“My space and time are dictated by my jobs”: Space-Time Constraints for Female Domestic Workers in Hong Kong

Fikriyah Winata, Department of Geography and Geographic Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

BACKGROUND

Increase of transnational migration in Asia has included large inflows of unskilled and low-educated women from developing countries to work as domestic workers in foreign countries. Female domestic workers (FDWs) are a highly vulnerable group (Wang et al., 2017) due to intensive work responsibilities that limit women’s mobilities within space and time constraints (Mendoza et al., 2017) and demanding daily tasks that restrict FDWs’ social interactions outside their employers’ homes (Chen et al., 2017). Their transnational migration experiences is shown to an unfamiliar place and culture – can compound their work-related social and emotional vulnerabilities (Yeoh and Huang, 2000).

Indonesian Female Domestic Workers in Hong Kong

- Domestic workers were the highest percentage type of Indonesian migrant workers in 2018 (32.8%), and 70% of them are female (BNPTKI, 2019). In the last decade, Indonesian FDWs migrated to Hong Kong significantly increased.
- Hong Kong is the only top destination for Indonesian FDWs that regulates & implemented a mandated rest day, while many other Asian countries do not successfully implement it. With a rest day, FDWs are able to go out their employers’ homes to do any activities they desire.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Space-Time Geography Framework and Gendered Space-Time Constraints

Individual space-time constraints (Hägerstrand, 1970).
- Capability constraints
- Coupling constraints
- Authority constraints

A domestic worker’s time geography is dominated by fixed activity.

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

- To examine the space-time constraints in everyday lives experienced by women in domestic employment living in a foreign country.
- To evaluate the effects of FDWs’ characteristics on activity spaces that are not related to their work tasks, and time spent outside the workplace and to analyze differences between work and rest days.

Hypothesis: (1) FDWs’ daily activities and mobilities are predominantly fixed and dependent on their tasks; (2) FDWs’ mobilities and activities (within space and time) differ between working and rest days.

METHODS

Data Collection and Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited through:
- Domepet Dhufaa Hong Kong (DDHK), a non-profit organization that provides social, religious, and educational programs for Indonesian FDWs.
- Snowball sampling
- Peduli Sehat Hong Kong, non-profit organization that promotes breast cancer awareness.

Primary data collection:
- 42 Indonesian female domestic workers collected activity diaries in working & rest days. Online activity diaries recorded:
  - Type of activity
  - Location
  - Time spent in each location

G15 approaches:
- Each location from activity diaries (in working & rest day) was geocoded in ArcGIS Pro.
- Hours of being outside employers’ house were 3D-visualized in ArcGis Pro.

Activity space approach: calculating convex hull size

Convex Hull: the minimum bounding geometry encloses each input feature or each group of input features (Esri, 2021).

Multilevel modeling approach

Multilevel modeling to evaluate the effects of FDWs’ characteristics on activity space size and time spent outside the workplace and to analyze differences between work and rest days.

Model 1: Hours of being outside the workplace
- Model 2: Number of places visited
- Model 3: Convex hull size

Model 3: Convex Hull
- Linear mixed model fit by REML, Restricted maximum likelihood
- t-tests use Satterthwaite’s method

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristics</th>
<th>Median (Min; Max)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>35 (-15; 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of being outside</td>
<td>25 (-5; 360)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of residence</td>
<td>Hong Kong (DDHK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDW status</td>
<td>Younger (DDHK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of siblings</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental education</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Common activities during working & rest days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Working days</th>
<th>Rest day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grocery shopping</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompanying employers' children</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompanying elderly to restaurants</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxing</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
<td>1.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>0.007 (0.31)</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting other domestic workers</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multilevel modeling results

Table 3. Multilevel modeling results of hours being outside (M1), number of places visited (M2), and convex hull size (M3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed effects</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.007 (0.04)</td>
<td>0.0001 (0.002)</td>
<td>0.11 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of work (&lt;5 years)</td>
<td>REF</td>
<td>REF</td>
<td>REF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of work (5-10 years)</td>
<td>0.38 (0.40)</td>
<td>0.29 (0.74)</td>
<td>1.79 (1.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to the closest public transit stop (in meters)</td>
<td>0.0002 (0.003)</td>
<td>0.0005 (0.003)</td>
<td>0.0007 (0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to the closest public transit stop (in minutes)</td>
<td>0.07 (0.21)</td>
<td>0.13 (0.15)</td>
<td>0.31 (0.49)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION

- FDWs experienced restrictive space-time constraints during their working days. Their mobilities are primarily dictated by their work tasks.
- During the rest day, FDWs could have flexibility to do any activities they want, visit any places they desire. Rest day has an important role for FDWs’ lives when they can rest and refresh their minds.
- Hours of being outside, number of places visited, and convex hull size are significantly different between working and rest days.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Dr. Sara McLafferty for her countless supports, guidelines, and advice.
- University of Illinois Graduate College Dissertation Travel Grants, The Neille Signor Graduate Scholarship – Illinois Program, and Enrique Martinez Graduate Scholarship for funding this research.
- 42 research participants who recorded activity diaries in Hong Kong and Domepet Dhufaa Hong Kong for helping with participant recruitment, Pak Imam Baisani, S.T, and Mba 563 Nagatil for their kindness and help.

REFERENCES