Author’s response to reviews

Title: A feminist phenomenology on the emotional labor and morality of live-in migrant care workers caring for older people in the community

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dr. Tovah Honor Aronin
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Dr. Vico Chiang
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Dear Prof. Aronin,

Revision and Re-submission of Manuscript BGTC-D-19-00171

Thank you very much for the opportunity for us to revise the manuscript.

The reviewers provided very useful comments for us to improve the manuscript. Please kindly find our point-by-point responses to the comments in the following content. Revised contents are highlighted in yellow in the manuscript resubmitted.

Best Regards,
Vico Chiang
Response to Reviewer 1’s comments

1) Provide more knowledge to contextualize the phenomenon of MCWs:
The types of duties and the problems faced by live-in MCWs were supplemented in the background. (p.4-5)

2) Elaborate more on the 9% abuse of older person:
The possible reasons particularly contributing to the abuse were supplemented. (p.4-5)

3) Be careful about the use of concepts: ‘older person’, ‘older people’, and ‘the aged’:
The terms were aligned to be older people. (p.5, 6, & 18)

4) Clarification on the sentence “were drawn from an analysis of secondary data”:
The sentence was a typo and it was corrected as “were drawn on a secondary analysis of the data from a primary study by the first author”. (p. 7, paragraph 1)

5) State the purpose of the follow-up interview and clarify the interview guide for both the first and second interview:
Purpose and examples of interview questions were supplemented in the section of data collection. (p.8)

6) Social desirability bias might have played a role in the interview situation. Are there any negative experiences or feelings for older persons, or any information talk about the abuse mentioned in the introduction?
An example of data from participant Audrey showing negative experiences towards older persons, yet MCWs still suppressed their expression of emotions, was supplemented under the theme “Caregiving regulated by emotions and its expressions as morally demanded by a socio-culturally oppressive work relationship”. (p. 11)

7) Provide more information in the analysis section and provide citation and information to the type of thematic analysis:
The recurrent processes of the thematic analysis were described and further supplemented with citations. (p. 9)

8) The information about the two weeks period should be described in the background:
The information of two week period was provided in the background. (p. 5)

9) Themes are interesting and would like to know more, although under the limited spaces in scientific journal:
An example of data from participant Audrey showing negative experiences towards older persons, yet MCWs still suppressed their expression of emotions was supplemented under the theme “Caregiving regulated by emotions and its expressions as morally demanded by a socio-culturally oppressive work relationship”. The research team deems that adding this piece of information can further maximize the variations of experiences while balancing the readability of the manuscript. (p. 11)

10) Lack of discussion of strengths and limitations in relation to quality criteria:
The discussion on strengths were further strengthened by linking the discussion to credibility, confirmability and transferability. (p. 16)
A sub-section of limitations was added. (p. 17)

11) The last sentence about enactment of goodness is a bit “indigestible”: The last sentence is revised as “Through the lens of moral economy, the feminist phenomenological findings of moral habitus suggest that bodily controlled emotional labor is, in fact, an embodied skill and knowledge for MCWs to interact morally with older people, which impacts on their quality of home care.” (p. 18)

Response to Reviewer 2’s comments

1) What is the sampling frame and response rate? Was there any difference between the profiles of the respondents compared to non-respondents? This is a qualitative study that we purposively recruited those live-in MCWs who can articulate their experiences to our study. Therefore, we further explicated the strategy of purposive sampling in this study (p.22, reference 42), and the inclusion and exclusion criteria in the section of participants. (p. 7, paragraph 2)

Furthermore, we purposively maximized the variations of participants by recruiting MCWs with 2-15 years of experiences. Differences between those refused to participate vs those agreed to participate were supplemented. The number of participants refused to participate was also supplemented. (p. 9, last paragraph, to p.10)

2) There were Filipinos and Indonesians respondents only. Are they representative of the MCWs in Hong Kong? As mentioned in the section of participants and sampling, 98% of MCWs in Hong Kong were Filipinos and Indonesian (p. 7, paragraph 2).

3) Provide more representative interview questions that were used to elicit responses about emotional labour: The questions were supplemented with more information (p. 8). Meanwhile, it was an unstructured interview which was inductive in nature. This questioning technique is appropriate to explore an understudied phenomenon, such as emotional labour in MCWs.

4) With regard to subtheme 1, would it not be more appropriate to say it is socio-culturally rather than morally demanded by an oppressive work relationship? The research team asserted that the oppressive working relationship is socio-culturally constructed in which regulating emotions become morally demanded. In order to explicit the stance, oppressive relationship was revised as socio-culturally oppressive relationship. [p. 11, see also the abstract, p.10, 12, 16 (last sentence), & 17 (last paragraph)]

5) The findings do not quite support the need to develop culturally appropriate interventions for MCWs. The main theme and subthemes seem have arisen more as a result of the asymmetry of power between employers and MCWs rather than MCWs having to adapt to working in a foreign culture. Would not these findings have been similar if the care workers were local Chinese? As explicated in the findings and discussion (p.14, 15, 16 & 18), the asymmetry of power was socio-culturally constructed in which MCWs have to be sensitive to the socio-cultural construction in order to demonstrate emotions appropriately in the socio-cultural oppressive relationship. Therefore, acculturation intervention is suggested.
For the proposition of having the same findings on local Chinese care workers, the research team does not have any hints to answer this question which is out of the scope of this study. The target participants were migrants, which were inherently culturally different with locals. This is the background, substantiated by the findings of this study, that MCWs are faced with acculturation needs. Furthermore, our findings were unable to be transferred to a different population group.