



“Resilience On The River: Analyzing The Challenges Faced By Out-Migrants From Majuli Island Amidst And Beyond The COVID-19 Pandemic”

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Abstract: Work is an integral aspect of human existence and societal functioning, often necessitating individuals to migrate for employment opportunities. Majuli Island, situated in Assam, India, grapples with the pressing issue of out-migration. This study focuses on the diverse challenges faced by out-migrants from Majuli, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary aim is to meticulously examine the immediate hurdles encountered by these individuals, encompassing health, employment uncertainties, and restricted access to essential services during the pandemic. Additionally, the research delves into the psychological and emotional aspects of the out-migrant experience, shedding light on mental well-being, coping mechanisms, and resilience in the face of adversity. Emphasizing the role of social networks and community support, the analysis seeks to provide valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of out-migration from Majuli during the pandemic. The findings aim to inform targeted policies and interventions, fostering support structures and resilience within the Majuli Island community. Lastly, the research aims to contribute to a nuanced comprehension of the migration trends post-COVID-19, particularly in rural settings, unraveling the underlying tendencies that shape the post-pandemic migration landscape. By addressing these objectives, this study aspires to provide valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and communities alike, fostering a more holistic understanding of the intricate challenges associated with out-migration in the context of a global health crisis.

Index Terms - Migration, Migrants, Out-migrants, Covid-19 pandemic, social network.

I. INTRODUCTION

Labor holds an essential position in human existence, being fundamental for sustenance. Early sociologists, such as Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx, probed concepts like the 'division of labor' and 'alienation' to dissect the intricacies of work (Zeitlin, 1968). Work can be delineated into formal and informal categories, each contributing to an individual's identity. In pursuit of livelihood, individuals engage in diverse occupations, often necessitating geographical relocation, a phenomenon termed migration.

Migration, a ubiquitous process, involves a shift in residential location across national or state boundaries. Some regions progress socioeconomically, evolving into developed or developing areas, attracting migrants in search of emerging opportunities and employment prospects. This demographic movement, encompassing length, composition, and causes, has become commonplace due to regional imbalances and disparities in employment opportunities at macro and micro levels (Pandey & Mishra, 2011). Out-migration, a historical and prevalent facet of migration, entails leaving one location to settle elsewhere, typically within the same country. Presently, migrant workers play a pivotal role in stimulating growth across major sectors of the Indian economy, providing cost-effective labor (Ghosh, 2012). A significant portion of rural inhabitants,

particularly from Assam, engages in out-migration, with over 50% contributing as laborers to other parts of the country (Borah, 2022).

This study focuses on the predominant form of migration, specifically rural out-migration, observed in Majuli, Assam, with a focal point on Borbeel Bebejia village. In recent decades, a substantial portion of the impoverished rural population in this village has migrated to developed urban centers in search of improved living standards and income, predominantly assuming roles as unskilled workers within the informal economy. These migrants, working without formal benefits or employment stability, face numerous challenges in both their workplace and daily lives. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in India introduced additional hardships for migrant workers, impacting them physically and psychologically. Consequently, there is a compelling need to investigate the conditions of migrant workers during this period. This research on out-migration assumes significance, delving into the socio-economic dimensions and work identities of these workers, with the aim of providing insights into their social lives in destination areas and the challenges encountered during the pandemic.

II. OBJECTIVES:

- To investigate the immediate challenges encountered by out-migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic
- To examine the psychological and emotional challenges faced by out-migrants during and post-COVID-19
- To investigate the role of social networks and community support in mitigating the challenges faced by out-migrants
- To analyze and comprehend the post-COVID migration tendencies within the village setting

III. LITERATURE REVIEWS:

This review of literature is done on the basis of the objectives, hoping to give a basic overview on what works have been done on the topic.

In the context of India migration plays a significant role in organizing regional and urban places (Lusome & Bhagat, 2020). Classical migration theorist such as Revenstien (1889) argues that the process of migration varies from person to person on the basis of age, gender, education and other socio-economic factors, in other words, it is selective (Revenstien, 1889). Migration is a rational choice of individuals that is influenced by differences in labor demand and wages between origin and destination (Todaro, 1976). Srivastav & Sasikumar in their study (2003) maintained migration streams involve poorer section of the society and leads to internal migration elsewhere in India. The determinant of migration can be categories as push and pull factors (Ramesh, 2016; Revenstien, 1889; Chandra, 2011). Push in North East Region and pull factors at destination (Chandra, 2011). Chandra (2011) found push factors for North East Indian Migration are due to lack of educational infrastructure, lack of employment opportunities, communal conflicts and unresolved socio-political unrest (Ramesh, 2016), violence and poverty (Ramesh, 2016), erosion of the village, poor economic condition of the village, illiteracy of youth (Sharma and Muktiar, 2019) in North eastern Region and The pull factors are better environment of educational opportunities, employment opportunities and well impact of globalization in the Delhi and other National Capital Region (Chandra, 2011). Revenstien (1889) says land tenure system, unfavorable forms of trade, pressure of rural poverty, disparity and income are push factors and employment, education and other modern facilities are pull factors, those create migration. Such binary segregation allows to classifying the emerging situation of migration within the broad categories of 'compulsion' and 'attractions' (Ramesh, 2016) and in-migration and out-migration (Lusome and Bhagat, 2020).

The migrants are basically cultivator, small land holding peasants and unemployed persons (Saxena, 1977). Archana Prasad in her work (2013) says after the liberalization of the Indian economy, the rural life and livelihoods have suffered the most and this devastation left no option for the peasantry but to migrate to the metropolises. She also highlighted the composition of the urban workforce and its increasing vulnerability in the slums specially, in the absence of any government social security system (Prasad, 2013). Revenstien in his article "The laws of migration" (1885) stated that the economy as the major cause of migration process. Also formulated some laws regarding migration, including most migrants move only a short distance, existing process of dispersion inverse to absorption, compensating counter-flow produce through each migration flow, migration rate among rural people is higher than in urban areas (Revenstien, 1885).

IV. METHODOLOGY:

This study adopts a qualitative research design to delve into the challenges faced by out-migrant workers from Majuli during the Covid-19 pandemic. Embracing an interpretivist methodology, the research decisions and context are intricately shaped by this approach. Acknowledging the limitations of objectivity in evaluating participant statements and community interactions, the study aligns with interpretivism, critiquing scientific approaches for their inherent epistemological and social power assumptions of objectivity (Haraway, 1988). The inductive method is employed, prioritizing field research and data collection before formulating theories or concepts. The central questions driving the study focus on the meaning of out-migration for the village's people and the challenges confronted during the pandemic. Open-ended interviews serve as a crucial tool, providing participants the opportunity to articulate the meaning they ascribe to their lives (Reinharz, 1992, p. 18). Both primary and secondary sources contribute to data collection, with face-to-face interviews being the primary method for engaging with selected respondents, employing a snowball sampling technique due to the accessibility challenges posed by the dynamic work engagements of returnee migrants. Telephonic interviews supplement the primary data collection, offering insights into the work structures and environments of migrants who remained outside the state post the Covid-19 pandemic. The simplicity and efficiency of telephonic interviews facilitate in-depth conversations, ensuring a meaningful exploration of respondents' experiences and perspectives. Secondary sources include relevant literature, journals, government reports, and published and unpublished theses, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Majuli's out-migrant workers during the pandemic.

V. Overview of the Village:

Majuli, designated as India's first island district in 2016, is situated on the Brahmaputra River in northern Assam, having previously been part of the Jorhat district. Within Majuli district, the focus of this study is the village of Borbeel Bebejia, located in the Majuli Circle and falling under the Ujani Majuli Community Development Block. This village, with a ward number of 7, is approximately 80 kilometers away from the nearest town, Jorhat. According to the 2011 Census, the village code for Borbeel Bebejia is 293519, and it is associated with the gram panchayats of Cherpai and Luit Poria.

As of 2009, Borbeel Bebejia covers an area of 442.08 hectares, with a population of 1001 individuals residing in 212 households. The gender distribution indicates 52.35% females and 47.65% males, resulting in a population density of 226.43 persons per square kilometer. The literacy rate in the village is 74.63%, with 79.87% literacy among males and 69.85% among females.

The village's landscape includes 222.08 hectares of sown/agricultural area, 222.08 hectares of un-irrigated land, 38 hectares in non-agricultural use, 50 hectares as current fallow area, and 132 hectares of culturable waste land. The primary occupation of the villagers revolves around rice cultivation, with a notable presence in the cultivation of mustard oil. Additionally, the villagers engage in the cultivation of potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, chilli, bananas, and various other vegetables.

Borbeel Bebejia comprises a predominantly Chutiyia and Koch community, categorized as Others Backward Classes (OBC) in terms of caste. The residents of the village adhere to Hinduism, with the majority following Neo-Vaishnavism. Various religious practices are observed in the village, such as Ek Saran Nam Dharma, Sankardev Sangha, and Mahekiya (where people use bamun).

VI. Finding and Discussion

6.1 Out-migrants with their challenges

The livelihood opportunities in the city were the main trigger for the rural exodus of this village to the city. The process of rapid industrialization, urbanization, and the strong desire for wealth are the main factors for rural-urban migration in India. Article 19(1) (e) of the Indian Constitution guarantees all Indian citizens the right to reside and settle in any part of the Indian Territory. However, migrant workers face a variety of challenges due to the nature of their work at their destinations. The growing number of capitalist enterprises has produced more migrant workers and thus increased their problems. As Marx said, the bourgeoisie produces the proletariat and capitalist expansion increases the degree of exploitation of workers (cited in Ritzer, 2000, p.47).

The Covid 19 pandemic has additionally brought many challenges to people around the world to which migrants are not immune. The various difficulties migrants face at their destinations are discussed in this chapter.

6.1.1 Nature of living conditions, work environment and other challenges

Migrant workers encounter significant challenges related to their living conditions, with many being accommodated on the outskirts of urban areas by their employing companies. Typically residing in deteriorating structures, often lacking hygiene, and occasionally constructing makeshift shelters near worksites, their housing situation is a pervasive concern. The National Urban Rental Housing Policy in 2015 acknowledged migrants as the largest demographic seeking urban housing, emphasizing the critical nature of their housing needs (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2015).

These migrants frequently inhabit substandard and unsanitary living conditions, reflecting a neglect of their essential requirements despite being integral members of urban communities (Kusuma et al., 2014). The types of housing they occupy at their destination vary, encompassing squatter huts, katcha houses constructed from substandard materials, and more robust structures like pucca or semi-pucca dwellings. The majority opt for rented one- or two-room apartments without separate kitchens to minimize costs, often improvising cooking spaces without adequate ventilation. The study emphasizes the suboptimal quality of these dwellings concerning the number of rooms, kitchen facilities, water supply, sanitation, and hygiene.

In terms of water access, migrants primarily rely on public taps, water pipes, hand pumps, and tanker supplies, with purchased water for consumption due to concerns about water purity. The initial period of migration is marked by difficulties in accessing basic services, contributing to challenges in identity establishment and navigation within the city. Additionally, migrants face harassment from the police and citizens, leading to the adoption of potentially detrimental habits like alcohol consumption and tobacco use. The shift to urban areas also results in a loss of access to social services, including subsidized food and health services. Migrants encounter obstacles in acquiring essential items such as gas cylinders, often paying surcharges due to the absence of a cylinder card. Poor working conditions further compound health risks, particularly for those engaged in industries like plywood manufacturing and security services. Workers in such environments endure dangerous atmospheres, loud machinery noise, and exposure to hazardous substances, leading to potential health issues.

Security guards, for instance, grapple with multiple challenges, including restricted phone usage, boredom during shifts, exposure to the elements without necessary amenities, and mistreatment from others. The lack of rest days and deductions for vacations further exacerbate their work-related struggles. In summary, migrant workers face a complex interplay of challenges, encompassing substandard living conditions, health risks, and difficulties in accessing basic services, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive support mechanisms and policy interventions.

The study found migrants face various health diseases at their destination, as shown in Table 1

Table 1: Illness while working in the destinations

Illness	Percentage
Fever	53.84%
Headache	76.92%
Cough	26.92%
Cold	19.23%
Body pain	65.38%
Stomach pain	57.69%
Back pain	92.30%
Chest pain	46.15%

*One respondent have 2/3 health problems

Migrant workers face challenges in adhering to the sick role behavior as outlined by Parsons (1951), a theory that suggests illness allows individuals a legitimate basis to be relieved from their usual roles and work responsibilities. Contrary to the sick role theory, migrant workers, due to lower incomes, often avoid seeking medical help from physicians during illness. Instead, a majority opts for pharmacies, and only a few turn to government hospitals or forego treatment entirely. Limited financial resources and the prioritization of daily wages over health concerns contribute to this trend, reflecting a departure from the conventional understanding of the sick role.

In unfamiliar territories, migrant workers encounter obstacles accessing banking and financial facilities provided by state governments, hampered by an inability to produce necessary proof of identity. Their lack of formal saving instruments and investment opportunities leads to the erosion of their hard-earned wages, resulting in a lack of creditworthiness. The absence of urban local labor market ties and educational limitations hinder them from securing better-paying jobs, trapping them in their existing positions even when faced with challenges. This powerlessness over their labor power, coupled with limited savings and

skill disparities, obstructs career progression, leading to frustration and premature returns to their native places.

Classifying Borbeel Bebejia Village's out-migrants as petty bourgeoisie, the study aligns with Breman's (2006) classification of informal sector workers. These migrants prioritize independence, avoiding subordination and demonstrating bourgeois characteristics such as thrift and hard work. Unlike lumpen individuals with criminal features and a declassed status, the migrants exhibit a commitment to societal norms and family connections. However, despite their classification as petty bourgeoisie, the study underscores the hazardous nature of their work, contributing to health issues, especially respiratory diseases, and a lack of health security from employers.

Additionally, migrants grapple with challenges in acclimating to new environments. Language barriers pose significant obstacles, as both Hindi and the native languages of their destinations are unfamiliar. Communication difficulties with coworkers and supervisors coupled with unfamiliar socio-cultural environments and changing climates, impact their overall well-being. The study emphasizes the struggle of migrants in adapting to new dietary patterns, with specific challenges noted in South India, where the use of coconut oil in meal preparation has adverse effects on their food habits (Bora, 2014; Joseph, 1985; Kusuma et al., 2014; Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2015).

Migrant workers face challenges posed by local criminal elements, commonly referred to as "don" or thugs, who demand money from them and issue threats if their demands are not met. Initially, migrants express fear of going to the market due to these thugs. However, an interesting observation is that, over time, some migrants establish amicable relationships with the local dons, engaging in social activities and even receiving assistance from them.

The inadequate wage levels prompt many migrant workers to resort to gambling as a means to augment their income quickly. However, this practice often leads to gambling addiction, resulting in accrued debts to middle-class locals in the destination areas. The migrants, unable to repay the loans due to their low incomes, face harassment from creditors, and in rare instances, physical harm. The study highlights two cases of migrant laborers from the village committing suicide in Hyderabad in 2017 and Karnataka in 2015. While the specific reasons for these suicides remain unclear, the prevailing belief among migrants is that debt played a significant role, while some attribute the tragedies to interpersonal issues.

In the workplace, migrant workers encounter challenges related to their orientation toward work. Drawing from Watson's (1996) distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction, the study reveals that migrant workers predominantly experience extrinsic satisfaction. Work for them becomes a means to an end, lacking intrinsic value or personal fulfillment. Their engagement in work is solely driven by the need for wages, devoid of concern for social status, prospects, or identity.

A pervasive sense of alienation characterizes the migrants' experience in the urban environment. This alienation is evident in their casual conversations, revealing calculative and self-interested relationships, marked by a lack of trust. Migrants frequently express feeling estranged from employees and locals in the destination areas, citing a lack of trust and effective communication, often attributing these issues to their out-of-state origins. During festive occasions, nostalgia for their home state becomes particularly pronounced, emphasizing the emotional toll of their alienated existence in urban settings.

6.2 Impact of covid -19 pandemic

As of the 2011 Census, India recorded approximately 5.4 crore inter-state migrants, reflecting the pervasive trend of inter-state migration. As previously mentioned, migrant workers from the studied village encounter numerous challenges at their chosen destinations, reflecting the intricacies of their work identity.

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, initially a health crisis, significantly impacted human and social life globally. Regardless of class, caste, gender, or ethnicity, everyone felt the reverberations of COVID-19. Marginalized groups, including inter-state migrant workers, faced heightened challenges during this critical period, exacerbating pre-existing inequalities (Diwakar & Viswambaran, 2022). Following the rapid spread of the virus in India, a nationwide lockdown was enforced on March 25, 2020, disrupting various aspects of daily life and causing substantial economic losses.

The pandemic particularly affected migrant workers, as highlighted by the distressing images of their mass exodus from cities to their hometowns, symbolizing the loss of livelihoods during the lockdown. In Assam, migrants encountered additional hurdles, such as job losses and confinement in the region due to industrial closures and halted transportation systems. The loss of employment triggered a severe financial crisis for these migrants, rendering it challenging to meet basic needs like healthy food and clean water.

During the lockdown, migrants grappled with the absence of work, spending days confined with colleagues while yearning for their homes and families. Communication technology, particularly social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, emerged as crucial tools for migrants to stay connected

with their families and access information about Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), transportation, and government initiatives.

Financial challenges multiplied during the lockdown, with difficulties in paying electricity bills and recharging cell phones. While some respondents mentioned receiving financial support and phone recharges from their families, others encountered neglect by local authorities. Issues such as housing rent, food insecurity, and healthcare expenses intensified the hardships faced by migrant workers during the pandemic (MoFHW, 2020; Singh, 2021).

Despite the myriad challenges, some respondents noted understanding from homeowners who refrained from charging rent during the financial crisis and unemployment period. This underscores the complex dynamics and varying responses experienced by migrant workers in navigating the multifaceted impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

One migrant worker recounted the challenges faced during the lockdown, highlighting instances where the unavailability of gas due to closed stores and hotels led to difficulties in procuring meals. The individual mentioned encounters with the police when attempting to obtain gas and described a period of sustenance limited to cookies and water for two days. Notably, the municipality provided lunch at 1 pm, requiring individuals to queue for their meals. Another respondent shared a poignant experience, revealing that their father passed away at the period of pandemic when transportation services were halted due to the lockdown. The lockdown restrictions prevented the respondent from seeing their father one last time and attending the funeral, locally known as Sokam. Expressing deep agitation, the respondent voiced frustration towards the Assam government's perceived neglect of employment opportunities for boys in the state.

The migrant workers reported an escalation in psychological stress and substance addiction during the pandemic. Despite financial constraints, they persisted in consuming intoxicants and tobacco, attributing their substance dependence to concerns about family well-being and uncertainties regarding their future. The pandemic has induced a mental health crisis among migrants, characterized as the "pandemonium of the pandemic" (Singh, 2021). The prevalent psychosocial challenges faced by migrant workers encompassed inadequate access to basic necessities, housing, transportation, familial anxieties, infection risks, challenges faced by children and women, poverty, unemployment, uncertainty about future prospects, heightened anxiety, and a lack of sufficient social support. The physical distance from their families and hometowns intensified their fears of losing family members and exacerbated their overall stress levels.

6.3 Government Actions towards migrants

During the COVID-19 pandemic, both the central and state governments implemented initiatives to assist migrant workers. As the lockdown led to several migrants attempting to return to their home states on foot, the central government arranged special buses and trains, known as Shramik special trains, in collaboration with the states to facilitate their transportation. Thousands of migrants were transported through these specially operated trains. The Assam state government, for instance, booked five special Shramik trains to facilitate the return of migrants to their homes during the nationwide lockdown (NDTV, 11 May 2020).

To further aid migrant workers, the Central Government advised states to establish relief camps with medical facilities and authorized the use of the State Disaster Response Fund to provide accommodation for migrants. The Ministry of Home Affairs also permitted states to transport migrants to their states using private buses. Additionally, Indian Railways resumed passenger movement by operating Shramik Special trains, assisting more than 58 lakh migrants in returning to their home states through 4,197 such trains (The Hindu, 2020). Furthermore, the government decided to provide free food to migrant workers without ration cards and planned to launch the One Nation One Ration Card initiative.

Several state governments also initiated one-time cash transfers for returning migrant workers. For instance, the Uttar Pradesh government announced a maintenance allowance of Rs 1,000 for returning migrants required to quarantine. Similarly, the Assam government offered Rs 2,000 to out-migrants stranded across the country, along with launching a helpline number (9615471547) for support to these vulnerable migrants (India Today, 17 April 2020; The Economic Times, 20 April 2020, 04:50 PM).

According to respondents from the study, the Assam government purportedly offered Rs 4,000 to them. To avail this assistance, migrants had to complete a Google form, providing details such as their name, title, home and work addresses, district name, bank account numbers, and mobile numbers. However, a significant majority of migrants did not receive this sum from the government.

6.4 Post Covid migration

The preceding discourse elucidates the myriad challenges faced by migrants in their destinations, particularly exacerbated by the unprecedented disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Paradoxically, post-pandemic, the proclivity for out-migration from the village has resurged. The study discerns various

reasons underpinning this renewed trend. Migrants and villagers contend that within their own district, Majuli, stable employment opportunities are scarce, and wages remain low due to familiarity with the local populace. Expressing this sentiment, a migrant articulated that in external locales, they receive a monthly payment, while in the village, wages are dispensed on a weekly basis, with the cumulative amount proving more conducive to sustaining their families.

Many migrant workers, laments the absence of significant industries, stable employment, and dependable payment mechanisms in their home district. Disillusionment with the Assam state administration is palpable, as promises of secure local employment during the Covid-19 pandemic remain unfulfilled. Moreover, the acquired skill sets in destination states often find limited applicability or demand in Assam. For instance, Ajit Borah, employed in a T.V.S company in Karnataka, learned gasoline welding, a skillset with scant demand in his local and neighboring districts, compelling him to migrate for work once more.

Nevertheless, certain migrant workers express a preference for the autonomy and freedom experienced outside their home environment. A respondent candidly shared that at home, familial admonishments prevail, whereas external locales afford them the liberty to do as they please, relishing a life unconstrained by familial constraints. A telephonic interview with Arpan Rajkhua, who has not returned home for twelve years, provides insights into the attachment formed with the external environment. Rajkhua asserts that Hyderabad, where he works, has become akin to his own abode. Despite his prolonged absence during the pandemic, he encountered minimal challenges due to the familiarity he established with local authorities. In contrast, a fellow migrant contends that Rajkhua has accumulated debts in the village, rendering him unable to return.

This multifaceted analysis underscores the intricate interplay of economic, social, and personal factors influencing the migration dynamics of the study population. The post-pandemic landscape reveals not only the persisting challenges but also the nuanced motivations that propel migrants to seek opportunities beyond their immediate locale.

6.5 Consciousness raising and unionism

Consciousness, a pivotal aspect of human potential emerging from actions and interactions (Ritzer, 2000), has historically catalyzed the formation of workers' unions, with early mobilization attempts dating back to 1918 in Madras (Elembilassery, 2018). Despite over 90% of India's workforce residing in the informal sector, hindered by a lack of social and legal protection, unionization remains a challenge in the contemporary global age, predominantly confined to the formal sector. Post-COVID-19 challenges have heightened the awareness of occupational identity among migrant workers, leading many to join Migration Support Centres (MSCs) as resource hubs for job information, counseling, and community-building activities. Additionally, respondents have affiliated with agencies like G4S Security Service for support, adhering to obligations that prioritize human rights and dignified treatment. The post-pandemic era sees an increased focus on unionization as a means to address migrant issues, with workers joining labor offices for protection, receiving labor cards, and engaging in monthly meetings to voice concerns. Despite a lack of ideological commitment, workers exhibit instrumental commitment to labor offices, recognizing the benefits derived from membership (Severke & Allvin, 2000). Notably, some members' sporadic attendance suggests a pragmatic alignment with the office for potential advantages (ibid).

VII. Conclusion

The analysis discerns a heightened vulnerability among out-migrant workers originating from the village, primarily attributed to the multifaceted challenges encountered in their respective destinations. The intricacies of their predicaments lead these migrants to adopt coping mechanisms rather than actively seeking comprehensive solutions, underscoring their marginalized status within society. In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, this vulnerability intensifies as concerns about job security become paramount, prompting a growing apprehension among migrant workers. Interestingly, the inclination towards forming or joining unions as a collective voice to address their grievances emerges as a focal point of anxiety and deliberation. The dynamics within these unions reveal a nuanced scenario, with a significant proportion of workers exhibiting an instrumental commitment—engaging with the union for pragmatic purposes rather than embracing it as a locus for broader advocacy. This confluence of heightened concerns, deliberative contemplation on collective action, and the instrumental nature of union involvement encapsulates the intricate socio-economic landscape shaping the experiences and responses of the out-migrant workers post the Covid-19 epidemic.

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