

Indonesian migrant live-in care workers in rural Taiwan: Making friendships, kinships, and creating social capital overseas



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ABSTRACT

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Taiwan serves as a main destination for Indonesian females seeking work as migrant live-in care workers. However, being a migrant worker requires efforts to face challenges and difficulties overseas to achieve family well-being. One of them is utilizing social capital. Studies on social capital among migrants tend to be unisex, with a limited focus on women as the main actors. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how these women create and utilize their social capital to fulfill their needs. This paper examines the form of social capital of Indonesian migrant live-in care workers (LCWs) in Taiwan, highlighting their unique characteristics, given the specific nature of their job roles. Using a phenomenological approach, the study involves in-depth research and direct data collection. Data analysis follows a structured process including data reduction, display, verification, and conclusion. This essay finds a new structure in social capital and migration by positioning women as the main actors. It shows that LCWs primarily rely on bonding social capital, forming strong, exclusive friendships often based on geographical proximity, characterized by long-distance and close-distance patterns. Participation in social groups such as *pengajian* does not enhance LCWs' social capital, resulting in weak ties within bridging social capital. Additionally, LCWs tend to develop stronger relations with their employers, enabling them to access various resources through linking social capital, which differs from bonding and bridging social capital. This essay concludes that LCWs in Taiwan predominantly utilize bonding and linking social capital to achieve their migration expectations.

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1. Introduction

Research on social capital and migrants often focuses on unisex, with few studies centering on women as migration actors. However, several studies on social capital and female migrants highlight its significant role for them. For example, [Giusta & Kambhampati \(2006\)](#) emphasized how social capital enables women to settle in new environments. [Anggaunitakiranantika \(2021\)](#) further highlighted the importance of social capital for Indonesian female migrant workers, as it facilitates cooperation and access to resources to meet their needs. In the context of this essay, Female Migrant Workers refer specifically to Indonesian Migrant Live-in Care Workers (LCWs), who provide care for the sick, elderly, and people with disabilities in households ([Liang, 2021](#)). Apart from direct healthcare, they also perform household chores and care for children. LCWs face unique difficulties



and challenges compared to migrant workers in other sectors, which may influence their social capital patterns and survival strategies. Live-in care workers in Taiwan lack protection under migrant worker regulations, including those concerning minimum wages, holidays, and overtime working hours (Liang, 2014). Furthermore, they can work 24 hours a day due to private contracts (agencies) that set working conditions without government oversight (Liang, 2021). Therefore, focusing on LCWs as the primary actors offers a distinct perspective on social capital and migrant workers, particularly from a gender standpoint.

The population of Indonesian LCWs in Taiwan accounts for 68.8% (169,016 individuals) of all Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan (Ministry of Labor Republic of China (Taiwan), 2022). This substantial population suggests the potential for significant social capital among Indonesian LCWs, enabling the development of specialized networks or activities. The ability to harness social capital in Taiwan is crucial for LCWs future success in enhancing the well-being of their families back home (family financial stability and future investment). Success, in this context, refers to their capacity to overcome challenges in Taiwan and ensure a decent livelihood for themselves and their families in Indonesia. Social capital serves as a bridge that enables individuals to access opportunities and resources facilitated through social relationships within and between groups. These social connections are typically built on similarities in gender, ethnicity, culture, kinship, and trust, fostering mutual reliance (Hlatshwayo & Wotela, 2018). Despite the unique challenges faced by LCWs in Taiwan, such as working around the clock without a day off, they still manage to gather in public areas on weekends, showcasing their efforts to establish social connections.

This essay focuses on Indonesian migrant live-in care workers (LCWs) residing in rural areas of Taiwan, specifically in Hualien County, where there are few public areas and a limited variety of LCWs groups. This research posits that the characteristics of social capital among LCWs in rural areas differ from those in major cities in Taiwan, which are the main hubs for LCW distribution. The population of LCWs in rural areas is not as large as in the major cities of Taiwan. Putnam (1995) and Sørensen (2016) suggest that urban areas generally have weaker social connections compared to rural areas. They argue that urban areas often experience more pronounced group differences based on ethnicity or regional background, whereas rural areas tend to have strong, intimate social bonds, often rooted in kinship. The smaller size population of LCWs, combined with the characteristics of household employment, limit social interaction among LCWs. Consequently, rural areas often depend on personal relationships to access resources.

Considering the social capital concept involves understanding it as the tangible and potential assets present in social relationships, manifested through mutual recognition and the establishment of trust for shared objectives (Bourdieu, 1986; Field, 2003). This facilitates individuals and groups in efficiently accessing additional resources like human and financial capital. Drawing from Woolcock & Narayan (2000), Cote & Healy (2001), and Claridge (2018), social capital is categorized into three types: bonding, bridging, and linking. These types reflect how individual attributes and their connections enhance problem-solving capabilities. Key elements in social capital include trust. Trust increases when individuals trust each other, network with one another, and are part of institutions that uphold honest behavior, thereby enhancing the realization of migration expectations. It is important to know how LCWs form their social capital to achieve their migration expectations (family well-being). Therefore, a research question can be formulated as follows:

Q: What are the characteristics of social capital possessed by Indonesian migrant live-in care workers (LCWs) in rural Taiwan?

This essay aims to investigate the characteristics of the form of Indonesian migrant live-in care workers' social capital in Taiwan because they have different job characteristics than other migrant workers. This essay elucidates the types of social capital among LCWs and how they obtain and develop it as a form of effort in succession to overcome challenges and improve their well-being. These social relationships form due to shared problems, leading to a desire to assist each other.

2. Method

This essay employed a phenomenological study and used an interactive approach, which involved in-depth research with direct data collection techniques from individuals in their natural environments. Phenomenology focuses on the meaning that emerges from human experience. Additionally, the essay used previous research or theory as a reference for interpreting qualitative data. Data collection

involved conducting in-depth interviews with 30 Indonesian Migrant Live-in Care Workers (LCWs) at locations such as restaurants, minimarkets, or their employers' residences in Hualien County, Taiwan. On average, each interview lasted 1 hour and 10 minutes. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian and sometimes Javanese, depending on the informant's background. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, with translations into English. Triangulation was utilized to validate the data, ensuring credibility and minimizing bias by cross-checking information obtained from research subjects at different times and places (Anggaunitakiranantika, 2021). This study employed thematic analysis to identify the types of social capital utilized by Indonesian migrant live-in care workers, in line with the research questions. Consequently, thematic analysis serves as the framework for addressing research questions. According to Figgou & Pavlopoulos (2015), thematic analysis is a method used to analyze data by identifying patterns or themes within the collected data.

In the process of collecting data, participants in the research had to meet several specific criteria: (1) They were Indonesian female migrant workers employed as live-in care workers, (2) They were female migrant workers with family responsibilities in their hometown, and (3) They were female migrant workers who had completed at least one work contract lasting three years. The in-depth interviews aimed to explore their migration experiences, difficulties, and challenges faced, as well as their social capital, such as friendships or community relationships. Informants were recruited using snowball sampling, with the help of social networks involving both informants and researchers, based on the predetermined criteria. The majority of informants were from East Java, West Java, Lampung, and Central Java. In the data collection process, research participants must meet several predetermined criteria, namely (1) Informants are Indonesian female migrant workers who work as live-in care workers, (2) Informants are female migrant workers who have family responsibilities in their hometown, (3) Informants are female migrant workers who have served at least one work contract (3 years). In-depth interviews will explore the migration process, difficulties/challenges, and social capital such as friendships or community relationships. Recruitment of informants used snowball sampling, with the assistance of social networks of informants and researchers based on predetermined criteria. The majority of informants come from East Java, West Java, Lampung, and Central Java. Drawing from interviews with 30 Indonesian migrant live-in care workers, this essay will address the issue in various stages. It will begin by discussing the Form of Social Capital of LCWs, followed by an examination of the Paradox of Friendship: Moral Hazard among LCWs. The essay will then delve into the issue of Language Barriers to Access Linking Social Capital, before concluding with an analysis of the Patterns of Social Capital of Indonesian LCWs.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Investigating the form of social capital among Indonesian Migrant Live-in Care Workers (LCWs) in Taiwan

In the context of social capital among LCWs, individuals entering the field, particularly newcomers or those lacking family ties, theoretically stand to gain significantly from the social connections established with experienced migrants. According to Curran & Rivero-Fuentes (2003) and Bankston (2014), these relationships facilitate the discovery and access of opportunities. Viewing this through a social capital lens, addressing issues among fellow migrant workers, as an expression of solidarity, can be seen as a critical asset for survival. Hoang (2016) explains that migrant networks serve as the core of migrant workers' social lives, offering both material and social support. The ability to utilize this support for economic purposes depends on social factors like gender, ethnicity, and sexuality.

Social capital refers to the creation of beneficial connections with others, which can be leveraged to improve one's well-being (Putnam, 2001; Portes, 1998). The complex challenges faced by LCWs make adaptation to their work environment difficult, hindering their ability to survive abroad and fulfill their migration goals, particularly in terms of enhancing their well-being. For LCWs, well-being is closely tied to the well-being of their families, encompassing financial stability and future prospects. Given the nature of LCW work, building strong social bonds among them should help in achieving their migration goals. This study identified unique patterns and characteristics of social capital among LCWs. Shared socio-economic backgrounds and motivation foster a sense of mutual support among LCWs, which is particularly crucial for Indonesian LCWs, especially newcomers, those without family connections, or prior experience living abroad (Hasanah, 2015). The formation of social bonds is influenced by factors such as ethnicity, culture, nationality, and language (Hlatshwayo & Wotela, 2018). For LCWs in Hualien, Taiwan, finding companions who share similar circumstances and

understand their challenges is highly valued. Many LCWs lack social ties or family members in their host country, often feeling isolated in their struggles. In interviews with one of the informants, Miss Hy (initial name, 45 years old), an LCW from East Java, she highlighted the importance of having a friend in their daily lives as LCWs. This underscored the significance and value of companionship among LCWs working overseas.

... For me, friends are a place to share heart-to-heart; we can support and help each other, and because we are from Indonesia, we don't feel like we are abroad.

In rural areas, the social relations formed by LCWs were typically rooted in nationality rather than ethnic or regional backgrounds. This was attributed to the characteristics of LCWs' work, which restricted their mobility and opportunities for social interaction. An LCW from Central Java, Miss St (initial name, 39 years old), highlighted this aspect during an interview about social relations among LCWs.

... when you meet an Indonesian friend, it's a joy, really feels good. It's like meeting family, you know. If they're older, we treat them like an older sibling, and if they're younger, we see them as a younger sibling. When we meet, it just brings joy, like family. Let's eat together, come on. It's like, as long as we're both Indonesians, doesn't really matter where they're from, you know.

The degree of social mobility and the concentration of LCWs in a specific area impact the formation of social capital patterns. In major cities with a significant LCW presence, there is likely to be diversity among groups based on ethnicity or regional background. In contrast, LCWs in rural areas have fewer options for building social networks, resulting in the development of social relationships primarily based on nationality, ultimately contributing to the formation of social capital among LCWs. The social relationships that form provide hope that these connections will lead to information exchange and collaborative problem-solving. As a result, LCWs will develop social capital through their interactions and activities with one another (Madhavan & Landau, 2011; Hasanah, 2015).

3.2 The Formation of Bonding Social Capital

Social capital manifests in various forms that migrant workers can potentially utilize. One such form that LCWs may develop is known as bonding social capital. This type of social capital is based on strong trust, particularly among individuals who are familiar with each other, and it often leads to positive outcomes (Svendsen & Gunnar, 2009). Bonding social capital is exemplified by exclusive friendships, which typically form among individuals with similar characteristics, goals, and backgrounds (Claridge, 2018). Miss Hr (initial name, 41 years old), an LCW from East Java with 15 years of experience in Taiwan, recounted her first encounter with a friend in Taiwan. She actively nurtured social relationships with other LCWs whenever possible.

... I usually meet my first friend around the neighborhood, like taking *A-Kong* [grandpa] for a stroll and bumping into "*Mbak A*", then introducing ourselves, exchanging numbers, and walking together when taking care of the elderly, gained more friends at the hospital, asked if they're from Indonesia, exchanged phone numbers. Sometimes during medical check-ups, we usually go together or when we visit "*Toko Indo*" [Indonesian store], there are many there. In the park, it's already a routine, we stroll there every day, meet there every day, chat there. We regularly meet in the morning, you know, every morning pushing *A-Kong's* wheelchair for a walk, every day, morning and evening. Apart from that, we rarely meet outside of that ...

According to Claridge (2018) the development of bonding social capital can be categorized into two types: location-based and association-based. Location-based bonding occurs when there are connections formed within a specific area, such as the work placement of LCWs. This form of bonding is established through regular interactions over a prolonged period, characterized by exclusivity and a focus on internal relationships. It allows LCWs to access opportunities, information, and support. Association-based bonding occurs within a group where members share commonalities in identity, understanding, and a sense of belonging. According to Claridge (2018), the strength of social capital ties is not determined by the size of the group, as strong relations can develop within smaller units within a larger group. This essay revealed that LCWs established social relationships with their peers in locations near their employer's residence (such as parks), hospitals, or Indonesian stores, often leading to the exchange of contact information. Miss St (initial name), elaborated on the interactions among LCWs.

... because we rarely meet, we communicate through phones. When someone changes their place of work, communication becomes less frequent, because, you know, when you move, you have different friends again [...] not forgotten, but usually more focused on closer friends [in location]. Because our free time is also limited, not freely chat on the phone. In the past, if someone cooked, we'd have a meal in the park while taking care of the patient

Exclusive friendships are the most significant form of bonding among LCWs, characterized by relations, affection, and reciprocal actions. Reciprocity within these friendships involves a mutual exchange of giving and receiving, anticipating future needs. Black & Hughes (2010) suggest that social relationships with strong reciprocity demonstrate concern for each other's interests based on mutual trust. However, Putnam (2001) notes that not all social relationships are positive, as bonds based on homophily can lead to animosity. In friendships, not everyone can guarantee supportive reciprocity. This essay revealed that friendships among LCWs, motivated by material concerns, emerged as a potential solution to address the financial challenges that were the main focus for LCWs in their hometowns. Miss Rs (initial name, 41 years old), an LCW from Central Java shared her experiences regarding friendships among LCWs.

... well, I only exchange contacts and get to know friends around here [home]. If it's outside of that, like when I'm out and about, it's just a casual acquaintance, no need to exchange WhatsApp numbers. I'm not interested, too much hassle, and sometimes it leads to borrowing money. In short, not into having too many friends ...

Hence, it can be inferred that LCWs in rural Taiwan, typically form bonding relationships centered on their workplace. The limitations of time and space greatly affect the depth of interactions and communication among them. These social bonds are easily forged due to their shared destinies or experiences as migrant workers. However, friendships among LCWs are intricate, balancing camaraderie in their shared struggles with the potential for harm.

3.3 The Formation of Bridging Social Capital: LCWs Networks

A potential type of social capital that can be developed is bridging social capital. Unlike "bonding" social capital, which LCWs often form based on their location, "bridging" social capital aims to connect different locations within a single framework, such as a community. In such communities, individuals typically share common interests but may have diverse identities (Haldane et al., 2019). Claridge (2018) suggests that engaging with new people on a broader scale presents an opportunity to acquire "bridging" social capital. This opportunity may arise from attending events or joining associations such as migrant workers' groups, ethnic groups, religious groups, or other social organizations. In the case of this study, involves LCWs' participation in *pengajian* (a religious study group) at a mosque, where the community comprises individuals with diverse backgrounds (general — workers/students; male/female; industry/household workers).

This essay found that in rural areas, LCWs encountered challenges related to limited social mobility and community access. The *pengajian* activity, which typically occurred at night, along with a lack of alternative communities and restricted travel due to work conditions, hindered LCWs' ability to develop extensive networks (bridging) despite establishing close relationships (bonding). LCWs could potentially have enhanced their bridging social capital if they had been located near community centers, such as mosques, or if they had had greater mobility options, such as flexible working hours, access to private vehicles (such as motorbikes or electric bicycles), and employer permits. In essence, "bridging" social capital has the potential to provide advantages such as enhanced information gathering, resource access, and identification of new opportunities through interactions with a diverse range of individuals (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Paxton, 2002). Additionally, Claridge (2018) highlights that bridging social capital facilitates the sharing and exchange of information among different groups, fostering agreements between groups with diverse interests. However, this essay showed that for LCWs in rural areas, the benefits of bridging social capital were limited. This was because they tended to have homogeneous connections, as emphasized by Miss Hr (initial name),

... Well, I used to be active in *yasinan* [religious activities: reading the Koran — Moslem culture from Nahdathul Ulama/the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia] at the mosque, more on the spiritual side. But in terms of the group, it didn't really have much benefit, just some feasting. The meals were the initiative of the "*jama'ah*" [mosque members]. Sometimes they brought ingredients to cook at the mosque and we'd eat there.

In the city, there are two mosques with different *jama'ah*, but you can switch mosques. Plus, my house is far away, so I wasn't actively involved. But the community at the mosque is pretty much the same people, not many in Hualien. They're also my customers. My contacts spread from friend to friend. And here, people are neutral, no gathering based on regions; everyone's together because there aren't many people. They're from East Java, West Java, and Central Java. It's different from the lower regions like Kaohsiung and nearby areas; there, you have groups from Banyuwangi, groups from Lampung, quite a lot ...

Additionally, most LCWs did not participate in *pengajian*. One of the informants, Mrs. Di (initial name, 47 years old), from East Java, explained the reason why she did not take part in *pengajian*.

... *Pengajian*, I can't joint. *A-Ma* [grandma] doesn't allow me to go out at night. Actually, I want to participate in the *yasinan* [religious activities: reading the Koran — Moslem culture from Nahdathul Ulama/the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia] at the mosque. But even if I have a day off, I must be home by 6:00 PM. In the morning, like on Eid prayer, I'm allowed to go out, so I attend at the mosque ...

However, there is an opportunity for LCWs to develop bridging social capital through social media platforms like WhatsApp Groups or Line. Despite this potential, most LCWs, as revealed in in-depth interviews with all informants, were not actively utilizing social media to broaden their social circles. One informant had previously participated in online communities but chose not to continue. Miss Wk (initial name, 42 years old), an LCW from Central Java shared her experiences regarding her involvement in social media.

... Someone invited me before, but it felt complicated, there were requirements, payments, and all that. It was a *pengajian* group using Line, but it seemed cumbersome, so I excused myself. I'm not really into community activities, I just don't want to join. The most interaction I have with people is during Eid prayer. In my free time, I usually watch YouTube, *pengajian*, or sermons ...

In rural areas, there is not much variety in groups, with only one community, the *pengajian*, resulting in homogenous networking. Additionally, the limited mobility of LCWs restricts their access to the *pengajian*, as activities are conducted at night. Consequently, most LCWs in rural areas do not participate in the *pengajian*, except for those living near the mosque. Nonetheless, some LCWs can join through online media, although they do not actively use *the pengajian* to expand their networks.

3.4 Formation of Social Capital Linking: Making Kinship with Employer

Another form of social capital for LCWs is linking social capital. Workers in Taiwan's household sector typically come from diverse racial, cultural, and national backgrounds. This diversity can lead to both positive and negative social relationships. In the case of LCWs, power relations and the intimate, isolated characteristic of their work make them highly reliant on their relationships with employers, who often adopt a paternalistic approach. Hence, the interaction between LCWs and their employers has the potential to generate linking social capital. This type of social capital involves relationships with individuals who have the authority to access various resources, incorporating shared cultural values and enduring trust bonds (Stone & Hughes, 2002; Schneider, 2009). For LCWs, employers can provide knowledge, skills, security, and life assurance, enhancing the value of their work. According to Claridge (2018), linking social capital embodies norms of respect and mutual trust between individuals interacting across different power levels or social positions. Therefore, LCWs and their employers need time to establish a trustworthy relationship within the context of power dynamics. This concept is crucial for LCWs because they cannot predict whom they will work with or the conditions of their work. A favorable working environment and the employer's characteristics largely determine their experiences. Consequently, LCWs' ability to adapt to their employers' characteristics is essential for acquiring linking social capital. During an interview about maintaining a positive relationship with her employer, one informant, Miss Hr (initial name), emphasized the significance of adjusting to the employer's traits.

... Well, we have to know what kind of employer we have; that's important. Every family has different issues and rules, so we must be able to adapt and win their hearts. We also have to be obedient since we're working here. My employer sees me like a sibling, so we have to talk with them often. This way, the employer also knows if I have any problems [...] The employer can understand, so they often provide solutions. Because we consider

each other as family, maybe because the employer sees that I'm obedient and do a good job. Once we're close to the employer [...] we also have to build trust with them ...

Building linking social capital hinges on the trust developed between employers and LCWs. However, establishing this trust is a complex process. It requires a considerable amount of time as it involves bridging social gaps and power differentials. LCWs need to make a favorable impression on their employers to develop linking social capital. In essence, LCWs must earn their employer's trust to demonstrate their worthiness. Miss Si (initial name, 47 years old), an LCW with 8 years of experience in Taiwan, elaborated on the suggested behavior of LCWs towards their employers.

... Well, bro, the key to work is being honest; we have to be loyal, meaning we understand what makes the employer happy. Besides that, we work genuinely, with sincerity, and *Inshaallah* [God willing], it will go well. You see, some people work just for money, without putting their heart into it. Working with heart is like this: if *A-Ma* is not feeling well or feeling sad, we have to talk, communicate. So, *A-Ma* feels happy, not just changing diapers. If we do our job well, the employer will appreciate it, and whatever we ask for will be granted. The principle is to show our skills. And we have to recognize the employer's character because not everyone can be communicated with, so observe first. Later, our relationship with the employer will be like family ...

The majority of LCWs are capable of working wholeheartedly and demonstrating loyalty to their employers. This loyalty fosters a deep trust between LCWs and employers, transforming the typical power dynamic in domestic work into relation based on a sense of family. Employers begin to view LCWs not just as caregivers but as integral parts of their families. Miss Rh (initial name, 45 years old), an LCW with 8 years of experience in Taiwan, expressed these sentiments during an interview, discussing the characteristics of Taiwanese people.

... That's because I maintain a good relationship with my employer, I serve my employer, I pay attention to everything. Even *A-Ma* [grandmother] said that if *A-Kong* [grandfather] passed away, I don't need to worry, I can still work here, because if I'm not here, how about their children and daughters-in-law, who will help them? Taiwanese people, when they are comfortable with us, it's like having a sibling. Maybe the employer values my work because I work sincerely and never resist. Because they once told their friend that I take care of everything, never picky about work. I sometimes wash 4-5 cars belonging to the employer, I can even paint the walls, where can you find a maid like me ...[laughs]...

Most of the informants noted that Taiwanese employers exhibit more compassionate traits compared to employers from other countries. When Taiwanese employers feel compatible with an LCW's personality, a familial relationship tends to develop, with employers considering LCWs as part of their family. However, the unpredictability of circumstances and the need to adapt to employers' characteristics present challenges. Overcoming challenges is a key factor in individuals' potential for success in achieving their goals. For instance, in Javanese culture, caring for parents is not just a duty but also a domestic responsibility for women. Therefore, when LCWs are assigned tasks outside their contract, they approach them with sincerity, as such responsibilities are ingrained in their cultural and daily practices. LCWs in Taiwan are contracted to care for the elderly, yet they go above and beyond, treating the elderly as if they were their own parents. They willingly undertake additional household chores such as cleaning and cooking, distinguishing them from domestic workers of other nationalities. This loyalty has the potential to transform social dynamics, originally based on power relations, into relations based on a sense of family or what is called "making kinship". Developing these family-like connections enables LCWs to build "linking" social capital with their employers, granting them access to opportunities and resources.

3.5 The Pattern of Indonesian Migrant Live-in Care Workers (LCWs) Social Capital

The concept of social capital is formed through an individual's relationships with others, enabling them to leverage these connections to improve their well-being (Coleman, 1998; Putnam, 2001; Portes, 1998). Social capital is understood as both an existing and potential resource linked to networks and institutional relationships founded on mutual trust and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986). Svendsen & Gunnar (2009) explains that for migrants or immigrants, the formation of social capital can be influenced by the locality of their networks, their work locations, and the types of jobs they hold. Social capital is categorized into three types: bonding, bridging, and linking (Claridge, 2018).

This essay discovered a unique pattern of LCWs' social capital, shaped by the specific characteristics of their job, suggesting that the development of their social capital was less flexible compared to other types of migrant workers. "Patterns" in this context refer to the recurring and observable structures of LCWs' social relationships. By identifying these patterns, we can better understand the strategies MLCWs employ to build and sustain social capital and how these strategies influence their overall well-being and adaptation in the host country. These patterns offer a comprehensive view of the social dynamics at play among MLCWs in rural areas of Taiwan.

By identifying these patterns, we can better understand the characteristics LCWs use to build and sustain social capital, which influences their overall well-being and adaptation in the host country. These patterns offer a comprehensive view of the social dynamics at play among LCWs in rural areas of Taiwan. The structural factors influencing LCWs' social capital can be categorized into three groups: trust, social relations, and social norms. Social relations involve similarities in job types and proximity of work locations, which facilitate the development of social connections. The potential for moral hazard within "bonding" among LCWs impacts their friendship dynamics, reducing trust bonds. Despite this, LCWs generally form location-based bonding social capital through friendships and small circles, providing access to resources. Through thematic analysis, this study identified a distinctive pattern of bonding social capital among rural LCWs.

Pattern of Bonding: Exclusive Friendship

While 'bonding' social capital generally offers benefits and problem-solving opportunities, this essay discovered that LCWs, particularly in rural areas, prefer forming exclusive friendships in small, tight-knit units rather than seeking broad, extensive friendships. The essay indicates that LCWs are highly selective in choosing close or exclusive friends. This is exemplified by the experiences shared by Miss Rh (initial name) regarding her approach to forming friendships.

... For me, I don't need many friends, just three or four at most. What's the point of having many friends if they only harm us? Friends should benefit us, mutually beneficial, we should make good use of each other here. That's just my personal opinion ...

Furthermore, Miss Rh said,

... I don't know, I'm too lazy to have many friends if they're not beneficial. When I was in trouble, no one ever helped me, I've even been cheated by a friend, around NT\$ 51,000 ...

LCWs exhibit a highly selective pattern of friendship, which serves as a precaution against potential trust abuse or improper reciprocity. To mitigate these risks, LCWs limit their social circles and form particularly small, tight-knit units, rather than having numerous but potentially harmful friendships. While this approach may limit their access to opportunities and resources that could benefit them overseas, it provides a safe and reliable friendship pattern for LCWs in rural areas.

Pattern of Bridging: Weak Ties in Networks

Besides facing limited social mobility, LCWs find it challenging to access bridging social capital due to the potential for moral hazard, which makes them hesitant to cultivate such relationships. Those LCWs who engage in community activities, such as religious studies like *pengajian*, tend to avoid forming close friendships within the community. While participating in these activities allows LCWs to share joy, gain knowledge, and interact with peers, they do not typically use these settings for forming deep, personal friendships or sharing private issues. Some informants, including Miss Ros (initial name, 46 years old), an LCW from Lampung, who participate in *pengajian* activities mentioned that social interactions within these groups are mainly limited to spiritual matters.

... Being part of a community definitely has its benefits, for me it's more about having more interactions with friends in Indonesia. Then, eating together, sharing about everyday work. But one thing about being in a community, when people gather, there will always be gossip. We have to be careful with that, we have to watch our mouths. Don't let ourselves get slapped because of gossiping ...[laughs] ...

Furthermore, Miss Ros said,

... For me, I just come to 'say hello', just small talk, so the relationship remains good. I'm also not too active, before I only attended yasinan [one of the Islamic traditions — read

Qoran) when *A-Ma* [grandma] was still healthy. Basically, we avoid getting too close. We already know what it's like to live with people ...

This essay observes that bridging social capital among LCWs in rural areas is characterized by weak ties that are often not further developed. This study found the potential for gossiping behavior to emerge in the recitation community which is the reason why MLCWs are reluctant to stay long in these forums. This was also revealed by Miss. Ngs (initial name), when interviewed regarding the benefits of taking part in *pengajian*.

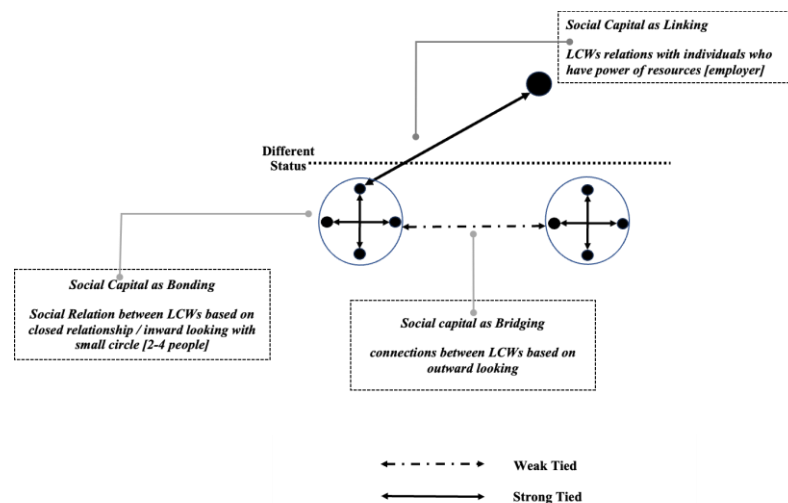
... The benefits are just for fun, hanging out with friends, making new friends, gaining insights, nothing else. It's different for men and women when they gather. Women do a lot of *nggibah* [gossiping] ...[laughs]... That's what I've experienced. Now, I just focus on work, there's no benefit in socializing. I've had a lot of life experiences in Taiwan, so now I know, I'm too lazy to look for friends. Back then, I used to meet people on the street, at the park, in the market, or at Toko Indo ...

Weak ties in bridging social capital result in the lack of implementation of *gotong-royong* or collective action in problem-solving among LCWs using their networks. Most LCWs view *pengajian* merely as a means to fulfill their religious needs. The potential for gossiping behavior during gatherings discourages LCWs from expanding their networks. Collective action within the community is limited to operational needs, such as sharing food, cooking together, and communal meals during religious study group activity.

Pattern of Linking: Strong Ties (a half-family)

Through in-depth interviews, this essay also discovered that LCWs tend to prioritize strengthening bonds with their employers over forming friendships abroad. This indicates that linking social capital is the most viable option for LCWs working overseas. The trust established between LCWs and their employers facilitates access to various resources and provides more secure relationships compared to bonding and bridging. Miss Tk (initial name, 45 years old), an LCW from Central Java, highlighted this aspect when discussing the importance of maintaining positive relations with employers.

... Firstly, we need to maintain our personality. We should be friendly to the local people, even if our employers are strict or stingy. When there's a problem, we can confide in the agency, although from my experience, the agency is useless ... [laughs]... So it's better for us to understand our employers, to win their hearts. That's why my employer sees me as family. It's very important to maintain a good relationship with our employers. Because I think, here we rely on our employers, if we are good to them, it's better than with friends. Friends can't fully help, but employers can ...



Source: Author, adapted from Claridge (2018)

Figure 1. Indonesian Migrant Live-in Care Workers' Social Capital

Miss Tk emphasizes that maintaining a positive relationship with the employer is crucial for the well-being of LCWs. She believes that employers are more capable of addressing the challenges faced by LCWs compared to relying solely on friendships with fellow LCWs, despite the shared experiences

and challenges they may have. The mutual relationship between them is based on loyalty and trust. Consequently, the "linking" form of social capital emerges as the most effective for LCWs in realizing their migration goals. The trust extended by employers to LCWs fosters strong bonds, reflected in the humane treatment of LCWs as part of the family. This enables LCWs to establish connections that provide access to information, opportunities, and benefits, enhancing their well-being.

Figure 1 depicts the social capital of Indonesian Migrant Live-in Care Workers (LCWs) in rural Taiwan. In this illustration, the bonding among LCWs shows strong ties in the form of exclusive friendships, albeit limited to small units around the workplace (employer's home). On the other hand, bridging among LCWs lacks strong relationships due to mobility constraints and group variations. Consequently, bridging in rural areas tends to be highly homophilic and does not offer significant benefits for LCWs beyond spiritual activities. Unlike the culture of Indonesians, there is no tradition of *gotong-royong* or collective action among LCWs for problem-solving. *Gotong royong* is mainly focused on community needs, such as providing food for mosque members or contributing to mosque operations, rather than addressing personal/private issues. Therefore, the "linking" form of social capital emerges as the most effective and efficient choice for LCWs to access various resources.

4. Conclusion

The concept of social capital encompasses bonding, bridging, and linking forms, representing individual attributes and their approach to problem-solving. This essay shows the unique characteristics of LCWs' social capital, namely that they have strong ties in bonding and linking but weak ties in bridging. The degree of social mobility and the concentration of LCWs in a specific area significantly impact the formation of social capital patterns among them. In major cities, where there is a substantial presence of LCWs, diversity among groups based on ethnicity or regional background is more prevalent. However, in rural areas, the limited options for building social networks result in the development of social relationships primarily based on nationality, which contributes to the formation of social capital. These social relationships provide hope for information exchange and collaborative problem-solving, although the limitations of time and space greatly affect the depth of interactions and communication among LCWs in rural Taiwan.

LCWs in Taiwan often form highly selective and tight-knit social units, particularly in rural areas, to mitigate risks of trust abuse or improper reciprocity. This selective pattern, although limiting their access to broader opportunities and resources, offers a safe and reliable friendship structure. The weak ties in bridging social capital hinder the implementation of collective action, such as *gotong-royong*, for problem-solving. Consequently, most LCWs view *pengajian* merely as a means to fulfill their religious needs, rather than as opportunity to expand their networks, further constraining their social interactions. Despite these challenges, LCWs manage to build "linking" social capital with their employers through loyalty and trust, which becomes the most effective form of social capital in achieving their migration goals. The humane treatment of LCWs as part of the family fosters strong bonds and provides access to valuable information, opportunities, and benefits, enhancing their overall well-being. This linking social capital, therefore, emerges as the most efficient choice for LCWs in rural Taiwan to access various resources and improve their families' well-being.

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