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Does Culture Affect Farmer Willingness to Transfer Rural Land? Evidence from Southern Fujian, China

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Abstract: This research explored the impact of culture on farmer willingness to transfer rural land. Data from 30 interviews and 537 valid survey questionnaires were collected in three villages in Zhangzhou, Fujian, China that are representative of typical Southern Fujian culture. First, a qualitative analysis was conducted based on interview data using NVivo11. Thereafter, a quantitative analysis using structural equation modeling was completed. The results of the field interviews indicated that cultural, economic, and individual factors were the three main influences on willingness of farmers to transfer land. Cultural factors were further classified into folk, religious, language, and family cultures. Religious belief culture had a significant negative impact on farmer willingness to transfer land, while language, family, and folk cultures had significant positive associations with farmer land transfer intentions. It was found that rural culture had a significant influence on farmer willingness to transfer land. The findings will help in developing a more comprehensive theoretical framework for research on this topic.

Keywords: land transfer; rural tourism; rural land use; farmer behavior

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1. Introduction

Recently, the Chinese government has introduced a series of policies to promote the development of rural tourism. Villages with rich resources and cultural heritage are to become new destinations for the large domestic tourism market. The development of rural tourism has improved the living environments in the countryside and brought certain economic benefits to farmers, but it has also become an arena where various forces compete for land. In this process, collective agricultural land as the main carrier must be transformed into tourism sites, and this inevitably necessitates the transfer of land rights and power [1,2]. The transfer of rural land is defined as the redirection of rural land management rights without changing its agricultural use. In China's rural areas, the use rights of land are granted to individual households while the ownership remains "collective" at the village level, and this is called the household responsibility system [3]. Land transfer requires government support and policy, but it ultimately depends on farmer decision-making [4,5]. The decision-making of farmers reflects their consideration of the benefits and risks before and after land transfers of any form [6]. Farmer attitudes directly influence the effectiveness of land transfers and are related to the social harmony and stability of rural areas after redirection [7,8].

Scholars have conducted extensive theoretical and empirical research on the factors influencing rural land transfer. Previous studies suggest that willingness and behaviors are subject to farmers' individual subjective factors and social influences when engaging in land

transfers [9–12]. The extant research confirms that many factors affect farmer willingness to transfer land. These include the individual farmer profiles, household characteristics, regional socioeconomic status, institutional policy, village conditions, land transfer patterns (collateral, rent, shareholdings, etc.), and the market environment [13–15]. Zhang et al. (2020) found that head of household age, presence of village cadres in households, non-farm working hours, size of household labor forces, and difficulties in obtaining land transfer information, land types, and property rights intervention were deep-rooted factors affecting land transfer willingness. Some other factors, including land titling and pension security, also have an effect on land transfers [16]. Song et al. (2020) determined that land titling significantly promoted land transfers within inner suburbs, and depended on how rural households interpreted institutional reforms [17]. Family pension security also has a significant negative effect on rural land transfers [18].

Factors impacting farmer principles, values, and social cognition patterns have been investigated. Rural folk customs, material life, and social norms have far-reaching effects on agricultural production, rural social stability, and economic development [19,20]. Zuka (2019) examined land reform in Malawi and found that it continues to face stiff resistance from the custodians and assemblages of customary institutions [21]. However, few scholars have paid attention to the influence of cultural factors on farmer willingness to transfer land. Rural tourism has the potential of enhancing rural living environments and adjusting the socioeconomic structure, and this is recognized by farmers in China [22,23]. The more concentrated the rural culture of farmers, the stronger the farmer recognition of rural tourism [24,25]. Nevertheless, whether rural tourism identification based on culture constraints affects farmer land transfer decisions remains to be explored.

The main objective of this research was to explore if rural culture affects farmer willingness to transfer land, and how particular rural cultural mores influence the decision making of farmers. It was confirmed through interviews and a survey that rural culture had a significant influence on farmer willingness to transfer land to others. The findings will help in developing a more comprehensive theoretical framework for research on this topic.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents the theoretical background, analytical framework, and hypotheses; Section 3 describes the materials and methods used; Section 4 discusses the empirical results; and Section 5 presents the conclusions.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Farmer Willingness to Transfer Land

(1) Outcome variable: Willingness of land transfer

In the process of China's agricultural reform, land transfer plays an important role. In China, farmers have land contractual management rights for use in crop farming, forestry, animal husbandry, and fishery production for a term of 30 years under the premise of abiding with the collective ownership of rural land. The operation of farmers' land contracting rights is protected by law, which specifies that other parties cannot occupy or transfer land without farmer permission. Just like commodities, farmer management rights of land transfer can be subcontracted, transferred, exchanged, cooperated, invested, leased, and mortgaged, but farmer willingness to transfer land should be respectful and adhere to the principle of voluntariness. The transfer of farmer land management rights provides land security for rural tourism development. However, it is often difficult to promote the sustainable development of rural tourism because of farmer reticence to transfer land. Therefore, it is of great significance to analyze farmer willingness to transfer land for the development of rural tourism.

(2) Identification of influential factors

The academic literature has yet to reach a consensus on the factors influencing farmer willingness to transfer rural land [15,26,27]. Previous research on the determinants of farmer land transfer willingness can be divided into the three main categories of farmer

individual differences, economic rationality, and survival ethics [28]. Differences in the individual profiles of farmers are considered to be the dominant factors affecting the willingness to transfer land. For example, age, physical condition, available labor force, intergenerational differences, non-agricultural income, concurrent employment, and attitudes toward the market and non-market values of farmland have significant impacts on the willingness to transfer land [29–32]. One study based on intergenerational differences indicated that the first generation of migrant workers paid more attention to the old-age security worth of land, while the new generation put more emphasis on the economic value-added and property rights of land [33,34]. Thus, less educated, elderly farmers are more conservative than those better educated, younger professionals regarding land transfer perceptions.

The economic rationality of farmers also has a profound impact on their willingness to transfer land. According to the rational peasant theory proposed by Kessler and Popkin (1980) [35], individual farmers evaluate choices through their preferences and values, thereby making the desired utility choices that they believe to be the maximum. Farmers are similar to rational investors and make decisions in accordance with the principles of a market economy. Farmer land use demands and decisions are generally biased toward the asset attributes and property rights of land. Thus, credit access, transaction costs, land acquisition compensation, financial policies, and other economic factors significantly affect farmer land transfer willingness and actual transfer behavior [36–40]. The larger and more stable the economic benefits, the stronger the farmer willingness to transfer land. In contrast, when the future value of agricultural land and the income from transferring agricultural land are uncertain, farmers tend to adopt more conservative choices [41,42].

In addition, farmer survival ethics may also play an important role in land transfer decision-making. Some scholars argue that farmer behavior cannot be regarded as "utilitarian rationalism." For example, Scott's (1976) survival ethics theory indicates that the dominant principle governing small farmer economic behaviors is safety or avoiding risks [43]. Huang (1985) proposed the concepts of the semi-productive and crutches logics of a small-scale peasant economy, which suggests that land has become the survival basis for traditional farmers not only due to its income generating function but also because of its sustenance of smallholder farmer traditions, emotions, cultures, dignity, and beliefs [44]. When farmers make land transfer decisions, their behavioral attitudes (personal benefits), subjective norms (opinions of pioneers, family members, and highly respected people in the village), and perceived behavior (cognitive decisions on willingness to transfer land) are positively related to farmer willingness to transfer land [45,46]. Additionally, farmer perceptions of the economic value of land and their emotional dependence on land restrict land transfers to some extent.

Farmer willingness to transfer land and the occurrence of actual transfer behavior are rational decision-making processes affected by various socioeconomic factors [47–49]. Overall, the existing research emphasizes farmer personal attributes and economic rationality. Although the influence of "survival ethics" on the economic behavior of farmers has received some attention, its content needs to be further studied and more empirical and in-depth research needs to be conducted.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Reciprocal determinism was proposed by psychologist Albert Bandura in the 1960s. The theory derives from absorbing the advantages of behaviorism, humanism, and cog nitive psychology [50]. It has been applied to research in many behavioral fields. In reciprocal determinism, a person's behavior is controlled by environmental stimulation actions. People are influenced by personal factors, such as instinct, drive, and traits; thereafter, behavior follows a process formed by the interaction among behavior (B), personal factors (P), and environmental factors (E). The environment is a potential factor in determining behavior. E can work only when E and P are combined and activated by the appropriate B. People interpret the rules according to their experiences, which come

from their interaction with the environment (i.e., publicly recognized). They anticipate that particular results will be produced in certain circumstances, and this regulates willingness to behave. Although farmers understand how things operate in general (such as the benefits and income derived from rural tourism), they may not have direct experience with such enterprises. They can observe the results from other farms and then adjust their own behaviors.

The interaction of P and E determines B [51]. P is not a passive reactor completely controlled by E and is not a completely free entity. P and E are determined by a two-way interaction. E is conducive to the establishment of a self-regulation function, and thus, establishes and develops the ability of self-response. P and B influence one another and are the decisive relationship between personal factors and behaviors, such as expectations, beliefs, and consciousness which dominate and guide behavioral responses. In turn, the behavioral response of B also causes an emotional response of P, which adjusts thoughts and ideas of P. It is worth noting that the interaction of P, B, and E are a process of interactional decisions [52]. The stronger the person's intentions and ideas are influenced by environmental factors, the stronger the person's willingness to act. Cultural environments and personal experience have positive impacts on people's behavioral responses. People's behavioral responses also change the external environmental factors.

2.3. Hypotheses

Based upon previous research, the factors that affect farmer land transfer willingness include educational levels, main sources of family income, and concurrent employment and agricultural planting. It is found that more educated farmers have a stronger willingness to transfer land, and educational level has a significant positive impact on the rent in and rent out decisions of farmers [45,46]. Farmers whose primary source of family income comes from non-agricultural activities (engaged in agriculture but with the majority of family income from non-agricultural activities) are more willing to transfer their land. The more single agricultural utilization methods of farmland and the more rice and other food crops planted on land make the willingness to transfer land stronger. Thus, the first hypothesis was as follows:

H1. *Individual characteristics have a positive impact on farmer willingness to transfer land.*

Individual ideology responds to external environmental stimuli [12]. Before making land transfer decisions, farmers will consider the possible changes in the survival environment and the related economic risks after the land transfer [53]. It is the first thought of farmers not to jeopardize security and cause housing problems that exacerbate financial and living difficulties [54]. Dijk (2003) [55] argued that farmers with small land plots are reluctant to transfer their own farmland to avoid risks in an unstable market economy environment. In contrast, households with high non-agricultural incomes are more willing to transfer land [56,57]. Second, agricultural subsidies and family financial liabilities have significant positive impacts on rent in decisions. Villages with stronger non-agricultural economies and higher proportions of migrant workers have stronger desires to rent out land since the migrants may provide employment opportunities or information through social interactions among farmers. In economically developed regions, the more opportunities that farmers have to work in secondary and tertiary industries, the higher the likelihood that they will transfer land [58,59]. Therefore, a reasonable and effective solution for farmer security concerns following land transfer is to raise willingness to transfer land to develop and support rural tourism development. Thus, the second hypothesis was proposed as follows:

H2. *Economic factors have a positive impact on farmer willingness to transfer land.*

Culture is a tool for humans to control the environment. People evolve in different environments and display varying behaviors. All cultural factors of a society are constituted by a system that includes language, clans, families, religious beliefs, and folk customs, and this system is called the "cultural fact" of the society. Once a belief is formed, it

has an impact on an individual's thinking, and thus, on the person's willingness and behavior [60,61]. Even if this belief is later proven to be inconsistent with facts and is even absurd, as long as people still believe in it, they will act according to it and develop a behavioral regulation based on the belief, which constitutes the "social facts" of the society [62]. Thus, the third hypothesis was as follows:

H3. *Cultural factors have a positive impact on farmer willingness to transfer land.*

Based on these three hypotheses, a conceptual framework and evaluation model were developed (Figure 1) to measure the relationships with farmer willingness to transfer land.

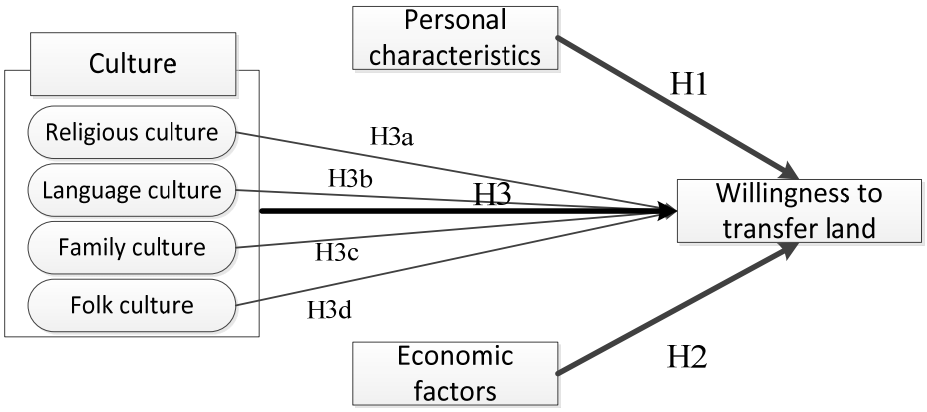

Figure 1. Conceptual framework model and research hypotheses.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Study Area

The Southern Golden Triangle is located in the southeastern part of Fujian, including the three districts and cities of Quanzhou, Xiamen, and Zhangzhou (Table A1 in Appendix A). It is one of the most populous areas and a dynamic area for economic development in the province in which people speak the Southern Fujian language as a dialect. The Southern Golden Triangle has a long history and a rich cultural heritage. It has many tourism resources, including several national and provincial nature reserves, numerous scenic areas and historical sites, and distinctive cultural characteristics, which make it especially suitable for developing rural tourism [63]. The three rural tourism destinations of Dingye, Renjia, and Shangping were selected to represent villages that have already developed, are developing, and have not yet developed tourism, respectively. The areas represent typical Southern Fujian cultural characteristics, and villager thoughts and behaviors are deeply influenced by this culture (Figure 2).

Southern Fujian (Minnan) culture comprises the customs and traditions of Quanzhou, Xiamen, and Zhangzhou, and these cities are known as the Southern Golden Triangle. This is a regional culture formed by the absorption and integration over a long history of the Baiyue indigenous culture, the Han culture of the central plains, and foreign cultures. The immigrants from different regions, coverage of different cultural layers, and social changes at different stages have formed this distinctive culture. The Southern Fujian culture is often regarded as a local culture, based on the people as the main carriers of life traditions, beliefs, community organization, and experiences [64]. Minnan culture has spread worldwide. Minnan culture includes a dialect, village families, religion, folk customs, literature and art, and sea silk [65–67].

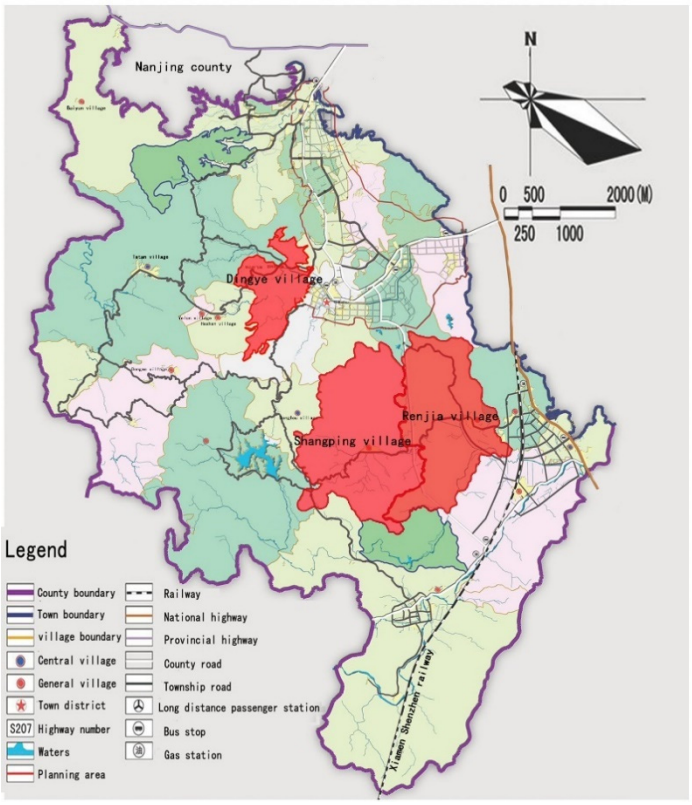

Figure 2. Research area.

3.2. Qualitative Research Design and Results

3.2.1. Qualitative Research Design

In-depth interviews were used to identify the cultural factors affecting farmer willingness to transfer land and were conducted in April 2018. A total of 30 households were selected for interviewing by convenience sampling in Dingye Village, Renjia Village, and Shangping Village. Interviews were carried out face to face, each session lasting for about 20 min. The interview was guided using seven questions to keep the participants focused on the purpose of the study. Themes discussed were information about land use, Land Gods, lifestyles, feelings about hometowns, attitudes toward tourism development, and willingness to transfer land. Participants were encouraged to add other topics or information.

3.2.2. Results

In total, 50% of the participants were male and 50% were female; 86.7% were aged 40–70 and 13.3% were under 35 years old. There were 11 people with educational backgrounds below primary school, 9 above junior high school, and 10 above secondary school or senior high school. Most of the households owned land. In total, 73% of the farmers cultivated land by themselves and 27% had transferred their land out.

The interview recordings were transcribed into 30 text documents, with corrections being made for irregular dialects in the discussions. NVivo11 software was applied to conceptualize and classify the 30 recordings. First, recordings were theoretically encoded, then they were focus coded, and finally, the initial coding was done to form a free coding table (Table 1).

Table 1. Interview data free coding table.

Theoretical Coding	Focus Coding	Initial Coding	Frequency	Percentage
Personal factors	Personal characteristics	Individual characteristics	6	2.29
		Opinions of family members	1	0.38
		Agricultural planting	25	9.54
Economic factors	Price factors	Transfer price	8	3.05
	Compensation factors	Village project	1	0.38
		Individual or company project	1	0.38
		National project	4	1.53
	Life issues	Living security	5	1.91
Cultural factors	Folk culture	Negotiation scenarios	55	20.99
		Rural culture	11	4.20
		Etiquette custom	19	7.25
	Religious culture	Land beliefs	30	11.45
		Rural complex	29	11.07
		Living conditions	3	1.15
	Language culture	People who speak local dialects	20	7.63
		Acquaintances	3	1.15
	Family culture	Clan culture	16	6.11
		Filial piety culture	6	2.29
		Family economy	19	7.25

The results indicated that cultural, economic, and individual factors were the three main influences on the willingness of farmers to transfer land. The cultural factors accounted for the largest proportion, followed by individual and economic factors. Cultural factors were further classified into folk, religious, language, and family aspects. For example, interviewees were more likely to transfer land to people speaking the Southern Fujian dialect. They relied most on the opinions of elders and the men in their family, and were more willing to talk about it while drinking tea in the evening or when together for large-scale religious sacrifices. Farmers also paid attention to the purpose of the land transfer. They hoped that their land would be preferentially used to rebuild family ancestral halls and religious temples. Whether the household was dominated by agricultural income and the opinions of family members and relatives also affected the willingness to transfer land. Additionally, the farmers considered economic factors, including the land transfer price, compensation, and life issues.

3.3. Quantitative Research Design

The survey questionnaire was designed through a comprehensive analysis of the related literature, using scales validated by previous scholars, along with the elements of Southern Fujian culture, current issues with rural tourism, farmer willingness to transfer land, and in-depth interviews. It consisted of two parts. The first consisted of the measurement scales on how Southern Fujian culture affected farmer willingness to transfer land. The second gathered the individual characteristics including respondent demographics, basic conditions, and family economic situations, gender, age, marital status, local residence years, household registration, employment conditions, and family economic status. According to the analysis of the qualitative interview data and research hypotheses, the first part of the scale was designed using seven latent variables (religious culture, language culture, family culture, folk culture, personal characteristics, economic factors, and farmer willingness to transfer land) and observation variables. The survey questionnaire used five-point Likert scales (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree) and 21 questions. The variables and items are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Variable selection and design.

Latent Variables	Question Code	Question	Reference
Religious culture	RC1	a1. The belief in the Land God is a manifestation of your love for your hometown and the land.	Miao et al. [68]
	RC2	a2. Worshiping at temples on the 1st and 15th of each month can improve the mood.	
	RC3	a3. The belief in the land God affects the circulation of rural tourism land.	
Language culture	LC1	a4. The land is preferentially subcontracted to local dialect speakers at the same price.	Bao et al. [69]
	LC2	a5. People who speak the local dialect are given priority when prices are not too different.	
	LC3	a6. Regardless of whether the price given by foreigners who do not speak the local dialect is higher than the local people who speak the local dialect, the priority should be given to subcontracting the land to those who speak the local dialect.	
Family culture	FC1	a7. Transferring rural tourism land in your home village is based on the opinions of your relatives or the respected people in your village.	Yin et al. [46]
	FC2	a8. You transfer your land to develop rural tourism based on the opinions of most people in the village.	
	FC3	a9. Transferring your own land to rural tourism is the result of discussions with your family.	
Folk culture	FKC1	a10. It is better to talk about the transfer of land or the expropriation of land for the development of rural tourism at night. During the day, there is no time, and you are unwilling to talk at work.	Chen, et al. [70]
	FKC2	a11. It is better to negotiate at your own tea table for the transfer or expropriation of your own land for the development of rural tourism.	
	FKC3	a12. It is also possible to negotiate at a dinner table or wine table for the transfer or expropriation of your own land for the development of rural tourism.	
Economic factors	EF1	a13. The government must give you lifestyle guarantees if you transfer your land to develop rural tourism.	Kessler, et al. [35]
	EF2	a14. The government must compensate you if your house has been requisitioned for rural tourism construction.	Boucher, et al. [36]
Personal characteristics	PC1	a15. What is your education level?	Liao [29]
	PC2	a16. What is the type of agriculture in which you are engaged?	Ma, et al. [31]
	PC3	a17. What are your sources of economic income?	
Willingness to transfer land	WTL1	a18. You support the village collective to transfer your land to develop rural tourism, improve the infrastructure construction, and promote the rural economy in the village.	McMurry, 1930 [71]
	WTL2	a19. You support the government to develop your land for industrial construction and to improve the employment of the village.	
	WTL3	a20. You agree to transfer your land for the construction and development of the village.	
	WTL4	a21. Transferring land can change its use and be used for the development of the rural tourism economy.	

The survey was conducted with a sample of 650 farmers from the middle of May to late June 2018. The participants were a convenience sample in three villages. Potential

respondents were given an overview of the study explaining that the purpose of the research was to investigate factors influencing land transfer attitudes. Participants were provided with an explanation about informed consent and the details of how to participate in the study. They were then asked to complete a one-time questionnaire. At the completion of the survey respondents were provided with a small incentive. Among the completed questionnaires, 537 were valid, and the valid response rate was 82.6%.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Results

SPSS 22.0 software was used to conduct the descriptive statistical analysis and the respondent profile is displayed in Table 3. The proportions of males and females in the sample was balanced (56.4% were male and 43.6% were female). The majority were young and middle-aged people, and 83.2% were married. Overall, 84.2% earned more than $466 a month. More than 60% thought their economic situation was normal. Some 76.9% had lived in the local area for more than two decades, and 82.1% had been living in the village since they were born. More than half were engaged in cultivation, whereas the largest shares of non-agricultural activities were freelancers and self-employed work (17.3% and 13.0%, respectively).

Table 3. Survey sample profile (n = 537).

Variables	Profile	Frequency	Percent (%)	Variables	Profile	Freq.	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	303	56.4%	Age (years)	Under 18	10	1.9%
	Female	234	43.6%		18–29	95	17.7%
Marital status	Unmarried	82	15.3%		30–39	164	30.5%
	Married	447	83.2%		40–49	159	29.6%
	Divorced	5	0.9%		50–59	71	13.2%
	Widowed	3	0.6%		60 and over	38	7.1%
Time at residence (years)	Less than 2	10	1.9%	Economic situation	Adequately fed and clad	93	17.3%
	2–5	23	4.3%		Common	353	65.7%
	5–10	38	7.1%		Fairly well-off	89	16.6%
	10–20	53	9.9%		Rich	2	0.4%
	More than 20	413	76.9%	Occupation	Company employee	61	11.4%
Income ($)	466	85	15.8%		Government employee	44	8.2%
	467–777	186	34.6%		Self-employed	70	13.0%
	778–1244	153	28.5%		Professional technical/ personnel	25	4.7%
	1245–1555	70	13.1%		Freelancer	93	17.3%
	1556 and over	43	8.0%		Retiree	3	0.6%
Household registration	In village	492	91.6%		Student	27	5.0%
	Not in village	45	8.4%		Other	214	39.9%
Land	Have land	441	82.1%	Place of residence	In village	441	82.1%
	No land	96	17.9%		Not in village	96	17.9%

4.2. Scale Reliability and Validity Tests

The construct validity was appraised through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) after exploratory factor analysis in Table 4. For the exploratory factor analysis, principal components analysis through a Varimax rotation identified an interpretable solution of seven factors from the 21 measurement items: religious culture, language culture, family culture, folk culture, personal characteristics, economic factors, and willingness to transfer

land. The factor loading of item a6 was less than 0.5, and thus, LC3 was removed from the final model. The factor loadings of the other measurement items ranged from 0.720 to 0.873 (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin = 0.713, X2 = 3075.606, df = 190, and $p < 0.000$). Therefore, the validities of the measurement items were satisfactory. Cronbach's α was used to test the reliability. The correlation coefficient of item a9 was less than 0.4, and FC3 was removed from the model. The Cronbach's αs of the final model were acceptable, ranging from 0.614 to 0.831. The skewness and kurtosis should be within the ranges of ± 2 and ± 5, respectively [72]. Hence, the normality tests of the data showed that the absolute skewness of each observation variable was less than two and the absolute kurtosis was less than five, which were acceptable.

Table 4. Validity and reliability.

Variables	Questions	Descriptive Statistics		Confirmatory Factor Analysis		
		Mean	αvalue	Factor Loading	AVE	CR
Religious culture	RC1 RC2 RC3	2.41 2.68 2.93	0.728	0.54 0.68 0.83	0.48	0.73
Language culture	LC1 LC2	2.37 2.25	0.719	0.81 0.69	0.57	0.72
Family culture	FC1 FC2	2.86 2.45	0.614	0.53 0.85	0.50	0.65
Folk culture	FKC1 FKC2 FKC3	2.75 3.17 2.95	0.831	0.78 0.75 0.85	0.62	0.83
Economic factors	EF1 EF2	1.82 1.75	0.666	0.87 0.58	0.54	0.69
Personal characteristics	PC1 PC2 PC3	3.37 2.77 2.20	0.763	0.72 0.73 0.80	0.56	0.79
Willingness to transfer land	WTL1 WTL2 WTL3 WTL4	2.09 2.40 2.39 2.67	0.736	0.74 0.62 0.74 0.48	0.42	0.74

CFA was conducted to test the reliability and the validity of the observed and latent variables. CFA and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to test the conceptual model. The factor loading of a21 was less than 0.5 but greater than 0.45, which was acceptable. CFA was carried out by using the maximum likelihood method and the results are presented in Table 4 [73,74]. The CFA results showed the following: (1) The standardized factor load could be used to calculate the composite reliability (CR) of the latent variables and its critical value of 0.6 reflected satisfactory consistency. The CRs of the seven latent variables (religious culture, language culture, family culture, folk culture, economic factors, personal characteristics, and willingness to transfer land) were 0.73, 0.72, 0.65, 0.83, 0.69, 0.79, and 0.74, respectively. The CRs of the latent variables surpassed the suggested threshold of 0.6. (2) The average variance extracted (AVE) can be used to measure the extent to which the observed and latent variables were explained. The AVEs of the observed and latent variables in the data ranged from 0.42 to 0.62. Fornell and Larcker (1981) [75] suggested that an AVE between 0.36 and 0.5 is acceptable, and the ideal AVE value is higher than 0.5. Therefore, all constructs of the model had acceptable convergent validity. (3) Discriminant validity was checked and compared with the squared root of

the AVE and the correlations. Since the squared roots of the AVEs were all larger than the correlations, the discriminant validity was acceptable.

4.3. Quantitative Analysis Results

SEM was used to test the proposed structural model. The results are given in Table 5 and the estimated factor loadings and path coefficients are shown in Figure 3. The results were that Southern Fujian culture, economic factors, and personal characteristics influenced farmer willingness to transfer land for the development of rural tourism. Personal characteristics ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 2.403$, $p < 0.05$) and economic factors ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 4.423$, $p < 0.001$) had positive correlations with willingness to transfer land, supporting H1 and H2. Among the personal characteristics, whether family income was dominated by agriculture, whether the land transfer was determined by the individual, and the opinions of family members and relatives affected willingness to transfer land. Regarding the economic factors, the transfer price and life security after transferring were important. Farmers paid less attention to the land use after the transfer. In addition, culture affected willingness to transfer land. Religious culture ($\beta = -0.18$, $t = -2.881$, $p < 0.01$) had a negative correlation with willingness to transfer land, and H3a was not supported. Language culture ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 4.625$, $p < 0.001$), family culture ($\beta = 0.37$, $t = 4.585$, $p < 0.001$), and folk culture ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 2.048$, $p < 0.05$) were significant influences on willingness to transfer land, and H3b, H3c, and H3d were supported.

Table 5. Results of structural equation modeling.

Hypotheses	Coefficients	SE	t-Values	Results
H1: Personal characteristics→Willingness to transfer land	0.12	0.028	2.403	Supported
H2: Economic factors→Willingness to transfer land	0.27	0.086	4.423	Supported
H3a: Religious culture→Willingness to transfer land	−0.18	0.047	−2.881	Not supported
H3b: Language culture→Willingness to transfer land	0.32	0.075	4.625	Supported
H3c: Family culture→Willingness to transfer land	0.37	0.063	4.585	Supported
H3d: Folk culture→Willingness to transfer land	0.12	0.041	2.048	Supported
H3: Cultural factors→Willingness to transfer land		—		Supported
Model fit		TLI = 0.910, CFI = 0.927, IFI = 0.928, RMSEA = 0.053		

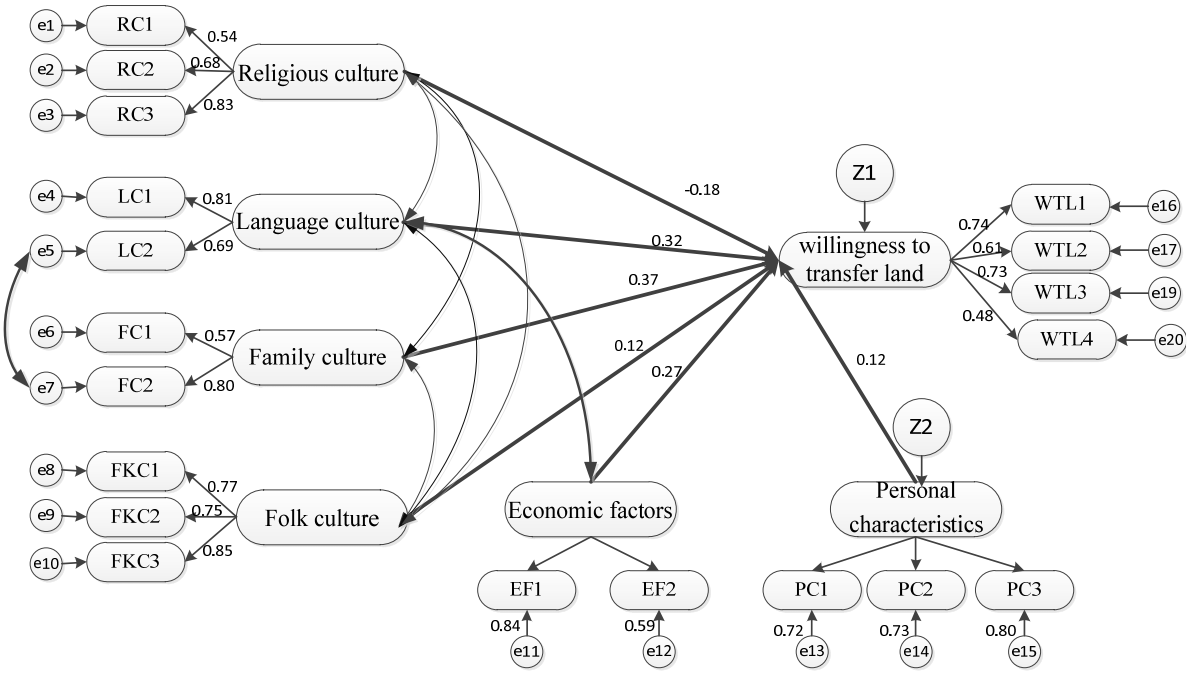

Figure 3. Results of structural equation modeling.

The results indicated that religious belief culture had a significant negative impact on willingness to transfer land. Farmer beliefs in the Land God are an expression of love for their hometowns and land. Some perceive that transferring land out to develop rural tourism is disrespectful to the Land God. In contrast, language culture had a significant positive impact on willingness to transfer land. Farmers trust kinsmen who speak the Southern Fujian dialect and attach priority to subcontracting their land to local people who speak the dialect, at the same price or even at a slightly lower price than for non-natives. Family culture had a significant positive impact on the willingness to transfer land. Farmers follow the opinions of most people in their villages and villagers who are highly respected in families, but ultimately, it is up to the men in the families to decide whether land will be transferred out or not. Folk culture also had a significant positive impact on the willingness to transfer land. Farmers thought it better to discuss land transfer in the evening while drinking tea because they have to work in the daytime and were not willing to talk during working hours. In addition, respondents felt that village committees and local governments should provide livelihood security and economic compensation after transferring land. Finally, there was a positive correlation between the main family income source and willingness to transfer land. Farmers with more income diversity were more willing to transfer land.

The analysis of factors affecting the causality of the model path was used to determine the main influential factors in the causal relationships between pairs of variables in model paths. The main factor affecting the degree of causal relationship between personal characteristics and willingness to transfer land was farmer economic sources. Whether the government had given villagers life guarantees was the main factor affecting the degree of causality between economic factors and willingness to transfer land. Beliefs about the Land God affected the transfer of rural land and was the main factor influencing the degree of causality between religious culture and willingness to transfer land. Farmers gave priority to subcontracting land to locals at the same price, which was the main factor affecting the degree of causality between language culture and willingness to transfer land. The main factor affecting the level of the causal relationship between family culture and willingness to transfer land was farmers relying on the opinions of most people in the village when deciding whether to transfer land to develop rural tourism. The opportunity to negotiate over dinner or wine-drinking for the transfer or expropriation of land was the main factor affecting the degree of causality between folk culture and willingness to transfer land.

5. Discussion

Land has long been considered as life security by rural farmers, which lowers their inclination to transfer land out and reduces the rural land allocation efficiency in China [76]. Research shows that farmer willingness to transfer land out is closely related to individual characteristics and the subsequent economic security. In addition, the village itself is a living system and relationship networks are connected by kinship, geography, folk beliefs, township rules, and village regulations. When farmers make decisions, they follow the social norms of their villages and refer to the opinions of pioneers, family members, and the villagers who are highly respected in the community. For this research, the typical rural cultural areas in Southern Fujian were chosen to elucidate the underlying effects of economic factors, individual characteristics, and cultural mores on farmer willingness to transfer land.

Based on the research literature and historical materials, and the results of the interviews, the connotations of Southern Fujian culture were discerned as the four aspects of folk, religious, language, and family. Folk culture is a type of life culture expressed through various folk customs and habits. Its manifestations are generally divided into two categories: material and non-material folk culture. Material folk culture is formed by the people in the process of creating and consuming material wealth in daily life, such as in productive, food, clothing, and residential customs. The people in South Fujian cultivate particular habits and behaviors. For example, to increase emotional connections

between parties and to conduct conversations and negotiations, they use tea to greet guests. Choosing the right time in the day for farmers to talk about land transfer is also important. Folk culture is a manifestation of the ideology of the people in Southern Fujian, including customs related to age, etiquette, and beliefs. These customs give people a reason to go back to their hometowns so that people who left can reunite with those who have remained and share their ideas and worship according to age, etiquette, and beliefs [77].

5.1. Theoretical Implications

First, the existing research emphasizes the dominant roles of personal attributes and economic rationality on farmers' willingness to transfer land. The explanatory variables in the existing literature were found to be the educational levels of farmers, engagement in agricultural production, and income structure, which have significant and positive effects on farmer willingness to transfer land. These results are in accordance with the findings in the existing research [78–81], including Zhang et al. (2020), who found that farmer willingness to transfer land was positively affected by non-farm working hours and non-farm income [16]. Additionally, economic and housing security following land transfer are major concerns for farmers, and these factors are positively related to their willingness to transfer land, which was confirmed by previous scholars [82].

Second, many other factors should be taken into account in the transaction of farmland ownership besides economic factors. With the implementation of China's Rural Revitalization Strategy, rural culture is gradually disappearing due to the influence of government policies and the external economy [83]. However, there are still many rural areas with good protection of traditional culture in China, where the rural culture plays a dominant role in farmers' daily lives. By focusing on the special situation of Chinese rural culture, this research investigated the mechanisms and roles of the existing "survival ethics" in influencing farmer willingness to transfer land and analyzed the effects of the major Southern Fujian cultural aspects. This is consistent with the characteristics of the social network influences on peasant household land use decision-making, including shared ancestry and kinship impacts on farmer willingness to transfer land. In other words, farmers focus on what neighbors and relatives are doing, no matter what policies state [84]. Furthermore, it was found that most of these cultural aspects played a positive role in influencing farmer willingness to transfer land. However, scholars have not conducted comprehensive studies in this area. It was verified that rural culture has an important role in rural communities, which complements and improves the existing theoretical framework.

Finally, farmers pay great attention to future land use after transfers, another important factor impacting their land transfer decisions. Compared with other construction land, such as for industry, farmers are more inclined to transfer their land without changing its use, or to transfer the land for village construction. For example, farmers are concerned about potential ecological problems related to subsequent land uses. Current studies are focused on farmer awareness of the ecological function of land, but have not yet considered this with respect to farmer willingness to transfer land. Thus, the findings supplement the existing theoretical research.

5.2. Practical Implications

First, it was found that family income had a significant impact on the probability of farmers transferring land. The higher their income, the lower the probability of their out-transfer. An important reason for transferring out land is to obtain land rent. For families with higher incomes, the effect of the rent income of their land is not as great. In contrast, farmers have deep emotional attachment to the land and land abandonment without being transferred out has become a widespread phenomenon in China [85]. The results showed that cultural factors have a positive impact on farmer willingness to transfer land. Regarding emotions, it was found that farmers have a cultural sense of security that will not be lost due to shifts in consciousness and environmental change. In view of the farmers with good economic conditions and low rental income, the local government

and village committees should pay more attention to the value of rural culture; create a mutually uplifting and collective culture; and encourage farmers to participate in local practices and daily lives in an autonomous way to improve the effectiveness of rural tourism land transfer.

Second, as the carrier of local spiritual practice, rural culture provides daily ethics, spiritual models, ideological sustenance, and spiritual authority for clan autonomy for the current villagers to manage their lives, which promotes the development of rural tourism and the effectiveness of land transfer. However, the survival of local rural culture is experiencing a crisis due to the gradual infiltration of modern production and lifestyles into rural areas. The original reciprocal emotional relationship in villagers' production and lives has been transformed into a production and communication system of simple economic benefit exchange and alienation among people. This is gradually destroying the social character and operation of the application of rural culture, such as the partial collapse of the clan structure and the neglect of traditional cultural education, thereby changing the village governance system. Therefore, the local government should manage folk beliefs in a flexible and comprehensive policy-oriented way, respect historical and traditional culture, and guide the orderly integration of people's belief needs and the construction of modern society.

Finally, although rural culture can promote the effectiveness of rural tourism land transfer, farmers are concerned for their livelihoods after land transfer, such as whether farmers can get sufficient living and housing security. Therefore, a fair and reasonable compensation system needs to be designed that promotes pre-job skills training for rural labor employment and tourism management capacity and strengthens the construction of infrastructure to improve the rural receptive capacity so that farmers can fully benefit from participation in rural tourism, with expanded diversity of livelihoods and reduced economic vulnerability.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

First, land transfer is a relatively complex and sensitive issue in China. In actual practice, the local government may rely on administrative power to force farmers to transfer their land cheaply or even provide their land to the government in the form of land acquisition when farmers are reluctant or even unwilling to transfer their land. These realities make it difficult for farmers to cooperate with researchers and provide their true thoughts. This research selected the villages in Fujian as the study case. However, there are significant differences in the economic and tourism development of other regions. The scope of investigation should be expanded further in the future for greater accuracy and generalization.

Second, previous studies paid more attention to the individual, household, and socioeconomic differences among farmers, but they did not consider group differences such as minorities and types of crop planting. However, more differences among groups of farmers will occur with additional regional sampling. Future research should further divide farmers into different groups to investigate the variations among groups of farmers in addition to individual, family, and socioeconomic characteristics.

Finally, the land use after land transfer has become a major concern for rural farmers. After the improvement of their economic conditions, farmers pay more attention to the ecological environment of the village where they live [86]. Most of the farmers are unwilling to transfer their land for the development of polluting industries, they are more likely to transfer their land for tourism, which will make their hometown more beautiful. Tourism land is a kind of compound land use mode, of which the activities can be supported without changing land use, such as increasing the experience of tourists in paddy fields. However, the construction of tourism infrastructure and service facilities inevitably occupies some farmland and green spaces. This research did not further divide tourism land into subcategories, and the farmers' understanding of tourism land is "no pollution, no change of the original land use." Thus, the conclusions are only applicable to land

transfers in the development of rural tourism with regards to the small-scale construction and transformation of villages. Future research should specify the types and functions of tourism land.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Case areas.

Case Area	Basic Situations
Dingye Village	There are 12 village groups with a total population of 1392 people in 368 households. The family name of Ye is possessed by more than 90% of the population. The village has a distinct village culture. The total land area of the village is 1275 acres, including 958 acres of mountainous area and 126 acres of paddy fields. The economic income of the villagers mainly depends on the income from planting, breeding, and labor. It was one of the few villages with slow development in Chengxi Town. It began to develop as a rural tourist village in 2016. It is a base of flower seedling cultivation and a place of farmhouse leisure. In 2017, it received more than 10,000 visitors and achieved tourism economic income of more than $28,610. The development of rural tourism has injected new vitality into the rural economy of Dingye Village, which has greatly promoted the revitalization of the local economy.
Renjia Village	The total area of the village is 3754 acres, including 2946 acres of mountainous area and 459 acres of paddy fields. The village is divided into 13 village groups, with a total population of 1977 people in 493 households. The main agricultural economic income of the villagers comes from planting pineapples and bamboo. More than 90% of the people in the village have the family name of Xu. The village family culture is very strong, which has a long history and has a rich historical and cultural heritage. One of the ancestral halls in Renjia village was built in the Southern Song Dynasty (1205–1207), which was listed as a protection unit of city-level cultural relics in 2001. The descendants of the Southern Tao Gong and Tianzenggong Dynasties are scattered throughout China (Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao) and Southeast Asia, with more than 3 million people. Xinliang, Xu., the leader of Taiwan's former Democratic Progressive Party, also had an ancestral home in this village. Every year, overseas compatriots return to their hometown to worship their ancestors, especially on the eighth day of the lunar April. On that day, the members of the Xu family from home and abroad will gather together to hold a worship ceremony with more than 3000 people.

Table A1. *Cont.*

Case Area	Basic Situations
Shangping Village	Shangping Village is located in the south of Chengxi Town. The total area of the village is 3893 acres. The village is divided into 13 village groups, with a total population of 1736 people in 432 households. The main agricultural economic income of the villagers depends on planting bamboo and pineapples. To effectively implement the government's target responsibility system for farmland protection, the construction of 84 acres of high-standard farmland in this village was approved by the Longhai government in 2018. The family name Chen in Shangping Village has a long history and is a descendant of Chen Yuanguang, the king who established Zhangzhou. The people in this village all have the "Chen" family name. The village is best known for its pineapple, which has been cultivated for more than half a century. The pineapples in Shangping, Cukeng, Renjia, Fushan, Guanyuan, Yangkui, and Donglou Village are collectively called the "Chengxi Pineapple." The existing area of planting pineapples is 4118 acres, and the annual output is 37,000 tons. The output value is more than $28.6 million. In 2003, it became a pollution-free agricultural product in Fujian Province. In 2004, it was identified as a famous agricultural product in Fujian Province. In 2012, it was awarded the "National Geographical Certification Mark." Every year, many tourists visit this area because of the "Chengxi Pineapple."

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