

Economic sustainability and community support by ex-migrants in rural communities in Lombok Tengah, Nusa Tenggara Barat

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Abstract. This study explores the experiences of ex-migrant workers in Batukliang, Central Lombok, as they transition from overseas workforce to local entrepreneurship. With a focus on the challenges and motivations behind their entrepreneurial endeavours, the research delves into how these individuals leverage their skills, experiences, and limited resources to establish sustainable businesses in their home communities. Through purposive sampling, 24 ex-migrants participating in the Desmigrative program were interviewed, revealing a common thread of resilience and adaptability in the face of economic and regulatory constraints. The findings highlight the critical role of community support and the need for government intervention in encouraging these entrepreneurial activities. Despite the hurdles of minimal capital and limited land, these entrepreneurs contribute significantly to local economic development, particularly through small-scale enterprises such as brick molding, gardening, and poultry farming. The study underscores the importance of targeted policies and initiatives that enhance the capacity of ex-migrant entrepreneurs, ensuring their contributions to the community's economic stability and sustainability.

1 Introduction

In today's discourse on sustainable development, the idea that economic activity should extend beyond the pursuit of profit to include social responsibility and community well-being is becoming more and more important [1]. This viewpoint is especially pertinent to former immigrants who have started their own businesses after returning home [2, 3, 4]. Driven by a desire to make constructive contributions to their communities, returned migrants frequently utilize their learned abilities and resources to launch enterprises that guarantee their own financial stability and improve their fellow residents' well-being [5]. Keeping with the current emphasis on sustainability in the world, entrepreneurs who are former immigrants are in a unique position to advocate for eco-friendly methods in their businesses. They

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actively support the growth of a moral economy by implementing sustainable production, distribution, and consumption practices. By adopting sustainable production, distribution, and consumption methods, they actively contribute to the advancement of a moral economy, which aligns economic activities with ethical and environmental imperatives [6]. This highlights how important it is for former immigrants to support a sustainable future for their communities as well as for society at large, highlighting the significant influence of social consciousness in creating a more just and sustainable global economy.

The economic decision-making processes of ex-migrants are complex and influenced by a myriad of factors, including ethical considerations, community values, and the imperatives of survival in often challenging circumstances [7, 8]. As return migrants navigate the transition back to their home countries, one of their primary concerns is establishing a sustainable business that ensures long-term economic viability. This endeavor is not solely driven by financial motives but is also deeply rooted in ethical considerations and a commitment to upholding community values.

Some studies focus on the moral economy of voluntary return migration, such as the decision of young West African migrant men to enroll in the IOM's voluntary return program in Morocco and make sense of their return experiences [9, 10, 11]. These studies explore the moral considerations and social pressures that influence migrants' choices to return home, as well as the challenges they face in reintegrating into their communities [12]. Other studies investigate the moral economy of involuntary return migration, such as the case of Ghanaian migrants evacuated from the Libyan civil war in 2011 [13, 14]. These studies examine the moral and emotional impact of forced return on migrants, the social stigma they may face, and the ways in which they negotiate their identities and social status upon returning home.

Determining the degree of community support and resources accessible to ex-migrant entrepreneurs requires an understanding of the patterns and motives behind their entrepreneurial endeavors. Furthermore, studying the kind and level of community assistance for ex-migrants offers important insights into the processes by which these people reconstruct their lives and succeed economically after returning home [15]. Thus, the purpose of this research is to clarify the mechanisms and effects of social support on the pursuit of financial security and prosperity by return migrants. The results of this study could influence programs and policies intended to empower and reintegrate ex-migrants into their communities and local economies.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Moral Economy

James C. Scott's [17] concept of the "moral economy" provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the socio-economic behavior of ex-migrant workers transitioning to entrepreneurship in their home communities. The theory, as articulated in Scott's seminal work "The Moral Economy of the Peasant", explores how economic practices are influenced by moral and ethical considerations rooted in cultural and social norms. This framework is particularly relevant for analyzing the dynamics of returning migrants who engage in local entrepreneurship, as it helps elucidate the intersection of economic behavior with social values and community support.

The study of moral economy in return migration aims to understand the social, cultural and economic factors that shape the experiences and decision-making processes of migrants who voluntarily or involuntarily return to their home countries. This field of research investigates the moral norms, values and expectations that govern returning migrants'

behavior and interactions within their communities and homes. The concept of moral economy is also applied to the study of undocumented migrants and their employment experiences in the host country [18]. These studies explore the moral norms and expectations that shape the interactions between migrants and employers, and how these norms are negotiated and challenged in the context of irregular migration. Scott defines the moral economy as the set of principles and values that underpin people's economic behavior, particularly in pre-capitalist and peasant societies. It emphasizes the idea that economic actions are not solely driven by profit motives but are also guided by norms of justice, fairness, and social obligations. In essence, the moral economy reflects the ways in which economic transactions are intertwined with moral expectations and communal responsibilities.

3 Methods

The informants for this study were purposively selected from the community of ex-migrant workers in the Batukliang district, located in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. This community is part of the Desmigrative program, a regional initiative aimed at supporting the reintegration and entrepreneurial activities of returning migrant workers. A total of 24 participants were interviewed, each of whom has established a local business within the community. These businesses are at various stages of development, reflecting a spectrum of success and challenges faced by the entrepreneurs. The selection criteria for participants were based on their active involvement in the local economy and their ongoing efforts to sustain their businesses despite encountering various obstacles in the entrepreneurial landscape. The purposive sampling method was employed to ensure that the selected informants provided rich, relevant insights into the dynamics of post-migration entrepreneurship within the Desmigrative framework. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences, challenges, and strategies employed by these ex-migrants as they navigate the complexities of establishing and maintaining their businesses in their home country.

4 Result and Discussion

The interviews conducted with the 24 ex-migrant workers in the Batukliang district revealed a complex interplay of economic motivation, hardship, and resilience in their migration experiences. These narratives provide critical insights into the socio-economic challenges that prompted their migration and the skills they acquired abroad, which they now apply in their entrepreneurial ventures upon returning home.

4.1 Financial Inspiration and Relocation Involvement

The choice to emigrate was overwhelmingly driven by financial need. As one member distinctively depicted, "The point is, I went there since of financial thought processes." This estimation was resounded by others who looked for to elude the financial hardships in their domestic locale by looking for work overseas. The relocation travel itself was full with peril, especially within the prior decades, when legitimate movement channels were either blocked off or excessively expensive for numerous. One member related:

"There utilized to be a broker, that's the term. With battle, I utilized to swim. Since back at that points it was still unlawful... numerous of our companions got to be casualties of suffocating, being pulverized by tankers, ships."

These accounts highlight the extraordinary dangers that these people were willing to attempt to attain financial solidness, underscoring the need of legitimate and secure movement pathways at the time. The nonappearance of official back and the toll taken a toll of legitimate documentation, such as international ids, encourage exacerbated the situation. This constrained numerous to depend on casual systems, as reflected within the taking after declaration:

"At that time, in case I'm not mixed up, 125 thousand [rupiah]... Let alone needing to form an international id, there was no cash, and there wasn't any at that time."

The participant's recollection of needing to borrow 125 thousand rupiah—a substantial amount at the time—highlights the financial depression that leaves many with no choice but to navigate illegal pathways. The lack of accessible legal avenues and the prohibitive costs associated with obtaining appropriate documentation further exacerbates this situation. This scenario is emblematic of a broader pattern observed in studies of irregular migration, where economic deprivation forces individuals to take significant risks in pursuit of better opportunities abroad. The absence of institutional support and affordable legal migration channels thus perpetuates the cycle of irregular migration, as individuals are left with limited options to escape poverty and improve their livelihoods.

4.2 Abilities and Lessons Procured Overseas

In spite of the tall dangers and challenges experienced amid their movement travel, the ex-migrants too detailed noteworthy benefits from their time overseas, especially in terms of teach, work ethic, and budgetary administration. These procured aptitudes have demonstrated priceless in their current entrepreneurial endeavors. One member famous:

"Lessons learned from Malaysia. Exceptionally valuable, particularly teach in time, work... In the event that we compare it with us here, we know the teach is missing."

Another participant, often acquire robust financial management skills through necessity. In the context of the continuous labor markets they encounter abroad, they learn to budget, save, and invest their earnings wisely. For instance, one informant stated, "We can also manage our finances. The work abroad taught us the importance of saving and reinvesting our earnings for future stability." This newfound financial discipline contrasts sharply with the seasonal and often unstable work available in their home regions, where employment is intermittent and financial management is less structured. The accentuation on teach and monetary judiciousness may be a repeating topic among the members. The involvement of working in a more organized and taught environment overseas ingraining in them a more grounded work ethic and a more key approach to sparing and contributing their profit. This was especially apparent in their approach to monetary administration, as portrayed by another source:

"On the off chance that there, we spare. The term is in the event that we need meat, we ought to work for ourselves, since we keep in mind our family. So that's our soul to not be apathetic. Tireless, solid, enduring."

These discoveries propose that the relocation involvement, in spite of its challenges, given these people with profitable abilities and states of mind that have interpreted into their entrepreneurial victory back domestic. The teach, tirelessness, and money related insight

procured overseas are presently being connected in their nearby businesses, contributing to their maintainability and development.

4.3 Business Ownership and Operations

One participant described his venture into brick production, a business he initiated after returning from Malaysia. Despite having no prior experience in this specific trade while abroad, he identified brick molding as a viable income-generating activity upon his return. He explained:

"Printing bricks, here. I have my own, I tell people to do it."

This statement underscores a key aspect of his business model: delegation and local employment. By renting land for brick production, he not only created a source of income for himself but also provided work opportunities for others in the community. This approach highlights the role of returning migrants in contributing to local economic development through entrepreneurship, even in the absence of large-scale resources or land ownership. The participant further elaborated on the operational aspects of his business:

"There`s not much land, we rent it. We rent the place... We`ll look for a place to rent to make bricks. Print. This is where I work."



Fig. 1. Bricks printing house in rented land

The necessity of renting land reflects a common challenge among ex-migrants, who often lack substantial capital or assets upon their return. Nonetheless, this did not deter the participant from pursuing his business idea, demonstrating resilience and resourcefulness in utilizing available resources to establish a sustainable livelihood. The motivation behind the participant's entrepreneurial efforts was deeply rooted in the realities of aging and the stricter regulations governing migrant labor. He stated:

"Not allowed to go there anymore, to Malaysia... This wife. Because she`s old... Now we can't go there anymore, her age."

This reflects a significant shift in life priorities, where returning migrants, unable to continue working abroad due to age restrictions, turn to local entrepreneurship as a sustainable alternative. The strict enforcement of age limits for migrant workers, coupled with the participant's advancing age, necessitated a permanent return to the home country and the subsequent establishment of a business that could provide ongoing income.

The participant's decision to start a brick-molding business, despite not having acquired the idea from his work in Malaysia, illustrates the adaptive strategies employed by returning migrants. Rather than directly transferring skills learned abroad, this individual identified a local market need and leveraged his ability to organize and manage a small-scale production enterprise. Another participant emphasized the significant role that personal interests and hobbies play in the sustainability of entrepreneurial activities. He reflected,

“After experience, we just realized, it turns out that everything we do is also based on hobbies. If we don't have a hobby, we can't. No matter how difficult it is, if it's a hobby, we can definitely do it.”

This statement underscores the intrinsic motivation required to persevere in business, particularly in a challenging environment where external support may be limited. The participant's passion for chicken farming and gardening was not merely a means of survival but also a source of fulfillment that kept him committed despite the obstacles. This highlights the flexibility and entrepreneurial mindset of returning migrants, who often must pivot from their previous occupations to find viable business opportunities in their local context. The ability to adapt and innovate, even in unfamiliar industries, is a critical factor in the success of migrant entrepreneurs.

4.4 Challenges and Community Impact

The decision to become an entrepreneur was strongly influenced by family considerations and economic pressures. The participant explained that the government's restrictions on working abroad, particularly the prohibition on returning to Malaysia, were a significant factor. With no viable options for formal employment due to age restrictions, he chose to utilize his remaining time and knowledge to pursue local entrepreneurial activities. This decision was driven by both necessity and the desire to support his family. He stated,

“The economic motive, we are no longer allowed to go to Malaysia, there is no permission from the government. Then for capital for other work, it is also impossible, because of age factors.”

This narrative reflects a broader trend among returning migrant workers who find themselves excluded from traditional employment opportunities due to age or other barriers. As a result, entrepreneurship becomes not only a pathway to economic stability but also a means of maintaining personal dignity and agency in the face of structural constraints. However, the transition from being a migrant worker to an entrepreneur in their home country has not been without its challenges. For example, limited access to land and capital are significant barriers, as reflected in the need to rent production space. Despite these constraints, the participant has managed to sustain his business, albeit on a modest scale, indicating the perseverance and determination characteristic of many ex-migrant entrepreneurs in the region.

The participant's entrepreneurial activities are rooted in the desire to improve their family's welfare, a common theme among returning migrants. However, they also acknowledged the risks and challenges associated with such ventures. As stated by one of the participants,

“Not all migrant workers who go to Malaysia will be successful. It all depends on the individual, for example, skill.”

This statement highlights the variability in outcomes for returning migrants, where success in entrepreneurship is contingent upon a combination of individual resilience, skills, and access to resources. Interestingly, the participant pointed out the lack of communication and support networks among former migrant workers, which could be seen as a missed opportunity for collective advancement.

"There is actually no communication between former migrant workers, sis. Because we are both far away."

Despite the shared experiences and common challenges, the absence of strong social networks and organized support among ex-migrants may hinder their ability to collaborate and share resources. Moreover, the participant's reflections on the lack of communication among ex-migrant workers point to the potential benefits of fostering stronger community ties and networks. Such networks could facilitate the sharing of knowledge, resources, and support, thereby enhancing the resilience and success of entrepreneurial ventures among returning migrants. By employing local workers, the participant's business contributes to the community's economic well-being, illustrating the broader social impact of returning migrants' entrepreneurial activities. This case study exemplifies how ex-migrants can play a pivotal role in local economic development through small-scale business ventures, despite facing considerable challenges. Many participants reported difficulties in accessing capital, navigating bureaucratic hurdles, and overcoming societal stigma associated with their status as former migrant workers. These challenges have been exacerbated by a lack of formal support systems, which has made it difficult for some to sustain their businesses over the long term. Despite these obstacles, the determination and resilience of these ex-migrants remain evident in their continued efforts to maintain and grow their enterprises.

5 Conclusion

While the transition from migrant labor to local entrepreneurship is often fraught with challenges, such as limited access to capital, the ability to identify and exploit new opportunities is crucial for success. Despite the obstacles, the ability to identify and exploit new opportunities is a critical factor that can lead to entrepreneurial success. Returning migrants often possess a unique blend of skills and experiences gained from their time abroad, which can be leveraged to identify unmet needs or market gaps in their home communities. For example, skills in modern agricultural practices, acquired while working on plantations or farms overseas, can be adapted to local conditions, leading to improved productivity and the introduction of new crops or farming techniques.

This case study illustrates the complex interplay of personal motivation, economic necessity, and structural challenges in the entrepreneurial journeys of returning migrant workers. While hobbies and personal interests can drive resilience and commitment, the broader context of limited employment opportunities, inadequate access to capital, and weak social networks presents significant hurdles. To maximize the potential of returning migrants as contributors to local economic development, there is a clear need for policies and initiatives that address these challenges, providing the necessary support to help them succeed in their entrepreneurial ventures.

Similarly, experience in manufacturing or services can inspire the development of small-scale businesses that cater to local demands. However, this also points to the critical need for more robust government intervention and resources to help these entrepreneurs overcome their limitations and scale their businesses. This participant's experience highlights the importance of supporting returning migrants in their entrepreneurial ventures, as their contributions can significantly impact local economic development and community well-being. By establishing cooperatives and accessing targeted assistance, ex-migrant

entrepreneurs can further enhance their economic contributions, fostering greater stability and sustainability within their communities.

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