

The Intention of Resettling in Cities (towns) of China's New-generation of Migrant Workers and Individual-level Determinants

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Keywords: China; the new-generation of migrant workers; settlement intention; working cities; small and medium-sized cities

Abstract. Under the background of China's accelerating urbanization with worrisome quality, it is necessary to examine the future settlement intention of Chinese new-generation of migrant workers who has a stronger will to settle in cities. In this paper, the current status, reasons and individual-level factors affecting the intention of settling in cities (towns) of the new-generation of migrant workers are studied, based on the questionnaire in 5 cities (counties) of Liaoning Province in 2012. It has found that the new-generation of migrant workers tends to settle in small and medium-sized cities, and the territorial proximity principle plays an important role in making decisions for settlement.

Introduction

As the largest developing country in the world, China has billions of rural-urban migration population coincided with special period of China's economic and social transformation, with the urbanization roads clarified by step-by-step exploration. This population migration is not only non-permanent migration or temporary migration, but also is a circular flow between move-in-places and move-out-places for one or more times [1]. Through the use of urban and rural resources, migrant workers can probably and indeed acquire interests from the two places [2]. Only a small part of the previous generation of migrant workers in China have settled in cities. In reality, it is noticed that most of them might still keep a circular flow for their children's education and children's future settlement in cities to a large extent.

China's urbanization rate has reached 52.57% in 2012 and the urban population exceeded the rural population. However, it is noticed that the essence of such statistical urbanization¹ is that the citizenization of migrant workers is not synchronized with the urbanization process, because the vast majority of migrant workers have not been entitled to equal basic public services as the residents of their working cities.

China's new-generation of migrant workers born in the 1980s and 1990s have less affection to countryside and land and more recognition of the urban lifestyle. Having witnessed the fact that the previous generation of migrant workers has been paying the happiness of three generations (separated couples, left-behind children and left-behind elderly) for the improvement of the economic situation of their families, the new-generation of migrant workers do not want to follow the same path. In recent years, some research has confirmed that the new-generation of migrant workers has a stronger will for future settlement in cities than the previous generation [3,4,5,6]. But a fact is ignored that the migration of migrant workers is not always one problem of whether staying in destination cities or not, or whether settling in cities or not. Some scholars have done exploration in this regard [5,6,7]. However, more attention should be paid to the research on diversification of migrant workers' settlement intention, especially in view of the above-mentioned features of the new-generation of migrant workers.

¹ The urban population is the total inhabitants living in cities and towns, including those who live in the township streets and leave the registered permanent residence for more than half a year.

In recent years, China has relaxed Hukou restrictions in towns, small and medium-sized cities. And China's migration within province has become the main body of the rural-urban migration population. Therefore, the migrant workers more probably choose to work and live near their hometowns, and small and medium-sized cities in hometowns are expected to be the places they prefer to settle in.

In this paper the settlement intention of the new-generation of migrant workers is further discussed including current status, reasons and individual-level factors through an analysis of 652 questionnaires. It is hoped that this research could contribute to a better understanding of the settlement diversification of the new-generation of migrant workers and enriching the study of population migration in the world, especially in developing countries.

Data and Methods

The data in this paper were acquired by questionnaire interviews in five cities of different levels in Liaoning Province in July and August, 2012. The valid questionnaires were 652 copies, including 310 copies in the provincial capital city of Shenyang, 219 copies in prefecture-level cities of Jinzhou and Anshan, and 123 copies in the county-level city of Beizhen and the county of Taian. In each city, based on the probable industry distribution of the new-generation of migrant workers and trial surveys, the sample proportions of various industries were determined, that is 30% for manufacturing industry, 30% for construction industry and 40% for service industry. In each industry, the samples were obtained by random sampling method. The interviewees were recruited mainly through two channels. One way was with the enthusiastic help of the officials of administrative departments of migrant workers and friends of the investigators in selected cities. Another way was the investigators' searching for interviewees randomly in shops of the city streets, labor markets, odd jobs markets, construction sites and so on.

The interviewees in this survey are born after 1980 (below 32 years old), raised in countryside, and not highly educated² with migrant experiences. The main questions include "Where do you intend to settle down, work and live permanently in the future? Why do you intend to settle in the working city? Why do not you intend to settle in the working city? Why do you intend to settle back in the prefecture-level city, the county-level city, the county or the town in your hometown? Why do you intend to settle back in your rural hometown?"

The preliminary analysis of the data reveals some important demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Their average age is 24 years old with the male of 70.40% and the female of 29.60%. The unmarried ratio is 62.89%. 65.64% of the respondents have received junior middle school education and those who have received high middle school or technical school education account for 27.76%. The proportion of technique-based workers engaged in industries of cooking, barbering, processing, manufacturing and construction is 51.38%, with those pursuing physical work, odd jobs and service sector jobs 42.02% and with the workers such as contractors, company managers and owners of stores 6.60%. 75.46% of the sample comes from Liaoning Province.

Two purposes are expected to achieve by utilizing the survey data. The first is to examine the settlement intention of the interviewees and corresponding reasons by statistical analysis methods. The second is to analyze the individual-level influencing factors on their settlement decision-makings. These factors comprise the following four features of migrant workers, including demographic characteristics, family economic characteristics, working status in destination cities, geographical features of working cities and the origin rural hometowns. The mlogit regression will be used to examine the impact of these characteristics of migrant workers on their settlement intention.

² Considering that the growth and educational experience, and social life of this group vary greatly from those of migrant workers mentioned in real life, the highly educated groups are therefore not included in this survey.

The Intention of Resettling in cities (towns) and Reasons of the New-generation of Migrant Workers

The analysis shows that the new-generation of migrant workers has strong desire to settle in working cities or other cities. As shown in Table1, 57.06% of the respondents intend to stay in working cities and 82.06% choose to settle in cities and towns. The most two selected ones by respondents are working cities and small and medium-sized cities (prefecture-level cities and county-level cities) in hometowns. It's worth noting that the lower the levels of receiving cities are, the more proportions the choices of receiving cities chosen as their final settlement cities are, showing that the new-generation of migrant workers prefer small and medium-sized cities for settlement. 65.98% of those people choose cities or towns as settlement places prefer small and medium-sized cities.

The top five factors are listed in Table2 after sorting the reasons of diversification in the settlement decision-making. The top three considerations for migrant workers to choose to stay in working cities in turn are: being fond of here after living for a long time, stable work, and having already bought a house here. Moreover, the above answers are partly proofed by the answers of respondents toward the question: Why don't you intend to settle in your working city. The worry about housing price and being far from their hometowns are the reasons for that they do not intend to stay in current working cities. In addition, it is noteworthy that 60% of the respondents who take small and medium-sized cities in hometowns as the ideal future settlements nearly have the consideration of "Close to home" at the first place, while the proportions of the other four factors are significantly lower.

Table1 Distribution of the intention of settling in cities(towns) of the sample(%)

Levels of Working cities	Working cities	Provincial capital cities in hometowns	Prefecture-level cities in hometowns	County-level cities and Counties in hometowns	Towns in hometowns	Other cities	The intention of settling in cities(towns) in total *
<i>The provincial capital city</i>	48.39	2.90	11.61	13.55	1.94	2.58	80.97
<i>The prefecture-level cities</i>	62.10	0.46	7.76	8.68	1.37	1.83	82.20
<i>The county-level cities and Counties</i>	69.92	0.00	0.81	8.94	0.81	4.07	84.55
<i>Total</i>	57.06	1.53	8.28	11.04	1.53	2.61	82.05

N=652.

Source: survey results.

*The sample also includes the two choices of "Returning to rural hometown" and "Uncertain".

Table2 The main considerations of the main settlement intention (the top five ones)

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
<i>Why do you intend to settle in working cities?</i>	Fond of here after living for a long time	Stable work	Have bought a house here	(Future) spouse is here	Close to home
<i>Why do you choose small and medium-sized cities in hometowns to settle in?</i>	Close to home	Have bought a house there	Cheaper Houses	Also can find a job in the developing hometown	To take care of parents

Source: survey results

The Individual-level Influencing Factors on the Intention of Resettling in Cities (towns) of the

New-generation of Migrant Workers

Table3 presents the mlogit regression results of the relative-risk ratios for the intention of settling in cities (towns) from four aspects, taking “staying in the working city” as the basic category.

It is found that the settlement intention of the new-generation of migrant workers is closely related to their demographic characteristics. First, the female workers tend to stay in working cities, while the male are more inclined to choose prefecture-level cities in hometowns as future settlement places. The possible explanation is that the young female has more recognition of city lifestyle, and they hope to change their future life by finding future spouses in working cities. For the male, the lower housing prices and living cost in prefecture-level cities than in working cities may make them shoulder responsibilities for buying a house and family-supporting more easily which are usually born by men in China. Second, those aged 26 to 32 tend to stay in working cities due to being young and with more working and living experience. Third, the migrant workers with a higher level of education are inclined to stay in working cities. Fourth, the married are more inclined to choose towns in hometowns because of being the nearest places from their original rural areas with some urban atmosphere, lower housing prices and living cost and their stronger will of entrepreneurship in hometowns³.

The second variable group is about family economic conditions. In general, a certain level of income is regarded as a prerequisite for migrant workers to settle in cities [8]. When the high unmarried rate (63.19% in this survey) of the new-generation of migrant workers is considered, family economic conditions represented by annual household income and housing values in hometown have more practical significance to settlement in cities than their own labor income. Our findings are that annual household income and housing values in hometowns exert the significant impact on the new-generation of migrant workers to settle in working cities and hometown cities respectively. It is noted that in the regression results of Table3, although the annual household income variable does not display the significance, we find that the new-generation of migrant workers prefer to stay in working cities and settle in small and medium-sized cities in hometowns rather than return to their rural areas for those with higher annual household income, when the part of samples of intending to settle back in original rural areas are added to the regression model. For the factor of housing values in hometowns, the ones with the highest housing value and without housing value tend to settle in small and medium-sized cities in hometowns.

Coming to the third set of variables, the study finds that the migrant workers who are engaged in intellectual occupation and have long working seniority in destination cities tend to stay for settlement. For the strong intention to stay in working cities of intellectual workers, the highest wages are one reason in addition to relatively better working conditions. In terms of the working seniority in destination cities, our finding is that the working seniority of migrant workers has an inverted U-shaped relationship with the possibility of staying in working cities. Those with the longest urban working seniority do not show the strongest will to stay in working cities, but a tendency to settle back to county-level cities in hometowns. There are two possible explanations. One is that when the migrant workers still do not have the opportunity become citizens in true sense after the working seniority accumulated to a certain extent, they will be inclined to make a new decision of selecting other cities as their future settlement places. Another may be that they have saved up enough capital and experience for entrepreneurship in hometowns [9].

The fourth group of variables is used to examine the influence of levels of working cities and origin areas of the new-generation of migrant workers on their settlement intention. The study finds that the migrant workers working in prefecture-level and county-level cities tend to stay in destination cities. This result is inconsistent with studies by Zhu & Chen [10] who found that small and medium-sized cities in Fujian are not attractive for the floating population. This may be due to regional differences in the selected samples. Liaoning Province’s migrant workers consist of ones

³ Generally speaking, “The entrepreneurship in hometown of returned migrant workers” in literatures usually means that the migrant worker return to counties and towns of hometown to set up factories and shops based on the accumulated capital, experience, social relations during working.

within the province as the main part, while Fujian Province with other provinces' labors as the main part (62.5%, Hu, etc. [11]). As the origin of migrant workers is considered, our finding is identical with some existing research results, showing that the migrant workers within the province and those from near the provinces are more willing to stay in working cities [7,12]. Besides, it is found that those from outside Liaoning Province, especially three northeast provinces, tend to settle back in cities in hometowns and those from outside three northeast provinces tend to settle back in small and medium-sized cities in hometowns. The above findings can be explained from two points. On one hand, it may be due to far geographic distance between working cities and hometowns, affection to hometowns and big economic and social development gap. On other hand, the accelerating development of hometown cities is also a crucial "pulling back" factor.

Table 3 The results of multinomial logistic regression

Explanatory variable	Relative-risk ratios				
	2(1)	3(1)	4(1)	5(1)	6(1)
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>					
<i>Gender</i> (reference group: female)	5.55E+06	2.7938**	1.47	1.8606	1.3654
<i>Age</i> (reference group: below 21 years old)					
21-25	2.2513	1.5901	1.06	0.2328	0.572
26-32	1.1413	1.1175	0.3676**	0.0779*	2.48E-08
<i>Education level</i> (reference group: junior high school and below)	0.3224	0.9059	0.5611*	0.2396	0.4573
<i>Marital status</i> (reference group: single)	1.0963	0.9787	1.75	10.2882*	1.4574
<i>Family economic characteristics</i>					
<i>Annual household income</i> (reference group: 50000 yuan and below)					
50001~100000	0.667	1.6753	1.69	0.7736	2.6112
Above 100,000 yuan	0.3758	0.7194	1.02	0.3925	0.9256
<i>Housing value in hometown</i> (below 30000 yuan)					
30001~100000	4.19E-01	2.8615	3.58	7454453	0.3086
100001~200000	3.76E+06	5.2648	3.27	1.70E+07	0.345
Above 200,000	2.91E+07	10.1695**	4.5022*	6.57E+07	0.8799
0 yuan	1.50E+07	7.8403*	3.97	0.8247	0.75
<i>Working status in the working city</i>					
<i>Occupation category</i> (reference group: physical type)					
Technique type	1.1833	0.8451	1.02	0.5121	1.0604
Intellectual type	9.79E-08	0.1192*	0.64	3.12E-08	7.52E-08
<i>Working seniority in working city</i> (reference group: below 1 year)					
1 to 3 years	4.42E-01	0.4113**	0.2867***	2.08E-01	0.6646
3 to 5 years	4.64E-08	0.491	0.3678**	3.83E-08	2.88E-08

Above 5 years	1.25E-01	0.3961 [*]	0.3755 ^{**}	6.77E-01	5.74E-08
<i>Level of working cities and geographical features of origin</i>					
<i>Level of working cities</i>					
(reference group: provincial capital city)					
Prefecture-level city	0.0936 ^{**}	0.6342	0.5132 ^{**}	0.5386	0.3078 [*]
County-level city	5.81E-08	0.0748 ^{**}	0.4503 [*]	0.1947	0.4853
<i>Geographical features of origin</i>					
(reference group: Liaoning Province)					
Jilin Province and Heilongjiang Province	10.1745 ^{**}	0.8371	1.15	2.86E-08	2.64E-08
Non-northeast provinces	6.0173 [*]	6.6683 ^{***}	3.4978 ^{***}	4.29E+00	1.1571
N			535		
LR chi2(68)			231.26		
Pseudo R2=			0.2135 ^{***}		

Source: survey results.
Notes: * P <0.10, ** P <0.05, *** P <0.01.
“2(1)” in Table3 represents the relative-rate ratio of the settlement intention of the new-generation of migrant workers in provincial capital cities in hometowns to the settlement intention in working cities. The numbers of 1 to 6 in “2(1)”, “3(1)”, “4(1)”, “5(1)”, and “6(1)” represent the intention of settling in working cities, in provincial capital cities in hometowns, in prefecture-level cities in hometowns, in county-level cities and counties in hometowns, in towns in hometowns, and in other cities respectively.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

This research focuses on the new-generation of migrant workers and examines the diversification trend of their future settlement intention. It has found that the new- generation of migrant workers tends to settle in small and medium-sized cities, and the territorial proximity principle plays an important role in making decisions for settlement. These findings have important policy implications in understanding and predicting current and future migration situation of China's new-generation of migrant workers and in promoting sound and coordinated urbanization development of China.

On one hand, whatever the migrants’ migration characteristics(settled or unsettled) are, more attention should be paid to the interests of the migrants in receiving cities, and equal basic public services (the rights of employment, housing, social insurance etc.) should be enjoyed by them. On the other hand, the plans and the development of small and medium-sized cities in China should be give priority when formulating urbanization policy measures in consideration of the migrants’ practical settlement intention. The “affordable” nature of settling in small and medium-sized cities may be “good medicine” to solve the concern-raising issue of China’s urbanization with low quality. In addition, the cities of different levels and the cities of different regions should take different adsorption policies toward migrant workers according to local conditions instead of sweeping approach or blind imitation.

Acknowledgements

This research is supported by the funding from NSFC with project codes of 70973082 and 71273179 and NCET-12-1014. The author would like to thank several teachers of the college for their suggestions, the student investigators’ painstaking and concerted efforts, especially the officials and friends in the selected cities for providing the convenience for the survey.

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