

# The Influence of Village Committees on Farmers' Satisfaction with Withdrawal from Rural Homesteads

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## Abstract

The village Committee has an important impact on farmers' satisfaction with withdrawal from rural homesteads (WRH). Based on the data from 300 farmers in three counties/districts (Cuiping, Luxian, and Pengshan) in Sichuan Province from August to November 2022, we explored the significant impact of village committee's participation on farmers' satisfaction with WRH. The empirical results, according to the multi-classification ordered regression model, showed that the village committee's policy publicity, coordinated management and internal trust with farmers positively affect farmers' satisfaction with WRH, this paper has practical significance for improving village governance ability and building the performance improvement mechanism of WRH.

## Keywords

Rural Homestead Withdrawal; Village Committee; Farmers' Satisfaction.

## 1. Introduction

In response to the real-life problems of idle rural homesteads, oversized areas, and sloppy utilization that commonly exist in China's rural areas at this stage[1], the Chinese government launched two rounds of rural homesteads system reform pilot projects in 2015 and 2020, which have actively explored and achieved obvious results on the farmers' withdrawal from rural homesteads. At present, the process of the new round of rural homesteads system reform is more than halfway through, WRH gradually exposes the problems of damage to the rights and interests of farmers, such as too low compensation standards, unreasonable distribution of benefits, and poor living conditions, which makes farmers less satisfied with the homestead withdrawal policy.

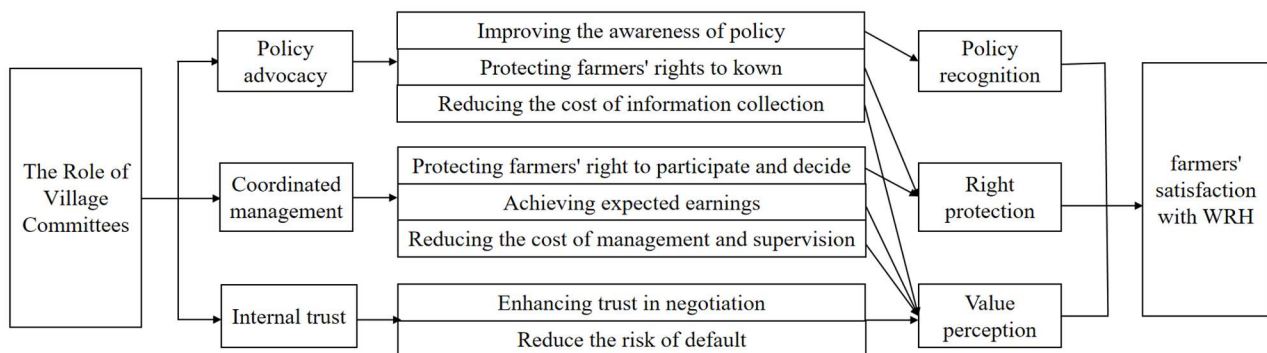
Throughout the existing studies, most of them focus on the withdrawal connotation and mode[2], withdrawal willingness and influencing factors[3], withdrawal mechanism[4] and compensation standard[5], and some of them focus on the influence of social network[6], family life cycle[7] and farmers' differentiation[8], while few studies have systematically analyzed what roles do village committees play in WRH.

As a villagers' autonomous organization widely active in rural areas, village committees have natural advantages in village management and can play an important and irreplaceable role in WRH, and the influence of village committees on farmers' satisfaction with the homestead withdrawal policy cannot be ignored.

Therefore, this paper will investigate the influence of village committees on farmers' satisfaction with WRH from both theoretical and empirical perspectives, in order to provide a reference for improving farmers' satisfaction with homestead withdrawal policy.

## 2. Theoretical Frameworks

Village committees usually play multiple roles in the process of WRH, and the participation of village committees can significantly reduce transaction costs and risks. According to existing research, village committees are the grassroots organizer and implementors for WRH, responsible for explaining the homestead withdrawal policy to farmers as well as mobilizing their active participation. It also bears the responsibility of implementing specific publicity measures and ensuring that farmers are aware of the relevant information[9]. At the same time, village committees can help coordinate the interaction between farmers and other participants, deal with matters related to WRH, such as policy design, demolition and reclamation, resettlement site construction, etc[10]. In addition, some studies have found that farmers' trust in village committees has a positive impact on the effectiveness of village governance, which can guide farmers to actively participate in village governance[11]. Therefore, this article mainly explores the impact of village committees' participation on farmers' satisfaction with WRH from three aspects: policy advocacy, coordinated management, and internal trust(Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Influencing mechanisms of village committees on the farmers' satisfaction with WRH.

### 2.1. Policy Advocacy

In the process of WRH, village committees serve as a bridge for communication between the government and the villagers. On the one hand, it is responsible for receiving policy information released by the higher-level government and communicating with the higher-level government on the relevant situation of WRH, On the other hand, responsible for conveying complete and comprehensive policy information to farmers. Among the various ways of information dissemination, organizational dissemination represented by village cadres and grassroots propaganda departments and interpersonal dissemination among friends and relatives are the main channels for farmers to obtain homestead withdrawal policy. The active promotion of the policy by the village committee is conducive to farmers' access to accurate and detailed information on WRH, improving their awareness of the withdrawal policy, prompting them to better understand the government's policy connotation, and increasing their recognition of the homestead withdrawal policy[12]. Policy recognition will directly affect the policy implementation effect, and also reflects the most direct and real feelings of farmers towards this policy[13]. Farmers get the information through the village committee and do not have to rely on themselves, which greatly reduces the cost of information gathering and helps improve their policy satisfaction[14,15].

### 2.2. Coordinated Management

WRH requires the coordination and participation of multiple subjects to ultimately achieve multi-satisfaction and overall win-win situation. When village committees participate in the

management of WRH, it can effectively ensure farmers' rights to be informed, to participate, to be heard, to decide etc., ensuring that farmers obtain reasonable monetary compensation, housing resettlement, and social security in accordance with the law. By participating in the preparation of homestead withdrawal plan, the establishment of withdrawal compensation mechanism, the bidding of demolition and reclamation projects, and the construction of new houses, village committees, on the one hand, communicate with the higher-level government on behalf of farmers, so that farmers can obtain reasonable withdrawal compensation, on the other hand, negotiate with the construction teams and supervise their work. This not only reduces the management energy and supervision costs that farmers spend on WRH, but also be beneficial to improve the level of protection of farmers' substantive and procedural rights. It helps them achieve the expected income goals, maintain their dignity, and increase their satisfaction[16].

### 2.3. Internal Trust

We are in a society that follows trust relationships, which affects multiple aspects of rural society[17]. It is not about valuing contracts, but rather a natural recognition of familiar behaviors in mutual interactions. Mutual trust between farmers and organizations can be divided into interpersonal trust and institutional trust[18]. In the relationship between farmers and village committees, interpersonal trust refers to farmers' trust in village committee members, while institutional trust refers to farmers' trust in the standardization of village committee work procedures, fairness of mechanisms, and other aspects. On the one hand, interpersonal trust increases communication and mutual trust between village committees and farmers, which can effectively improve farmers' awareness of WRH policy and cooperation in its implementation, save transaction costs, on the other hand, the establishment of institutional trust requires village committees to be fair in formulating WRH plan and to protect farmers' reasonable rights and interests[19]. The above evidence proves that the trust relationship between village committees and farmers can make farmers more recognize WRH policy, more confident in the benefits of WRH, and increase farmers' satisfaction with WRH.

## 3. Research Setting

### 3.1. Study Area and Data Collection

**Table 1.** Profile of survey respondents in sample villages (n = 300).

| Feature   | Option                                 | Percentage (%) | farmers' satisfaction with WRH(%) | Feature                               | Option  | Percentage (%) | farmers' satisfaction with WRH(%) |
|-----------|----------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Gender    | Male                                   | 43.0           | 68.2                              | Household annual net income (RMB 10k) | <0.5    | 10.7           | 46.9                              |
|           | Female                                 | 57.0           | 73.7                              |                                       | [0.5,1) | 12.7           | 50.0                              |
| Age       | <30                                    | 5.7            | 64.7                              |                                       | [1,1.5) | 11.7           | 65.7                              |
|           | 30-39                                  | 4.3            | 76.9                              |                                       | [1.5,3) | 23.3           | 71.4                              |
|           | 40-49                                  | 17.3           | 69.2                              |                                       | [3,5)   | 22.3           | 74.6                              |
|           | 50-59                                  | 28.7           | 57.0                              |                                       | [5,7)   | 10.0           | 70.0                              |
|           | 60-69                                  | 26.3           | 65.8                              |                                       | [7,9)   | 4.3            | 77.0                              |
|           | 70-79                                  | 15.3           | 80.4                              |                                       | ≥9      | 5.0            | 86.7                              |
|           | ≥80                                    | 2.4            | 85.7                              |                                       |         |                |                                   |
| Education | Elementary school and below            | 63.6           | 63.9                              | Family size                           | 1-2     | 8.3            | 64.0                              |
|           | Junior High School                     | 25.7           | 67.5                              |                                       | 3-4     | 35.3           | 67.0                              |
|           | Senior High School                     | 6.0            | 72.2                              |                                       | 5-6     | 48.3           | 63.4                              |
|           | Vocational/technical secondary college | 1.7            | 80.0                              |                                       | 7-8     | 6.7            | 75.0                              |
|           | Undergraduate and above                | 3.0            | 66.7                              |                                       | 9-10    | 1.3            | 75.0                              |

We selected a total of 18 administrative villages in three counties/districts (Cuiping, Luxian, and Pengshan) in Sichuan Province as our samples. The main reason for taking these areas as examples is that these areas launched the second round of rural homestead reform pilots work in China in 2020. The goal is to explore forms of realization of the separation of ownership, qualification rights, and use rights of rural homesteads.

The research team investigated Cuiping District of Yibin, Luxian County in Luzhou and Pengshan District of Meishan by means of interviews and questionnaires. A total of 310 questionnaires were sent out and 300 valid questionnaires were returned (Table 1), with an effective rate of 96.77%, of which 67 in Luxian County, accounting for 22.33%, 125 in Pengshan District, accounting for 41.67%, 108 in Cuiping District, accounting for 36.00%. The survey mainly includes farmers' satisfaction with WRH, the basic situation of farmers' families, and farmers' cognition of village committees' participation in WRH.

### 3.2. Method

Since the options of the dependent variable "farmers' satisfaction with WRH" are multiple and ordered, we use multi-classification ordered regression model. The basic form of the model is as follows:

$$\ln\left(\frac{p(y \leq j | x)}{1 - p(y \leq j | x)}\right) = \mu_j - \left(\alpha + \sum_{i=1}^k \beta_i x_i\right) \quad (1)$$

$P(y \leq j | x)$  represents the cumulative probability of the class  $j$  and the following categories:

$$P(y \leq j | x) = \frac{e^{\mu_j - (\alpha + \sum_{i=1}^k \beta_i x_i)}}{1 + e^{\mu_j - (\alpha + \sum_{i=1}^k \beta_i x_i)}} \quad (2)$$

Here:  $y$  is farmers' satisfaction with WRH,  $j$  is the classification of the dependent variable  $y$ ,  $j=1, 2, 3, 4, 5$  denotes five levels,  $x_i$  denotes the  $i$ th factor affecting farmers' satisfaction with WRH,  $i=1, 2, \dots, k$ ,  $\alpha$  is the intercept term,  $\beta_i$  is the partial regression coefficient;  $\mu_1, \mu_2, \dots, \mu_j$  are the cut-off points.

### 3.3. Variables

(1) Dependent variable: In this paper, the overall satisfaction level of WRH policy is taken as the dependent variable.

(2) Core independent variables: The core independent variables in this paper include three variables: policy advocacy, coordinated management, and internal trust of village committees.

(3) Control variables: This paper introduces the following three types of control variables: first, personal characteristics of farmers, including gender, age, and education level; second, household characteristics, including the ratio of migrant workers in households and household annual net income; third, characteristics of farmers' homesteads, including the area of the original homestead and the years of the original homestead.

The definition of each type of variable and the results of descriptive statistical analysis are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Definition and descriptive statistics of each variable.

| Variables                            | Definitions                                                                                                                                                     | Mean    | S.D.    |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Farmers' satisfaction with WRH       | Very dissatisfied=1; dissatisfied=2; average=3; satisfied=4; very satisfied=5                                                                                   | 3.700   | 0.969   |
| <b>Policy Advocacy</b>               |                                                                                                                                                                 |         |         |
| Publicity methods                    | The number of specific ways in which the village committee to promote policy about WRH.<br>The value ranges from 1 to 6.                                        | 1.870   | 1.032   |
| Propaganda frequency                 | The number of times the village committee publicized WRH policy.<br>The value ranges from 1 to 4.                                                               | 2.300   | 1.074   |
| Publicity depth                      | Level of publicity and transparent of WRH policy and other related information: very opaque = 1; opaque = 2; general = 3; transparent = 4; very transparent = 5 | 3.360   | 1.099   |
| <b>Coordinated Management</b>        |                                                                                                                                                                 |         |         |
| Management intensity                 | The number of specific works that village committees participate in during the process of WRH.<br>The value ranges from 0 to 6.                                 | 3.250   | 1.002   |
| Degree of democratic decision-making | The frequency of the consultation organized by village committees during the process of WRH: never = 1; hardly = 2; often = 3; usually = 4; frequent = 5        | 3.710   | 1.063   |
| Feedback Comments                    | The frequency of feedback comments from village committees during the process of WRH: never = 1; hardly = 2; often = 3; usually = 4; frequent = 5               | 2.940   | 1.100   |
| <b>Internal Trust</b>                |                                                                                                                                                                 |         |         |
| Image of Village Council             | the image of the village committees.<br>Very poor=1; poor=2; fair=3; good=4; very good=5                                                                        | 3.350   | 1.051   |
| Interpersonal trust                  | Whether village committees are trusted by farmers in daily work: distrust = 1; less trust = 2; general = 3; trust = 4; very trust = 5                           | 3.230   | 1.089   |
| Institutional Trust                  | Whether the rules and regulations established regarding the WRH can be trusted by farmers: distrust = 1; less trust = 2; general = 3; trust = 4; very trust = 5 | 3.410   | 0.951   |
| <b>Control variables</b>             |                                                                                                                                                                 |         |         |
| Age                                  | Respondents' actual age (years)                                                                                                                                 | 55.880  | 13.498  |
| Gender                               | Male=1; Female=2                                                                                                                                                | 1.570   | 0.496   |
| Education level                      | Elementary school and below = 1; Junior High School=2; Senior High School=3; Vocational/technical secondary college =4; Undergraduate and above=5               | 1.550   | 0.911   |
| Proportion of migrants               | The ratio of migrant workers in households                                                                                                                      | 0.402   | 0.240   |
| Household annual net income          | [0, 5k) = 1; [5k, 10k) = 2; [10k, 15k) = 3; [15k, 30k) = 4; [30k, 50k) = 5; [50k, 70k) = 6; [70k, 90k) = 7; [90k, +∞) = 8                                       | 4.060   | 1.845   |
| Area of the homestead                | The actual area of the original homestead owned by households or having been withdrawn.                                                                         | 280.064 | 213.306 |
| Land used period of the homestead    | The land used period of the original homestead owned by households or having been withdrawn                                                                     | 23.680  | 10.645  |

## 4. Results

According to the model we constructed, SPSS 26 statistical software is used to perform multi-classification ordered regression to test the significance of the influence of each explanatory

variable. The parallelism test is the basis for judging the applicability of the multi-classification ordered regression model, and the results show that  $P=0.163>0.05$ , indicating that the data satisfy the conditions for using this model. From the goodness-of-fit test of the model, the Cox & Snell  $R^2$  is 0.593 and the Nagelkerke  $R^2$  is 0.638, indicating that the model has a goodness of fit and is suitable for multi-classification ordered regression model.

Table 3 shows the estimated results of the model. The roles of village committees in policy advocacy, coordinated management, and internal trust have varying degrees of influence on farmers' satisfaction with WRH. Regarding the impact of policy advocacy, the methods and depth of publicity have a significant positive effect on farmers' satisfaction with WRH, with coefficients of 0.388 and 0.427, which are significant at the 1% and 5% levels, respectively, indicating that the more diverse publicity methods and the more transparent the policy information, the higher farmers' satisfaction. When the village committees undertake the work of information search and unconditionally propagate it to farmers through diversified means, it can not only significantly reduce the cost of farmers searching for certain information or knowledge, but also increase the quantity and quality of information obtained by farmers, enhance farmers' recognition of the benefits and value of policy implementation, and enable farmers to positively evaluate the policy. The impact of publicity frequency on farmers' satisfaction with WRH is not significant, which may be due to the lack of reasonable publicity methods and insufficient consideration of farmers' information acquisition ability, and farmers' knowledge of the WRH policy is still insufficient even though the village committees have publicized it several times.

Regarding the impact of coordinated management, management intensity and degree of democratic decision-making positively affects farmers' satisfaction with WRH at the 5% and 10% levels, respectively, with coefficients of 0.394 and 0.288. This shows that the more work the village committee is involved and the higher the level of democratic management, the greater farmers' satisfaction with WRH. This may be due to the fact that farmers are able to fully express their demands, maximize their interests and reduce their costs. The effect of feedbacking opinions on farmers' satisfaction is not significant, because in the actual situation, it is mostly symbolic consultation, and farmers' opinions are not adopted and feedback.

Regarding the impact of internal trust, the image of the village committee positively affects farmers' satisfaction with WRH at the 1% level, with a coefficient of 0.588. It can be seen that a good image of the village committee is a basic prerequisite for farmers to gain a sense of "security", and directly affects the credibility of the government, which in turn affects farmers' satisfaction. Interpersonal trust positively affects farmers' satisfaction at the 1% level with a coefficient of 0.545, indicating that farmers' trust in village cadres is strongly correlated with farmers' satisfaction. Institutional trust positively affects farmers' satisfaction with WRH at a statistical level of 10%, when farmers have a higher institutional trust in WRH, the stability and reliability of the participation environment felt by farmers are correspondingly improved, and their interests and rights are relatively less compromised, and therefore, farmers' satisfaction with WRH is relatively improved.

Two control variables have significant impacts on the satisfaction of farmers withdrawal from rural homesteads among which age and household annual net income have a significant positive effect, with a coefficient of 0.044 and 0.124, respectively, significant at 1%-level and 10%-level. The results show that the older the farmers and the higher the household annual net income, the more satisfied they feel about withdrawing from their rural homesteads.

**Table 3.** Results of the multi-classification ordered model regression.

| Variables                                  | Coefficient | Standard Error | Significance |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Policy Advocacy</b>                     |             |                |              |
| Publicity methods                          | 0.388       | 0.129          | 0.003***     |
| propaganda frequency                       | 0.155       | 0.124          | 0.213        |
| Publicity depth                            | 0.427       | 0.165          | 0.010**      |
| <b>Coordinated Management</b>              |             |                |              |
| Management intensity                       | 0.394       | 0.176          | 0.025**      |
| Degree of democratic decision-making       | 0.288       | 0.155          | 0.062*       |
| Feedback Comments                          | 0.088       | 0.129          | 0.494        |
| <b>Internal Trust</b>                      |             |                |              |
| Image of Village Committee                 | 0.588       | 0.168          | 0.000***     |
| Interpersonal trust                        | 0.545       | 0.161          | 0.001***     |
| Institutional Trust                        | 0.345       | 0.184          | 0.061*       |
| <b>Control variables</b>                   |             |                |              |
| Gender                                     | -0.413      | 0.253          | 0.103        |
| Age                                        | 0.044       | 0.012          | 0.000***     |
| Education level                            | 0.160       | 0.175          | 0.361        |
| Proportion of migrant workers              | -0.169      | 0.513          | 0.746        |
| Household annual net income                | 0.124       | 0.070          | 0.076*       |
| Total area of the original homestead       | 0           | 0.001          | 0.940        |
| Land used period of the original homestead | 0.008       | 0.011          | 0.493        |

Note: \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper focuses on the effect of village committees on farmers' satisfaction with WRH. The study found that: Through effective information propaganda and policy interpretation, the village committee can obviously improve farmers' satisfaction with WRH. The village committee plays the role of coordinated management, which helps to protect the legitimate rights and interests of those farmers who participate in WRH, which is conducive to improving the implementation effect of WRH. The internal trust between village committees and farmers will greatly help to reduce the risk and cost of policy negotiations. Compared with institutional trust, interpersonal trust plays an obvious positive role in WRH, indicating that the personal charm of village cadres has a great impact.

In response to the above findings, the following policy implications can be drawn.

The village committee should strengthen the promotion and propaganda of the WRH policy at the early stage of the work of WRH, which can enrich the form of propaganda, abandon the traditional propaganda methods and choose the way that farmers can intuitively accept and understand to improve their awareness of WRH policy. Take advantage of the high efficiency and wide audience of the network, rely on new media and communication tools, break the geographical restrictions, facilitate the communication of various information and open village affairs, and promote the construction of rural grassroots democracy.

Village committees play an important role in the work of WRH, and their policy guidelines and means of implementation directly affect the effectiveness of the reform. First, it is necessary to clarify the duties and obligations of village committees, strengthen the mutual supervision between village committees and higher-level governments in village governance, and reduce the occurrence of role overstepping among rural management participants. Second, it is necessary to improve the business quality and working ability of village cadres and learn more effective ways and methods of work. Third, it is necessary to strengthen two-way communication with farmers, understand their real needs, effectively ensure that farmers' interests are expressed, and improve farmers' satisfaction with WRH.

As the most important grassroots self-governance organization, village committees need to actively change their management mindset and put themselves in the position of serving the people in order to maintain a good image of the grassroots self-governance organization in the hearts of farmers, which is conducive to the future development of rural management. When farmers encounter problems in WRH, village committees should give full play to their service guidance role, provide comprehensive and detailed answers to farmers' relevant questions, and communicate with relevant government departments in a timely manner to promote positive interaction between the government and farmers and effectively solve the practical problems encountered by farmers.

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