Social Work Innovation and Progress of National Unity in Multi-ethnic Areas—from the Perspective of Inter-embedded Community Building

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Abstract: This paper focuses on how social work in multi-ethnic areas can innovate the work of national unity and progress, and based on the perspective of the construction of interlocking communities, it discusses in depth how to promote the harmonious coexistence and common development among multi-ethnic groups through the model of interlocking communities in the current social context. The inter-ethnic embedded community is an organic ethnic community that promotes inter-ethnic interconnection and mutual integration, and jointly promotes development. It requires the embedding of all ethnic groups in geographic space, social culture and spiritual consciousness, thus forming a pattern of common progress, mutual understanding and mutual help among all ethnic groups. As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, there are new changes in China's national conditions, and consequently, new interpretations in the cultural construction of ethnic communities. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, the study comprehensively assessed the actual effects of interlocking communities in enhancing ethnic communication, understanding and identity by analysing cases of interlocking community building in several multi-ethnic areas. The results found that multiple variables affect the level of acculturation and the happiness index to different degrees. Among them, acculturation stress, with a coefficient of -0.991, constitutes a strong negative impact on the level of acculturation.

Keywords: Multi-ethnic Areas, Social Work Innovation, National Unity and Progress, Inter-Embedded Communities, Community Building

1. Introduction

In multi-ethnic regions, national unity and progress are not only the cornerstone of social stability and harmonious development, but also an inevitable requirement for the fulfilment of the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. At the macro level, the so-called ethnic interlocking social structure is a social form of community with many links between elements of the social structure, strong correlation of interests, and deep ethnic emotions, which is formed in the process of the development of multi-ethnic societies, in which each ethnic group, with the role of subjectivity and equal status, interacts with the other ethnic groups in different spheres of the social life [1]. From the perspective of the overall structure of the interethnic social structure, 'interethnic' constructs a stable, organic, and highly interconnected social structure. From the perspective of structural characteristics, firstly, mutual embedding reflects the openness of social structure, that is, communication in various fields is not limited by closed boundaries between ethnic groups, and ethnic groups can be widely accepted in various social communication fields; secondly, mutual embedding emphasizes the equality and reciprocity among the subjects participating in social interaction, namely the series of "mutual" emphasized in the Central Conference documents, reflecting the active participation of various ethnic groups in social interaction and interaction with equal subject status, free subjective will, and positive communication mentality, forming a symbiotic and mutually dependent social relationship; again, unlike complete assimilation of social structures, mutual embedding emphasizes the organic connection between elements of a social structure rather than complete coverage; finally, from the perspective of specific social forms, mutual embedding reflects the mutual embedding of various structural elements in multi-ethnic societies, that is, the strong bond relationships among members of different ethnic groups in different fields of activities such as politics, economy,

culture, and social life [2]. Scholars have found that changes in the spatial conditions under which members of different ethnic groups engage in social interaction have a decisive impact on issues such as ethnic relations and social security in the cities where they live. So far, there are two main types of multiethnic or multiracial settlement patterns in major metropolitan cities around the world: one is the naturally occurring specific single-ethnic or racially oriented communities that are characterised by the country of origin of the immigrants, such as Chinatown in the United States, Koreatown, etc.; and the other is the government-led multiethnic proportional mixing of communities, such as the settlement pattern in Singapore [3]. With the in-depth development of globalisation and the profound changes in the social structure of China, multi-ethnic areas are facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, economic and cultural exchanges among ethnic groups have become increasingly frequent, which promotes mutual understanding and respect among ethnic groups; on the other hand, issues such as cultural differences and unbalanced economic development may also trigger ethnic conflicts and contradictions. Therefore, how to innovate social work methods and promote national unity and progress in multi-ethnic areas in the context of the new era has become an important topic that needs to be addressed urgently.

When exploring the issue of national unity in multi-ethnic areas, previous literature has mostly approached it from a single dimension, such as policy formulation, cultural integration and economic development, with less systematic consideration given to the construction of inter-embeddedness at the community level. This leads to the fact that in practice, it is often difficult to form a comprehensive, in-depth and sustainable working mechanism for national unity. Based on this challenge, the motivation of this paper is clear: from the perspective of inter-embedded community construction, it comprehensively examines the inter-embedded factors in multiple dimensions, such as economic, cultural, and social, and explores their unique roles and mechanisms in promoting the progress of national unity. Through in-depth theoretical analysis and empirical studies, this paper aims to reveal the potential value and practical path of interlocking communities in national unity work, and provide scientific basis and reference for the formulation and implementation of relevant policies. The contribution of this paper is that on the one hand, it enriches the theoretical research system of national unity and progress work in multi-ethnic areas, and on the other hand, it provides new ideas and methods for community governance and ethnic work in practice. The organisational structure of the paper firstly describes the background and significance of the study, then reviews the relevant literature and points out the research gaps, then details the research methodology and data sources, then presents the research results and analyses, and finally sums up the conclusions of the study and puts forward the policy recommendations.

2. Related Works

The study reviews and summarises domestic and international research results on multiethnic and multicultural social integration and identity construction. Wuerhong P, through anthropological fieldwork, highlighted the multilevel nature of ethnic inter-embeddedness - spatial, subsistence and cultural inter-embeddedness - and analyzes the root causes of cultural diversity in the Ili River Valley, demonstrating a multiethnic coexistence and co-prosperity paradigm [4]. Vlasov M et al, on the other hand, used an econometric model to quantify the impact of socio-cultural variables on human capital in multi-ethnic regions of Russia, and found that factors such as marriage, education, healthcare and travelling attitudes are significant, especially domestic travelling has a boosting effect on human capital [5]. Based on the theory of "mutual embeddedness", Wengmu B et al. conducted an in-depth study on the promotion of Putonghua and the construction of national identity in Shangri-La City, and put forward an optimisation path to provide guidance for language education and national unity [6]. Arsyad M et al. revealed the mechanism of social integration in multi-ethnic rural communities through interviews and snowball rolling, emphasizing the importance of social and government activities [7]. Törngren S O et al. transnationally analyzed multiethnic personal experiences to promote an interdisciplinary understanding of the global phenomenon of mixed ethnicity [8]. Meanwhile, Aricindy A et al. used an ethnographic approach to evaluate multicultural education models in multiethnic schools to emphasise the equality of education for all ethnic groups [9], and Crețan R et al. explored the construction of the Roma as 'other' in multicultural borderlands from a postcolonial perspective, revealing complex prejudices and power relations [10].

However, despite the fact that domestic and international studies on integration and identity construction in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies have achieved remarkable results, these studies still face some limitations that cannot be ignored. Geographic specificity is a common problem. Many studies focus on specific geographical areas or cultural contexts, so differences in sample selection and

data collection methods have an impact on the generalisability of the findings. Therefore, when this paper explores the integration and identity construction of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies, it seeks to achieve the dual goals of theoretical innovation and practical guidance on the basis of synthesising the results of previous research. By integrating research methods and perspectives from different fields, this paper aims to construct a more universal and operable theoretical framework, so as to reveal the complex mechanism of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural social integration and identity construction in a more comprehensive and in-depth manner. This framework will take full account of geographical differences, sample selection and the diversity of data collection methods, and seek to enhance the general applicability and reliability of the research results.

3. Methods

3.1. Structural Functions of Ethnically Embedded Communities

The co-operative body constituted by the main elements needs to be fully supported by the auxiliary elements and environmental elements in order to perform the overall function of promoting the construction of an ethnic inter-embedded social structure, whose functions mainly include the following points.

(1)Economic inter-embedded function, it refers to the embedded function of promoting members of all ethnic groups to participate in industrial development together in the form of co-operation and mutual benefit, in order to achieve common prosperity.

(2) Cultural inter-embedded function, it refers to the embedded function of promoting mutual influence and mutual reference of different ethnic cultures, and forming cultural sharing and commonality on the basis of mutual recognition.

(3) Social interlocking function, it refers to promoting effective social interaction among various ethnic groups on the basis of mutual respect, as well as the functions of mutual assistance, love, and dependence among each other.

(4) The interlocking function of systems, it refers to the function of promoting friendly unity and mutual interaction among different ethnic groups in terms of organization and policy.

The "initiative", "driving force", and "assisting force" of the construction of an interethnic social structure interact and work together, forming the three main sources of power for the construction of an interethnic social structure. This promotes diverse organizations to play a role related to the embedded development of various ethnic groups on the basis of cooperation, and ultimately promotes the construction of an interethnic social structure (as shown in Figure 1).
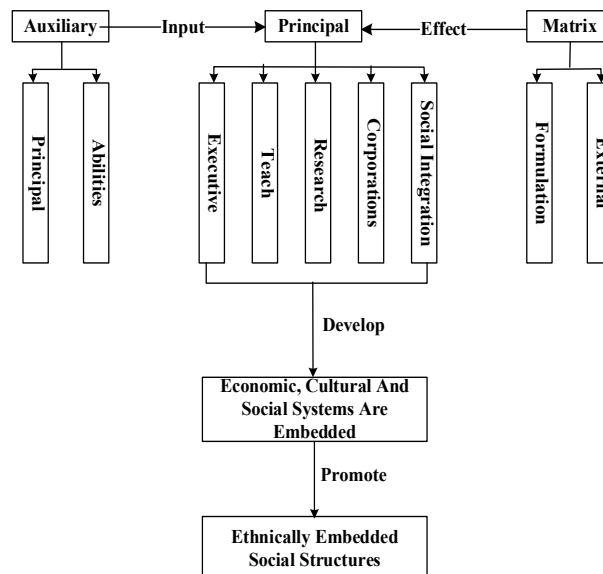

Figure 1: Multi-organisational cooperation in ethnically embedded social structures

3.2. Structural Characteristics of Ethnically Embedded Communities

3.2.1. Spatial Interlocking

The Chinese nation is composed of 56 ethnic groups, and there are many commonalities and differences among the ethnic groups. In the process of constructing the Chinese national community, how to correctly deal with the relationship between the commonalities and differences of the various ethnic groups is particularly important for maintaining national unity and accelerating the construction of the Chinese national community [11]. Only by strengthening the interactions and exchanges between ethnic groups and enhancing the commonality between ethnic groups can we lay the foundation for the mutual embedding of spatial community. Living space is a necessary condition for the reproduction and survival of ethnic groups, and the construction of spatial community is the basis for the mutual embedding of ethnic groups. The continuous inter-embedding of ethnic groups' living space also strengthens their exchanges and collisions at the cultural, economic, social and psychological levels. Thus, spatial embeddedness strengthens the process of interaction, exchange and integration among ethnic groups and lays the spatial foundation for their mutual embeddedness.

3.2.2. Shared Space for Economic Exchange

After the reform and opening up, the overall development of the country has ushered in new opportunities. With the implementation of the Western Development and the relocation policy of Diaozhuang immigrants in the autonomous region, the economic conditions and living standards of all ethnic groups in the autonomous region have been significantly improved. In addition, the central and local governments have provided multiple development policies and measures for immigrant development zones such as Dachangchang Town, continuously promoting the development of immigrant communities in Dachangchang Town [12]. The investment of the state in the ethnic areas has made the ethnic areas feel the influence of the state power, and at the same time, it has also forged the identity of the ethnic groups in the ethnic areas to the state. The state's economic embeddedness in ethnic areas is mainly manifested in the implementation of a variety of policies and development strategies to support the economic development of ethnic areas, improve infrastructure, improve the standard of living of the residents, strengthen the interaction and communication between the various ethnic groups of immigrants, broaden the space for economic exchanges shared by the various ethnic groups of the immigrant community of the town of the Great Battlefield, and strengthen the sense of community of the Chinese nation. The increased demand for economic development has further promoted the construction of the immigrant embedded pattern in Big Battlefield Township, which is highlighted by the fact that the economic embedded development has led to the adjustment of the structure of the living space of the immigrant groups of all ethnic groups in Big Battlefield Township. The spatial living pattern for the production and life of immigrant groups of all ethnic groups has a non-negligible impact on the production and life, as the saying goes, "one side of the soil and water nurtures one side of the people", in different areas of the survival of the population of many different ethnic groups, and these populations in the process of fighting with the natural conditions of the formation of their own unique mode of production and habits of life.

These highly individual production and living styles not only provide a source of livelihood for immigrant groups of all ethnic groups, but also provide favourable conditions for interaction and exchange between immigrant groups of all ethnic groups in the shared economic space. At the beginning of the local immigrant community, due to various factors, the interaction and communication between immigrant groups of various ethnic groups were relatively rare, and the distribution of living space pattern was also relatively homogeneous, which was more often presented as a kind of blood relationship and geographic relationship. With the continuous change and development of the local immigrant community under the leadership of the Party and the maturity of the conditions in all aspects, the interaction and communication within the immigrant community gradually began to increase, the immigrant groups are more familiar with each other, and the common needs have increased, which to a certain extent has brought the immigrant groups of all ethnic groups closer to each other psychologically, laying the foundation for the psychological level of the immigrant groups of all ethnic groups in the town of the Great Battlefield to be intertwined with each other. At the same time, with the expansion of this shared economic space and the growing familiarity between immigrant groups of all ethnic groups, the foundation has also been laid for the readjustment, differentiation and combination of immigrant communities of all ethnic groups in the town of the Great Battlefield, breaking the original single distribution of immigrant communities according to the solidified pattern of blood ties and geographic ties, and beginning to adjust to the distribution of the distribution of residential patterns based on geographic and industrial ties embedded in each other.

3.2.3. Cultural Sharing

Spatial embeddedness is both a historical fact and a realistic human ecological situation of the existence and development of border multi-ethnic communities. Economic symbiosis has gradually emerged and developed with the deepening of spatial and geographical embeddedness, and has continuously promoted and facilitated inter-ethnic exchanges and intermingling [13]. Cultural sharing, on the other hand, is the process of forming a "spiritual community" in cultural embeddedness, a phenomenon of inter-ethnic cultural interaction and integration, and the result of active participation and promotion by all ethnic groups.

Against the backdrop of deepening economic symbiosis, cultural sharing has become a catalyst for the deeper development of ethnic relations. With the growing improvement of transport networks, the deepening of the market economy and the rapid advancement of information technology, economic interaction between different ethnic groups has become increasingly frequent, and this close economic linkage has paved a solid bridge for cultural exchanges and integration. In this process, the cultural elements of various ethnic groups are no longer confined to a single geographical area, but have crossed geographical boundaries, penetrating and influencing each other, and weaving together a cultural picture of pluralistic symbiosis. The core of cultural sharing lies in the construction of a "spiritual community". This means that in the course of long-term interactions and exchanges, various ethnic groups have gradually formed an identification with and respect for each other's cultures, and then constructed in their hearts and minds a common pursuit of values and spiritual belonging that transcends ethnic boundaries. This spiritual community not only promotes unity and harmony among ethnic groups, but also injects a strong endogenous impetus for the overall development of the community. The realisation of cultural sharing cannot be achieved without the active participation and initiative of all ethnic groups. In their daily lives, people display and spread their unique cultural charms through festivals, folk art performances, cultural exchanges and other forms, while at the same time drawing nutrients from the cultures of other ethnic groups. This two-way interactive process not only enriches the cultural life of the various ethnic groups, but also promotes cultural innovation and development, making the cultural ecology of the multi-ethnic border communities more colourful and vibrant.

In addition, cultural sharing has promoted the common advancement of education, science and technology, health and other social endeavours. In the course of cultural exchanges, various ethnic groups have continued to introduce and learn from advanced ideas and technologies, which has promoted the rapid development of their own social endeavours. At the same time, such exchanges and cooperation have built a broader platform for cooperation among the various ethnic groups, laying a solid foundation for jointly meeting challenges and achieving prosperity and development.

3.3. Measurement of Subjective Well-Being in Multi-Ethnic Areas

In areas where many ethnic groups live together, subjective well-being, as an important indicator of residents' quality of life and state of mental health, is particularly complex and rich in its connotation and expression. This complexity is not only reflected in the diversity of cultural backgrounds among different ethnic groups, but also profoundly affects the way individuals understand and pursue happiness. Therefore, the measurement of subjective well-being in multi-ethnic areas needs to go beyond the consideration of a single dimension, and instead build a multi-dimensional and multi-level comprehensive evaluation system.

Subjective well-being, an emotional experience deeply rooted in the individual's inner world, is centred on the individual's comprehensive assessment of his or her own life situation and positive feelings [14]. It is not only the satisfaction of material life, but also the abundance and harmony of the spiritual world. Subjective well-being consists of three pillars: life satisfaction, the balance between positive and negative emotions, and the dynamic interaction between these three. Life satisfaction is an individual's degree of satisfaction with life as a whole or in a specific area, and is the foundation of subjective well-being; positive emotions include positive emotional experiences such as joy, contentment, and love, and are key factors in enhancing well-being; and the reduction or effective management of negative emotions is an important aspect of maintaining the stability of well-being.

In order to more accurately measure the subjective well-being of residents in multi-ethnic areas, the Psychological Well-Being Scale can be drawn upon and appropriately adapted. The scale comprehensively and deeply portrays an individual's level of happiness in life through six dimensions, including life autonomy, environmental control, individual growth, positive interpersonal relationships,

life goals, and self-acceptance [15]. In the application in multi-ethnic areas, the scale can be adjusted with the necessary cultural adaptability and sensitivity by taking into account the local cultural background and social reality to ensure that it can truly reflect the well-being status of local residents.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Practical Exploration of Inter-embedded Communities in Multi-ethnic Areas

According to the data provided by the Lijiang Ethnic and Religious Committee (2023), the distribution of the number of Han Chinese and various ethnic minorities in the Lijiang urban area and in three randomly selected communities is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the number of Han Chinese and various ethnic minorities

Distribution of various ethnic groups	Number of people in lijiang	Number of people in three communities
Han group	478233	52605
Yi ethnic group	270889	29798
Bai ethnic group	54444	5989
Hani ethnic group	445	49
Zhuang ethnic group	4615	508
Dai ethnic group	13382	1472
Miao ethnic group	7050	776
Lisu ethnic group	119214	13114
Hui ethnic group	4413	485
Lahu ethnic group	80	0
Wa ethnic group	165	18
Naxi minority	236486	26013
Jingpo ethnic group	63	7
Yao ethnic group	66	0
The zang or tibetan people	5980	658
Brown tribe	56	6
Achang ethnic group	18	0
Nu ethnic group	117	13
Pumi tribe	23389	2573
De'ang tribe	8	0
Dulong clan	63	7
Mongolian	8	0
Jino tribe	530	58
Aquarium	51	6
Manchu	231	25
Buyi ethnic group	237	26

From the Table 1, it can be seen that Lishui City has a majority of Han Chinese, but ethnic minorities account for more than half of the total population, and among the ethnic minorities, the Yi, Naxi, and Lisu have the largest populations. Afterwards, the study randomly selected 500 people from the three communities to do the questionnaire survey, and 437 questionnaires were returned after one week. Figures 2 and 3 show the characteristics of the local ethnic minority migrant population as reflected in the valid questionnaires.
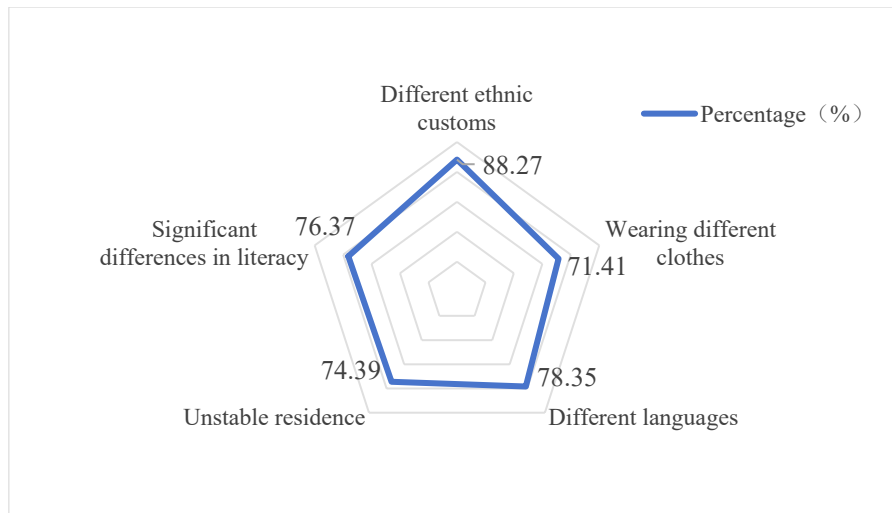
Figure 2: Ethnic minority mobile population group characteristic perception

Figure 2 reveals the influence of multiple factors on the perception of group differences, with ethnic customs differences (88.27%) being the most significant, emphasizing the importance of cultural customs. Clothing (71.41%) and language (78.35%) differences closely follow, reflecting the roles of cultural traits and communication bridges, respectively.
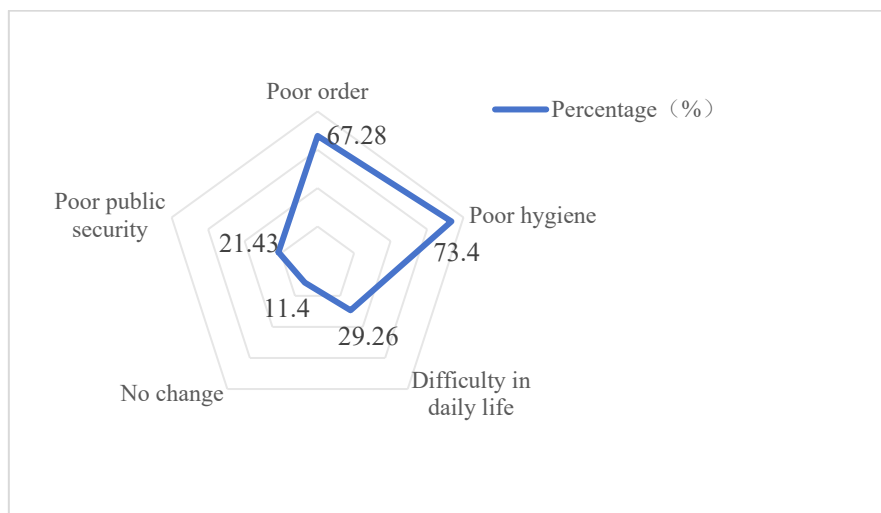

Figure 3: Perceived Community Impacts of Ethnic Minority Mobile Populations

According to Figure 3, it can be seen that residents of the three communities are primarily concerned with hygiene (73.4%), with order (67.28%) coming second. This demonstrates the two core demands of community residents for their living environments: the pursuit of clean and healthy sanitation, and the desire for stable and orderly community order. These concerns not only reflect residents' deep concern for their personal well-being, but also their expectations and demands for the overall level of community development. Therefore, the relevant departments and community managers should pay full attention to these feedbacks and take effective measures to improve hygiene and strengthen order management in response to the residents' urgent needs.

4.2. Survey of Subjective Well-Being within Multi-Ethnic Communities

When exploring the cultural adaptation and subjective well-being of ethnic minority migrant populations, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used as an analytical tool to quantify and analyze the correlation between cultural adaptation, subjective well-being index, and a series of social, economic, and cultural factors [16]. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to indicate the strength of the correlations, which are analysed in Table 2.

According to Table 2, it can be found that several variables have different degrees of impact on the level of cultural adaptation and the happiness index. Among them, acculturation stress constitutes a

strong negative impact on the level of acculturation with a coefficient of -0.991, and also has a considerable impact on the well-being index with a coefficient of -0.413, which highlights the importance of reducing acculturation stress. On the other hand, positive social integration factors such as language proficiency (coefficients of 0.193 and 0.417), employment status (coefficients of 0.0897 and 0.214), and level of social participation (coefficients of 0.128 and 0.337) all contribute significantly and positively to both acculturation levels and well-being indices, with language proficiency in particular having a particularly pronounced effect on the enhancement of well-being. In contrast, time of migration (coefficients of 0.044 and 0.131), age (coefficients of -0.079 and 0.0865), and marital status (coefficients of 0.113 and -0.019), while having an effect on these two indicators, have a relatively small impact.

Table 2: Correlation coefficients of factors influencing cultural adaptation and subjective well-being in multiethnic mobility

The coefficient values of each variable		Level of acculturation	Happiness index
Adaptation to stress issues	Cultural adaptation pressure	-0.991	-0.413
Adaptation process issues	Migration time	0.044	0.131
	Age	-0.079	0.0865
Social integration issues	Employment situation	0.0897	0.214
	Marriage situation	0.113	-0.019
	language proficiency	0.193	0.417
	Educational level	0.0745	0.251
Social participation issues	Social participation level	0.128	0.337

5. Conclusion

Through an in-depth exploration of the innovative practice of social work in multi-ethnic areas on national unity and progress under the perspective of the construction of interlocking communities, this study summarizes the main findings: the model of interlocking communities significantly promotes economic interdependence, cultural intermingling and social identity among ethnic groups, effectively eases ethnic conflicts and strengthens the cohesion of the community. This finding explains why the interlocking community has become an effective path to promote ethnic unity and progress, and its multi-dimensional interlocking mechanism has realized the harmonious symbiosis of ethnic relations. At the same time, the results of this study have a positive impact on social governance, economic development and cultural diversity preservation in multi-ethnic regions, providing lessons that can be learnt from other regions. The case of this paper provides three insights for conducting research on ethnically embedded communities. Firstly, there are levels of embeddedness - spatial, cultural, economic, social and psychological - but spatial embeddedness can be a "starting move" in terms of research strategy. When conducting research on an ethnically embedded community, the first and foremost issue is to find out the origins of different ethnic groups, the process of entry, and their respective expressions of migration and embeddedness, which naturally creates the conditions for revealing the process and form of spatial embeddedness of each ethnic group. Taking spatial embeddedness as the "starting move", we can extend it to cultural, economic, social and psychological dimensions one by one, and then explain the formation and development of the all-round embeddedness of each ethnic group. Secondly, each inter-embedded ethnic community has its own "life history" of development, formation and growth, and it is shaped by the "life history" of the migration, rooting and development of the various ethnic groups within the community. However, the study acknowledges that there are limitations in data collection and sample selection, and future research needs to further expand the sample and refine the dimensions of analysis. Based on this, this paper suggests that policy makers should pay attention to the construction of inter-embedded communities, increase investment, and improve the relevant policy support system; at the same time, social workers should actively explore more innovative methods to better serve the cause of national unity and progress in multi-ethnic areas. Compared with existing studies, this study is a breakthrough in both theoretical construction and practical application, providing a new perspective for understanding social change and ethnic relations in multi-ethnic areas.

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