

Research Article

Research on the Education Problems and Cultural Forms of the Floating Muslim Population in China

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Abstract

This article mainly studies the education status of Uyghur Muslim migrant populations in inland cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan, as well as the education status of Uyghur Muslim migrant children and their accompanying children, and other educational issues. Obtaining fair educational opportunities is a legal requirement and a key factor in promoting the integration of migrant populations into local society. As the mode of population mobility gradually shifts from individual mobility to family mobility, the number of migrant children in need of education has significantly increased, and the demand for inclusive education policies has become increasingly urgent. These children should have been admitted to schools nearby according to the principle of "nearest enrollment". However, research has found that due to limited educational resources and other reasons, many schools are unable to accept these children. This issue is very evident in kindergarten and primary education. For the Uyghur Muslim community in Chinese cities, there are significant language, cultural, and customs differences between their place of birth and destination, which presents them with enormous challenges. These obstacles often lead to Uyghur children feeling excluded from the local education system. This also means that many Uyghur people do not intend to live in mainland cities such as Beijing and Shanghai for a long time.

Keywords

Floating Muslim Population, China, Education Problems, Discrimination, Exclusion

1. Introduction

Access to fair education is a legal requirement and a critical factor in promoting the integration of floating populations into local society. As population mobility increasingly shifts from individuals to families, the number of floating children requiring education has grown significantly, making the need for inclusive educational policies more urgent. However, for Uyghur Muslim communities in cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan, significant differences in language, culture, and customs between their origins and destinations create substantial challenges. These barriers often

result in a sense of exclusion for Uyghur children in local education systems.

The education of Uyghur Muslim children accompanying their families remains in a "natural" and largely unstructured state, with low enrolment rates among eligible children. The national fair education policy does not adequately address the specific needs of Uyghur floating children, leaving many unable to access education. Contributing factors include language barriers, the inability to provide required documents such as registered residence or school registration certificates,

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Received: 10 June 2025; **Accepted:** 2 July 2025; **Published:** 24 July 2025



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age limitations for enrolment, and unstable living conditions. These challenges are compounded by communication difficulties in Mandarin, which prevent effective learning under standardized teaching methods.

Additionally, many Uyghur parents lack the educational awareness or resources to support their children's schooling, making it difficult for them to collaborate with schools to ensure academic success. Differences in lifestyle habits and cultural customs further complicate the ability of Uyghur children to integrate into local society and schools, often leading to feelings of isolation and reduced educational outcomes.

This lack of access to education has broader implications, not only hindering the academic and personal development of Uyghur children but also affecting the social and economic integration of their families. The situation calls for targeted measures to address these challenges, including the development of inclusive policies, language support programs, and culturally sensitive educational practices to better accommodate Uyghur students and their families.

In this article is a survey on the education of Uyghur Muslim floating population in mainland cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan. The education status of Uyghur Muslim floating population (education level, working age, education issues of Uyghur population); The education status of Floating Uyghur Muslims and their accompanying children (education issues for Uyghur children in Beijing and for Uyghur children coming to Shanghai); Educational power: Difficulty in receiving education, inconvenient access to education, etc. This article mainly adopts characteristic in-depth interviews and participatory observation methods in ethnology and anthropology research, as well as commonly survey methods in sociology to obtain basic data. In Shanghai, the author collected a large number of first-hand materials through in-depth interviews and participatory observations with hundreds of Uyghur Muslim floating populations from different industries, and gained a preliminary understanding of their motivations for going out, Floating life, business conditions, as well as the difficulties and problems encountered in urban adaptation. During the investigation process, it is important to select representatives from different industries as the research subjects, which helps to ensure the comprehensiveness, objectivity, and accuracy of the research conclusions.

2. The Cultural Level of Uyghur Muslim Floating Population

Since 2000, I have focused on studying the education and cultural level of Uyghur Muslim floating populations and their accompanying children in mainland cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan. This research explores the educational background of Uyghur Muslim migrants, their access to education, and the challenges they face in integrat-

ing into urban educational and cultural systems.

The findings highlight the importance of understanding the cultural and educational disparities that influence their ability to adapt to and participate in urban life. Through this investigation, I hope to shed light on the educational opportunities and systemic barriers faced by this community, with a particular focus on the intergenerational impact on their children.

2.1. Shanghai

Two notable master's theses examine the Uyghur Floating population in Shanghai: "Urban Adaptation Issues and Social Support Pathways for Ethnic Minorities in Shanghai and Xinjiang: A Case Study of Putuo District" [1] and "Research on Xinjiang Uyghur Floating Population in Eastern Cities: A Case Study of Shanghai" [2]. Among them, Chen's paper was provided with some survey materials by the author. But in their academic papers, they conducted comprehensive research without detailed research on education. In the author's paper, the above research results are used as references and only focus on educational issues.

The author employed a sampling survey method to study the Uyghur Muslim floating population in Shanghai, selecting ten individuals to represent the broader community. These participants included A and B, small business operators selling lamb skewers; C, a restaurant owner; D, the highest leader of the Uyghur Autonomous Region's Shanghai office; E, a national civil servant with Shanghai household registration; F, a socially and economically influential businessperson; G, a restaurant waiter; H, a small business operator selling raisins for a larger boss; I, a prominent business owner; and J, a small vendor selling food.

Detailed interviews with these individuals provided critical insights, which were divided into two parts. The first focused on their personal situations, while the second captured their understanding and perspectives on the experiences of Floating Uyghur Muslims in Shanghai and across the country as members of this community.

The initial section of this chapter describes these ten individuals' profiles, examining their basic circumstances, educational backgrounds both before and after migrating to Shanghai, and their overall cultural levels.

Table 1. Survey of Educational level.

Age/Gender/Ethnicity/Educational level	
A	twenty-seven/Male/Uyghur ethnic group/junior high school
B	twenty/Male/Uyghur ethnic group/junior high school
C	thirties/Male/Uyghur ethnic group/junior high school
D	fifties/Male/Uyghur ethnic group/undergraduate course
E	thirties/ female/ Mixed Blood Father Uyghur Mather Han/undergraduate course

Age/Gender/Ethnicity/Educational level

F	forties/Male/Uyghur ethnic group/undergraduate course
G	twenties/Male/Uyghur ethnic group/middle school
H	twenties/Male/Uyghur ethnic group/primary school
I	twenties/Male/Uyghur ethnic group/junior high school
J	twenties/Male/Uyghur ethnic group/primary school

D and E, who work in offices, are exceptional cases and do not reflect the general situation of the Uyghur Muslim floating population. The majority have low educational attainment, with most having completed junior high school or less, and very few achieving higher levels of education. Data analysis indicates that primary and secondary education dominate, with the majority of the population not progressing beyond a junior high school level. However, among young people under 25, most have completed nine years of compulsory education.

The Uyghur Muslim floating population also faces significant challenges with Chinese language proficiency. Only about 10% are fluent in Chinese, capable of reading and writing Chinese characters, understanding newspapers, and speaking fluently. Less than half have very poor Chinese skills, rendering effective communication with Han Chinese nearly impossible. Although more than half report “average” proficiency, this often only enables basic communication for transactions and daily life, with overall competency remaining low. This combination of limited education and poor language skills largely confines Uyghur Muslim floating workers to informal employment opportunities when they migrate to major cities. These systemic barriers prevent them from accessing more stable and formal work, perpetuating their socio-economic challenges.

2.2. Beijing

About the Education Problems of the Floating Muslim Population in Beijing, there are no relative research results, but there are many research results on the overall situation. For example, one of the earliest studies on the Uyghur Floating population in Beijing is Abdueli's doctoral thesis, *Investigation and Re-search on Uyghur Floating Population in Beijing*. [3] Ren Yifei, Yaseen Wushouer, et al., “Investigation of Xinjiang Villages in Beijing” [4], Yang Shengmin and Wang Hansheng, “The Changes of Xinjiang Villages in Beijing - One of the Surveys of Xinjiang Cun in Beijing” [5], Wang Hansheng and Yang Shengmin, “The Formation and Evolution of Ethnic Minority Floating Population Settlements in Large Cities: In visitation of Xinjiang Villages in Beijing, Part 2” [6], Zhuang Kongshao, “The spatiotemporal process of food culture in the ‘Xinjiang Street’ of Beijing” [7]. Arsilan, “The Food Culture of Xinjiang Villages in Beijing” [8],

Zhang Yahui, Yang Shengmin, and Tang Wenxia, “Investigation and Reflection on the Survival Status of Uyghur Floating Population in Beijing” [9]. The titles of these papers indicate that they did not focus on educational issues, but they have great reference value for understanding the overall situation of the floating Uyghur population in Beijing.

A low level of education is a defining characteristic of the Uyghur Muslim floating population in Beijing, significantly influencing their living conditions and opportunities. Many within this community have never attended school, with most not completing primary education. Only a small fraction has finished primary school, and an even smaller number have pursued college or technical education. Language barriers are a significant issue, as many cannot speak or understand Chinese, and some even struggle with reading or writing in Uyghur.

Among those interviewed, individuals who had learned Chinese in primary school fared relatively better after arriving in Beijing. Conversely, those who received their education exclusively in Uyghur faced considerable challenges, especially in business operations where language plays a critical role. These language limitations often hinder effective communication and integration into urban life. During interviews, individuals with limited Chinese skills were reluctant to speak and frequently deferred to someone with stronger Chinese proficiency to represent them.

This combination of low educational attainment and linguistic barriers severely restricts the socio-economic mobility of Uyghur Muslims in Beijing, confining them to precarious and informal forms of employment. A Uyghur working in a restaurant at a certain school commented:

I once got lost outside and didn't know which path to take, and others didn't understand me. Finally, I lost my job when I came back. Because I was missing for two or three days, the school canteen lost a lot.

The majority of Uyghur Muslims who migrate to Beijing are of working age but face significant challenges due to language barriers, low educational levels, and a lack of professional skills. Unlike non-ethnic floating workers, they have an urgent need for language and skill training, particularly in Mandarin, to improve their employability and expand their development opportunities. However, the lack of accessible language and skill education programs persists, severely limiting their ability to secure better employment and advance economically.

Q: I would like to ask if you, at your current age (23 years old), have you considered what kind of job you are looking for? Are you currently selling fast food? Before selling fast food, did you want to work in any other industry in the past?

Answer: I just want to read, but I don't have money. I want to read a book, and after finishing it, I can go outside to find a job. I also know someone who runs a computer business in Beijing. We are both friends. I said I would be your disciple, and he said yes. He asked me, do you know Chinese characters? Do you know English? I don't know, there's nothing I

can do. He can't help me either.

This case highlights the pressing need for Chinese language education among Uyghur Muslims of working age to help them adapt to major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan. However, they lack the necessary environment and resources to acquire these skills. One major obstacle is their limited interaction with Mandarin speakers, as they primarily communicate with fellow villagers or friends who speak Uyghur. Even when they do interact with Chinese speakers, they typically pick up only basic daily phrases, making fluent and effective communication unattainable. Another significant issue is the absence of specialized institutions offering Chinese language education tailored to Uyghur Muslims in cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Without such resources, opportunities for learning are virtually non-existent. Vocational training for Uyghur workers is often completed in their home region, focusing on traditional skills such as baking nang or preparing Uyghur-style dishes like pilaf. However, floating vendors acquire additional skills from fellow villagers once in mainland cities. For instance, adapting sesame candy, meat skewers, or other products to suit mainland market preferences or to reduce costs often requires on-the-job learning, as these adaptations are not taught in their home region. While some language improvement occurs in mainland China, it is generally limited to basic oral communication. Reading and writing skills in Chinese remain very low, further constraining their ability to navigate urban environments and access better opportunities. This lack of comprehensive language and vocational training hampers their economic and social integration into mainland cities.

3. The Education Status of Floating Uyghur Muslims and Their Children

The education of floating Uyghur Muslim children is largely in a "natural" state, with very low enrollment rates among eligible students. Despite China's policies promoting fair education, these policies do not adequately ensure access for Uyghur children. Language barriers, the inability to provide registered residence and school registration documents, over-age enrollment issues, unstable living conditions, and other factors prevent many school-age children from receiving an education.

Mandarin communication barriers pose a significant challenge, as traditional teaching methods often fail to address the specific needs of Uyghur students. Additionally, many parents lack the educational awareness or ability to support their children's learning and collaborate with schools. Differences in life style habits and cultural customs further complicate the integration of Uyghur children into local schools and society.

Field research indicates that cities like Beijing and Shanghai have the largest numbers of floating Uyghur Muslims and face the most urgent educational challenges for children accompanying migration. These children are theoretically enti-

tled to attend schools near their residences under the principle of "attending schools nearby." However, limited educational resources and institutional constraints prevent many schools from accepting them.

The complexity of the educational situation for Uyghur Muslim children in cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan is most pronounced in early childhood education. Access to kindergartens has emerged as one of the most pressing issues, reflecting broader systemic challenges in integrating these children into urban education systems.

3.1. Education Challenges for Uyghur Muslim Children in Beijing

Currently, there are no Muslim kindergartens in Beijing, creating significant challenges for Uyghur Muslim families working in the city. Parents are hesitant to enroll their young children in ordinary kindergartens due to concerns over dietary restrictions and the lack of halal food options. Since young children have not fully developed religious awareness and eat what is provided by their teachers, parents often send them back to their hometowns, leading to early separation from their children. Even wealthy Uyghur Muslim families in Beijing face this issue, and despite their willingness to sponsor the establishment of Muslim kindergartens, none currently exist.

Primary and secondary schools pose less of a challenge in terms of dietary requirements, as students can skip school provided meals. However, Uyghur children still face significant barriers to enrollment.

Case Study: Struggles with Primary Education

One interviewee, a Uyghur parent with three sons, described the difficulties they faced trying to enroll their children in Beijing schools. The children, previously attending school smoothly in Xinjiang, were denied admission to schools in Beijing after their relocation. Despite attempting to enroll at two nearby schools, the parent was met with obstacles. The first school required the children to take exams after missing several months of classes, resulting in poor performance and subsequent rejection. The school also cited a lack of available spaces.

At the second school, the family was stopped at the gate by security guards who claimed there were no available seats. Attempts to contact the school administration were met with similar rejections. In frustration, the parent approached various government departments. After repeated visits to municipal and district education offices, the parent was directed to a specific teacher, only to find that the teacher had no prior knowledge of the situation. Despite numerous attempts, the children were left without access to education.

Broader Issues and Impact

Many Uyghur Muslim families in Beijing face similar struggles. Even those who can afford tuition fees are often denied enrollment for their children due to their "Uyghur" status. Sponsorship fees demanded by schools are beyond the

reach of most floating households, whose incomes are generally low. As a result, many parents opt to leave their school-age children in their hometowns for education, unable to navigate the barriers to entry in Beijing.

There is a strong desire among Uyghur parents for their children to receive an education, with some prioritizing this over food and shelter. However, systemic challenges—including discrimination, lack of resources, and high costs—make it nearly impossible for many families to provide their children with the education they need in Beijing. This perpetuates a cycle of low education levels and limited opportunities within the Uyghur floating population.

3.2. Education Challenges for Uyghur Muslim Children in Shanghai

Most Uyghur Muslims arriving in Shanghai speak Uyghur as their first language, with only limited exposure to Mandarin. While some manage to learn basic phrases for daily interactions, fluent communication in Chinese remains a significant challenge. This language barrier directly impacts the ability of Uyghur children to access education in Shanghai, where Mandarin is the language of instruction.

In the Uyghur region, children typically attend schools that use Uyghur as the medium of instruction, with Uyghur-speaking teachers and textbooks. Mandarin is taught as a secondary language. Upon relocating to Shanghai, this familiar language environment disappears, and the absence of specialized Uyghur language schools exacerbates the issue.

For instance, Case X involves a Uyghur father with three children aged 11, 7, and 3, none of whom are enrolled in school. The primary reason for their lack of access to education is the language barrier. Despite his strong desire for his children to attend school in Shanghai, the inability to adapt to a Mandarin only education system has left them excluded. When talking about his 11-year-old child, he said:

He attended a Uyghur language school in his hometown until fourth grade. I particularly hope that my child can study in Shanghai and speak Mandarin and Chinese in the future.

All the Uyghur small business owners I interviewed identified their children's language barrier as the primary obstacle to school enrollment. This challenge stems from the inability of Uyghur children to adapt to Mandarin as the language of instruction, a situation compounded by the lack of Uyghur language schools in Shanghai. Consequently, many schools in Shanghai are unwilling to accept Uyghur Muslim children, citing the language issue as a significant barrier. This systemic limitation not only excludes these children from education but also exacerbates the difficulties their families face in adapting to urban life. X said:

According to our understanding, the reason for not accepting is language, which is actually a big problem. The textbooks used in schools in Shanghai, as well as the language used by teachers, are all Chinese. Ethnic children from Xinjiang cannot understand and keep up, and teachers have an

unwritten responsibility system. If one or two children in the class drag on, it will drag on the entire class. This has caused a generation of illiteracy, and many people from Xinjiang have not read books. The problem arose, involving Shanghai people hating Xinjiang people for stealing things. But the children are still very eager to go to school. When I come here every Friday (referring to a certain mosque), the Xinjiang child pulls me up and says, "Uncle, I want to read". The child's words are like knocking over a bottle of five flavors, I feel uncomfortable in my heart! Sometimes I dare not come to this courtyard.

Many Uyghur Muslim children in Shanghai remain out of school due to systemic barriers, such as language issues and limited access to education. Without formal schooling or sufficient family support, some of these children are left without structure or guidance. In some cases, this lack of education and supervision leads to delinquent behaviors, including theft, as they struggle to find their place in an unfamiliar urban environment. This highlights the urgent need for accessible educational opportunities and community support to provide these children with a stable foundation and prevent such outcomes. When introducing the children who 'wander to Shanghai', X said:

These Xinjiang dolls who came to Shanghai are indeed very pitiful. They only know that they are from Xinjiang, but they don't know who their parents are. These children have been bought since childhood and have undergone rigorous and cruel training. They are very old and are already developing new children. After these children were sent there, in order to be better to the Han people, they didn't hit them, sometimes swallowing coins or even blades. In this case, they will have to be taken to the hospital, and after they come out, these people will continue to steal things.

As a teacher from Shanghai Mosque said in an interview with us:

Q: If there are any issues in this area, what is the education situation for children of Xinjiang in floating families in Shanghai now?

Answer: My feeling is that, of course, I am not Xinjiang Uyghur. Based on my years of observation, it is very difficult for them to make a living in Shanghai, and education cannot be talked about. Education is very lacking.

To ensure teaching quality, schools typically evaluate teachers based on student performance. However, including the performance of Uyghur students, who often face academic challenges due to language barriers and systemic inequities, can lower the overall class average. Teachers have raised concerns about the fairness of this practice, as it affects their evaluations. Conversely, excluding Uyghur students from assessments risks undermining efforts to maintain and improve their educational outcomes.

In response, relevant authorities developed a flexible evaluation system. Within individual schools, Uyghur students' grades are included in the overall class assessments to ensure accountability and consistent teaching standards. However, at the township level, their grades are excluded

from inter-school evaluations to avoid penalizing teachers and schools. This compromise balances the interests of teachers while maintaining focus on the educational quality for Uyghur students.

Existing research highlights that floating child, including Uyghur students, typically go through a process of exclusion, acceptance, and eventual integration into the educational systems of their destination cities. In the early stages of population migration, educational institutions in inflow areas often imposed restrictive thresholds on floating populations due to resource limitations. These practices, while discriminatory, were partly a response to the challenges of accommodating a rapidly growing and diverse student body. China's Compulsory Education Law explicitly guarantees equal access to education for all children and adolescents with Chinese nationality, regardless of ethnicity, race, religious beliefs, or family property status. Article 4 affirms the right to compulsory education, while Article 18 mandates the establishment of schools in economically developed areas to serve children from all ethnic groups. Despite these legal guarantees, many Uyghur Muslim families in cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan face systemic barriers to accessing education. High admission requirements, unaffordable costs, and, in some cases, prejudice linked to their "Uyghur" identity prevent many children from enrolling in schools. These challenges underscore the gap between policy and practice.

4. Religious Educations

Family religious education plays a central role in the religious life of Muslim families, and this tradition continues among Uyghur Muslims who migrate to cities like Beijing and Shanghai. For these families, religious beliefs and practices are largely passed down through family interactions, with the older generation often playing a key role in imparting religious values and education to the younger generation.

Uyghur Muslims who relocate to these urban centers generally maintain a strong religious consciousness and adherence to Islamic principles. However, many younger Uyghurs, even in their home region, have limited formal religious education. After moving to mainland cities, some families establish connections with local mosques, allowing their children to receive additional Islamic education and influence. This connection reinforces the family's religious traditions, helping children remember their Muslim identity and adhere to Islamic codes of conduct. Without family-driven religious education, broader society is unlikely to provide sufficient exposure or support for these traditions.

In the Uyghur region, earlier generations benefited from strong social and moral education rooted in traditional and religious values. These teachings emphasized integrity, lawful living, and responsibility, as well as respect for Islamic principles, such as earning money honestly and using it wisely. Religion also instills moral discipline, teaching individuals to rely on themselves rather than resorting to unlawful acts like

theft or exploitation. For example, Islamic teachings emphasize severe consequences for stealing, such as the metaphorical "chopping of hands," which underscores the importance of personal accountability.

However, without access to cultural or religious education, some individuals, driven by poverty and desperation, may fall into harmful behaviors. The lack of a strong moral and religious foundation can leave them vulnerable to exploitation or unethical actions. Islam seeks to counteract this by promoting lawful livelihood, moral responsibility, and the dignity of self-reliance, values that are critical for both individual and societal wellbeing.

In essence, the continued emphasis on family religious education among Uyghur Muslims in mainland cities serves as a vital means of preserving their cultural and religious identity, fostering moral integrity, and guiding the younger generation toward a path of lawful and ethical living.

The religious personnel of a certain mosque believe that:

The Hui people in Xinjiang has their own mosques. But not in Shanghai. Xinjiang people basically identify with our mosque when they come to our mosque. Why? They have no other choice but to come to our mosque, and they don't have much place to go... So, when Xinjiang people come to Shanghai, they can only go to our Hui ethnic group. Currently, there are mosques authorized by the government for religious and ceremonial activities. Therefore, as far as I understand, they basically identify with these mosques in Shanghai. They will come to places like Shanghai West or Xiaotaoyuan, where there are mosques, especially during gatherings. Because our Islamic tradition requires everyone to gather together, they do not know, nor do they have the ability, nor the possibility. Like in the past, when everyone gathered together, borrowed a private house, and built a mosque, it was impossible, nor did they have the conditions, nor did they have the policy permission. From a religious perspective, why is it easy for people to find a house to live around a mosque? In our northwest, mosques are like our homes, and we have become accustomed to them over there. After arriving in an unfamiliar place, the first thing to do is to find a mosque, which can solve the problem of food and drink, and secondly, it can solve the problem of housing. This can also solve problems such as using the restroom during worship, and ethnic customs have come to life in this way. Therefore, it is necessary to find a corresponding one. Mosques actually provide Muslims with a place with many functions.

Most respondents believed that mosques and Muslims in Beijing and Shanghai differ little in religious rituals when compared to Uyghurs, with only a few believing there was any noticeable difference, as X said:

Q: Is there a difference in religious etiquette between Muslims in Shanghai and Xinjiang?

Answer: There is one difference, the way we worship is different. They sometimes speak in Chinese. In addition, there are relatively few imams.

As noted earlier, many Uyghur Muslims attend mosques

not only for worship but also as a key location for purchasing halal food. However, my research reveals that the social circles of Uyghur Muslims in cities like Beijing and Shanghai remain relatively narrow. There is minimal interaction between Uyghur Muslims and the local Hui Muslim community, despite shared religious beliefs and practices. Instead, Uyghur Muslims predominantly rely on fellow believers from their hometowns for support and assistance in addressing their needs or resolving issues. This reliance highlights the strong ties within their own ethnic community while underscoring their limited integration into broader local Muslim networks.

5. Conclusion

The education of Uyghur Muslim children in mainland cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan is severely limited, with enrollment rates remaining low. Despite policies guaranteeing fair access to education, these children often face systemic barriers, including language challenges, lack of proper documentation like residence permits and school registration certificates, over-age enrollment issues, and unstable living conditions. Beijing Aizhixing Research Institute, "Report on the Health, Residential and Other Human Rights Situation of Uyghur Floating Population in Cities - Taking the Floating Uyghur Ethnic Group in Beijing as an Example" [10].

Most Uyghur children encounter difficulties with Mandarin, which is the language of instruction in mainland schools. This creates significant obstacles in their ability to follow standard teaching methods, compromising their educational outcomes. Additionally, many Uyghur parents lack the educational awareness or resources to support their children's schooling, further widening the gap between Uyghur students and their peers. Cultural and lifestyle differences also hinder the integration of Uyghur children into local educational and social systems.

Field research indicates that cities like Beijing and Shanghai have the largest populations of floating Uyghur Muslims, making the education of their children a pressing issue. Although these children are entitled to attend schools near their residences, resource limitations and institutional barriers often prevent them from enrolling. This problem is particularly acute in kindergarten and primary education, where many schools are unwilling or unable to accommodate Uyghur children.

As a result, many Uyghur families avoid long-term settlement in cities like Beijing and Shanghai, preferring instead to leave their children in their hometowns for schooling. Interestingly, concerns about mother-tongue education were not a significant focus among interviewees. Instead, the immediate priority for these families is gaining access to basic educational opportunities, particularly in early childhood education, which remains one of the most critical and unresolved issues for Uyghur Muslim floating populations.

Author Contributions

Alimtohte Shiho is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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