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Intention to Leave the Job Among Live-In Foreign Home Care Workers in Israel

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In Israel, almost all around-the-clock home care services are provided by foreign workers. Despite the fact that these workers are considered temporary, the Israeli government has acknowledged the need for consistency in care and now allows workers to stay in the country for as long as their care recipient is alive. Nonetheless, there have been increasing concerns about the tendency of foreign home care workers to view Israel as a temporary station on their way to more attractive destinations, such as Canada or England. Using the job rewards and concerns model, this article evaluates determinants of foreign home care workers' intentions to leave their job. This study was a cross-sectional analysis of 178 Filipino home care workers in Israel. Only 15 workers (8.4%) reported that they would be likely or very likely to leave their job within the next 3 months. The final model suggested that negative experiences within the home/work environment as well as within Israeli society at large contribute to depression and posttraumatic stress symptoms. However, caring for an older adult with dementia was the only predictor of intention to leave the job. The majority of workers do not report an intention to leave their job. Nonetheless, greater supervision of this caregiving arrangement in an attempt to protect the rights of foreign home care workers within the home/work environment is an important step, which has to be followed up by attitudinal changes within society at large. Specific training in dementia care is also warranted.

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KEYWORDS domestic care, globalization, long-term care, migration, retention

INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, there has been a steady increase in the popularity of home care services to older adults and frail individuals worldwide (Aronson & Neysmith, 1996; Denton, Zeytinoglu, & Davies, 2002; Martin-Matthews, 2007; Neysmith & Aronson, 1997; Stacey, 2005). These services are usually provided by foreign workers from the developing world and consist of the provision of paid personal care, such as feeding, grooming, and cooking (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2000; Yeoh, Huang, & Gonzalez, 1999). The popularity of live-in foreign home care services is attributed to the decrease in available informal caregivers (unpaid family members and friends) and to the low status assigned to caregiving in Western society (Ehrenreich & Hochschild). Furthermore, home care is a cheaper alternative than institutional care (Aronson & Neysmith) and at the same time, it fulfils the wishes of many frail individuals and their family members to stay in their home environment for as long as possible (Keysor, Desai, & Mutran, 1999).

In Israel, foreign workers provide almost all live-in home care services. Currently, there are about 54,000 foreign home care workers, and at least additional 40,000 undocumented workers (Nathan, 2008). The vast majority of these workers are from the Philippines. Live-in foreign home care in Israel is subsidized by the government, which allows only the most impaired individuals to hire a foreign home care worker (Heller, 2003).

Although the government has been attempting to reduce the number of foreign workers in the country, their number has been increasing steadily over the years, because their employment is based solely on demand. In contrast to the other sectors that employ foreign workers, which are eligible for a predetermined number of foreign workers per year based on their active negotiation with governmental officials, there is no predetermined number in the foreign home care sector. Instead, once an individual is eligible for a worker, there is immediately an opportunity to bring in another foreign home care worker into the country (Klein-Zeevi, 2003).

The stay of foreign home care workers in Israel is explicitly defined as temporary. Hence, workers are not allowed to bring their family members with them and are expected to leave the country after several years. Nevertheless, even the Israeli government has acknowledged the need for consistency in care and now allows foreign home care workers to stay in the country for as long as their care recipient is alive. However, according to reports of social workers involved in this caregiving arrangement, retaining foreign home care workers on the job can be problematic. Reportedly, many foreign home care workers come to Israel because it requires no prior

caregiving training. Thus, after several years in the country, they leave to Canada or England, where they are considered “kosher Filipinos,” who have now gained the desired caregiving experience. In contrast to Israel, in Canada or England, these workers usually gain higher salaries as well as the opportunity to eventually become citizens (Ayalon, Kaniel, & Rosenberg, 2008).

Similar to the Israeli case, the international literature also has been struggling with the issue of retention of direct care workers in practically all long-term care (LTC) settings (Bennett, 2000); though, to date, no attention has been given to the issue of foreign home care. Apparently, the turnover rates in LTC range from 40% to over 100% per year depending on organization and geographical region (American Health Care Association, 2003; Ditson, 1994). This, of course, has been associated with many negative consequences, including increased financial costs (Ditson), impaired quality of life of care recipients (Bishop et al., 2008), and impaired working atmosphere. Within the live-in home care industry, high turnover rates can be particularly deleterious as the provision of around the clock home care consists not only of personal assistance but also of emotional and social assistance (Ayalon, 2009c).

In the present article, I review factors associated with satisfaction with the job, intention to leave the job, and actual turnover rates among LTC workers, because even though these are not synonymous, they are highly related (Castle, Engberg, Anderson, & Men, 2007; Kiyak, Namazi, & Kahana, 1997). To date, various models have been proposed to explain LTC turnover. One of the most prominent models is the job rewards and concerns, which argues that satisfaction with the job as well as intention to leave the job are affected by both perceived benefits and costs associated with the job (Karasek, 1979; Marshall, Barnett, Baruch, & Pleck, 1991). Apparently, although direct care workers attribute more positive than negative qualities to their job, it is primarily the negative aspects that account for dissatisfaction with the job (Brannon, Barry, Kemper, Schreiner, & Vasey, 2007). The most powerful predictors of job dissatisfaction are personal and job-related stressors, such as depression and the experience of racism (Ejaz, Noelker, Menne, & Bagaka's, 2008). In addition, other factors, such as payment, benefits, lack of opportunity for advancement, and the perception of work overload also were identified as correlates of job dissatisfaction and intention to leave the job (Brannon et al., 2007; Caudill & Patrick, 1991; Chou & Robert, 2008; Ejaz et al., 2008; Hasson & Arnetz, 2008).

Whereas informative, none of these studies has specifically addresses the issue of intention to leave the job among foreign home care workers. Although foreign home care workers share many of the characteristics of LTC direct care workers discussed above, they have several unique characteristics that require further analysis. First, as already discussed, almost all foreign home care workers in Israel provide around the clock live-in personal

care and, as a result, the nature of their work within the home/work environment is blurred and they are often exposed to high levels of abuse either by the care recipient or by his or her family members (Ayalon, 2009b; Denton et al., 2002; Neysmith & Aronson, 1997). Second, foreign home care workers capture positions that are not wanted by the citizens of the host culture and as a result, their status in the host culture is low (Raijman, Schammah-Gesser, & Kemp, 2003). Furthermore, in contrast to other ethnic minorities (e.g., Arabs, Druz) or new immigrants (e.g., Russian Jews), foreign workers arrive in Israel as a temporary workforce and are expected to leave after several years or when their care recipient dies (Heller, 2003). Given their low status and low prospects of becoming citizens, these workers might be exposed to high levels of societal discrimination. In addition, foreign home care workers provide care to the frailest individuals in the country as only the most impaired are legally eligible to hire a foreign home care worker (Heller). Many of these individuals are not only physically impaired but also cognitively impaired. There is ample research demonstrating that providing care to an individual with dementia is an extreme challenge that impacts one's mental and physical health (Schulz & Beach, 1999). The impact of providing care to an individual with dementia may be intensified when the carer comes from a different culture and does not share the same beliefs and attitudes about dementia as the majority culture, as past research has shown that caring for an individual with dementia is often one of the major challenges faced by foreign home care workers (Ayalon, 2009a).

In contrast to these various concern factors, institutional support, supervisors' instrumental and emotional support, and coworkers' support have all been associated with increased satisfaction with the job (Chou & Robert, 2008). Given the nature of home care, these variables may be less relevant in the Israeli context that takes place behind closed doors with only minimal supervision. On the other hand, social support from friends and family members could potentially be rewarding in this caregiving arrangement and may positively impact one's intentions to stay on the job. Another component that has largely been missing from past research on the topic is the examination of workers' distress as a potential mediator of the relationship between costs and rewards factors and intention to leave the job.

Based on past research, I expect that caring for an older adult with dementia has a direct impact on one's exposure to negative experiences within the home/work environment. It is also expected that negative experiences within the home/work environment and in Israeli society at large impact workers' mental health. Both depression and posttraumatic stress symptoms are evaluated because, as already discussed, past research has shown that this population of foreign home care workers is exposed to high levels of abuse, which may trigger these various emotional states. Finally, these negative emotions, in turn, are expected to have a direct impact on one's intention to leave the job. These hypotheses are summarized in Figure 1.

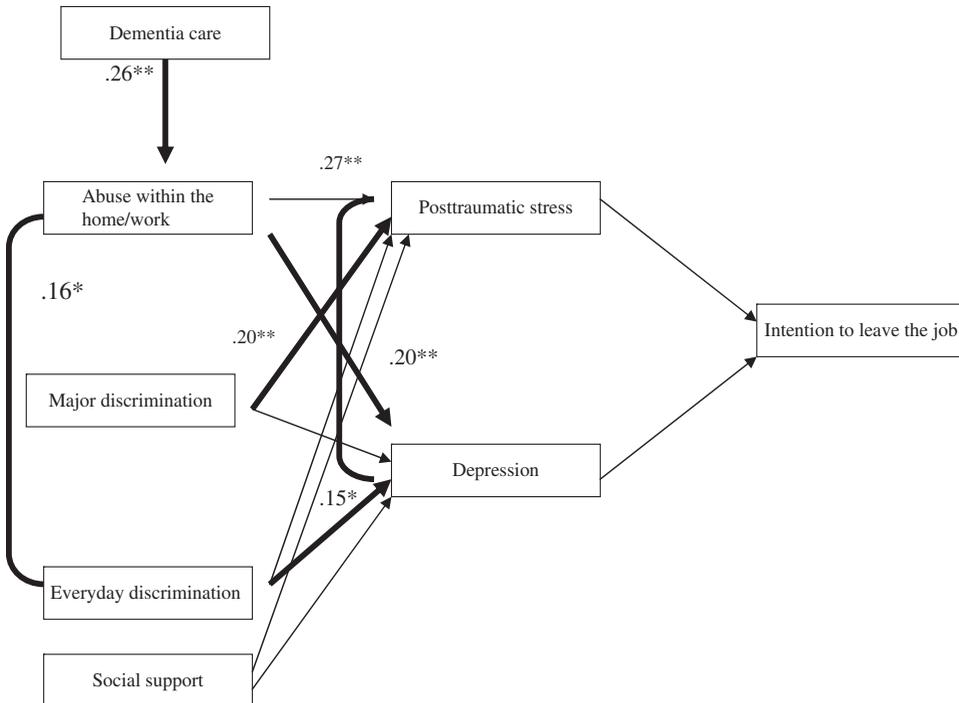


FIGURE 1 Hypothesized model predicting intention to leave the job. Bold arrows represent significant coefficients. Only significant standardized estimates are reported. Observed variables are represented by rectangles. $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$.

METHODS

Procedure

This study was based on prior qualitative research conducted with Filipino home care workers, family members of older adults cared by these workers, and social workers in charge of this caregiving arrangement (Ayalon, 2009c; Ayalon et al., 2008). Following these prior interviews, I conducted a focus group with 12 prominent members of the Filipino home care community in Israel (all active members in various Filipino-Israeli workers' organizations). These individuals were asked to complete a draft of the questionnaire and to provide feedback on its applicability and readability. The questionnaire was further revised based on this feedback. Several members who participated in this focus group had agreed to assist in data collection and received a short training prior to embarking on their data collection efforts. These Filipino home care workers used snowballing techniques to collect the data by capitalizing on their role as prominent members of the Filipino community in Israel. Questionnaires were administered during social gatherings of the Filipino community and in churches attended by members of the

community. Per the recommendation of focus group members, all surveys were available only in English. All participants gave an oral informed consent prior to participating in the study. Participation was voluntary and participants were not compensated for this. This study was approved by the ethics committee of Bar Ilan University.

Outcome Measure

INTENTION TO LEAVE THE JOB

Propensity to leave the job within the next 3 months was rated on a scale of 1 = *not likely at all* to 5 = *very likely* (Lyons, 1971). Because the variable was positively skewed in the present study, it was dichotomized to represent those stating that they are likely or very likely to leave their job versus all others.

Mediators

POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

The Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist-Civilian Version is a 17-item measure to assess symptomatology of posttraumatic stress (Weathers, Litz, Huska, & Keane, 1994). Example questions include: "having difficulty concentrating"; "being super-alert or watchful or on the guard." In its original form, response choice is on a 5-point scale. In the present study, a yes/no format was used based on the explicit recommendation of all focus group members. Reliability in the present study was .92.

DEPRESSION

The PHQ-9 ranks each of the nine *DSM-IV* criteria on a scale from 0 = *not at all* to 3 = *nearly every day* over the past 2 weeks. Example questions include: "little interest or pleasure in doing things"; "feeling tired or having little energy." The measure has been widely used for the assessment of depressive symptoms (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & the Patient Health Questionnaire Primary Care Study Group, 1999). Its reliability in the present study was .87.

Concern Factors

EXPOSURE TO ABUSE WITHIN THE HOME/WORK ENVIRONMENT

Participants were specifically asked about their experiences within the home/work environment since their arrival in Israel. Questions were based on a questionnaire developed for use with Filipino home care workers in

Israel (Ayalon, 2009b) and on a measure of sexual harassment at work (Gettman & Gelfand, 2007). The final measure contained 17 items. Example questions are: “not receiving the food you need and like”; “been asked to do more than your job requirement at no extra pay.” Participants were asked to indicate whether the event has ever happened in their current position as home care workers in Israel. Reliability in the present study was .72.

EXPOSURE TO EVERYDAY DISCRIMINATION

Everyday Discrimination Measure is a 5-item scale that taps into the hassles associated with perceived everyday discrimination. It represents a measure of chronic stressors (Williams, Yan, Jackson, & Anderson, 1997). In the present study, participants were specifically asked about their everyday life in Israeli society at large. Example questions are: “people act as if they are afraid of you”; “people act as if they think you are not smart.” Each item is rated on a scale of 1 = *never* to 4 = *always*. Reliability in the present study was .70.

MAJOR EXPERIENCES OF LIFETIME DISCRIMINATION

This is a 6-item yes/no scale assessing major experiences of discrimination (Williams et al., 1997). In the present study, participants were specifically asked about experiences since their arrival in Israel. Example questions are: “have you ever been unfairly denied a bank loan?”; “Have you ever been unfairly stopped, searched, physically threatened or abused by the police?” Reliability in the present study was .59.

Reward Factors

SOCIAL CONTACTS

The number of monthly contacts with friends or relatives in Israel and the number of friends or relatives one feels close to were rated on a scale of 0 = *none* to 5 = *nine or more*. A composite score of the two items was used to assess overall social contacts, ranging from 0 to 10. Reliability in the present study was .56.

Statistical Analysis

I first ran descriptive statistics to assure variables comply with the statistical assumptions. Univariate and bivariate analyses were conducted on all variables. Path analysis, using AMOS 7 was used to test the proposed hypothesized model, estimated by maximum likelihood procedure. A pairwise covariance matrix was generated to estimate the goodness of fit between the data and the hypothesized model. In reporting the results of the path analysis, I

report the following goodness-of-fit measures: chi-square statistic, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Squared Error (RMSEA) as previously suggested (Hu & Bentler, 1999). If the chi-square is small relative to the degrees of freedom, than the observed data do not differ significantly from the hypothesized model. CFIs that exceeds .95 and RMSEA below .08 are indicative of acceptable model fit. The significant level criterion for all statistical tests was .05.

RESULTS

The sample consisted of 178 Filipino home care workers. The majority were married (56.7%) females (87.6%). The mean age was 37 ($SD = 6.3$) and their average number of years of education was 8.3 ($SD = 5.0$). Overall, 15 (8.4%) reported that they would be likely or very likely to leave their job within the next 3 months. Over 50% reported being exposed to at least one type of home/work related abuse, over 70% acknowledged being exposed to at least some form of everyday discrimination, and 26% reported being exposed to at least one type of major discrimination since their arrival in Israel. See Table 1 for further details. Table 2 outlines correlations between the variables.

TABLE 1 Demographic and Clinical Characteristics of the Sample ($n = 178$)¹

	Descriptive data	
	Mean (SD)	N (%)
<i>Outcome Variable</i>		
Intention to leave the job		15 (8.4%)
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>		
Age (24–54)	37.3 (6.3)	
Gender		
Female		156 (87.6%)
Marital status		
Married		101 (56.7%)
Education (0–19.5)	8.3 (5.0)	
Years in the country (.6–13.1)	4.4 (2.42)	
<i>Cost Factors</i>		
Caring for an older adult with dementia		110 (61.8%)
Exposure to at least one type of abuse within the home/work environment		89 (51.9%)
Exposure to at least one type of everyday discrimination		46 (26%)
Exposure to at least one major life discrimination		118 (71.1%)
<i>Reward Factors</i>		
Social contacts (0–10)	1.72 (1.12)	
<i>Mediators</i>		
Depression (0–27)	4.06 (4.61)	
Posttraumatic stress (0–17)	5.05 (5.01)	

¹Results are presented as Mean and SD for continuous variables and frequency and % for categorical variables.

TABLE 2 Correlation Matrix of the Variables

	Leave job	Depression	Posttraumatic stress	Dementia care	Abuse within the home	Everyday discrimination	Major discrimination
Depression	.15						
Posttraumatic stress	.08	.29**					
Dementia care	.17*	.07	-.14				
Abuse within the home	.13	.20*	.11	.21*			
Everyday discrimination	.05	.18*	.16*	.03	.17*		
Major discrimination	.10	.06	.21**	.10	.08	.10	
Social contacts	-.07	.12	-.06	.11	.05	-.02	.001

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

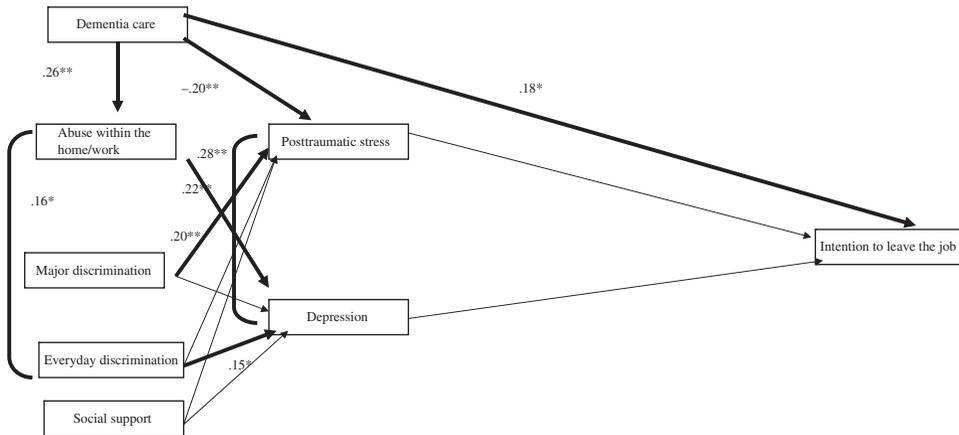


FIGURE 2 Revised model predicting intention to leave the job. Bold arrows represent significant coefficients. Only significant standardized estimates are reported. Observed variables are represented by rectangles. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

The initial model, outlined in Figure 1, had a less than optimal fit to the data: chi-square (13) = 20.8, $p = .07$, CFI = .85, RMSEA = .06. This model was further revised based on theoretical grounds and the modification indices (modification indices > 5). See Figure 2 for details. The revised model offered an excellent fit to the data: chi-square (11) = 8.7, $p = .64$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0. However, it explained only a small portion of the variance associated with intention to leave the job (6%), posttraumatic stress disorder (12%), and depression (9%), suggesting that other variables not evaluated in the present study could be of influence. Based on this model, both exposure to abuse within the home/work environment and exposure to everyday discrimination increased susceptibility to depressive symptoms, whereas exposure to major life discrimination increased susceptibility to posttraumatic symptoms. Nonetheless, neither posttraumatic stress nor depressive symptoms were associated with intention to leave the job. Thus, these negative emotional states did not serve as mediators. Whereas caring for a person with dementia was associated with increased exposure to abuse within the home/work environment, it also decreased susceptibility to posttraumatic stress symptoms. The only predictor of intention to leave the job was whether or not the respondent provided care for a person with dementia.

DISCUSSION

Foreign home care to frail individuals has become a common alternative to informal care (Browne & Braun, 2008; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2000). Nonetheless, the literature on this caregiving arrangement is scarce and, to date, there has been no attention to the issue of retention of foreign home

care workers on the job. In the present study, only a small portion of the workers expressed an intention to leave their job in the next 3 months. This is despite the fact that over 50% reported being exposed to at least one type of home/work related abuse, over 70% acknowledged being exposed to at least some form of everyday discrimination, and 26% reported being exposed to at least one type of major discrimination since their arrival in Israel, suggesting that the present sample of Filipino home care workers likely is exposed to multiple chronic and more acute stressors both within the home/work environment as well as within society at large.

Even though these stressors impact workers' mental health, they have minimal impact on workers' intentions to leave their job. It is possible that the need to provide for their families in the Philippines, the availability or lack of availability of employment opportunities in other countries as well as in the host country, and the availability or lack of availability of social networks in other countries are the major pushes that turn workers away from their current job in Israel, rather than the costs associated with the job and with life in Israel. In fact, based on qualitative research, I found that workers often are reluctant to move back to their country of origin and prefer to hold on to their job even at the expense of their own safety (Ayalon, 2009b). Further research should evaluate these factors more carefully in order to produce a more accurate model of intention to leave the job among foreign home care workers.

An unexpected finding of the present study is the role that caring for a patient with dementia plays in the life of foreign home care workers. As expected, those who cared for a patient with dementia reported more abuse within the home/work environment. Yet, they also reported lower levels of posttraumatic stress. Potentially, the ability to attribute these negative experiences to dementia reduced the emotional impact these negative experiences had on the worker. Similarly, past research has shown that those workers who were aware of their care recipient's medical condition also held more positive attitudes toward dementia (Ayalon, 2009a). Consistent with these findings, research has shown that whereas exposure to racism directed by LTC staff reduced direct care workers' satisfaction with the job, exposure to racism directed by care recipients with dementia had no such an effect because workers were able to attribute these negative experiences to the dementia (Ejaz et al., 2008). Nonetheless, providing care to an individual with dementia also had a direct impact on intention to leave the job that was not accounted for by emotional distress, with those caring for an individual with dementia being more interested in leaving their job. Hence, further training specific to dementia care is warranted.

Whereas informative, this study does not go without limitations. First, the study evaluated intention to leave the job and not actual turnover. Although the two are highly related (Castle et al., 2007; Kiyak et al., 1997; Murrells, Robinson, & Griffiths, 2008), they are not synonymous. Second, this is a cross-sectional design that cannot imply cause and effect. Third, this

was a convenience sample that was collected through snowballing techniques. Nonetheless, it is important to note that given the fact that a large segment of foreign home care workers in Israel is undocumented, this might be the only means to recruit this “invisible” population into a study. Although respondents were asked about their legal status in this study, only three acknowledged being undocumented. Because this likely represents an underreport, legal status was not included in the analysis. Fourth, most measures administered in this study were developed for use with individuals in the developed world. It is likely that questions are understood differently in different cultures and it is possible that some questions were misunderstood in the present study as a result of cultural differences. However, it is important to note that in order to assure that respondents accurately understand the questions; the measure was pilot tested and revised based on relevant feedback. Finally, the model explained only small variations in intention to leave the job and in workers’ mental state suggesting that other variables (e.g., familial obligation, work alternatives, etc.) that were not evaluated in the present study should be further explored in future research.

To sum, this study is innovative because it is the first to evaluate factors associated with foreign home care workers’ intention to leave their job. Results suggest that further training and support on the topic of dementia care likely will improve workers’ well-being and may result in higher retention rates. Specifically, past research has shown that foreign workers often hold beliefs that are in discordance with current scientific view of dementia. Hence, education regarding the etiology and manifestation of dementia is important as well as further training in dementia care. Although neither abuse within the home/work environment nor unfair treatment by society at large were associated with intention to leave the job, they were significantly related to workers’ mental health. Hence, greater supervision of this caregiving arrangement in an attempt to protect the rights of foreign home care workers within the home/work environment is an important step that has to be followed up by attitudinal changes toward foreign home care workers within society at large. Finally, although the job rewards and concerns model has been supported in past research concerning direct LTC workers, the model does not apply well to foreign home care workers as it explains only a very small percentage of the variance. Therefore, this unique group of workers is potentially motivated by other factors not currently evaluated in the present study.

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