

The Current State and Enhancement Strategies of Chinese Excellent Traditional Cultural Literacy among Kindergarten Teachers in Ethnic Minority Areas: An Empirical Study of 350 Teachers in Four Counties and Cities

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Abstract: This study targets kindergarten teachers in four counties and cities within ethnic minority regions, employing questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews to deeply explore their perceptions and practices regarding Chinese excellent traditional cultural literacy. The findings indicate that although the teachers' overall literacy in Chinese traditional culture ranges from intermediate to high levels, notable discrepancies exist between novice and experienced teachers, kindergartens of different operational types, and various ethnic regions. Qualitative interviews revealed teachers' interest in and identification with traditional culture, alongside significant deficiencies in systematic learning, training, and practice. Based on these insights, the study proposes several recommendations, including strategies to enhance teacher training and professional development, optimize educational resources and environmental construction, and promote collaboration between home and community. These measures aim to foster balanced development of teachers' literacy, deepen their understanding of traditional culture, and stimulate both teachers' and young children's interest in and appreciation for Chinese outstanding traditional culture. This study provides essential support for the inheritance and development of Chinese traditional culture.

Keywords: Kindergarten Teachers; Chinese Traditional Culture; Literacy; Empirical Research

1. The Emergence of the Issue

In 2014, the Ministry of Education promulgated

the "Guiding Outline for the Improvement of Chinese Excellent Traditional Cultural Education"^[1]. Subsequently, the "Opinions on Implementing the Project of Inheriting and Developing Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture" were issued, aiming to establish a comprehensive system for the inheritance and development of Chinese traditional culture by 2025. These initiatives have garnered widespread social consensus for the revival of traditional Chinese culture. In the context of the new era, fostering a positive identification with Chinese culture and the Chinese nation from an early age is crucial for national identity, ethnic revitalization, national unity, social stability, and children's cultural belonging and identity recognition^[2]. However, as the world becomes increasingly multipolar and economic globalization intensifies, profound transformations are occurring within domestic economic and social spheres, accompanied by the rapid development of modern communication technology. The exchange and integration of diverse ideological cultures worldwide have become more frequent, leading to significant discourse conflicts and increasing challenges to national and cultural identity^[3,4]. Kindergarten teachers play a pivotal role in implementing traditional cultural education, carrying the significant responsibility of inheriting and promoting Chinese traditional culture. Their cultural literacy profoundly impacts the quality of traditional cultural education and directly influences children's cultural identity and confidence. By integrating the essence of Chinese traditional culture into educational practices^[5], kindergarten teachers instill a sense of pride in Chinese culture and loyalty to the nation in children's hearts. This integration provides robust cultural support for

the harmonious development of ethnic regions and ensures the widespread dissemination and deep-rooted acceptance of core values in these areas, thereby playing a positive role in maintaining national unity and ethnic solidarity.

2 Research Design

2.1 Research Instruments

To gain an in-depth understanding of the traditional cultural literacy of kindergarten teachers in ethnic areas, this study employs a questionnaire survey supplemented by semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first part collects basic information about the teachers, including age, educational background, teaching experience, teaching stage, and type of kindergarten; the second part is the "Assessment Scale for the Literacy of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture among Kindergarten Teachers," primarily based on the "Cultural Understanding and Heritage Literacy" section of the "21st Century Core Literacy 5C Model Research Report"^[6]. The scale includes three dimensions: understanding of Chinese excellent traditional culture (8 items), identification with Chinese excellent traditional culture (12 items), and practice of Chinese excellent traditional culture (19 items), totaling 39 items. Single-choice questions are used, with each item scored on a Likert 5-point scale: "completely agree," "mostly agree," "moderately agree," "mostly disagree," and "completely disagree." For data analysis purposes, the questionnaire items are scored as follows: "completely agree" = 5 points, "mostly agree" = 4 points, "moderately agree" = 3 points, "mostly disagree" = 2 points, and "completely disagree" = 1 point. Question 17, "Do you think the content of traditional culture is too complex and not suitable for children to learn," is a reverse scoring item, and reverse analysis is performed using data analysis software. Higher scores on a dimension indicate higher levels of traditional cultural literacy among the kindergarten teachers.

2.2 Research Subjects

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Sample Demographic Variables (N=350)

Variable Category	Demographic and Sociological Characteristics	N	Percentage (%)
County City	Kashgar City	135	38.57%

	Shufu County	92	26.29%
	Wuqia County	77	22.00%
	Aheqi County	46	13.14%
Age	Under 26 years	54	15.43%
	26-30 years	153	43.71%
	31-35 years	90	25.71%
	36-40 years	39	11.14%
	41-45 years	11	3.14%
	Over 45 years	3	0.86%
Highest Education	High School/Technical Secondary/Vocational	12	3.43%
	Junior College	166	47.43%
	Bachelor's Degree	172	49.14%
Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years (including 5 years)	107	30.57%
	6-10 years	169	48.29%
	11-15 years	56	16.00%
	16-20 years	11	3.14%
	Over 20 years	7	2.00%
Kindergarten Type	Department-run by Education Authority	299	85.43%
	Enterprise and Institution-run	40	11.43%
	Inclusive Private Kindergarten	3	0.86%
	Inclusive Public Kindergarten	8	2.29%
Class	Small Class	87	24.86%
	Middle Class	88	25.14%
	Large Class	170	48.57%
	Mixed-age Class	5	1.43%

The research subjects were selected using a random sampling method, combining online and offline approaches, to conduct a questionnaire survey among teachers in 200 rural kindergartens in the Kashgar and Kizilsu regions (all part of the 17 counties receiving rural revitalization assistance in our region). A stratified random sampling method was used to select samples of kindergarten teachers, taking into account the level of economic development. Four prefectures (Kashgar region, Hotan region, Aksu region, and Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture) and four counties (Kashgar City, Shufu County, Wuqia County, and Aheqi County) were chosen, all of which are key areas for rural revitalization assistance in our region. Based on the total number of kindergartens, 150 kindergartens (including those run by education departments, enterprises and institutions, inclusive public kindergartens, and inclusive

private kindergartens) were proportionally selected, and their teachers constituted the research subjects. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, with 370 returned and 350 valid responses, yielding a validity rate of 94.6%. The demographic information of the survey subjects is detailed in Table 1.

2.3 Data Processing Method

This study utilizes SPSS 20.0 software for data entry and processing, conducting descriptive statistics and differential analysis to explore the multifaceted factors influencing the literacy of Chinese excellent traditional culture among kindergarten teachers in ethnic areas. Additionally, qualitative analysis is performed on the interview data to reveal the manifestations and needs of teachers regarding the literacy of Chinese excellent traditional culture in rural kindergartens.

3. Research Conclusions

3.1 Overall Level of Chinese Excellent Traditional Cultural Literacy

The average total score of Chinese excellent traditional cultural literacy among kindergarten teachers in ethnic areas is 4.125, significantly higher than the standard value of 3 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that the overall level of traditional cultural literacy among the surveyed teachers is medium to high. The mean scores for the different dimensions of Chinese excellent traditional cultural literacy are: identification with excellent traditional culture (4.376 ± 0.557), practice of excellent traditional culture (4.136 ± 0.781), and understanding of excellent traditional culture (3.787 ± 0.542). These findings suggest that while the overall literacy level is medium to high, there is uneven development across the various dimensions.

3.2 Differences in Literacy among Different Teacher Groups

Firstly, as teaching experience increases, teachers' scores in the dimension of "Understanding of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture" also increase. Significant differences are observed among teachers with different levels of teaching experience. Specifically, teachers with less than 5 years of experience have an average score of 3.50 ($SD = 0.82$), those with 6-10 years of experience score 3.91 ($SD = 0.79$), teachers with 11-15 years of experience

score 3.86 ($SD = 0.95$), those with 16-20 years of experience score 4.07 ($SD = 0.72$), and teachers with more than 20 years of experience score 4.09 ($SD = 0.53$). ANOVA results show an F-value of 4.871 and a P-value of 0.001, indicating a significant positive correlation between teaching experience and understanding of Chinese excellent traditional culture. Post-hoc comparisons reveal that teachers with 6-10 years of experience significantly outscore those with less than 5 years ($P < 0.05$), while differences among teachers with 11-15 years and those with 16-20 years or more are not significant. This suggests that as teaching experience increases, teachers' understanding and mastery of Chinese traditional culture gradually deepen, especially when their experience exceeds 10 years. Fuller and Brown's stages of teacher growth—survival, situational, and student stages—further explain that novice teachers, in the survival stage, may neglect cultural literacy due to their focus on adapting to the work environment, while experienced teachers, in the student stage, focus more on children's needs, enhancing their professional capabilities and cultural literacy. Secondly, as teaching experience increases, teachers' ability to practice Chinese traditional culture also improves significantly. Teachers with 6-10 years and 11-15 years of experience score significantly higher in practicing traditional culture compared to novice teachers with less than 5 years. However, teachers with around 15 years of experience may experience professional burnout, affecting their practice intensity, consistent with Fessler's findings that professional burnout peaks around 15 years. Teachers with 16-20 years of experience show no significant differences in cultural practice, likely due to career plateaus and potential burnout^[6]. Conversely, teachers with more than 20 years of experience, approaching retirement, exhibit richer educational wisdom and behavior, enhancing their practical knowledge and actions in traditional culture practice.

Thirdly, regarding the nature of kindergartens, teachers in non-inclusive private kindergartens excel in the dimension of "Understanding of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture." They have an average score of 4.39 ($SD = 0.74$), significantly higher than those in education department-run kindergartens (3.82, $SD = 0.82$), enterprise and institution-run kindergartens (3.44, $SD = 0.90$), and inclusive private kindergartens (3.85, $SD = 0.78$) ($F = 3.806$, $P = 0.010 < 0.05$).

This may be due to non-inclusive private kindergartens having more autonomy in educational resource allocation, curriculum design, and teaching material selection, providing teachers with richer cultural knowledge and teaching strategies.

Fourthly, in the dimension of "Identification with Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture," teachers in non-inclusive private kindergartens score the highest, but overall differences are not significant. Teachers in education department-run, enterprise and institution-run, and inclusive private kindergartens score similarly at 4.38, 4.39, and 4.37, respectively, with ANOVA indicating no significant differences ($F=1$, $P=0.961>0.05$). This suggests that traditional cultural practice is a universal behavior across different educational environments, with kindergartens of various natures encouraging teachers to integrate traditional culture into daily teaching, resulting in minimal differences in practice across different types of kindergartens. Additionally, the comprehensive effects of classroom teaching, community participation, and family education may contribute to the uniformity in the practice of Chinese traditional culture.

4. Qualitative Interview Findings on the Literacy of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture among Kindergarten Teachers in Ethnic Minority Areas

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 frontline teachers randomly selected from four counties and cities to understand the literacy of Chinese excellent traditional culture among kindergarten teachers in ethnic minority areas. The following conclusions were reached:

Firstly, teachers exhibit interest in Chinese excellent traditional culture; however, their understanding of its content and elements remains superficial. The understanding of traditional culture among kindergarten teachers encompasses their cognition and feelings towards its basic meanings, characteristics, historical origins, development processes, and the interactions between different cultures, including both the spiritual level of values and beliefs and the tangible aspects of the current state^[7]. Most teachers expressed a keen interest in Chinese excellent traditional culture, considering it to have a long history and profound depth that needs inheritance and promotion. For instance, teachers' understanding

of Chinese excellent traditional culture includes "intangible cultural heritage," "Tang poetry and Song lyrics," "Spring Festival," "traditional Chinese medicine," "martial arts," and "Chinese kung fu." However, when asked about their deep understanding of Chinese classical literary knowledge (such as Tang poetry and Song lyrics), 28 teachers (70%) felt they were "not very familiar with it." Additionally, when asked if they could explain the origins of Chinese traditional festivals (such as the Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, etc.) or the 24 solar terms, only 14 teachers (35%) could provide explanations, while the rest only knew some vocabulary, and some even exhibited "misplaced" phenomena.

Secondly, teachers recognize the importance and value of Chinese excellent traditional culture in early childhood education, but they lack systematic learning and training. Recognition of traditional culture refers to the attitude of social groups or members accepting the value utility of new cultural elements within the group or different cultural elements from outside the group that fit the traditional cultural value standards. After recognition, the new cultural elements will be accepted and disseminated, which is a positive cultural value orientation^[8]. Teachers hold attitudes of "awe," "recognition," "support," and "value" towards Chinese excellent traditional culture, believing it to be profound and having a high recognition of its value. Teacher C stated, "Understanding our excellent traditional culture continuously strengthens cultural confidence." Interviews revealed that some kindergarten teachers consciously and selectively improve their traditional cultural literacy after joining the job, combining personal interests and hobbies, "searching the Internet for curriculum resources of traditional cultural teaching activities in kindergartens," "discussing with colleagues in the kindergarten for traditional cultural teaching activities," "I will insist on reciting classic works every day," and some teachers also mentioned, "We are building a demonstration kindergarten for Chinese excellent traditional culture in our region, and we will regularly organize teachers to carry out joint teaching and research on the implementation of Chinese excellent traditional culture in early childhood education" (Teacher F). However, 26 teachers (65%) reported little or no exposure to traditional culture courses during their training in normal colleges, and they have

not systematically participated in training on the literacy and skills of Chinese excellent traditional cultural education after joining the workforce, "My kindergarten has not organized any traditional culture-themed teaching and research activities," "I have not received any specialized training in traditional culture knowledge." Sometimes when it is necessary to teach this aspect, they will search the Internet and find a similar case to replicate. Some teachers also mentioned, "In some other trainings, some knowledge of Chinese excellent traditional culture has been infiltrated, providing some specific practices in a fragmented way."

Thirdly, teachers consciously practice Chinese excellent traditional culture in their daily educational processes but are also influenced by the expectations of parents. Practicing Chinese excellent traditional culture is the process in which social members actively and consciously practice, inherit, transform, and innovate the lifestyle, concepts, and value orientation they choose and recognize in real life. The essence of a teacher is more important than the teacher's skills, first teaching people with the mainstream culture of society, and then teaching skills and methods^[9]. Teacher B stated, "In daily life, I will pay attention to my own behavior and set a good personal image for children." "In daily teaching, I will use stories, painting, handicrafts, and other forms to integrate Chinese excellent traditional culture into kindergarten teaching, helping children to better understand and inherit Chinese culture. Traditional folk arts such as paper-cutting and lion dancing can be used to expand children's cultural horizons." Interviews with kindergarten teachers reflected that most parents support and appreciate the traditional cultural activities carried out by the kindergarten. However, some parents, especially those in private kindergartens, lack support and a positive attitude towards the practice of Chinese excellent traditional culture education, preferring to see what the child "has learned," focusing more on the child's "visible specific behaviors, such as reciting a few poems, mastering what skills," and mechanically viewing the education received by the child in the kindergarten as "education obtained by knowledge," which also affects the improvement of the traditional cultural literacy of kindergarten teachers.

5. Research Recommendations

The literacy of Chinese excellent traditional

culture among kindergarten teachers in ethnic areas generally ranges from medium to high, yet significant disparities exist among different groups. To further enhance teachers' traditional cultural literacy, systematic improvements and training are essential at both policy and practical levels.

5.1 Targeted Cultivation and Tiered Teaching

Develop tailored training programs for teachers at various career stages, particularly offering systematic guidance on teaching and practicing Chinese excellent traditional culture for novice teachers. Provide intensive training for those with less than 5 years of experience to strengthen their understanding and application abilities of traditional culture. For teachers with approximately 15 years of experience, provide career development guidance and psychological support to mitigate job burnout and foster educational innovation. Harness the expertise of teachers with over 20 years of experience by involving them in mentoring roles or curriculum development, passing on their wealth of educational wisdom. Regularly update training content to ensure its relevance and timeliness.

5.2 Cultural Immersion and Environmental Shaping

Integrate and innovate educational resources on Chinese excellent traditional culture, crafting teaching materials and activities suitable for children. Design interdisciplinary courses merging language, arts, social sciences, and other fields, utilizing multimodal teaching tools like pictures, music, and stories to enhance interactivity and engagement. Create themed cultural environments within classrooms, showcasing ethnic attire, traditional musical instruments, handicrafts, etc., allowing children to directly interact with traditional culture. Incorporate elements of traditional festivals and solar terms into environmental arrangements to cultivate a vibrant cultural atmosphere. Organize hands-on traditional cultural activities such as calligraphy, painting, and paper-cutting, enabling children to learn through active participation.

5.3 Joint School-Family-Community Efforts to Cultivate Talents

Organize parent workshops to deepen parental understanding and appreciation of Chinese excellent traditional culture, fostering a

supportive home-school co-education environment. Collaborate with communities to leverage local resources and platforms for traditional cultural education activities, expanding educational outreach. Forge partnerships with community cultural centers, museums, etc., to share cultural educational resources and provide extensive learning opportunities for children. Encourage children to engage in community-led cultural activities such as festivals, exhibitions, and lectures to broaden their cultural perspectives. Collaborate with communities on cultural projects like community cultural walls and corridors, integrating traditional culture into children's daily lives.

Enhancing the literacy of Chinese excellent traditional culture among kindergarten teachers in ethnic areas contributes to fostering mutual understanding and respect among diverse ethnic groups, promoting ethnic unity, social harmony, and reinforcing stable social values. It provides spiritual sustenance for societal stability and development. Recommendations include providing governmental policy incentives to encourage teacher participation in traditional cultural education research, continually optimizing teaching methodologies, establishing demonstration kindergartens for Chinese excellent traditional culture, and recognizing outstanding teachers in traditional cultural education to stimulate their enthusiasm. Additionally, establish a longitudinal research mechanism to periodically evaluate the effectiveness and impact of traditional cultural education. Establish a qualification certification system for teachers specializing in Chinese excellent traditional culture education during the teacher certification process, delineating knowledge and skill standards, and ensuring periodic updates to certification requirements to uphold educational standards and promote ongoing professional development. Encourage teachers to engage in self-directed learning, guide reflective practice to identify and address challenges in traditional cultural education, and apply acquired knowledge to classroom instruction and daily activities. Foster knowledge sharing and experience exchange among teachers through collaborative learning groups or communities.

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