transfer and urban settlement intention. Therefore, this paper proposes the following hypothesis.

H7: Identity recognition plays a mediating role between agricultural land transfer and rural floating population’s urban settlement intention.

Based on the above theoretical analysis and research hypotheses, this paper constructs a model of the influence mechanism of agricultural land transfer on urban settlement intention (Figure 1).

3. Research Design

3.1. Data Sources. This paper uses data from the 2017 China Migrants Dynamic Survey (CMDS) organized by the National Health and Wellness Commission, which takes mobile population aged 15 years or older who have lived in the inflow area for more than 1 month and are not registered in their own district (county or city) as the target population, and uses a stratified, multistage, proportional to size (PPS) sampling method to investigate the basic personal characteristics, family members, employment and income and expenditure, social integration, family planning, basic public health, and so on that were investigated in detail with wide coverage and large sample size, which is highly representative. Since the group of interest in this paper is the rural floating population, only the sample of rural household

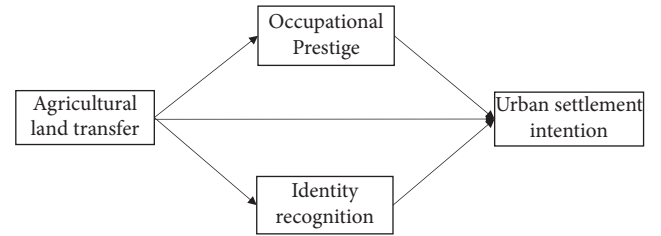


FIGURE 1: Model of the influence mechanism of agricultural land transfer on urban settlement intention.

registration is retained. After eliminating the missing values and errors of variables, we finally obtained 50,765 valid samples, which meet the research needs of this paper.

3.2. Variable Measurements. Urban settlement intention. The questionnaire was measured by the questions contained in the “intention to move and stay” section, according to the question “Do you plan to stay in the local area?” The respondents who answered “Yes,” “No,” and “I do not think about it” were selected and asked, “If you intend to stay in the local area, how long do you expect to stay in the local area?” The respondents who answered “6~10 years,” “more than 10 years,” and “settled” were assigned a value of 1 as they had the intention to settle in the city, while those who answered “1~2 years,” “3~5 years,” and “not sure” were assigned a value of 0 as they had no intention to settle in the city.

Agricultural land transfer. The questionnaire asked the respondents, “Who is cultivating your contracted land?” The answers were “own farming,” “hired farming,” “family and friends farming,” “subleasing to private individuals,” “subleasing to enterprises,” “subleasing to village collectives,” “abandoning,” “planting trees,” and “others.” Referring to Li et al. [14], subleasing to private individuals, subleasing to enterprises, and subleasing to village collectives with the nature of market transactions are considered agricultural land transfer [14] and assigned a value of 1. The other options are considered as nonagricultural land transfer and assigned a value of 0.

Occupational prestige. Li [16] conducted a nationwide study, which resulted in an occupational prestige scale containing 81 occupations [16]. In this study, the scale measured by Li was used to assign a corresponding occupational prestige score to each rural floating population’s occupation as a measure of the variable.

Identity recognition. The degree of identity recognition of rural floating population was measured by the questions included in the “social integration” section of the questionnaire, including the questions “Do you agree with the statement ‘I feel I am already a local?’” “Do you agree with the statement ‘I feel that the locals are willing to accept me as one of them?’” and so on to measure the degree of identity recognition, and the response options include “do not agree at all,” “disagree,” “basically agree,” and “completely agree” were assigned a score of 1 to 4, respectively, and the average value was obtained by summing up the responses. The higher the score, the higher the degree of identity recognition. The sample definition of main variables and descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Definition of main variables and descriptive statistics.

Variable name	Variable type	Mean/percentage	Standard deviation	Description
Urban settlement intention	Categorical variable	Intention to settle in the city = 46.5%; No intention to settle in the city = 53.5%	0.499	1 = Intention to settle in the city 0 = No intention to settle in the city
Agricultural land transfer	Categorical variable	Selected agricultural land transfer = 14.5% Did not select agricultural land transfer = 85.5%	0.352	1 = Selected agricultural land transfer 0 = No choice of agricultural land transfer
Occupational prestige	Continuous variable	39.562	9.962	Range of values (0, 100)
Identity recognition	Continuous variable	3.12	0.404	Range of values [1, 4]

3.3. Research Methods. In this paper, structural equation modeling was used to test the research hypotheses. Unlike using cascade regression to analyze each path individually, structural equation modeling can include all latent and measured variables into the pooled regression model for analysis at one time, and it can also control and reduce the errors caused by measured variables and avoid miscalculation of direct and mediating effects, thus enabling more accurate and unbiased estimation results [49]. In previous studies, the Sobel test is usually used to test the significance of the mediating effect. However, the prerequisite assumption of the Sobel test is that the mediating effects obey a normal distribution, and such an assumption is generally not satisfied in practical studies [50]. Therefore, when the mediating effect does not follow a normal distribution or the distribution cannot be determined, the use of the bias-corrected bootstrap method can effectively reduce the probability of the first type of statistical error (discard error) when compared to other tests such as the Sobel test. The bias-corrected bootstrap method also yields more robust and precise confidence intervals for the mediation effect, which has better statistical validity.

In summary, this paper follows the procedural approach suggested by Preacher and Hayes [51] and MacKinnon et al. [52] to validate the mediating effect and assess the significance level of the magnitude of the mediating effect, based on the validation and estimation procedures proposed by Baron and Kenny [53]. In the first step, only the independent and dependent variables are put into the research model to verify the direct utility between them, and the model will show the path coefficients and whether they have direct utility; in the second step, all variables related to direct and indirect effects are added to the model, and the significance of the path coefficients between the variables is estimated by building a structural equation model; in the third step, using bootstrap resampling technique, the mediating effect is tested for significance and assess their confidence intervals [54].

4. Research Results

4.1. Correlation Analysis. In this study, the correlation analysis of agricultural land transfer, occupational prestige, identity recognition, and urban settlement intention was

conducted by SPSS 26. The results of the correlation analysis are shown in Table 2. Occupational prestige, identity recognition, and urban settlement intention were all significantly and positively correlated with agricultural land transfer. Meanwhile, urban settlement intention was significantly and positively correlated with occupational prestige and identity recognition, respectively, while identity recognition was not significantly correlated with occupational prestige. The results of the correlation analysis provided support for the subsequent data analysis.

4.2. Hypothesis Testing. To clarify the relationship between agricultural land transfer, occupational prestige and identity recognition, and urban settlement intention, this paper uses Mplus 8.0 software to test research hypotheses using structural equation modeling. Figure 2 shows the results of the path test analysis of the research model with agricultural land transfer as the independent variable and also shows the direct and indirect effects of agricultural land transfer on rural floating population's urban settlement intention (the figure shows the unstandardized path coefficients, and the values in parentheses are standard errors). First, there is a significant direct positive effect of agricultural land transfer on rural floating population's urban settlement intention ($\beta = 0.070$, $p < 0.01$); second, there is a significant positive effect of agricultural land transfer on occupational prestige ($\beta = 0.891$, $p < 0.001$) and a significant positive effect of occupational prestige on rural floating population's urban settlement intention ($\beta = 0.019$, $p < 0.001$). There is a significant positive effect of agricultural land transfer on the urban identity recognition of rural floating population ($\beta = 0.014$, $p < 0.01$); there is a significant positive effect of identity recognition on the urban settlement intention of rural floating population ($\beta = 1.438$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H5, and H6 were supported by verification.

To further test for mediating effects in the model, bootstrap mediating variable tests were conducted in this paper with 5,000 replicate samples and 95% confidence intervals. The confidence interval of each standardized indirect effect does not contain 0, indicating that each mediating effect is significant. The standardized indirect effect

TABLE 2: Correlation analysis.

Variables	Agricultural land transfer	Occupational prestige	Identity recognition	Urban settlement intention
Agricultural land transfer	1			
Occupational prestige	0.027***	1		
Identity recognition	0.011**	0.003	1	
Urban settlement intention	0.017***	0.071***	0.272***	1

Note: **Significant correlation at the 5% level and ***significant correlation at the 1% level (the same as below).

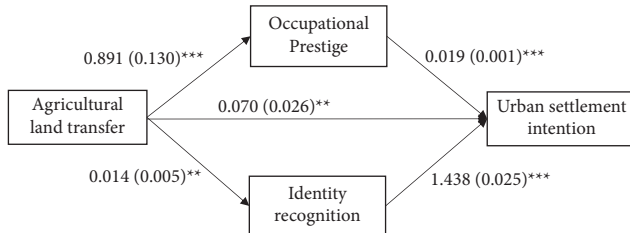


FIGURE 2: Research model path analysis results.

values, confidence intervals, and relative mediating effects of each mediating variable are shown in Table 3.

The results showed that among the indirect effects of the study model, the mediating effect of occupational prestige between agricultural land transfer and urban settlement intention was significant, with a mediating effect value of 0.017 ($p < 0.001$, 95% confidence interval [0.012, 0.022]); the mediating effect of identity recognition between agricultural land transfer and urban settlement intention was also significant, with a mediating effect value of 0.029 ($p < 0.05$, 95% confidence interval [0.006, 0.034]). Meanwhile, the direct effect of agricultural land transfer on urban settlement intention was significant, with a direct effect value of 0.07 ($p < 0.05$, 95% confidence interval [0.018, 0.122]). Thus, occupational prestige and identity recognition partially mediated the effect between agricultural land transfer and urban settlement intention. Thereby, hypotheses H4 and H7 were supported.

Table 3 also gives the comparison of the two mediating effects of occupational prestige and identity recognition, as well as the direct and indirect effects of agricultural land transfer on urban settlement intention. The results show that the difference between the two mediating effects of occupational prestige and identity recognition is 0.003, with a standard error of 0.677 and a 95% confidence interval containing 0, indicating that there is no significant difference in the magnitude of the two mediating effects. Using the data in Table 3, it can be calculated that the total effect of agricultural land transfer on urban settlement intention is 0.107, the direct effect is 0.070, the indirect effect is 0.037, and the proportion of the indirect effect to the total effect is 34.6%, that is, the mediating effect accounts for 34.6% of the total effect and the direct effect accounts for 65.4% of the total effect in the overall model.

5. Discussion

Summing up the above results, it can be seen that the agricultural land transfer behavior of rural floating population

has a significant positive effect on their urban settlement intentions, which is consistent with the findings of Zhao et al. [12], Du et al. [13], and Li et al. [14]. From the perspective of the realistic growth environment and living conditions of the rural floating population, the rural floating population grows up in rural areas and has a certain gap with urban residents in terms of the living environment, infrastructure, and local economic level. After rural floating population transfer their agricultural land out, their own ties to the most important source of property income they own in the countryside are weakened (Li et al. [14]; Fei [25]), and in pursuit of a better living environment and higher income levels, they will tend to enter the cities for engaging in nonagricultural jobs and then live and work in the city for a long time. Nowadays, the new generation of rural migrant workers has gradually become the main body of the rural floating population and the main force of China's new type urbanization construction [55], and in the survey sample of this paper, most of the rural floating population who are willing to settle in cities were born after 1980, and the age distribution is mostly concentrated between 20 and 40 years old, belonging to the new generation of rural floating population, who have the characteristics of young people's openness, optimism, and self-confidence and pay attention to the realization of self-worth [55]. Compared to the older generation of rural floating population, they have a higher propensity to invest in human capital, are more confident in their abilities, and are more accepting of changes in their lives [56], but also due to their general lack of farming experience and land attachment (Corsi and Salvioni, 2017) [57], they are more inclined to transfer their agricultural land to reap certain transfer rents to better support themselves to live and work in the city and have a higher urban settlement intention.

In addition to the direct effect, agricultural land transfer also has an indirect positive effect on urban settlement intentions through two mediating variables: occupational prestige and identity recognition. It has been shown that expected earnings in the city determine the urban settlement decisions of floating population [58] and that the occupation in which an individual works largely determines his or her income level. The proportion of people who would like to settle in the city is significantly higher among the sample who have stayed in the city for more than seven years than other groups. Longer stays in cities lead to higher human capital among rural floating population [59], and the advantages of higher human capital are directly manifested in the ability of rural floating population to enter higher-level occupations, promote their own occupational prestige, and earn higher incomes. The rural floating population who stay

TABLE 3: Results of the bootstrap test analysis for the significance of the mediation effect.

Path/effect	Bootstrap analysis test results (unstandardized)		Significance (two-tailed P -value)	95% Confidence interval (bootstrap with bias correction)
	Estimated value	Standard error		
C (total effect)	0.107	0.027	0.001	0.054, 0.163
C' (direct effect)	0.070	0.026	0.008	0.018, 0.122
$a_1 \times b_1$ (mediating effect of occupational prestige)	0.017	0.003	0.001	0.012, 0.022
$a_2 \times b_2$ (mediating effect of identity recognition)	0.020	0.007	0.005	0.006, 0.034
$a_1 \times b_1 + a_2 \times b_2$ (total indirect effect)	0.037	0.008	0.001	0.022, 0.052
$a_1 \times b_1 - a_2 \times b_2$ (comparison of indirect effects)	-0.003	0.008	0.677	-0.018, 0.012

longer in the city gain advantages in terms of occupational prestige and economic income, enabling them to meet the material conditions for settling in the city, and also increasing their satisfaction and happiness with urban life. Thus, rural floating population with high occupational prestige will have a stronger urban settlement intention. The marital status of the rural floating population in the sample shows that there are more married people, and the urban settlement intention of this rural floating population is stronger, as verified by other scholars in their studies [60]. The family size of the rural floating population in the sample shows that those who choose to settle in the city tend to have a family size of three to four members, accounting for 34.2% of the total sample. In order to improve the education level of the next generation, most rural floating population choose to migrate in a family-oriented manner, bringing their children to the city together to enjoy the educational resources of the city [61]. As rural floating population live in the city for a longer period of time, they also become more accustomed to the urban lifestyle, and at the same time, their children grow up in the urban environment, the family as a whole has a high degree of urban identity and a low willingness to return to their hometown, so influenced by family decisions, this part of the rural floating population is more inclined to settle in the city. In addition, most of the new generation of rural floating population also want to work in more “decent” jobs in the city and thus gain a higher occupational prestige; therefore, the new generation of rural floating population has a low willingness to return to their hometown and stronger urban settlement intention.

6. Conclusions

Improving the urban settlement intention of the rural floating population is important for promoting a new type of urbanization with people as the core in China. Based on this, this paper uses data from the 2017 China Migrants Dynamic Survey, selects rural floating population as the research object, analyzes the mechanism of the effect of agricultural land transfer on rural floating population’s urban settlement intention by combing through the relevant literature, constructs a research hypothesis model, and conducts an empirical test. The results show that first, there is a significant direct positive effect of agricultural land transfer on the urban settlement intention of rural floating population. This result indicates that the higher the degree of agricultural land

transfer, the stronger the urban settlement intention of rural floating population. Secondly, in addition to the direct effect, agricultural land transfer also has an indirect positive effect on urban settlement intention through two mediating variables: occupational prestige and identity recognition. Specifically, there are two indirect effects of agricultural land transfer on rural floating population’s urban settlement intention: first, it has an indirect positive effect on rural floating population’s urban settlement intention by increasing their occupational prestige; the second is through increasing their urban identity recognition, which has an indirect positive effect on their urban settlement intention; and third, the direct effect of agricultural land transfer on rural floating population’s urban settlement intention is significantly larger than the indirect effect.

The research findings of this paper are that first, it is necessary to further implement the confirmation of agricultural land rights and the issuance of land contract management certificates to ensure that land ownership is clear. The grassroots government should strengthen the dissemination of knowledge on agricultural land transfer policies to guide the rural floating population to form reasonable expectations and at the same time strengthen the capacity building of arbitration of agricultural land transfer disputes to dispel the rural floating population’s concerns about agricultural land transfer, thereby promoting the orderly transfer of agricultural land. Second, increase employment support for key groups among the rural floating population, carry out vocational skills upgrading actions according to the career development needs of the rural floating population, improve the lifelong vocational skills training system, and promote the upgrading of the human capital level of the rural floating population so that they can enter higher-level occupations and improve the quality of their urban employment. Third, accelerate the equalization of public services in towns and cities and realize the extension of public services to the rural floating populations. By increasing the financial budget for rural floating population to use public resources in urban communities, we should give them the opportunity to fully participate in various activities in urban communities, strengthen the communication and understanding between rural floating population and urban residents, increase rural floating population’s sense of belonging to the city, and help them truly realize citizenship.

The research limitations of this paper are reflected in the following aspects: first, the new generation of rural floating

population accounts for the majority of the sample with urban settlement intentions. In the future, we should classify the rural floating population by type and carefully analyze the factors affecting the willingness of different types of rural floating population to settle in cities. Second, in the CMDS questionnaire, the options for the urban settlement intention question included “not sure, I do not think about it,” and 26.5% of the rural floating population chose this option, and in the process of data analysis, the sample of answering “not sure, I do not think about it” is usually classified as those who have no intention to settle in the city. However, from a practical point of view, this group of people who answer “not sure, I do not think about it” may be the part of the rural floating population who are more confused about their future life and lack planning and are also the group that is easily ignored by various social policies. From the perspective of attracting labor and talent to cities, future studies clarifying the future urban settlement intentions of this group may play a role in promoting the construction of new urbanization.

Data Availability

This paper uses data from the 2017 China Migrants Dynamic Survey (CMDS) organized by the National Health and Wellness Commission. The data used to support the findings of this study are not directly available to the public but are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest with respect to the publication of this paper.

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