Article

Direct and Spillover Effects: How Do Community-Based Organizations Impact the Social Integration of Passive Migrants?

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Abstract: With the rapid process of urbanization and constant changes in ecological environments, passive migration programs have been popularized among many governments worldwide as a prevalent adaptation strategy. Poverty alleviation resettlement (PAR) emerges as one of China’s flagship initiatives, as the government has shifted its focus from investing in villages with harsh natural conditions to the construction of centralized high-density resettlement communities in small counties and peri-urban regions. The sustainability and well-being of migrants within resettlement communities play a vitally important role in the effectiveness of this program. In line with the integration theory, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and a household survey covering 287 PAR migrant households were conducted to analyze how community-based organizations (CBOs) influence the social integration of PAR migrants. The findings are as follows: (1) Both participants and non-participants in CBOs show higher levels of neighborhood interaction, behavioral adaptation, and identity recognition. However, no significant advantage is yielded by their economic integration. (2) The mechanism of CBOs impacting the social integration of migrants varies between participants and non-participants. The social integration of those migrants participating in a CBO experience increased through cooperation-based social interaction, adherence to organizational norms, and enhanced self-efficacy. In contrast, the social integration of non-participants in CBOs within the same community results from such mechanisms as service delivery-based social interaction, social learning, and community solidarity. Therefore, this article highlights the significance attached to developing CBOs as a sustainable development strategy for passive migrants. Additionally, to better support passive migrants in eliminating poverty, governments are advised to implement sustainable economic support plans through CBOs, with a particular focus on long-term employment assistance programs.

Keywords: community-based organizations (CBOs); social integration; passive migrants; poverty alleviation resettlement (PAR); China

1. Introduction

Poverty eradication is, first and foremost, one of the UN-defined Sustainable Development Goals [1]. Poverty is a ‘spatial trap’ that is closely related to environmental and geographical conditions [2]. There are many areas in China that have long been impoverished due to harsh natural conditions, such as the deserts in the northwest and the deep valleys in the southwest. To effectively eliminate poverty, the Chinese government launched the Poverty Alleviation Resettlement (PAR) plan in 2015. PAR requires the government to relocate residents in harsh natural conditions areas to more inhabitable small towns or suburban areas, for centralized resettlement [3]. By April 2020, the Chinese government had relocated nearly 10 million impoverished people within five years, which gave rise to a large population known as the ‘PAR migrants’ [4]. PAR is anticipated to achieve multiple goals, such as improving the overall living standards of migrants, providing them...
with access to essential infrastructure and services, and preserving the ecological environment [5]. However, this approach has direct effects on the original living environment, livelihood, and social networks of migrants, forcing them into social disconnection and marginalization [5,6]. The comprehensive social integration of migrants in the new social environment is considered a critical criterion of the effectiveness of PAR projects [7]. It is also a significant factor that impacts the sustainable adaptation and development of immigrants in the host society. Therefore, social integration provides a significant analytical tool for the research on relocation and migrants [8,9].

Social integration is a universal issue encountered by migrants. Depending on the way migration occurs, it can be categorized into “spontaneous migration” and “passive migration”. Thus far, there have been plenty of studies focusing on the social integration of spontaneous migrant groups, such as the international migrants in Europe [10] and the rural migrant workers in China [11]. In comparison, there are few studies conducted on the social integration of passive, policy-based migrants. Distinct from those spontaneous migrants who frequently encounter institutional obstacles, the government usually promotes the integration of passive migrants by taking various measures [7]. One of them is to optimize community governance.

Focusing on centralized resettlement, PAR has set up many atomized centralized resettlement communities. Currently, the Chinese government has established various formal community organizations, such as grassroots organizations of the Communist Party of China and mass autonomous organizations in these communities. In addition, the Chinese government strives to compensate for the insufficiency of experience and foundation in community governance by cultivating and promoting the development of various informal CBOs, such as the elderly association, volunteer association, and marriage and funeral associations. Although CBOs have long been regarded as essential for creating, maintaining, and changing the trajectory of migrant social integration [12], there remains little research focusing on the analysis of the underlying mechanisms behind this effect in PAR. Also, the existing studies fail to distinguish between the effects of CBOs on participants and non-participants. Are CBOs contributory to the social integration of both participants and non-participants? There is still no answer provided by previous studies.

In light of this, this present study explores the impact of CBOs on the social integration of PAR migrants. More specifically, there are three research questions raised: (1) Does participation in CBOs have a significant effect on the social integration of PAR migrants? (2) Can CBOs have an impact on the social integration of non-participants within the same community? (3) What is the specific mechanism of the above effects? To answer these questions, the mixed research method is adopted in this paper. The research data used in this paper are sourced from a field survey conducted in July and August 2020 in T County, Southwest China, including a questionnaire survey of PAR migrants and the in-depth interviews conducted with grassroots administrative officials, CBOs leaders, organization members, and non-participants of CBOs. Through an analysis of the impact caused by CBOs on the social integration of PAR migrants, insights are gained into sustainable governance for the centralized resettlement communities of passive migrants worldwide.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Four Dimensions of Social Integration of Passive Migration

Social integration is a major theme of the research on resettlement. As a term used interchangeably with assimilation by American researchers and inclusion by European researchers, integration is also interpreted in English language literature as acculturation [13], social adaptation [14], and social incorporation [15]. The way social integration is defined remains inconclusive. Commentators regard integration as either personal or public, involving structures or processes (Structure and process are two important perspectives taken in the study on social integration. In some literature, the structural perspective is taken to regard social integration as part of the larger social structure, where institutions and social norms influence the social integration of migrants. In turn, social integration affects the
social structure. For example, research has been conducted on the impact of institutions on
the social integration of migrants [16]. In other literature, the process perspective is taken
to view social integration as the process by which individuals or groups integrate into
the host society. It is a process that may be either continuously inclusive or continuously
exclusive or may alternate between the two states [12], and as a means or an end. All of
them have related integration to the question of how migrants fit into the society in which
they find themselves [17]. The integration-induced dilemmas faced by different migrant
groups are heterogeneous. To a large extent, the social integration of active economic
migrants is manifested as the interaction between migrants and the host society. As passive
migrants are arranged to live together with other migrants in the same situation, they often
encounter not only the dilemma of integration within the group but also isolation from the
host society.

Since a high degree of integration following migration is not an inevitable and universal
outcome, it is imperative to assess the social integration of migrants using quantitative
indicators. In the study of Gordon, integration was divided into two categories: structural
integration and cultural integration. Structural integration involves an increase in the social
participation of migrants at institutional and organizational levels, while cultural integra-
tion encompasses a process of acculturation for migrants in terms of value orientation and
social identity [18]. This dichotomy lays a foundation for operationalizing the concept of
social integration. Subsequently, the multidimensional schema became a popular method
of social integration measurement. For example, Ager and Strang (2008) contended that
successful integration is attributed to four reasons: the achievement and access across
different sectors of employment, housing, education, and health; the assumptions and
practices regarding citizenship and rights; the processes of social connection within and
between community groups; and the structural barriers to connection related to language,
culture, and the local environment [19]. Phillimore (2012) proposed three crucial measures
of social integration: a sense of belonging in the host community, interpersonal connections
and social networks, and the capacity and confidence needed to access various resources,
such as education, employment, and housing [20]. Kearns and Whitley (2015) identified
three aspects of social integration: trust, reliance and safety; social relations; and one’s sense
of the community [17]. In the view of Cao (2012), social integration includes participation
in the cultural, social-economic and psychological milieus under the context of project-
induced displacement [21]. It is evident that there is little debate about the dimensions of
social integration in literature, with the majority of studies assessing the social integration
of migrants from the perspectives of economics, social interaction, culture, and psychology.

Passive migrants are more likely to encounter economic difficulties due to the con-
straints imposed by their limited production experience, educational attainment, and
technical proficiency [22]. In terms of social interaction, the establishment of new social
networks is essential for the social integration of migrants after their resettlement, as passive
migrants are unable to select their place of residence based on the existing social
networks [23]. The cultural adaptability of passive migrants is crucial to their social inte-
gration. Passive migrants, many of whom previously resided in rural areas, now face the
challenge of adapting to urban life. The external manifestation of culture is behavior, and
for operationalized measurement, our focus is on the post-relocation adaptability of passive
migrants in terms of behavior. Furthermore, at a psychological level, the extent to which
passive migrants accept their new identity has a direct impact on the sustainability of their
social integration [24]. Based on the existing research foundation and the characteristics
of passive migration, four dimensions were identified in this study to measure the social
integration of migrants: economic integration, neighborly interaction, behavior adaptation,
and identity recognition.

Regarding the determinants of social integration, it has been demonstrated in prior
studies that the primary influencing factors in the social integration of migrants include
the socioeconomic characteristics of individuals or families [22], social interaction net-
works [25], and institutional factors. In many cases, institutional factors impede integration
by posing challenges in claiming citizenship [26] or gaining access to public resources [27]. However, passive migrants are frequently the beneficiaries of substantial federal, state, and local support, including affordable housing, healthcare provisions, and skills training opportunities [28]. In the relevant studies, the significance of government assistance has been highlighted, such as the material aid and security mechanisms implemented to facilitate the social integration of migrants [29]. Additionally, passive migrants are often concentrated in urban communities. For them, social integration is also affected significantly by their living experiences within the community and the resources they obtain from the community. However, the existing research lacks an in-depth exploration of the relationship between the community and social integration of passive migrants.

2.2. The Role of CBOs in Social Integration

CBOs play a crucial role in promoting the social integration of passive migrants by providing platforms and opportunities for their engagement within the community [30]. Exerting a direct influence on the social integration of participants, CBOs can also facilitate the integration of non-participants into the community.

According to the existing literature, participation in CBOs is an essential approach to the social integration of migrants. Social interaction and social capital are the primary dimensions in which CBOs influence the social integration of migrants. As a mechanism of promoting migrants’ social capital, CBOs encompass bonding capital to foster trust and relationships within homogenous groups and bridging capital to establish the connection between heterogeneous groups [31]. Participation in CBOs enables a rapid expansion of migrants’ social networks and the development of relationships with those migrants in the same situation. This leads to an increase in migrants’ bonding capital [32]. Moreover, it promotes communication between migrants and grassroots administrative officials as well as the indigenous inhabitants with diverse cultural backgrounds. This interaction not only increases the migrants’ bridging social capital but also enhances their social learning [33]. Bonding capital and bridging social capital lay a solid foundation for the social integration of migrants. They can exercise social capital to search for employment information, cultivate job skills, and even access temporary loans, which is crucial to their economic integration [23]. From a psychological perspective, participation in CBOs allows individuals to engage with community stakeholders, government officials, and other social organizations. As a result, they perceive themselves and their organizations as capable of addressing community-related issues [34]. Prior studies have also demonstrated that the individuals involved in community-based organizations have a higher level of community awareness compared to the residents who do not engage in any CBOs [35]. Thus, involvement in CBOs can fulfill the needs of participants for self-actualization, thereby boosting their self-efficacy and sense of belonging to the community [33]. Finally, in terms of behavioral adaptation, CBOs not only facilitate social learning for migrants through social interaction but also influence their behavior by promoting organizational norms that align with modern and urban values. Exposure to these norms can lead to changes in their discourse awareness and ultimately improve their cultural and behavioral adaptability [36].

In summary, participation in CBO organizations is conducive to promoting the social integration of migrants from different perspectives, such as economy, society, culture, behavior, psychology, and identity. Thus, the first hypothesis is proposed:

**H1.** The participation of CBOs is conductive to the successful social integration of PAR migrants in various dimensions, including economic integration (H1a), neighborly interaction (H1b), behavioral adaptation (H1c), and urban people’s identity (H1d).

CBOs are beneficial in shaping social integration among non-participants within their geographical areas. However, there exists a significant difference in self-perception and community perception between those who are involved in CBOs and those who are not [37]. It is thus crucial to reveal the mechanisms of social integration for these groups separately.
CBOs differ from other social entities in their commitment to addressing local community concerns. They apply their in-depth local knowledge to deliver services and resources that are specifically tailored to the needs of migrants [32]. Usually, CBOs form contractual partnerships with the government to secure the funding required for sustainable development, which directs valuable resources to the community [38]. These resources are beneficial not only to CBO participants but also to non-participants, which presents migrants with opportunities to get out of poverty [39]. In terms of social interaction, the non-participants of CBOs frequently engage in positive communication with those involved. Additionally, the events organized by CBOs are aimed at encouraging interaction among non-participants [40]. CBOs play a pivotal role in nurturing social interaction among migrants. They are influential to the extent that there are some urban community studies where the presence or absence of CBOs is taken as a metric to assess the level of social interaction among residents [39]. Moreover, when a behavior change campaign is launched by a CBO, it can significantly increase the attention paid by the migrants in the community to adopt new behaviors. Through their behavioral changes, the participants within the organization serve as role models, thus inspiring the non-participants in the same community to follow suit [36]. Ultimately, CBOs can foster social interaction to enhance community awareness and satisfaction among non-participants [39]. Some organizations also make efforts to forge emotional bonds between non-participants and the community through the construction of discourse. In this way, their sense of responsibility is reinforced [41]. This not only deepens the migrants’ sense of belonging and identity towards the host country but also leads to their acceptance of identity transformation [42]. Therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

**H2. CBOs also facilitate the various social integration of migrants who did not participate in CBOs. Specifically, conducive to economic integration (H2a), neighborly interaction (H2b), behavioral adaptation (H2c), and urban people’s identity (H2d).**

In most of the aforementioned studies, the mechanisms through which CBOs contribute to migrant integration have been explored, including social capital, organizational norms, and community solidarity. However, there remains little research exploring whether these mechanisms are effective in PAR migrant communities and whether there are additional mechanisms at play. Therefore, this study aims to further reveal the role of CBOs in PAR communities both quantitatively and qualitatively.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Case Selection

The data used in this study were collected from fieldwork performed in T County, a national-level poverty-stricken county in the southwest of China. The selection of sample PAR sites was based on two considerations. Firstly, as for the location and representativeness of the site, a geographically representative sample was selected from the most impoverished regions in China, with most of the rural inhabitants residing in high-altitude valleys and mountains with harsh natural environments. The T County government took the initiative to build 102 sites (including both long-distance and short-distance resettlement sites) during the 13th Five-Year Plan (FYP), with 26,261 households and 102,693 rural inhabitants relocated. The scale is among the highest in China. The second consideration was the availability of personal connections with local officials, with which fieldwork was conducted across various communities instead of simply ‘politically representative’ communities. In this way, the robust representativeness of our sample was ensured, and the quality of the relevant data was improved.

In order to facilitate the sustainable survival and development of PAR migrants, the T County government has initiated a series of follow-up guarantee programs, which aim at “Relocated voluntarily (bandechu), Be properly settled (wendezhu) and Be capable of creating wealth (nengzhifu)” . Specifically, policy measures include offering one-off
subsidies for migrants, tolerant household registration policies, an improvement in basic public service facilities in resettlement communities, and the launch of active employment promotion programs. Community governance represents another important measure taken by the T County government to promote the social integration of PAR migrants. Apart from establishing such formal community organization systems as grassroots organizations of the Communist Party of China and mass autonomous organizations, the T County government also endeavors to cultivate informal community social organizations, such as the elderly association, volunteer association, and communities based on interest. Despite the nominal independence of CBOs from the government and political parties, grassroots administrative staff often exercise their political power to intervene in the establishment and operation of CBOs. Grassroots administrative staffers are committed to finding social elites among PAR migrants, who are usually party members and highly influential among the migrants. Also, they serve as the key connection point between the government and the migrants. These community leaders were encouraged to establish CBOs and attract PAR migrants to participate voluntarily through their social capital. CBOs offer a wide variety of services to their members and the communities where they operate.

The resettlement site is located 3 km away from the town, which is referred to as the ‘new city’ by local urban residents (see Figure 1). From 2016 to 2020, seven relocation communities were set up, all of which are located in the western suburbs of the county. The resettlement site in T County consists of four batches according to the construction schedule. Four communities were selected from four batches in T County to improve representativeness. Two of the selected communities had active CBOs, while the other two did not (see Table 1). Fieldwork was conducted between July and August 2020.

![Figure 1. Location map of PAR resettlement in T County. Source: Drawn by author.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Formation Time</th>
<th>CBOs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XT</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>December 2018</td>
<td>The New Town Uncle (conducts voluntary services within the community); Aunt Service team (voluntary services and recreational activities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TF</td>
<td>April 2019</td>
<td>Folk Song and Dance Troupe (recreational activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>December 2019</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Data Collection

In this research, both qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted. In the first phase of the research, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with
government officials, including the officials in charge of resettlement work at the provincial level, county level, and street level. In the second phase, a household survey was conducted on 287 PAR migrant households throughout August 2020. In each community, questionnaires were administered and explained face-to-face to the respondents. Given the intensive settlement of PAR migrants, random sampling was performed to recruit the participants. The potential interviewees were identified at different times and in various public venues, such as the community’s activity rooms and parks, as well as convenience stores and fresh markets in the vicinity. Furthermore, snowball sampling was performed to recruit participants from CBOs. The questionnaire consists of four sections: (a) a series of questions designed to evaluate the four dimensions of respondents’ social integration: economic integration, behavioral adaptation, neighborly interaction, and identity recognition; (b) the relationship between respondents and CBOs, including whether respondents participate in CBOs and whether there are CBOs in the community; (c) the demographic characteristics of the family, including basic information about family members’ education level, employment status, income and expenses, and the time of relocation to the resettlement site; (d) PAR migrants’ satisfaction with the resettlement community, satisfaction with family relations, and satisfaction with life, PAR policy and their needs for relevant post-resettlement assistance. In total, 287 valid responses were collected. Additionally, the relationship between CBOs and the social integration of migrants was better investigated by conducting focus group discussions with grassroots administrative officials and the leaders of CBOs, and by conducting semi-structured interviews with CBO participants. To ensure the anonymity of the subjects, their names were changed in the description and analysis. Any details that might reveal the identity of the subject were omitted from this article.

3.3. Measurements of Variables

3.3.1. Social Integration Variables

A number of variables and indicators were selected from the survey that involved the four dimensions of social integration: economic integration, behavior adaptation, neighborly interaction, and identity recognition. These four dimensions are similar to the components of integration in the study of Ager and Strang (2008) and to the four aspects of social integration in the study of Yang (2020) (economic integration or incorporation, cultural acceptance, behavioral adaptation or adjustment, and identity of mainstream society). Also, two of the four elements of neighborhood social cohesion are covered (social networks and social capital and place attachment and identity) [19,43,44].

As a critical dimension of social integration, economic integration refers to the circumstance where migrants achieve an average or above-average economic standing compared with the natives [45]. It is commonly measured by various indicators, such as occupation, income, consumption level, housing, and education [46]. In this study, economic integration is measured by two continuous variables and one ordinal variable, involving both a subjective evaluation of economic status and an objective measurement of household human capital, i.e., economic pressure, human capital, and per capita employment income.

Behavioral adaptation indicates that migrants not only accept the inflow rules and customs but also behave in the same way as locals. Living habits (e.g., dressing, eating habits, consumption behavior, and health habits), social interactions, and interpersonal communications are all indicators applicable to measuring behavioral adaptation [44]. According to Berry (1997), adaptation is defined as the changes of individuals or groups in response to environmental demands. It can be achieved immediately or over a longer period of time [13]. In this study, behavioral adaptation is measured by two continuous variables and two categorical variables, i.e., daily activities with new friends, a change in lifestyles, and integration with town dwellers.

Neighborly interaction is referred to as “social relations between people living in close proximity” [47]. In general, it involves two social relationships: the social interaction and affective relationship between residents, including various activities, such as visits to others,
mutual support, and reciprocal care [48]. In this study, it is measured by three categorical variables: new friends/acquaintances, a range of social interactions, and neighborly interaction frequency. They are considered reflective of the range and intensity of PAR migrants’ neighborly interactions.

Identity recognition encompasses not only the elements of psychological distance between migrants and mainstream society but also a sense of belonging relating to their identity. It is extremely difficult to achieve the highest level of migrant integration in a short period of time. In this study, it is measured by three categorical variables: the sense of belonging, the perception of mate selection advantages (the selection of ‘the perception of mate selection advantages’ is used as an indicator within the dimension of identity because in China’s marriage market, being identified as an urban resident has a significant influence on an individual’s ability to find a spouse. Urban residents hold an absolute advantage in the marriage market, while rural residents frequently face difficulties in the partner selection process [49]. If respondents believe that they or their children have become more advantageous in the marriage market after relocation, they are more likely to accept their new identity as urban dwellers) and the psychological distance from mainstream society.

The sub-indicators and specific measurements are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Measurement of social integration variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four Dimensions</th>
<th>Indicators and Measurement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Sd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic integration</td>
<td>Economic pressure</td>
<td>After relocation, can your family make ends meet? (1 = Deficit; 2 = Balanced; 3 = Surplus)</td>
<td>1.394</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human capital</td>
<td>The proportion of employed population in total household population.</td>
<td>0.239</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Per capita employment income</td>
<td>The ratio of monthly employment income to employed population.</td>
<td>441.572</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior adaptation</td>
<td>Daily activities with new friends</td>
<td>Pleased select the kind of activities you often do with your friends in resettlement community? (1 = Chat occasionally; 2 = Square dance/Play cards; 3 = participate the activities with CBO/work together)</td>
<td>1.480</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in lifestyles</td>
<td>After relocation, in what ways do you feel you have changed, please select the changes you have made: (1 = Eating; 2 = Dressing; 3 = Entertainment; 4 = Health habits; 5 = Children’s education; 6 = Others, please list)</td>
<td>1.456</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction with city dwellers</td>
<td>How often do you interact with people in the town? (1 = Never; 2 = Occasionally; 3 = Quiet often)</td>
<td>1.593</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life satisfaction after resettlement</td>
<td>Are you satisfied with your life in the resettlement community? (1 = Not satisfied at all; 2 = Not satisfied; 3 = Fair; 4 = Relatively satisfied; 5 = Very satisfied)</td>
<td>2.879</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborly interaction</td>
<td>New friends’ acquaintance</td>
<td>Have you made new friends after relocation? (1 = Haven’t made new friends; 2 = Have made new friends)</td>
<td>1.774</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four Dimensions</th>
<th>Indicators and Measurement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Sd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Indicators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of social interaction</td>
<td>Where are your new friends come from? (1 = From the same community; 2 = From the other community of the resettlement site; 3 = Both) → The more options respondents selected, the higher the score.</td>
<td>1.953</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborly interaction frequency</td>
<td>How often do you interact/meet with your new friends? (1 = Occasionally; 2 = Twice or three times a week; 3 = Everyday)</td>
<td>2.296</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging</td>
<td>After relocation, do you think you have become a city dweller? (1 = No, I am still a peasant; 2 = I am not sure; 3 = Yes, I am a city dweller)</td>
<td>2.108</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of mate selection advantages</td>
<td>Do you think after moving into the resettlement site, it is helpful with looking for a partner in marriage? (1 = Not at all; 2 = Yes, it helps)</td>
<td>1.751</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological distance from mainstream society</td>
<td>What do you think people in the town think of you? (1 = They do not like us; 2 = They are kind)</td>
<td>1.337</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.664</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through a principal component analysis (PCA), a powerful one-factor solution was obtained for each dimension of social integration. With respect to the PCA analysis, the eigenvalue-one criterion is one of the most used criteria for solving the number of components. It is also known as the Kaiser criterion [50]. In prior studies, this criterion is recommended as particularly suitable for a small number of variables with a high accuracy. According to the Kaiser criterion, any component with a higher eigenvalue than 1.00 accounts for meaningful variance, which means it is worthy of retention. Concerning these four dimensions, only one factor has an eigenvalue that exceeds 1.00. The selection of factors was based on two criteria: a KMO value over 0.5 and a significance level of below 0.01 for the Bartlett’s test. The cumulative percent of the variance is 56.86% (KMO = 0.543) for economic integration, 39.58% (KMO = 0.647) for behavior adaptation, 82.36% (KMO = 0.723) for neighborly interaction, and 51.37% (KMO = 0.600) for identity recognition. The Bartlett’s test of sphericity for the four dimensions yielded a p-value of 0.000, which means the null hypothesis that the variables are uncorrelated can be rejected. It is indicated that a significant correlation is present among the variables, making them suitable for factor analysis.

3.3.2. Potential Explanatory Variables

Since long-distance PAR migrants are a heterogeneous group, each migrant starts the integration process with some personal characteristics of both a demographic and social nature. Based on prior studies, an investigation was conducted into three sets of functional factors or determinants of social integration [19]: the influencing factors of CBOs, the months of residence, and a set of demographic characteristic variables.

CBOs participation. CBOs are characterized by two features: being organized and being voluntary. CBOs are, first and foremost, organized entities. In spite of this, there is a wide range of formality in their organization, extending from loose, informal groups to highly formal organizations with established written rules and procedures. In China, most of the CBOs that are prevalent within communities are informal and loosely structured. With neither official status nor qualification, their members maintain interaction with the
organization through participation in its activities. Voluntariness refers to the voluntary participation of members in the organization’s activities or affairs. Their members come from the geographical community where the organization is based. Consequently, the participants in CBOs are those individuals within the community with voluntary engagement in the activities initiated by the organization. This is a binary variable. The individuals with experience in participating in CBO activities are recorded as ‘1’, and those without such experience are recorded as ‘0’.

CBOs existence. As a binary variable, the code respondents who have not participated in CBOs but have CBOs in their community is 1; otherwise, it is 0. For respondents in the XT and LT communities without CBOs, this variable is assigned a value of 0.

Length of residence. As the core explanatory variable, months of residence measure the PAR migrants’ months of residence in the resettlement site until August 2020, as measured by month.

Demographic characteristics variables. Demographic characteristic variables are measured by age (continuous variable), gender (male, coded as 1), hukou (local rural hukou, coded as 1), employment status (have off-farm employment, coded as 1), household income (continuous variable), education level (ordinal variable, illiterate (coded as 1), elementary education level (coded as 2), and higher than elementary school education level (coded as 3)). Tables 1 and 3 list the summary statistics for the dependent variables (social integration variables) and independent variables (potential explanatory variables).

Table 3. Variables and descriptive statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Variables and Measurement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social integration variable</td>
<td>Economic integration</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neighborly interaction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behavior adaptation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity recognition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential explanatory variables</td>
<td>Length of residence</td>
<td>8.611</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOs participation</td>
<td>Dummy variable: participant = 1; nonparticipant = 0</td>
<td>0.159</td>
<td>0.366</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOs existence</td>
<td>Dummy variable: when respondents do not participate in CBOs but CBOs exist within their community, it is 1. Otherwise, it is 0</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Continuous variable</td>
<td>57.241</td>
<td>13.067</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Dummy variable: male = 1; female = 0</td>
<td>0.457</td>
<td>0.499</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hukou</td>
<td>Dummy variable: rural area = 1; urban area = 0</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td>Dummy variable: off-farm employed = 1; unemployed = 0</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td>0.412</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income level</td>
<td>Ordinal variable: 1 = below 68 yuan/month; 2 = 68–201 yuan/month; 3 = 201–551 yuan/month; 4 = 551–1001 yuan/month; 5 = above 1001 yuan/month</td>
<td>3.273</td>
<td>1.306</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4. Analytic Strategy

This is a mixed-method study. The research was conducted in three steps, as follows: (1) The descriptive statistics on the characteristics of respondents and their families were analyzed to reveal the general characteristics of the PAR migrants. (2) An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model was applied to examine the potentially significant impact that the participation and presence of community-based organizations have on the social integration of PAR migrants. (3) Qualitative interview data were analyzed to explore the mechanism of community-based organizations influencing the social integration of PAR migrants.
4. Findings

4.1. Socio-Demographics of Interviewees

Table 2 lists the descriptive statistics obtained for the samples used in the analysis. The average age of the respondents is 57.2 years old, and the average number of months they have resided in a specific resettlement community is 8.6 months. Among these 287 respondents, 15.9% of them participated in CBOs, and 18.9% of them did not participate in CBOs but had active CBOs in their community. The remaining 65.2% indicated that they did not participate in CBOs, and such organizations were not present in their community. A total of 45.7% of them are women, 71.89% of them have a lower education level than elementary level, only 21.6% of them have off-farm employment, and 10.1% of them have already changed their local rural hukou into local urban hukou.

Regarding income and expenditure, the average monthly household income of the respondents reaches 766.23 yuan (USD166), ranging from 166.67 yuan (USD25.5) to 950 yuan (USD146). According to official statistics, however, the per capita disposable income of local urban residents in T County is merely 1437 yuan/month (USD218). As for expenditure, most respondents reported a sharp rise in their living expenses after relocation. After relocation, 66.55% of the respondents revealed that their income could not cover expenditure. The average monthly food expenditure of the respondents is 358.63 yuan (USD54.45), with some respondents reporting monthly spending of only around 16 yuan (USD2.43) on food. None of the respondents reported any expenditure on travel or recreational activities, despite a relatively high level of average household expenditure on various social activities, including funerals, weddings, and gifting, at around 4365.92 yuan (USD662.92) per year.

4.2. Quantitative Findings

Table 4 presents the results of the linear regression performed on the four dimensions of social integration of PAR migrants. The former model includes the duration of residence variable and other control variables, while the latter model introduces the CBOs’ participation variable and CBOs’ existence on this basis. The multi-collinearity with the VIF values of the variables was examined and was found to consistently fall within the acceptable range (for details, please see Table 4).

The first hypothesis is partially supported by the four sets of analyses. Despite no significant effect observed for CBO participation on economic integration, the analytical results show that CBO participation has a positively significant effect on neighborly integration ($\beta = 0.355, p < 0.1$), behavior adaptation ($\beta = 0.726, p < 0.01$), and identity recognition ($\beta = 0.341, p < 0.1$). It is indicated that participation in various community-based autonomous organizations facilitates neighborly interaction and behavior adaptation. In addition, those PAR migrants who have participated in CBOs are more likely to develop a ‘city person’ identity (H1b, H1c, and H1d are supported).

The second hypothesis is partially supported by the four sets of analyses as well. The migrants living in the communities with active CBOs exhibited no better economic integration than those living in the communities without CBOs. In spite of this, they still show significant advantages in neighborly integration ($\beta = 0.740, p < 0.01$), behavior adaptation ($\beta = 0.807, p < 0.01$), and identity recognition ($\beta = 0.730, p < 0.01$). This empirical result implies that positive externality is the role of CBOs in migrant social integration. For those migrants residing in the communities with active CBOs, even if they do not join CBOs, they can still expand their social networks, accelerate behavioral adaptation, and recognize their urban identity more due to the influence of CBOs.
Table 4. OLS regression results for social integration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four Dimensions of Social Integration</th>
<th>Economic Integration</th>
<th>Social Interaction</th>
<th>Behavior Adaption</th>
<th>Identity Recognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>Model 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of residence</td>
<td>-0.013 **</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.050 ***</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.019 ***</td>
<td>0.018 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.045</td>
<td>-0.063</td>
<td>-0.118</td>
<td>-0.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.055)</td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td>0.418 ***</td>
<td>0.425 ***</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
<td>(0.142)</td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income level</td>
<td>0.065 ***</td>
<td>0.065 ***</td>
<td>0.009 **</td>
<td>0.007 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hukou</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.281</td>
<td>0.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.093)</td>
<td>(0.094)</td>
<td>(0.185)</td>
<td>(0.185)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOs participation</td>
<td>-0.172</td>
<td>0.355 *</td>
<td>0.726 ***</td>
<td>0.341 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.104)</td>
<td>(0.205)</td>
<td>(0.135)</td>
<td>(0.131)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOs existence</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>0.740 ***</td>
<td>0.807 ***</td>
<td>0.730 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.105)</td>
<td>(0.207)</td>
<td>(0.194)</td>
<td>(0.201)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons</td>
<td>-2.044 ***</td>
<td>-2.072 ***</td>
<td>-1.976 ***</td>
<td>-1.567 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.148)</td>
<td>(0.152)</td>
<td>(0.295)</td>
<td>(0.298)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.791</td>
<td>0.792</td>
<td>0.161</td>
<td>0.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>759</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Source: Author’s calculations.

4.3. Qualitative Findings

4.3.1. The Mechanism of CBOs on the Social Integration of Participants

As suggested by the in-depth interviews conducted with the migrants participating in CBOs, the mechanisms through which CBOs influence the social integration of participants include cooperation-based social interaction, organizational norms, and self-efficacy.

CBOs enhance the social interaction of participants through cooperative relationships, as manifested in peer and external relationships. Joining a CBO is conducive to establishing meaningful peer connections among those individuals in similar circumstances. Given the limited access that migrants have to alternative channels of communication, their peer relationships play an essential role in behavioral adaptation and identity formation. Moreover, CBO participants are often offered the opportunity to engage with those individuals with more resources outside their immediate community, such as grassroots administrative officials and other non-governmental organizations. This provides valuable social capital for the integration of migrants into society. By gaining insights from the interviews with CBO participants and grassroots administrative officials, the underlying mechanisms of these social interactions were revealed.

Ms. Wang, a 58-year-old member of the Aunt Service team, was relocated to the HC community in February 2019. She resides with her partner, as her children are employed elsewhere. She shared her experiences with us.

“When I first came here, I didn’t know anyone. People from the same village had been scattered. Being idle at home was very boring. Later, I joined the Sister Service Team in the community. I made many friends here, and we participated in various activities together, such as a square dance competition and folk song competition. Later, we often went to the county together to hang out and go shopping in our spare time. I am very...”
happy with them, and gradually feel that this place has become our home (shy smile) . . .” (21 August 2020)

Mr. Li, aged 45, serves as the party branch secretary (the primary individual responsible for community affairs) of the HC community. He told us the story of his interaction with CBO participants and provided job opportunities for both participants.

“I employed two middle-aged women who were part of the Community Sister Service Team to perform janitorial duties in the office space of the local committee. I have a close relationship with the leader of this organization, who often invites me to their internal meetings, thus enabling me to network with many members within the organization. Their level of cooperation towards my tasks was highly commendable, and I am willing to offer assistance that aligns with my ethical principles.” (26 August 2020)

Institutional theory highlights the impact of regulations, norms, and cultural perceptions on organizations [51]. In China, the CBOs located in resettlement areas are subject to close supervision and guidance by the government. This leads to the development of organizational norms aligned with modernity and urban trends. These organizational norms can promote positive behavioral changes among participants. Norms may be formally proposed by organizational leaders, requiring members to abide by them. For example, as claimed by the leader of the folk song organization in the XF community, “What I often say to members is that we need to be city dwellers in the new era of civilization, and the folk songs we sing must be positive and healthy, rather than as vulgar as before” (28 August 2020). Norms may be informal as well. In spite of no clear terms and requirements, the participants in CBOs will be increasingly influenced by the organization’s values. Both formal and informal norms contribute to changing the behavior of the participants in CBOs and exert a subtle influence on their perception of identity. Below is an interview that helps improve the understanding of how this mechanism works.

Mr. Yang, aged 63, is a participant in the New Town Uncle program and was relocated to the HC community in April 2019.

“After relocating here, I had to take care of my grandson so I couldn’t work. Witnessing the ‘New Town Uncle’, advocating for mutual assistance in embracing a fresh start and fostering a cohesive community, I was deeply moved and promptly applied to become part of this esteemed organization. My primary role entails visiting various solitary elderly individuals’ residences every Tuesday and Friday, providing assistance with household chores to ensure their living spaces remain immaculate. I also need to keep myself clean because I represent the image of the New Town Uncle. I wash my face and shave every day. City people should have the appearance of city people.” (21 August 2020)

Participation in community-based organizations (CBOs) significantly improves the self-efficacy of PAR migrants. After their shift away from agricultural production, many of these migrants become idle due to age or skill barriers, gaining a sense of inferiority. Through engagement in CBOs and active participation in diverse activities, this negative psychological state can be effectively alleviated. Meanwhile, their need for self-actualization and altruism can be satisfied. The enhanced sense of self-efficacy has a promoting effect on strengthening the identification of migrants with the host society, playing a vital role in their psychological integration. Through an interview with a participant involved in CBOs, the mechanism through which self-efficacy operates is illustrated.

Mr. Wang, aged 52, is a participant in the New Town Uncle program.

“I came here in August last year, and honestly, I didn’t really know what to do at first. It felt like a total waste, just sitting on the street every day and watching people come and go... Later, I was mobilized to join the New Town Uncle and was assigned to patrol the community at night. Sometimes I also help the grassroots administrative officials with some work. Sure, I still don’t have any income, but at least now it feels like a real family here. And hey, I can actually contribute something to this family.” (21 August 2020)
4.3.2. The Mechanism of CBOs Influencing the Social Integration of Non-Participants within the Same Community

According to quantitative studies, CBOs also contribute to the social integration of those migrants not participating in CBOs within the same community. As revealed by the analysis of interview data, social interaction, social learning, and community solidarity based on resource sharing are the mechanisms through which CBOs impact the social integration of non-participants within the same community.

CBOs create a contact point for isolated migrants, thus expanding their social networks and enhancing their social interactions through resource sharing. As CBOs strive to make public services accessible to migrants, they set up connections among participants and non-participants within the same community. For instance, when a CBO member offers care services to an elderly individual, the latter becomes familiar with the participants and may even become emotionally attached to them. In addition to delivering targeted services, CBOs also provide universal public resources for communities, such as organizing public activities. According to social capital theory, the return on investment for community public resources often exceeds their initial cost. Also, these resources can enhance social interaction [52]. For example, one respondent reported regularly watching the evening performances organized by the Folk Song and Dance Troupe following dinner, where she formed a close bond with other audiences. The social interactions themed with resource sharing increase social capital within the community, which provides crucial support for the social integration of migrants.

According to social learning theory, individuals are more likely to adopt a specific behavior when they are closely connected with others who engage in that behavior, become exposed to the processes involved in the behavior, or recognize the benefits that the behavior confers [53]. Social learning mechanisms have a significant influence on the behavioral adaptation of non-participants in CBOs. In many cases, the participants sticking to CBO norms pioneer in adapting to urban behavioral patterns. As a catalyst for change, the interaction between the participants in CBOs and non-participants prompts non-participants to embrace similar behavioral shifts. Meanwhile, the behavior observed in participants provides a vital source of information. Their actions can inspire emulation, which is a great benchmark for positive change within the community. Those migrants feeling uncertain about how to embrace a more modern lifestyle in the city can learn from and imitate the behavior of CBO participants, which allows them to better adapt to urban life. The grassroots administrative officials of the HC community shared an anecdote that evidences the presence of such social learning mechanisms.

Mr. Li, aged 45, serves as the party branch secretary (the primary individual responsible for community affairs) of the HC community.

"At our residential area’s entrance, there is a bus service available for travel to the county seat at a mere cost of 1 yuan per ticket. Initially, no one utilized this service as migrants seemed apprehensive about using public transportation, potentially leading to isolation between the new town and county areas. Consequently, we approached two CBOs within our community and encouraged their members to familiarize themselves with riding buses. As people witnessed numerous individuals utilizing this mode of transport within our community, they gained confidence and eventually embraced it as well.” (26 August 2020)

CBOs play a crucial role in fostering community solidarity and cultivating a sense of belonging among residents. Apart from the previously discussed social capital, the capacity for community governance is another significant influencing factor for community solidarity. Active CBOs enhance the connections between grassroots administrative officials and residents, which improves the level of governance within these communities. Therefore, such communities are usually designated as demonstration sites by the government. Because of these advantages, migrants develop a collective identity, which promotes their social integration. Below is an interview conducted with one participant to confirm this sentiment.
Mr. Zhang, aged 48, was relocated to the HC community in April 2019 without any participation in the activities held by CBOs.

“Our community stands out as an exemplary model within this region. We have established neighborhood patrols that contribute to our overall safety. Furthermore, we are fortunate enough to witness the construction of several new fitness facilities exclusively available in our community compared to others... I consider myself extremely fortunate to be assigned to this exceptional community.” (24 August 2020)

5. Discussion

PAR has developed into the largest-ever resettlement program across China [16]. Although the project has improved the living conditions of residents in poverty-stricken areas, the social integration of migrants remains an outstanding issue for sustained poverty reduction. In this study, the framework of classical social integration theory is applied to thoroughly examine the status of social integration among PAR migrants from four perspectives: economic integration, neighborly interaction, behavior adaptation, and identity recognition. The community, as a geographical entity, has long been recognized as a crucial factor influencing the social integration of migrants [54]. Furthermore, limited attention has been paid to CBOs as a contributing factor within the community that facilitates the social integration of migrants [30]. Consistent with prior studies, the positive impact of CBOs on the social integration of passive migrants is validated in this research through questionnaires and in-depth interviews conducted with PAR migrants in T County, Southwest China.

5.1. The Evident Spillover Effect of CBOs on the Social Integration of Migrants

The existing research has confirmed the positive impact of CBOs on the social integration of its participants [33] and the potential benefits delivered to the community and its residents [40]. Based on this existing literature, our study emphasizes the necessity for a more systematic analysis of CBOs’ impact on social integration, involving both participants and non-participants within the geospatial community. It is validated that CBOs not only promote the social integration of participants but also have a spillover effect that extends to non-participants. As revealed by further qualitative studies, the mechanism of CBOs impacting social integration differed between the two groups. In contrast to the previous research focusing on how to empower CBO participants for increased political participation [55], our findings indicate that CBOs mainly influence the participants at a social level. For CBO participants, engagement in CBO activities enhances cooperation-based social interactions, fosters adherence to organizational norms, and improves self-efficacy. Ultimately, their social integration is promoted. In addition to the psychological level of social solidarity emphasized by previous studies [40], it is also confirmed in our study that CBOs contribute to the social integration of non-participants through the provision of opportunities for resource-sharing-based social interactions and social learning mechanisms. Notably, there may be some overlap between these mechanisms (e.g., community solidarity may also impact CBO participants). However, distinguishing between these mechanisms plays an essential role in fully understanding how CBOs facilitate the social integration of migrants.

5.2. Probability of CBOs Failing to Lift PAR Migrants out of Poverty

Consistent with prior research, our study also demonstrates the significant role of CBOs in the social integration of migrants, which contributes to their neighborly interactions, behavioral adaptations, and identity recognition [56]. Compared to previous qualitative analyses, our study is supported by the use of quantitative data. Our research findings are based on the existing literature. In previous studies, it is commonly argued that CBOs can expedite economic integration for migrants [57]. However, the significant impacts of CBOs on the economic integration of migrants are not observed in our study. Seemingly, CBOs are ineffective in supporting migrants to escape poverty. Social networks
and resource provision are considered two ways for CBOs to influence the economic integration of migrants. However, it is challenging to fulfill this role for the CBOs in PAR migrant communities. Although CBOs expand the social networks of PAR migrants, these networks tend to be highly homogeneous. As a result, it is difficult for them to access valuable employment information and improve their skills through social interaction. It is implied that the simple expansion of migrants’ social networks is insufficient to increase their employment opportunities [23]. This relates to the characteristics of community organizations in resettlement areas. Observations in the T County resettlement communities reveal that CBOs frequently prioritize activities such as volunteering and hobbies. Therefore, they encounter challenges in providing employment-related public services, including job mentoring and skills training. It also signifies the limited availability of employment opportunities in migrant destinations. Active migration is typically driven by job prospects, whereas passive migration requires seeking employment options after migration. Passive migrants tend to congregate in areas with few employment opportunities. Although CBOs contribute significantly to migrant social integration in various dimensions, their overall role is still undermined by their limited effectiveness in promoting economic integration.

6. Implications

According to some critics, large-scale passive migration poses a significant risk of maladaptation, which should be avoided [58]. With constant urban development and changes in the ecological environment, passive migration programs, including the top-down PAR program implemented by the Chinese government, have been accepted as a common adaptation strategy adopted by governments worldwide [40]. For example, the Indonesian government established centralized resettlement areas for the displaced following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami [42]. Discussion on promoting a sustainable social integration of passive migrants is more pertinent than criticizing mass resettlement. However, the existing studies focus mainly on the positive impact of formal follow-up support policies on the social integration of PAR migrants [29]. In comparison, this study emphasizes the promoting effect of informal community governance tools, especially CBOs, on the social integration of migrants. Therefore, our research provides valuable insights into the sustainable adaptation of passive migrants, including ecological migrants and disaster migrants in other countries.

According to our findings, the development of CBOs can be taken as a sustainable strategy for promoting social integration among passive migrants. Grassroots administrative officials ought to encourage migrants to join CBOs, participate in various activities organized by CBOs, and seek help from CBOs actively. However, a crucial question arises about how to promote the establishment and growth of CBOs effectively. In Chinese PAR resettlement communities, it is routine for grassroots administrative officials to take charge of initiating and overseeing the formation of CBOs. During the initial phase, grassroots administrative officials focus on identifying highly respected and motivated migrants within the community, encouraging them to establish various CBOs while providing necessary support. Then, grassroots administrative officials collaborate with these CBOs closely to improve their governance capabilities for communal well-being. Through the aforementioned experience, valuable insights can be gained into the concentrated resettlement communities accommodating passive migrants. When there is a lack of social capital within a community to establish CBOs independently, grassroots administrative officials can cultivate such organizations by establishing connections with key individuals. Notably, the CBOs driven by volunteerism and personal interests play a limited role in facilitating the economic integration of migrants. Therefore, resettlement communities must rely on CBOs to implement sustainable programs for greater migration capacity, which supports marginalized migrants to escape poverty and break the cycle of inter-generational poverty. For instance, CBOs can provide essential guidance on how to enhance labor skills, manage assets effectively, and ensure access to education for their children.
As suggested by the limited role of CBOs in promoting the integration of migrants, PAR migrants have access to quite limited employment opportunities. To minimize the negative impact of resettlement, more attention should be paid to the post-resettlement support mechanisms aimed at supporting PAR communities, with a transformation from the current short-term support oriented towards survival to the more targeted long-term support oriented towards sustainable development. For example, it is necessary to cultivate the employability of migrants by combining vocational training and further education with a tailored post-relocation industry.

7. Limitation and Future Research

Despite the above findings, this study remains subject to some limitations that may be enlightening for future research. Firstly, since social integration is a long-term two-way process of mutual accommodation, it is necessary to collect and analyze the longitudinal household data combining both PAR migrants and host societies in future research. The current sample size is small, and selection bias may arise from the process of estimating the results. Secondly, due to such a limited sample size, it is difficult to categorize CBOs, and there may be variations in the impact of various CBOs on the social integration of migrants. There are different standards that apply to classification, such as the relationship between CBOs and grassroots administrative officials, the main activities of organizations, etc. An important gap to fill in future research is to analyze the influence of different types of CBOs on the social integration of migrants. Finally, it is possibly worthwhile to further discuss and examine our measurement of the dependent variables. Also, a multidisciplinary approach should be taken to fully understand those different dimensions in a future study. Despite these limitations, this study still contributes an additional perspective to the ongoing debates around the benefits and costs of the Poverty Alleviation Resettlement plan in China. Further studies are required to fully comprehend the process of social integration among PAR migrants and the mechanism of CBOs impacting social integration.

8. Conclusions

This study emphasizes the significance of CBOs in contributing to the sustainable development of passive migration. In conclusion, the participants in CBOs and non-participants within the same community show a higher level of neighborly interaction, behavior adaptation, and identity recognition. However, there is no significant advantage found in their economic integration. The mechanisms of CBOs influencing the social integration of migrants vary between participants and non-participants. There are three ways in which those migrants participating in CBOs show an increase in social integration: cooperation-based social interaction, adherence to organizational norms, and enhanced self-efficacy. Differently, the social integration of non-participants of CBOs within the same community results from such mechanisms as service delivery-based social interaction, social learning, and community solidarity. Through a deeper understanding of the role and mechanisms of CBOs in supporting the integration of migrants into society, reference is provided for grassroots administrative officials in various countries to enforce more effective community plans on sustainable migration development.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, C.Y. and H.X.; Methodology, C.Y. and H.X.; Formal Analysis, C.Y. and H.X.; Investigation, C.Y. and H.X.; Resources, C.Y. and H.X.; Writing—Original Draft Preparation, C.Y. and H.X.; Writing—Review and Editing, C.Y. and H.X.; Funding Acquisition, C.Y. and H.X. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.
Data Availability Statement: Data are available upon request due to privacy restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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