



Distress, wellbeing and coping amongst migrant domestic workers in Singapore: A thematic analysis

ABSTRACT

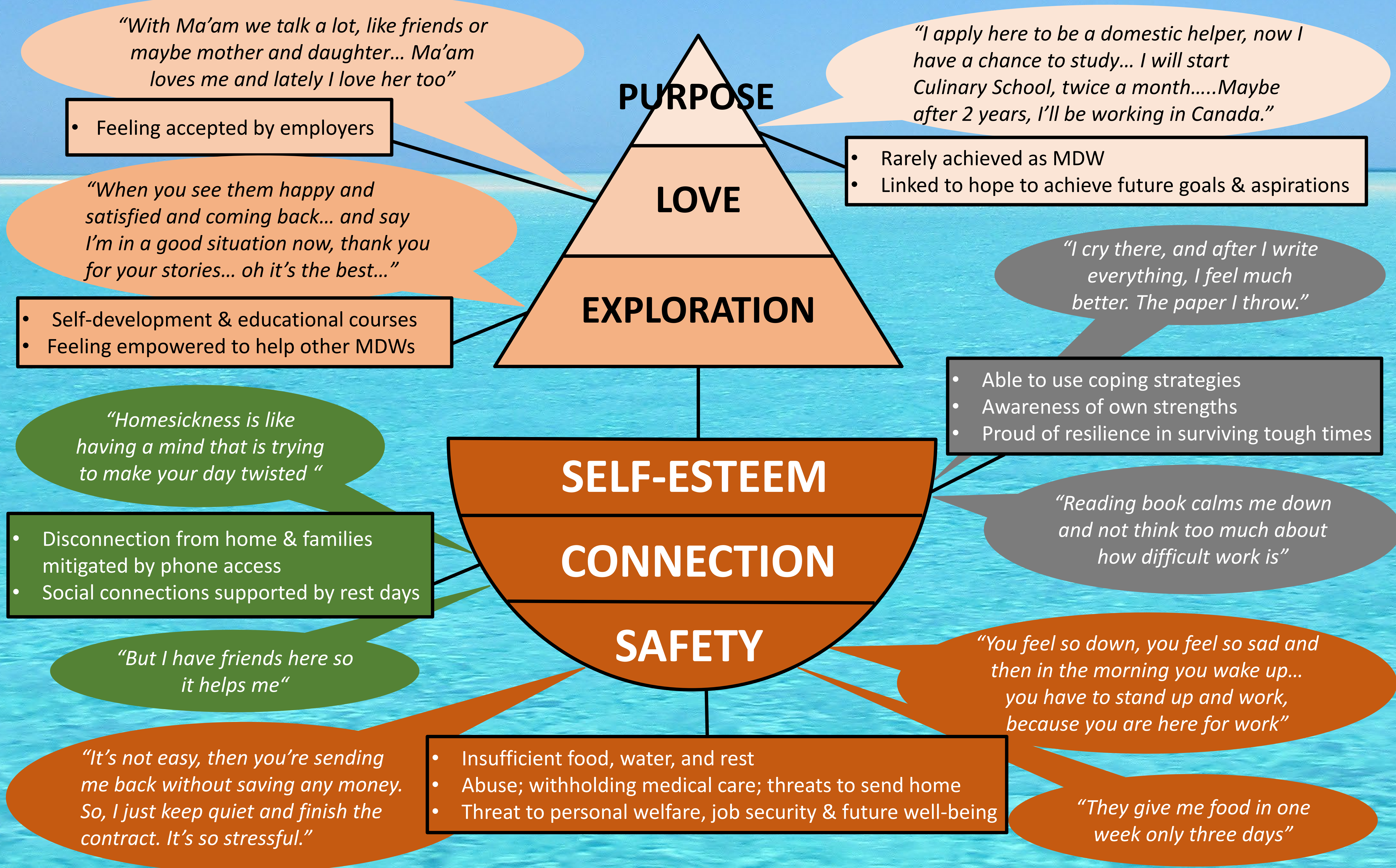
- Migrant domestic workers (MDWs) leave their home countries and families to seek work, where they are rarely protected by employment laws or policies.
- Previous research¹ highlighted that MDWs face many stressors and challenges. However, it typically used large samples, survey designs, and had a limited focus on resilience and coping.
- This qualitative research used reflexive thematic analysis², with results presented using Kaufman's self-actualisation model³.
- We found that MDWs are often focused on basic security needs, demonstrate strength and resilience in response to challenges, but have limited opportunities for growth.

METHOD

- 11 MDWs (28-46 years)
- Recruited via Facebook
- 1:1 semi-structured interview
- Reflexive thematic analysis
- Generated themes & subthemes:
 - Challenges (migration related, nature of MDW work, human rights)
 - Mental health (distress, wellbeing)
 - Coping (engaging with problems, managing emotions, avoiding the problems & emotions, future-focused)



RESULTS – SECURITY & GROWTH



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Replacing existing guidelines for contracts, rest days, wellbeing, and safety with enforceable policies and employment laws.
- Public and employer psychoeducation programs to increase awareness of the importance of supporting MDWs' wellbeing, with a long-term aim to shift societal attitudes towards MDWs.
- MDW wellbeing centers to provide physical and mental health support via mentors and professionals, foster social connections, and offer opportunities to explore and work towards future goals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & REFERENCES

We are grateful to the 11 women who shared their stories. We also acknowledge the unheard voices of the many women who could not participate in our study as they have no access to phones or rest days.

¹ Van Bortel, T., Martin, S., Anjara, S., & Nellums, L. B. (2019). Perceived stressors and coping mechanisms of female migrant domestic workers in Singapore. *PLoS one*, 14(3).
² Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2020). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis?. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 1-25.
³ Kaufman, S. B. (2021). *Transcend: The new science of self-actualization*. Penguin.