

Article

Caregiver Portrayal in Hong Kong Newspaper Discourse: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

The self-perception of caregivers and how others perceive and treat them can profoundly impact their sense of identity, social value, and the dynamics of caregiving. This Foucauldian discourse analysis examined both explicit and implicit portrayals of caregivers in Hong Kong newspaper articles, a society structured by the Confucian ethos of filial piety and postcolonial neoliberalism. Newspaper articles ($n = 27$; published between 2017 and 2025) explicitly referencing caregivers were sourced from the online platform of 11 major Hong Kong news outlets. Our analysis revealed five key themes: governmentality and biopower, social support, normalization of caregivers, culturally influenced challenges, and workplace complexities. Caregivers are frequently represented as “invisible heroes,” while caregiving is naturalized as a duty, particularly for women. This narrative, while celebratory, also marginalizes their identities in policy discourse, reflecting Hong Kong’s historical preference for non-interventionist governance, alignment with neoliberal ideals of self-reliance and minimal public expenditure, and the stigmatization of social welfare.

Keywords: Foucauldian discourse analysis; media discourse; Hong Kong; caregivers; employees; government; Confucian; caregiver burden



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1. Introduction

Caregiver burden, defined as chronic self-perceived strain resulting from financial difficulties, is a common phenomenon among caregivers, often co-occurring with the need to navigate multiple roles and reduced social activities ([Cham et al. 2022](#); [Liu et al. 2020](#)). It is a major risk factor for anxiety, poor quality of life, and suboptimal physical and psychological well-being ([Del-Pino-Casado et al. 2021](#); [Liu et al. 2020](#)). Caregivers with simultaneous paid employment (caregiver-employees; CE) likely experience greater strain due to challenges in balancing multiple roles ([Gaugler et al. 2018](#); [Yang et al. 2023](#)).

The social perception of caregiving may directly influence self-perception and caregiving decisions, thereby contributing to the “self-perceived” component of caregivers’

burden (Ng and Indran 2021b). While a negative social perception of caregiving may exacerbate self-perceived strains, a positive social perception shifts the role perception from a stressful obligation to a socially validated, meaningful, and identity-consistent role, often accompanied by culturally transmitted scripts for self-efficacy, thereby mitigating the perceived strains associated with caregiving (Falzarano et al. 2022; Ng and Indran 2021b; Pan et al. 2022). For instance, concepts of filial piety in East Asia (Bedford and Yeh 2021) and familismo (familism) in Latin America (Cahill et al. 2021) emphasize prioritizing the needs of others over one's own needs, especially if the "other" is a family, and even more so if the "other" is an older family member. Both concepts are lauded as virtuous acts in their respective regions, positively impacting caregivers' reappraisal and meaning-making of their role, thereby reducing caregiver burden (Pan et al. 2022; Smith et al. 2020).

Mass media such as newspapers play a pivotal role in shaping the issues and agendas the general public considers important, framing social actors, and perpetuating social stereotypes (Arendt 2023; Chong and Druckman 2007; Koskinen et al. 2014; McCombs and Shaw 1972; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007; Uotila et al. 2011). Several studies have previously demonstrated portrayals of caregiving as a burdensome, gendered, or heroic act; caregivers as unacknowledged lifelines or saviors; and older care recipients as passive objects of care in newspaper discourses in Western countries (Ågren and Wallroth 2025; Dunsmore et al. 2026; Ng and Indran 2021b; Ristolainen et al. 2025). Such portrayals can influence caregivers' self-perceptions and how others perceive and treat them, with profound implications for the formation of caregiver identity, social valuation, and caregiving dynamics. Culturally embedded norms and socially mediated narratives may also influence not only how caregiver burden is perceived and normalized but also whether supportive interventions are viewed as legitimate, necessary, and acceptable. While several interventions, including psychoeducational, psychological, psychosocial, community support, respite services, and caregiver-friendly workplace policy (CFWP), have been proposed to mitigate caregivers' burden (Badesha et al. 2023; Chen et al. 2015; Honea et al. 2008; Lee et al. 2025b), social perceptions can also influence the development, implementation, uptake, and effectiveness of these interventions (Brewster et al. 2020; Gallagher-Thompson et al. 2000; Napoles et al. 2010).

Only a handful of studies have reported the media portrayal of caregivers in Hong Kong despite its distinctive socio-cultural and economic context characterized by a rapidly aging society with a high elderly dependency ratio (344 per 1000 working-age individuals in 2021) (Census and Statistics Department, The Government of the Hong Kong S.A.R. 2023b), a strong expectation for workforce participation with 56.9% of the population in paid employment (Census and Statistics Department, The Government of the Hong Kong S.A.R. 2024; Fung 2017), and deeply rooted Confucian filial piety where young adults are expected to provide care to older adults (Chong and Liu 2016). The one study we could identify showed that Hong Kong newspapers portrayed eldercare as a socio-economic issue with a reframing of the traditional Confucian ethos of filial piety as a neoliberal practice, reinforcing the government's reliance on family caregiving under "Aging in Place," and a complete lack of representation of older adults in the narratives, which predominantly focused on policy and community services (Yip and Pang 2025). The study utilized corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADA), which is effective in detecting linguistic patterns to reveal predominant ideology, framing, and representation.

The current study aims to expand this line of inquiry by investigating both explicit and implicit portrayals of caregivers in Hong Kong newspapers through the lens of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA), which, unlike CADA, traces how discourses emerge and shift to constitute subject positions and regulate subjectivity (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2017). While other discourse approaches have been adopted in qualitative analysis,

such as critical discourse analysis, post-structural discourse analysis, and linguistic discourse analysis (Cheek 2004), FDA distinguishes itself by concentrating more on macro-level textual structures and less on micro-level linguistic features (Graham 2013). Thus, the current study is expected to add another layer of interpretive depth to how mass media portrays and shapes perceptions of caregiving in Hong Kong.

1.1. Social and Demographic Changes in Post-Colonial Hong Kong

While filial piety has traditionally been the primary socialization objective in Chinese parenting, with a significant impact on caregivers' journeys (D. Y. F. Ho 1996), research in the past two decades indicates a shift away from Confucian traditions of filial piety in Hong Kong. Various factors may be contributing to this shift, with some attributing the diminishing influence of filial piety to a shift from a collectivist society to a more individualistic one in Hong Kong during British colonial rule (Chan and Lee 1995; Yiu et al. 2020) and others to reduced recognition of older adults' wisdom and authority with increasing educational levels of younger generations (Chow 2006).

However, the decline of Hong Kong's long history of filial piety most prominently coincided with the adoption of post-colonial values characterized by neoliberalism (Tang 2011). For instance, Leung et al. (2019) showed that although older individuals highly valued filial piety, they had internalized some neoliberal ideas, such as financial independence for their children, and saw filial piety as unrealistic in the current socio-economic context. As a result, they had lowered their expectations of receiving support from adult children and internalized the need for self-reliance for their care (Leung et al. 2019).

Although the full impact of neoliberalism among caregivers in Hong Kong is slowly emerging, research from Western societies suggests that neoliberalist policies intensify the strain on caregivers, and the modern socioeconomic culture itself is not conducive to caregivers. For example, Heaton (1999) noted that the rise in market-driven policies in the UK in the 1970s aimed to reduce expenditure, leading to a shift from relying on state-provided services to relying on family or community members. The term 'informal caregivers' subsequently gained visibility in policy and related discourse. With the growing prevalence of care privatization and marketization, neoliberal policies in the modern UK have shifted responsibility for providing support from the government to families and the market, prioritizing efficiency and cost reduction, while also encouraging active citizenship (Maker 2022).

Furthermore, Daniels (2023) criticized the Care Act 2014, implemented by the UK government, pointing out that the Act grants caregivers the right to assessments and support but operates within a neoliberal framework, creating burdens for caregivers that are further exacerbated by austerity measures that transfer the responsibility of caring for those in need onto informal caregivers. Similarly, Henderson (2005) identified neoliberalism as the drive that outsourced mental health services to private and non-government organizations in Canada. Thus, the influence of neoliberalism has extended to citizens' everyday lives, although it originated as a doctrine that primarily emphasized market deregulation and state withdrawal (Hickel 2016).

Nonetheless, a recent study by Lee et al. (2024) found that caregivers in Hong Kong reported better mental well-being than those in the UK. The study also observed a positive correlation between caregivers' self-rating as a proxy of self-efficacy in the role and mental well-being (Lee et al. 2024). Caregiver self-efficacy, which, as discussed in the previous section, may be culturally transmitted in societies influenced by Confucianism, may foster a sense of accomplishment when providing care and, therefore, may be an important factor in explaining the differences in mental well-being outcomes among caregivers in Hong Kong and the UK observed by Lee et al. (2024). In line with this hypothesis, Zhang

et al. (2024) observed a negative correlation between caregiver burden and caregiver self-efficacy, along with a positive correlation between caregiver self-efficacy and caregiver gains among Chinese caregiver-care recipient dyads.

These social changes are compounded by Hong Kong's rapidly aging population, with the number of elderly persons aged 65 and over projected to increase from 1.45 million in 2021 to 2.74 million in 2046 (Census and Statistics Department, The Government of the Hong Kong S.A.R. 2023a). The demand for caregivers is also expected to increase as the population ages. Among other things, neoliberalism can discourage the decision to have more children (Sun 2012), thereby shifting responsibility for caregiving from families to individuals. This shift can add substantial mental strain on caregivers in a society historically built on notions of filial piety, like Hong Kong (Lai 2023; Lam and Chan 2023; Lee et al. 2024; Leung et al. 2019), as caregivers have to grapple with the concomitant pressures of participating in the market economy (Fung 2017). On the contrary, those who worked at institutions that were considered supportive, fair, and family-friendly reported better psychological well-being (H. C. Y. Ho 2023).

In the context of post-colonial Hong Kong, Chow (2006) described the dilemma between the diminishing role of family and the increasing demand for long-term care for older people. He argued that adult children are expected to care for their aging parents due to filial piety and are the primary source of long-term care, with minimal support from government policies and home-based services. As a result, he argued, traditional filial piety should neither be accepted entirely nor rejected in the context of caregiving in Hong Kong.

1.2. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

FDA, rooted in Michael Foucault's philosophical and historical framework, encourages critical inquiry into the structure and establishment of social practices, traditions, and texts through the lens of how power relations shape knowledge and amplify marginalized voices in discourse (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2017; Cheek 2004; Khan and MacEachen 2021). Instead of treating power as a fixed entity, the FDA conceptualizes it as a fluid force emerging from multiple sources and complex relationships.

Foucault conceptualized power relations as diffuse mechanisms that operate indirectly by influencing social expectations and potential behaviors (Foucault 1982). Foucault's analysis revealed the relationship between power and knowledge, particularly evident in acts of surveillance, in which heightened visibility generates greater knowledge about subjects (Foucault and Simon 1991). From a Foucauldian perspective, power is an interactive relationship that shapes how subjects perceive themselves and navigate the social world through discourse and institutional networks. Likewise, power is not only imposed externally but also internalized by subjects through socialization.

The epistemological foundations of the FDA can be traced to structuralism, which posits that language and culture operate through consistent structural relationships between the subject and object (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2017; Han 2013; Khan and MacEachen 2021). Khan and Raby (2019) further explain this concept through a scientific lens, proposing that an underlying system or central principle shapes and maintains the entire structure of language and culture.

Norris (2003) argued that the fundamental mechanisms of any structure are governed by laws, rules, codes, individuals' behavioral norms, and systemic approaches. Therefore, every technique, including culture, health, illness, language, and sexuality, contains a configuration controlled by uniform regulations and determining aspects. This implies that structures are factual elements that lie beneath impressions and control, creating significance. Khan and Raby (2019) highlighted that structuralism seeks to uncover hidden truths

embedded within textual and societal surfaces. Consequently, all systems operate within a framework dictated by consistent principles and factors. This suggests that structures function as underlying realities that shape perceptions, impose order, and generate meaning.

Derrida and Caputo (2020) noted that deconstruction, as a key poststructuralist approach, challenged the notion of fixed meaning, denying the possibility of determining absolute or universal interpretations. Texts generate multiple, divergent understandings, with definitions remaining fluid rather than fixed. This perspective dismisses the idea of a singular, objective truth, implying that interpretations are inherently unstable. Derrida and Caputo (2020) further contended that researchers cannot position themselves outside of textual frameworks and claim objectivity.

Thus, the examination of caregiver representation in the current study engages with Foucault's notion of subjectivity, particularly how individuals become constituted as subjects through the interplay of power and knowledge regimes (Katz 1996). In the context of Hong Kong caregivers, the Hong Kong government determines how subsidies are set and their eligibility criteria, thereby defining who can be deemed a "legitimate" caregiver, what constitutes support, and how it is distributed. Caregivers are thus involuntarily required to comply with these institutional social norms, with their behaviors and perceptions regulated by the local government. This framework manifests as bureaucratic power, in which conditions such as hours of care, income thresholds, means testing, and assessments function as gatekeeping mechanisms, categorizing caregivers as either "deserving" or "undeserving" of care.

By categorizing and evaluating caregivers through rigid institutional procedures and regulations, caregivers' real needs are often neglected and overshadowed, as the government controls the availability of support and who can access these resources. On the one hand, caregivers are often portrayed as needy figures who are dependent on institutional financial aid. On the other hand, they are expected to meet the rigid standards (e.g., providing at least 120 h of care per month) to receive any subsidy or allowance. Caregivers are reduced to compliant subjects whose primary responsibility is navigating the complex bureaucratic regulations, rather than being able to voice their needs and receive adequate support. Ultimately, caregivers are left feeling marginalized and vulnerable without the agency to resist under the existing paradigm of power relations.

2. Methods

2.1. Search Strategy

Searches were conducted between 26 February 2025 and 9 March 2025 directly on the websites of 11 major Hong Kong news outlets. The news outlets searched included HK01, ULifeStyle, Oriental Daily, AM730, Sing Tao Headlines, Ming Pao, Sky Post, Dot Dot News, etnet, TOPick, and Hong Kong Inmedia.

The search was conducted in both English and Chinese (Cantonese). The search terms used included "caregivers," "caregivers for older adults," "corporate and caregivers," and "caregiver-employees," with corresponding Chinese equivalents (照顧者, 照顧者, 企業與照顧者/職場與照顧者, and 兼任照顧者的僱員).

2.2. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Articles comprising news reports, features, editorials, opinion pieces, or press releases were included if they (a) explicitly referenced caregivers of children or adults, including older people, (b) referenced caregivers with or without concurrent paid employment, and (c) the full text of the article was available through the outlet's online platform. No time filter was used.

Duplicate articles published by different outlets, paid advertisements, and short social-media snippets were excluded. The deduplication process was based on the headline, the first 50 characters of the article, and the reporter/author's name.

2.3. Data Extraction and Preparation

Data extraction and translation were performed independently by the co-authors (S.M.C.O. & Y.W.). Metadata, including the outlet, publication date, author, headline, and URL of the eligible articles, were extracted using a standardized form. The article was downloaded as a PDF, cleaned to remove non-textual elements such as advertisements and navigation, and translated into English in its entirety before analysis. Care was taken to retain culturally nuanced information during the translation process as side notes. The translations and the side notes were compared during weekly meetings, with all discrepancies resolved through discussion. The reconciled text was further reviewed and revised by another co-author (E.M.-K.L.). All three researchers involved in the data extraction and preparation processes were bilingual (Chinese and English).

2.4. Analysis

A four-step process was adopted for the FDA. First, two authors (M.M.-S.L. & R.H.-T.C.) conducted a surface reading of each article to note salient discursive moves and recurring metaphors. Second, a preliminary codebook was developed inductively by the same two authors from the surface reading, with disagreements resolved during consensus meetings. Third, the codebook was used by the three authors (M.M.-S.L., H.H.-C.K. & R.H.-T.C.) to independently code the entire sample set. Article segments were coded when they contained a discrete discursive claim related to caregiving dimensions, such as in-house surveys, policy critique, caregiver framing, or gendered expectations. Overlapping codes were permitted. Fourth, the codes from each article were mapped and clustered into broader themes by one author (M.M.-S.L.) using discursive patterning. The emergent themes were iteratively refined and merged using prespecified merging rules comprising conceptual overlap $\geq 70\%$ across coded segments, thematic coherence across at least 3 outlets, and theoretical salience to Foucauldian concepts such as governmentality and biopower. Data management, coding, and mapping were conducted using NVivo software (Version 14, QSR International, Denver, CO, USA).

2.5. Reliability

Several measures were implemented to ensure the study's reliability and trustworthiness. The research team maintained an audit trail including an archive of the raw and translated text of the eligible article, codebook versions, intercoder logs, and the minutes of all team meetings. In addition, the team maintained dated reflexive memos through all analytic stages (first reading, codebook development, coding, consensus meetings, data mapping, and theme consolidation) documenting researchers' positionality, such as caregiving experience, volunteering as a social worker, or affiliations with organizations focused on caregivers' welfare, to minimize biases emerging from researchers' subjectivities and increase the credibility of qualitative findings. Both the audit trail and the individual reflexive memos were accessible to the entire research team.

3. Results

3.1. Characteristics of the Included Studies

A total of 27 relevant newspaper articles meeting our inclusion criteria were identified and included in the FDA. All included articles were originally published in Chinese over 8 years, spanning from June 2017 to July 2025. HK01 provided the most articles in the

sample ($n = 7$), followed by Oriental Daily ($n = 6$), Ming Pao ($n = 3$), and AM730 ($n = 2$). One article each was sourced from Sing Tao Headlines, Sky Post, ToPick, Dot Dot News, etnet, Inmedia, Singtao Headlines, Wen Wei Po, and ULifestyle. Slightly over half of the eligible articles (14/27) were published in 2024. The details of the included articles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Details of the 27 newspaper articles included in the Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Newspaper	Reporter	Publication Date	Article Title (Cantonese)	Translated Article Title
Sing Tao Headlines	Unnamed Reporter	11 June 2017	香港願景建議立法保障在職護老者權利	Hong Kong Vision Project proposes legislation to protect the rights of caregiver-employees.
AM730	Choi Hoi Wai	2 April 2019	在職護老者壓力爆煲	Caregiver-employees under crushing pressure.
Sky Post	Lee Yuet Wah	29 November 2021	社工籲建立家庭照顧夥伴 紓緩照顧者壓力	Social workers advocate for establishing family care partnerships to alleviate carer stress.
HK01	Yung Man Sum	17 January 2023	調查揭非就業照顧者每周平均花60小時照顧患者 相當於1.5份全職	Survey reveals unemployed carers spend an average of 60 h weekly on caregiving—equivalent to 1.5 full-time jobs.
HK01	Unnamed Reporter	3 February 2023	晚期病患照顧者遭職場歧視 疫情期間承受額外壓力	Carer for the terminally ill faces workplace discrimination and extra stress during COVID-19.
Ming Pao	Salvation Army Palliative Care Services	8 March 2023	【護老系列】「萬能鐵人」喜樂「友」你齊關注在職護老者	Invincible Iron Man—Let's support caregiver-employees together.
Oriental Daily	Unnamed Reporter	5 June 2023	東方民調：照顧者政策流於表面 隱性問題更難改善	Oriental Daily Survey: Superficial Carer Policies fail to address underlying issues.
ToPick	Unnamed Reporter	9 June 2023	【照顧者】父母同年相繼患癌 港女辭職頓成照顧者嘆孤立無援壓力大	Both parents diagnosed with cancer in the same year—Hong Kong woman quits job to become carer, laments isolation and overwhelming stress.
Dot Dot News	Fong Hei	20 June 2023	有片〉專題 「家庭照顧者」壓力爆煲 現有支援措施是否足夠?	Family carers under immense pressure—are existing support measures sufficient?
etnet	Stephanie Law Hoi Ning	27 October 2023	照顧者!沒有天生的照顧者! 社區支援、暫託服務助短暫停喘! 「安護員」善用照護知識關「照」他人	No one is born a caregiver! Community support & respite services offer temporary relief; “Care Ambassadors” leverage their expertise to look after others.
Oriental Daily	Unnamed Reporter	27 January 2024	調查指逾六成在職照顧者「無覺好瞓」 每日僅瞓6小時或以下	Survey finds that more than 60% of caregiver-employees report poor sleep, sleeping 6 h or less daily.
Inmedia	Unnamed Reporter	27 January 2024	調查指六成照顧者全職 九成需喘息空間	Survey finds 60% carers work full-time—90% need respite space.
Singtao Headlines	Chan Joi Sum	31 January 2024	聖方濟各大學夥城大 培訓「種子社工」冀護老者支援普及化	St. Francis University partners with CityU to train “Seed Social Workers”; Aims to make support for elderly carers more accessible.
HK01	Tse Duk Kan	28 March 2024	照顧者投身香港防癌會 籲社會更多癌症支援守護同路人	Carer joins the Hong Kong Anti-Cancer Society and calls for more community support.
Ming Pao	Unnamed Reporter	22 May 2024	替假護老者、照顧者資訊網等相繼推出 支援減輕照顧者壓力	Substitute carer services and carer resources platform launched to alleviate carer stress.
HK01	Kong Lai Ying	8 August 2024	隱蔽照顧者 63歲婦獨撐 照顧73歲病夫 「知要搵社工但無門」	Hidden carer 63-year-old woman bears sole responsibility of caring for 73-year-old ill husband—“I know I should seek help from social workers but have no way to access it”.

Table 1. Cont.

Newspaper	Reporter	Publication Date	Article Title (Cantonese)	Translated Article Title
HK01	Ng Mei Chung	28 August 2024	年輕護士投身護老10年無懼厭惡工作 鼓勵青年入行照顧長者身心靈	Young nurse devotes 10 years to elderly care, defies ‘Dirty Work’ stigma, and calls on youth to join the field.
Oriental Daily	Unnamed Reporter	31 August 2024	東華三院設首間護老者支援中心 治療肌肉勞損及改善睡眠等	Tung Wah Group of Hospitals establishes the first carer support center, offering services for muscle strain treatment and improving sleep quality.
Oriental Daily	Unnamed Reporter	14 September 2024	照顧者休息日服務成效研究 顯著減輕照顧壓力及抑鬱症狀	Efficiency of Carer Respite Day Services: Study reveals a significant reduction in carer stress and depression.
HK01	Yam Po Wing	14 September 2024	有研究指推照顧者休息日服務 助減輕壓力和抑鬱症症狀	Study finds care respite services help reduce caregiver stress and depression symptoms.
HK01	Unnamed Reporter	27 September 2024	平機會推出實用指南 協助僱主支援認知障礙症僱員及照顧者	The Equal Opportunities Commission releases a practical guide to help employers support employees with dementia and their carers.
Ming Pao	Leung Yee Kei	25 October 2024	【照顧者】孝順仔林保怡曾推所有工作 照顧父母 家庭主婦如霞二十四小時照料百歲母 明星或凡人皆是照顧者 貢獻與壓力冀被看見 保怡：只希望在他們倒數的日子裏 陪伴多些	Filial son Bowie Lam once turned down all jobs to care for parents; housewife Yu-Ha cares for a hundred-year-old mother for 24 h—Celebrity or ordinary, all caregivers share the same burdens and deserve to be seen. Bowie: “I just want to spend more time with them in their final days.”
Oriental Daily	Unnamed Reporter	24 December 2024	聽電話「幾句安慰」配套服務不到位	Just ‘a few words of comfort’ over the phone, follow-up services fall short.
Oriental Daily	Unnamed Reporter	24 December 2024	東方日報A1：照顧者政策拙劣一句 問候等3個月	Oriental Daily A1: Flawed Care Policies—A simple greeting takes 3 months of waiting time.
Wen Wei Po	Hung Chak Kai	24 February 2025	建議增託兒服務 紓緩照顧者壓力	Expand childcare services to relieve carer stress.
AM730	Nicole Wong	25 February 2025	讓照顧者感受社會關懷	Making carers feel society’s support.
ULifestyle	Ching Ka Kin Kin	July 8 2025	照顧者護老者津貼2025 關愛基金4大 津貼每月最多\$6000 申請資格手續收入限制一覽	Allowance scheme for carers and carers of the elderly 2025 Four subsidies under the Community Care Fund offer up to \$6000—eligibility, application process, and income limits explained.

When categorized by concurrent employment status, 15 of the 27 articles referred to caregivers not simultaneously engaged in paid employment, and 12 referred to CEs (Table 2). Among articles on caregivers without concurrent employment, 11 addressed general caregivers, 2 addressed caregivers of cancer patients, and 1 each addressed caregivers of dementia patients and cancer patients. However, articles on CE predominantly focused on caregivers of older patients ($n = 11$, including care recipients with dementia) and only one on caregivers of children.

Table 2. Breakdown of newspaper articles referring to caregivers by the type of care recipient. The number in parentheses indicates the number of identified articles.

Types of Caregivers by Concurrent Employment Status	Types of Caregivers by the Type of Care Recipients
Caregivers without simultaneous employment ($n = 15$)	General caregivers ($n = 11$) Caregivers for dementia patients ($n = 1$) Caregivers for cancer patients ($n = 2$) Caregivers for children ($n = 1$)
Caregiver-employees (CEs; $n = 12$)	CEs for children ($n = 1$) CEs for older people ($n = 6$) CEs for dementia patients ($n = 5$)

3.2. Themes

Seven themes were initially identified through the data-mapping process and subsequently combined into five themes: governmentality and biopower, social support, de-normalization, culturally influenced challenges, and workplace complexities, each with several subthemes. Among these, social support was the most commonly identified discourse, featured in two-thirds of the sample (18 out of 27 articles). In comparison, the (de)normalization of caregiving was the least commonly identified discourse, featured in only 3 articles. The emergent themes and subthemes have been summarized in Table 3 and discussed in detail in the subsequent sections.

Table 3. Summary of themes and subthemes identified through Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Hong Kong newspaper articles referring to caregivers. The number in parentheses indicates the number of identified articles for each theme and subtheme.

Theme	Subtheme
Governmentality and Biopower ($n = 14$)	Caregiver-employees as regulated subjects ($n = 4$) Criticism of the available support amidst overwhelming demand ($n = 7$) Lack of a standardized policy for providing support services ($n = 7$) Restricted availability of information ($n = 10$) Link to social support ($n = 3$)
Social support ($n = 18$)	Community aid and solidarity ($n = 17$) Caregiver-friendly culture promoted by the Government and NGOs ($n = 13$) Motivated by personal experience ($n = 1$) Insufficiencies ($n = 4$) Provision of healthcare support ($n = 4$) Comparison between healthcare provision and community support ($n = 1$)
(De)normalization ($n = 3$)	None
Culturally Influenced Challenges ($n = 11$)	Internalization of caregiving ($n = 7$) Stigma in help-seeking ($n = 4$) Feminization of caregiving ($n = 4$)
Workplace Complexities ($n = 12$)	Lack of CFWPs in the workplace ($n = 15$) Advocacy for equal opportunities ($n = 5$)

Note: Subtheme counts are not mutually exclusive as several articles were coded to multiple subthemes. As a result, the count for the number of articles under each subtheme does not sum to the count for the number of articles under the main theme.

3.3. Governmentality and Biopower

A total of 14 articles related to the central Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and biopower. Extending from Foucault's original definitions (Foucault 2007), governmentality refers to an ensemble of policies, norms, and administrative techniques that shape how caregivers are governed, while biopower refers to the set of power technologies that make the "basic biological features of the human species," such as health, reproduction, and mortality, the "object of a political strategy" through regulatory practices. Five sub-themes emerged under this theme: caregiver-employees as regulated subjects, criticism of the available support amidst overwhelming demand, lack of a standardized policy for providing support services, restricted availability of information, and link to social support.

3.3.1. Caregiver-Employees as Regulated Subjects

Although the government has initiated support schemes, caregivers are largely represented as 'regulated subjects' subdued by state power under strict bureaucratic regulations, as exemplified by eligibility criteria and standardized financial assessments (thresholds). For instance, in its 2022 Policy Address, the government announced that it will enhance support for caregivers, including the regularization of four financial assistance schemes under the Community Care Fund. This aims to provide more appropriate care for those in need and allow them to continue living in familiar communities. In an article in *ULifestyle*, Kin (2025) reported that several subsidy amounts within the fund have been increased, and due to the regularization of two caregiver subsidy programs, the Working Family Allowance will no longer count related subsidies as income. A living allowance is made available for low-income family caregivers. Allowance is also available for severely disabled persons who are employed in paid work to hire caregivers (Kin 2025).

The same article also reported that caregivers and the elderly care recipient must meet specific criteria to avail the financial assistance: the elderly care recipient is required to be living in Hong Kong with residential status, assessed and recommended for community/residential care services by the Social Welfare Department by 31 March 2024, listed on the central waiting list for subsidized long-term care, and is not availing any residential care services during the application and allowance period. Similarly, the caregiver must be a Hong Kong resident, have no employment ties to the care recipient, provide ≥ 80 h/month of care (or ≥ 120 h if caring for multiple eligible persons), be below the specified monthly household income limits to qualify for low-income household status, and not be receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, Elderly Living Allowance, Disability Allowance, or claiming a living allowance under the program for low-income caregivers of disabled persons for the same care recipient.

In an interview with *Sing Tao Headlines*, Prof. Ng Kai-hon, of the CUHK Communications and Public Relations Office, noted that while the Community Care Fund provides various subsidies for caregivers, it has numerous restrictions and an unclear positioning (Unnamed Reporter 2017). Due to the complexity of welfare policies, many caregivers are hesitant to seek assistance. This phenomenon of self-erasure can be attributed to overly complex benefit claim application procedures, leaving many caregivers feeling isolated and despairing.

An article published in *AM730* reported 14 tragic cases involving caregivers over three years, with half of these families not receiving the attention and support they needed, highlighting serious deficiencies in the current system's ability to identify and assist high-risk families (Wong 2025). The article cited the example of a 78-year-old man who was found dead in his home in 2025, revealing that his 44-year-old intellectually disabled son had been staying with the body for an extended period. In another tragic case from 2023, a 71-

year-old man fell dead in the bathroom at his home. His 75-year-old sister was bedridden and unable to call for help. A social worker eventually discovered the death of her brother.

Additionally, the existing support system's improper resource allocation requires caregivers to travel across districts to access services. As reported in the same AM730 article, few organizations offer specialized counseling, and the severe lack of psychological support is particularly concerning, given that over 60% of caregivers show symptoms of depression (Wong 2025). Further compounding the scenario is that respite services are overly expensive and have long waiting times, rendering them unaffordable for grassroots families. Under policies targeting poverty, families with incomes slightly above the assistance threshold find themselves in a difficult position (Wong 2025).

Furthermore, an unidentified person interviewed by Oriental Daily noted that government outreach and community organizations tend to focus more on grassroots and public housing areas, thereby limiting access to resources for those living in subsidized housing or private residences, which highlights the ineffectiveness of government policies and support services (Unnamed Reporter 2024b). She also received feedback from individuals who felt that government resources did not assist them. Furthermore, she mentioned that the prevalence of caregiver-employees is likely to increase, stating, *"If you ask around on the street, you might find two or three out of ten in such circumstances"*.

3.3.2. Criticism of the Available Support Amidst Overwhelming Demand

Newspaper articles highlight the Community Care Fund's expansion as inadequate to meet the overwhelming demand for caregiver support, whether in the form of respite services or dedicated childcare. As an indication of this demand, an Inmedia article reported that the Social Welfare Department's caregiver hotline (182183) received over 10,000 calls between September 2023 and January 2024, with 8 emergency interventions in 4 months (Unnamed Reporter 2024e). In an earlier article published by the Sing Tao Headlines, former Legislative Council Chairman Tsang Yok-sing noted that the vast majority of elderly individuals in Hong Kong wish to age at home; however, the proportion of seniors residing in care homes is disproportionately high, and government support for community care is insufficient (Unnamed Reporter 2017).

Kai (2025) reported voices of some "grassroots citizens" from the poverty alleviation summit in February 2025 in an article published in Wen Wei Po. This included an unidentified citizen who expressed her desire to work but lamented the lack of childcare, suggesting that schools extend dismissal times to 6 PM to give mothers like her more time to hold full-time jobs. Another unidentified citizen shared her struggles, stating that one of her sons has special learning needs while she also cares for a younger son, making it impossible for her to work. She criticized the lack of subsidies for caregivers and the absence of concern for their situation. Legislator Cheung Yan-yu, a father of three, empathized with caregivers' challenges and urged the Hong Kong government to consider expanding childcare services in the future (Kai 2025).

Although Vincent Yan, Legislative Council member and chair of the Family Affairs Committee of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, asserted in an interview with Dot Dot News that the current administration has enhanced caregiver support, including expanding respite care slots to offer caregivers breathing room, the demand still far outstrips supply (Hei 2023). The article reported that Hong Kong has 226,000 elderly care recipients, primarily cared for by spouses, children, or in-laws, citing the Census and Statistics Department's 2021 Population Census Thematic Report. However, as Yan explained, the Social Welfare Department currently provides only about 250 district-wide slots for respite care, while subsidized elderly homes and other par-

ticipating facilities offer just 570 temporary care places. Despite the government adding 17 daytime respite slots in 2023, the glaring shortage persists (Hei 2023).

Furthermore, the regularizing of the Community Care Fund, the establishment of a dedicated support hotline, and the increase in respite care quotas outlined in the 2022 Policy Address are met with skepticism for being inadequate and ineffective in supporting caregivers from NGOs and caregivers (Hei 2023). Yuen Suk-yan, a community organizer at the Society for Community Organization, told HK01 in an interview that many caregivers have not received adequate support. *“We see that many are falling through the cracks”* (Ying 2024). Furthermore, a November 2024 survey by the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute on caregiver support policies reported by Oriental Daily found that 29% of respondents considered the policies “very ineffective,” more than double the 14% who held this view before participating in deliberative discussions (Unnamed Reporter 2024c). Overall, approximately 65% of respondents believed the policies were ineffective. One surveyed CE reported getting only two to three hours of sleep per day and had to call for social worker assistance ten times before receiving a response, with follow-up contact only occurring three months later. Another respondent pointed out the issue of “the elderly caring for the even older.” Another 28% of respondents believed the city’s caregiver policies were only moderately effective.

In a follow-up study, 14 citizens—7 of whom were caregivers—were invited to participate in deliberative discussions. Following the discussions, participants who were previously unaware of caregiver challenges gained a deeper understanding of the limitations of the government’s support policies (Unnamed Reporter 2024c).

3.3.3. Lack of a Standardized Policy for Providing Support Services

While the articles discussed above represent caregivers as ‘regulated subjects’, many of whom “fall through the cracks” due to the strict bureaucratic regulation to avail support, others attribute this to the “lack of an established policy” to support caregivers, leading to chaos. For instance, an article in HK01 underscored the lack of standardized guidelines for employers to create CFWP and urged the government to develop such guidelines, citing a research team from the Caritas Institute of Higher Education (now known as Saint Francis University) (Unnamed Reporter 2023b). Similarly, Yu Oi-ling, project director of the Simon K.Y. Lee Foundation, pointed out in an interview to Singtao Headlines that while the government increased funding for caregivers in the 2018/19 policy address, welfare organizations can only trial and error in the absence of established guidelines, leading to inconsistent quality in support: *“If we can standardize support for caregivers, even novice social workers will have sufficient guidance, which will help improve the overall service level for caregivers in Hong Kong”* (C. J. Sum 2024).

In light of four caregiver-related tragedies in the six months preceding the reporting date (5 June 2023), Oriental Daily conducted a survey, according to which 40% of respondents indicated that caregivers are under overwhelming pressure, while 34% criticized the lack of crisis management and emotional support (Unnamed Reporter 2023c). Subsidies and related services were deemed inadequate, and policies do not prioritize caregivers’ needs. Respondents were concerned that, as the population ages, a lack of government support could lead to more tragic incidents, creating a ticking time bomb. Respondents also criticized the lengthy application processes for government services: 39% found them overly complicated, and 36% believed the policies were not caregiver-centered. Furthermore, 20% believed these procedures hinder caregivers from seeking help.

Furthermore, with only 10,000 caregiver subsidy slots available and around 500 spots for daytime respite care, 48% of respondents in the Oriental Daily survey decried the support measures as inadequate, while 34% called for reform in policies and measures, and

14% criticized the lack of improvement in support services. Given the lack of comprehensive government data on caregivers, 52% of respondents described the current approach as reactive/passive and ineffective at uncovering underlying problems, and 24% criticized the lack of preventive support. Additionally, 21% of respondents suggested establishing a committee to promote supportive policies. Regarding the government's proposal to increase hotlines and rely on care teams for caregiver support, 39% described these measures as superficial, 34% criticized the lack of comprehensive planning, and 22% accused the government of underestimating the issues. The survey indicated that 33% of respondents believe that community caregivers or home-based services should be established to better support caregivers (Unnamed Reporter 2023c).

In another Oriental Daily article, Hong Kong Legislative Council member and registered social worker Mr. Tik Chi-yuen acknowledged that the establishment of respite services is a step forward but still inadequate (Unnamed Reporter 2024b). He pointed out that only about 10,000 of the total 500,000 caregivers in Hong Kong currently receive financial support. Regarding the government's plan to launch a "database for caregivers of the elderly and disabled", he expressed uncertainty about how the government would proceed and hopes for early prevention measures and relevant standards, such as caregivers' family background and whether they care for elderly or disabled individuals. Similarly, an article in Dot Dot News reported that while the "Employment Programme for the Disabled" offered by the Labor Department encourages employers to hire and train people with disabilities, it may do little for those who are too discouraged to actively seek work (Hei 2023).

An unidentified person interviewed by Inmedia urged the government to increase resource allocation to care centers (Unnamed Reporter 2024e). The allocated resources should enable care facilities to increase staffing, improve service quality through training, and provide mental health services to care recipients—for instance, by organizing counseling sessions or online activities to help them stay socially connected (Hei 2023).

3.3.4. Restricted Availability of Information

In addition to stringent bureaucratic regulations for obtaining support, the widespread perception of inadequate governmental support or a lack of standardized policies to provide support may be attributed to limited information availability. Reflecting on the past, a 63-year-old caregiver interviewed by HK01 stated that it was not that she did not want help, but rather that she did not know how to find it: *"People say you can go to social workers, but you still have to find one to help you. I felt that you could not just casually go downstairs and find a social worker. How do you find a social worker? We were lost at every step"* (Ying 2024).

In a more specific context, one article in HK01 highlighted the general lack of public understanding of the ailments affecting older adults (Unnamed Reporter 2024g). The article presented World Health Organization data to argue that, while cognitive disorders are a rapidly worsening public health issue, public understanding of these disorders is lacking and often misunderstood. Another article in Oriental Daily underscored the general lack of public understanding of the types of assistance available to caregivers and even of how to seek assistance (Unnamed Reporter 2024c). For example, some non-caregiver respondents initially believed financial aid was the most flexible and direct form of support. However, in the post-discussion questionnaire, they recognized that mental health support was equally crucial for caregivers to sustain long-term efforts. Others came to understand the immense effort caregivers expend searching for support information and the lack of a centralized platform to consolidate such resources. The article also highlighted that older caregivers may face additional barriers to accessing information on caregiving. An interviewee caring for his father-in-law and mother-in-law (one recently hospitalized

and the other transferred to a nursing home) noted that many caregivers aged 60 or older looking after those over 80 face the issue of “the elderly caring for the even older,” making it difficult for them to benefit from policies aimed at improving access to information (Unnamed Reporter 2024c).

These sentiments were corroborated by an etnet article reporting a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Christian Service (HKCS) involving 499 caregivers. The survey found that 89.6% had never used respite services—primarily due to a lack of awareness (38.8%) or concerns about the care recipients’ adaptability (29.8%) (Ning 2023). In the Oriental Daily article, many caregivers also noted the difficulty of finding information due to the lack of a unified platform consolidating resources (Unnamed Reporter 2024c). In an interview with HK01, Dr. Lai Tsz-Kwan, Associate Professor at the Caritas Institute of Higher Education, went so far as to say that the government lacks measures to alleviate the stress on caregivers of patients with advanced illnesses (Y. M. Sum 2023).

Interestingly, one article featured in Ming Pao highlighted that much of the public awareness emerges after a crisis has occurred (Kei 2024). Mr. Wong Chi-Kit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong told the outlet with a sense of resignation, “*The public doesn’t pay much attention to the issue of caregivers. It’s usually only when tragedies occur in society that people take notice of caregivers’ needs*” (Kei 2024). Although tragedies have sparked heated discussions on how to support caregivers, one article in HK01 argued that actual assistance remains woefully inadequate due to fragmented and insufficient services. CFWP still needs improvement, and discrimination against caregivers remains widespread (Unnamed Reporter 2023b).

These findings highlight systemic issues: existing services fail to meet the needs of older individuals, while inadequate outreach leaves caregivers without vital support. In an HK01 article, the research team from the Caritas Higher Institute of Education highlighted the importance of developing a centralized website or mobile application to serve as a reliable platform that consolidates services for caregivers (Unnamed Reporter 2023b). Another HK01 article suggested that the hospital authority, the Department of Health, or non-governmental organizations could provide service platforms, such as integrated websites or apps, to support caregivers (Y. M. Sum 2023).

3.3.5. Link to Social Support

Several articles emphasized the importance of community outreach, which leads to the next theme—social support. Outreach visits and street booths are currently important methods for identifying caregivers who are often overlooked or “hidden” (Ying 2024). Addressing these issues requires joint efforts from the government and citizens, such as promoting community awareness through volunteer training and mutual aid projects to enhance caregivers’ sense of self-worth and community support networks (Wong 2025).

3.4. Social Support

Given that social support for caregivers ($n = 18$) emerged as the most prominent theme in the FDA, it indicates that the discourse in the study sample highly emphasize a community-driven ecosystem, comprising a caregiver-friendly culture promoted by the Government and NGOs, professionalization of former caregivers to provide human-centered care using their personal experiences, and personalized support in community-based care homes over clinical hospital settings to mitigate the insufficiencies such as limited access to respite and childcare services for caregivers.

3.4.1. Community Aid and Solidarity

The representation of caregivers as “regulated” subjects and the perceived “lack” or “ineffectiveness” of governmental support may have shifted the burden of caregivers’ sup-

port to a community-based approach, promoting caregivers' empowerment and resilience by creating support networks and strengthening mutual aid. For instance, Ms. Lee, a Senior Manager and Registered Social Worker at the Family Welfare Association, in an interview with Sky Post, emphasized that arranging support and mutual-help groups for caregivers, as well as increasing the number of respite services, can give them breathing space (Wah 2021). Apart from increasing social resources, she suggested that caring should start with the family: *"As caring is a family issue, the function of the family in caring should be strengthened. The previous concept of caring should also be changed to adopt a more family perspective, such as introducing the concept of family caring partner."*

Similarly, Oriental Daily reported that the Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service proposed several measures to alleviate caregiver stress, including promoting caregiver planning for respite days, advocating for holiday and home respite services to ease caregiver pressure, and fostering a community-based, caregiver-friendly environment throughout the city, with the intention of relieving caregiver stress (Unnamed Reporter 2024a). Nicole Wong, Southern District Councilor and Vice Chairman of the New People's Party Youth Committee, stressed in an article she authored in AM730 that addressing these issues requires joint efforts from the government and citizens, such as promoting community awareness through volunteer training and mutual aid projects to enhance caregivers' sense of self-worth and community support networks (Wong 2025).

3.4.2. Caregiver-Friendly Culture Promoted by the Government and NGOs

In line with the lack of (adequate) governmental support and the transfer of the support burden to community-based organizations, we could only identify two instances of governmental effort to promote caregiver-friendly culture, which were the "Stand by Caregivers" campaign and the expansion of the "Walk with Caregivers" program by the Social Welfare Department (Unnamed Reporter 2024e), whereas 11 articles highlighted instances of community-based support.

For example, an HK01 article asserted that outreach visits and street stands run by social workers have been a vital means of identifying 'hidden' caregivers (Ying 2024). The article shared the story of Fong Jie, a 63-year-old CE providing care for her 73-year-old disabled husband. After a chance encounter with a social worker running a street stand for the Society for Community Organization (SoCO), she was able to secure a day center, where her husband found structure and purpose. She no longer feels constantly worried ("heart hanging") at work, and her stress has eased. She also stated that if she notices friends in need, she refers them to SoCO and has already introduced several friends: *"It turns out there are organizations that can help us lower-class people. When I felt utterly helpless myself, they genuinely did help me"* (Ying 2024).

In addition to existing community support services, community-based organizations are also taking the initiative to promote a caregiver-friendly culture, which is crucial for CEs. For example, Ming Pao reported the launch of the "Caring for the Elderly in the Neighborhood" project by Salvation Army Tai Po Elderly Community Service Center, in collaboration with the Tai Po and North District Service Co-ordinating Committee of the Social Welfare Department and various elderly service units, to recruit and train stakeholders in the districts (Salvation Army Palliative Care Services 2023). The program aims to enhance the local community's understanding of caregivers' needs, proactively identify and support elders and caregivers in need, foster a caring and supportive social atmosphere, and encourage the community to address the needs of caregiver-employees. Similarly, etnet reported HKCS's public-private-community partnership model, which reframes respite care as a shared social responsibility, validating caregivers' contributions while offering

businesses meaningful corporate social responsibility opportunities (Ning 2023). HKCS's 'Relief Corner' community respite service has already served 100+ users.

Various community services, such as the Jockey Club and Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service, have launched support programs for caregivers and provided one-stop information to alleviate their pressure. An article in Ming Pao illustrated this using the case of Ms. Chow, a stage 4 breast cancer patient and the primary caregiver of her elderly mother, who was able to arrange for a 'relief carer' volunteer to visit her mother and accompany her to medical appointments through the Jockey Club Stand-by U Caregivers Community Support Project (Unnamed Reporter 2024d). The support allowed Ms. Chow to attend her own treatments, buy groceries, and even meet her friends, while the volunteer cared for her mother. One caregiver interviewed by Oriental Daily found social worker home visits helpful, saying they previously felt "marginalized" and "as if life had no meaning." Simply hearing a social worker ask, "How are you? Are you sleeping well? You look exhausted," made them feel acknowledged and valued (Unnamed Reporter 2024c). According to the Ming Pao article, more than 200 volunteer caregivers from the Jockey Club Support Project have received systematic training since 2021 to empathize with caregivers' hardships and provide emotional support, on-site care, and accompanying services (Unnamed Reporter 2024d).

Another article in etnet highlighted Jockey Club's All-Brilliant Carers Project, which aims to support caregivers' physical and mental well-being by preventing social isolation caused by caregiving responsibilities, enhancing care-related vocational skills, and helping them re-enter the workforce (Ning 2023). Similarly, Ming Pao reported that the Jockey Club provides stress-reduction workshops, skill-building sessions, tailored referrals based on each caregiver's stress levels, and peer support networks (Kei 2024). The article also reported that the Jockey Club Charities Trust allocated HK\$290 million to the Jockey Club Carers Space Project to establish caregiver-centric support centers with the goals of raising public awareness and serving more than 27,000 caregivers and 15,000 care recipients within five years. Ten centers were expected to be fully operational by the end of 2024. In an interview, Ms. Yu-ha, who has been bringing her mother to one of the centers almost every afternoon, told Ming Pao that *"Before the center existed, I would spend entire afternoons pushing Mom's wheelchair through shopping malls. Staying home would only make us feel more trapped, like caged animals."* She could entrust her mother to volunteers at the Carer Space for just an hour, which was enough time to rush home for chores, visit the market, and prepare dinner. What might seem like ordinary 'personal time' was an extraordinary respite for her. According to Ms. Yu-ha, having cared for her mother for years, she has not seen her friends in ages, let alone had a moment to herself (Kei 2024). Yet another article in Topick highlighted the Jockey Club Home for Hospice Care program, the only service offering overnight family accommodations (Unnamed Reporter 2023a). The article featured Ms. Lam, whose parents were both diagnosed with cancer in the same year, who told the outlet that most facilities restricted visits during COVID-19, except Home for Hospice Care. She observed a remarkable uplift in her father's spirits after he was admitted. He passed away peacefully three months later, embraced by his family until his final moments.

Similarly, HK01 (Wing 2024) and Oriental Daily (Unnamed Reporter 2024a) highlighted the Sunday Respite Service offered by Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service, which allows CEs to take a break on Sundays—about three years after its launch, over 150 caregivers had used the Sunday Respite Service, including nearly 6500 instances of center services and around 400 instances of home support services. The two articles also reported the findings of an effectiveness study of the Sunday Respite Service, conducted in collaboration with the Sau Po Center on Aging at the University of Hong Kong, involving 278 caregivers, evenly divided into the experimental and control groups. The survey found that the pro-

portion of high-stress caregivers using the respite service decreased from 72.7% to 36.4% within one month; meanwhile, the proportion of caregivers with high depressive symptoms decreased from 42.2% to 15.6% over three months, suggesting that the respite service effectively reduces caregiver stress and depressive symptoms. According to another In-media article, Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service Center also offers respite services (Unnamed Reporter 2024e). The article featured cases of Ms. Liu and Mr. Wong, both CEs, who availed themselves of the respite service to cope with the dual pressure of caregiving and employment.

In addition to these initiatives by NGO, Singtao Headlines highlighted efforts to advance towards evidence-based caregiver support (C. J. Sum 2024). The article reported the launch of the Caregiver Support Project 2.0 by Saint Francis University and the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the City University of Hong Kong in January 2024, intending to promote two validated interventions: (a) the Caregiver Support Model, which offers structured emotional counseling, skills training, and community resource linkage, and (b) the Psycho-Educational Program on Empowerment, a peer-led group program designed to strengthen resilience. These models were based on a six-month randomized controlled trial involving 580 caregivers of frail elderly care recipients, which demonstrated significant improvements in perceived resources, needs fulfillment, and life outlook in the experimental group compared with the control group. A central component of this project is the development of the Caregiver Needs Assessment tool, which allows social workers to map five key needs (physical condition, role conflict, needs of the care recipients, psychological needs, and social needs) and seven resources (spirituality, self-efficacy, family support, sense of responsibility, community support, relationship with elderly care recipient, and lifestyle) of caregivers. This tool helps caregivers and social workers better understand their situations and identify priority areas for intervention, thereby reducing caregiver stress and improving the well-being of care recipients.

3.4.3. Motivated by Personal Experience

One article in HK01 reported that caregivers' personal experiences can motivate some to join community-based organizations and offer support to other caregivers (Kan 2024). Angel, a caregiver for a cancer patient, stated, *"Back then, when I was accompanying my cancer-stricken father in and out of the hospital, sometimes a simple greeting from a nurse was already so heartwarming and helped me a lot."* The empathy of the healthcare provider made Angel realize the confusion and pressure patients and their families face, inspiring her to dedicate herself to the nursing field. She joined the Hong Kong Anti-Cancer Society Jockey Club Cancer Rehabilitation Center as a health service assistant. Drawing from her own experience, Angel and her team have, over the years, treated every patient and family member with empathy, as if they were their own family, carefully "keeping an eye on" the patients' conditions.

3.4.4. Insufficiencies

Four articles highlighted that despite growing awareness of community-based support, these networks remain fragmented, and the lack of centralized resources and state coordination limits their efficacy. Community support is often positioned as a supplement rather than a substitute for systemic reform. One CE interviewee shared with Oriental Daily how her attempt to seek help from a social worker after experiencing mental and physical exhaustion led to irritability and frequent mistakes, only to make ten calls before getting a response, with follow-up occurring three months later (Unnamed Reporter 2024c). The article also reported the case of another caregiver struggling to find meal delivery services or Community Care Service Vouchers for their 95-year-old father-in-law.

They found the related documents overly complicated, even questioning their own comprehension, and described the process as “jumping through many hoops” to understand the available services. While they acknowledged that social welfare organizations could assist, they stressed that caregivers first needed to know how to reach them. Another Oriental Daily article described how fragmented hotlines often provide “comfort” without substantial assistance, are generally insufficient, and, in some cases, merely referred older adults to another hotline for support, making it difficult for them to access relevant services (Unnamed Reporter 2024b). The article cited two legislators who emphasized the need for the government to reassess its policies. These views were echoed by another caregiver, Ms. Fong Jie, who told HK01 that many in society are like her—wanting help but not knowing where to find it—and hoped the government would increase public awareness (Ying 2024).

One article in Wen Wei Po reported that while Hong Kong offers a variety of services, including childcare and community caregiver services, demand continues to exceed supply even after the Social Welfare Department had expanded its elderly day respite services (Kai 2025). The article further highlighted the need to expand childcare services, citing legislators who attended the Anti-Poverty Alliance’s poverty alleviation summit.

3.4.5. Provision of Healthcare Support

The health and well-being of caregivers have garnered increasing attention through the establishment of support schemes that administer medical treatments and services, signaling a medicalization of care by state intervention. One legislator interviewed by Oriental Daily believed that everyone will eventually need medical services, which could be screened through questionnaires (Unnamed Reporter 2024b). Another legislator interviewed by the outlet expressed concern that caregivers of children with special educational needs and individuals recovering from mental health issues also need support and hoped the government would enhance its support to match the demands.

Another Oriental Daily article reported the launch of the CareWise Center, which offers a range of services and programs to support the holistic health of elderly caregivers, including physiotherapy to manage muscle strain and pain, professional nutritional consultation, sleep quality improvement programs, and healing rooms to help them relax and unwind (Unnamed Reporter 2024h). The center also provides life planning services, working with caregivers to establish schedules that balance care for older adults with self-care and referring them to appropriate services to help them adopt healthy lifestyles. The center is connected to community care service units under the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, assisting caregivers in accessing appropriate services and providing long-term support for both caregivers and elderly care recipients.

3.4.6. Comparison Between Healthcare Provision and Community Support

One HK01 article features an interview with Yau Chi-kit, a nurse caring for older patients, who stated that care homes provide more holistic support in a homelier environment, in contrast to hospitals, where the focus is solely on treatment with patients getting discharged upon recovery (Chung 2024). Further, he stated, “*we [care homes] incorporate more personalized, human-centered work—providing emotional support to fulfill residents’ physical, mental, and psychological needs*” to ensure residents spend their twilight years happily. He argues that while ward rounds in hospitals involve doctors and nurses assessing patients, visits in care homes are significantly different, focusing on “visiting the elderly residents.” He believes that seemingly simple questions, like “Have you eaten?” or “Did you sleep well last night?” or “Are you settling in alright?” carry profound warmth for older adults.

3.5. (De)normalization of Caregiving

The theme of (de)normalization of caregiving emerged from three articles, with media representations often describing caregivers as “silent”, “invisible”, or “natural” heroes while paradoxically reinforcing the narrative that caregivers’ extraordinary sacrifice and resilience are routine duties or a natural part of the human experience. One article in AM730 described the caregiving situation in Hong Kong as follows:

“In the bustling, fast-paced city of Hong Kong, there exists a group of invisible heroes quietly bearing heavy burdens. They are caregivers who selflessly provide care for their families in an unending cycle of day and night. From daughters pushing wheelchairs to accompany their stroke-affected mothers in rehabilitation, to fathers giving massages to their autistic children late at night, and elderly individuals in their seventies who shoulder the care of spouses with cognitive impairments—all these stories are woven throughout every corner of the city. According to statistics from SWD [Social Welfare Department], there are at least 120,000 such invisible caregivers in Hong Kong, and this number is just the tip of the iceberg.” (Wong 2025)

Along the same lines, an article in Ming Pao characterized Mr. Chan, a CE, as an ‘all-rounder’ for coping with his heavy workload while also serving as a caregiver for his mother (Salvation Army Palliative Care Services 2023). Furthermore, the article asserted that Mr. Chan was not an isolated example of a CE in Hong Kong; having to take care of one’s family, career, and the elderly is akin to being a ‘sandwich’, with layers of responsibilities weighing them down. Another article featured in Ming Pao reported the painful transformation of Hong Kong actor Bowie Lam from denial to acceptance while caring for his dying mother (Kei 2024). *“I never saw it as sacrificing my career. I am only living life well. I am just a normal person doing what normal people do,”* Bowie said. The article further emphasized that Bowie’s journey mirrors the struggles of thousands of silent family caregivers by interviewing noted geriatric psychiatrist Dr. Chan, who told the outlet that *“His [Bowie’s] story is not about celebrity; it is about the 300,000 ordinary Hongkongers currently relearning how to love through loss”* (Kei 2024). Similarly, speaking about Yu-ha, a 62-year-old housewife and caregiver providing care for her mother with dementia, Wong Chi-Kit, Assistant Director of the Social Services Department of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, told the outlet that *“Yu-ha represents thousands of invisible heroes”* (Kei 2024). *“From celebrity children to ordinary citizens, an entire generation is quietly sacrificing careers and well-being to care for aging parents,”* remarked the journalist (Kei 2024).

3.6. Culturally Influenced Challenges

Culturally influenced challenges emerged as another prominent theme from 11 newspaper articles. This theme predominantly centered on how the socially ingrained Confucian tenet of filial piety had led to the internalization of caregiving, with seeking help seen as a sign of failure to fulfill an inherent duty, thereby stigmatizing help-seeking. The sub-theme of the feminization of caregiving underscores how women in particular bear the disproportionate burden of caregiving, often sacrificing their careers and mental health to meet societal expectations.

3.6.1. Internalization of Caregiving

The self-perception of caregivers is primarily shaped by Confucian culture, which accentuates the profound importance of filial piety, molding caregivers to believe that caregiving is their “inherent responsibility” or “duty” and that they should act in compliance with sociocultural norms that prioritize filial piety over personal needs. In an interview with Ming Pao, one caregiver stated that caring for her mother was challenging, but she had been taught since childhood that family was very important and that *“Mummy is the*

only person in the world that I have" (Unnamed Reporter 2024d). Another caregiver told ToPick that she avoided social interactions after she was left physically and emotionally exhausted (Unnamed Reporter 2023a). Echoing these experiences, one article in AM730 read, *"With the aging population, many workers are caregivers, balancing jobs with the responsibility of caring for elderly relatives. They strive to uphold filial piety, but, lacking support, the pressure they endure is nearing a breaking point"* (Wai 2019).

In the interview with Ming Pao, Mr. Wong Chi-kit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong stated that, compared to supporting the elderly, Hong Kong society has historically paid less attention to supporting caregivers (Kei 2024). This is because, in traditional values, *"caring for parents is a child's duty, and spouses have a responsibility to care for each other."* When caregiving is taken for granted, society often overlooks the hardships and silent pressures that caregivers endure. Mr. Wong explained that such traditional views subtly influence how caregivers perceive themselves: For caregivers, complaining about stress to others often leads to feelings of guilt. As a result, they frequently neglect self-care, allowing physical and mental stress to accumulate. By the time others notice, caregivers are often already overwhelmed.

3.6.2. Stigma in Help-Seeking

Four articles reported cases in which the caregiver or the care recipient refused to seek help due to stigma. For instance, Ming Pao reported the case of Ms. Chau, who was caring for her elderly mother with dementia while battling stage 4 breast cancer (Unnamed Reporter 2024d). She told the outlet that her mother was very resistant to being admitted to a care home, as she had heard that residents were subjected to ill treatment at homes for older adults. Her mother also resisted hiring a foreign domestic helper as she did not accept the presence of outsiders in her home. As a result, Ms. Chau believed that forcing her mother to move into a residential care home might make her unhappy and affect her life expectancy, and she would feel guilty if something happened: *"There is no need to wait for something to happen before feeling guilty."* The experience or fear of guilt in such situations is not uncommon. Social workers from the Hong Kong Christian Service told Singtao Headlines, citing the Caregivers' Dilemma and Stress During the Pandemic survey, that nearly 40% of caregivers reported feeling guilty about their caregiving roles, believing they are not fulfilling their responsibilities well, and about half experience moderate to severe depression (C. J. Sum 2024).

Nonetheless, Ms. Chau ultimately sought help from the Jockey Club Carer Support Program (Unnamed Reporter 2024d). However, she said that she has now reduced her use of the program and switched to the Community Care Service Voucher Scheme for the Elderly provided by the Social Welfare Department. She explained that although there is a charge for the program provided by the Social Welfare Department, she felt she should give up her place *"so that more people can participate in the program (for caregivers)."*

Another article in AM730 presented the case of Grandma Lau, who has been caring for her spouse with cognitive impairment, to exemplify caregivers' hesitance to seek assistance due to the stigma attached to their roles or the complexity of welfare policies, choosing instead to endure immense pressure in silence (Wong 2025). Grandma Lau did not seek help due to the fear that she might trouble others until one day her husband went missing and was found wandering outside our (the writer's) office.

One article in HK01 featured the voice of Angel, a fellow caregiver and experienced healthcare worker, who urged caregivers to speak up when facing difficulties and not be ashamed to seek help, as society has paid increasing attention in recent years to the issue of caregiver support (Kan 2024). In the interview, Angel shared, *"Believe that you will find reliable support to share your burdens."*

3.6.3. Feminization of Caregiving

The social expectations that women are ‘liable’ to perform caregiving roles emerged from four articles. One article in HK01 cited a 2021 survey conducted by the School of Health Sciences at the Caritas Institute of Higher Education that involved 409 caregivers of patients with advanced illnesses, of whom 70% were women ([Unnamed Reporter 2023b](#)). The additional caregiving responsibilities of women are evident in that 50% of the cohort’s respondents were employed caregivers, with 62% working more than 40 h per week in addition to caregiving. Another HK01 article, citing the same survey, reported that over 70% of respondents were married women and that 75% were aged 50 or older ([Y. M. Sum 2023](#)).

Similarly, another article published in Inmedia cited the 2023 “Voices of Working Caregivers” survey conducted by Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service, in which 86.7% of the 118 surveyed caregivers were women ([Unnamed Reporter 2024e](#)). Over 66% of the respondents in this cohort were full-time workers, while part-time caregivers worked an average of 10 to 30 h per week. The survey also revealed that the highest proportion of respondents cared for their children, followed by parents and spouses. Notably, over 46% of respondents were responsible for caring for two or more individuals. Additionally, about 31% of respondents had been caregivers for 4 to 6 years, while 17.7% had been caregivers for 10 to 15 years.

In an interview with HK01, Dr. Ferrick Chu Chung-Man, Executive Director of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), concurred that most caregivers for patients with advanced illnesses are women and suggested adjusting gender roles to distribute responsibilities more evenly, allowing men to share some of the burden and preventing women from bearing the stress alone, thereby alleviating their mental strain ([Y. M. Sum 2023](#)).

While these articles highlight the disproportionate burden of caregiving roles borne by women and, in many cases, alongside their employment, many women in Hong Kong are unable to work due to the need to care for children or older adults, limiting the available workforce. This was exemplified by a grassroots citizen interviewed by Wen Wei Po at a poverty alleviation summit who expressed her desire to work and earn money but lamented the lack of childcare, suggesting that schools extend dismissal times to 6 PM to give mothers like her more time to hold full-time jobs ([Kai 2025](#)). The same article cited another citizen who was unable to work as she had to take care of her son with special learning needs along with raising a younger son. She criticized the lack of subsidies for caregivers and the absence of concern for their situation.

3.7. Workplace Complexities

Twelve studies highlighted the challenges of navigating the dual role of caring and paid employment, characterized by the pervasive lack of CFWPs, despite the high demand identified in the previously discussed themes. Although two newspaper articles reported advocacy for equal opportunities, this was limited to the EOC. Thus, this theme captures a different dimension of the tension between the emerging social expectation of achieving financial independence and the historical social expectation of fulfilling caregiving obligations among Hong Kong caregivers, captured in Theme 1.

3.7.1. Lack of CFWPs in the Workplace

As highlighted in an article featured in Sing Tao Headlines, CEs in Hong Kong face challenges due to long working hours ([Unnamed Reporter 2017](#)). Eight articles highlighted the lack of CFWPs or the challenges arising from their absence in addressing caregivers’ needs. For example, one Ming Pao article described the case of Mr. Chan, who had to take temporary leave, arrive late, or leave early during work to provide care for his mother, as

his company did not provide casual leave or care leave (Salvation Army Palliative Care Services 2023). He could only take major leave or unpaid leave at his supervisor's discretion.

Similarly, Wai (2019) reported findings of another survey in AM730 which found that over 60% of respondents had to take unscheduled leave, arrive late, or leave early to care for elderly individuals, as most companies either did not offer or allowed supervisors to approve paid or unpaid caregiver leave at their discretion. In fact, 20% of respondents had considered resigning to take care of their elderly relatives. This creates a dilemma: working makes it difficult to adequately care for one's family, while resigning imposes severe financial stress. Mr. Chan, as mentioned in the Ming Pao article, also considered quitting his job to care for his elderly mother, but this would cause him heavy financial pressure (Salvation Army Palliative Care Services 2023). Another caregiver interviewed by ToPick reported that since she had to forego her stable job and income to focus on her caregiving role, the family's entire financial burden was concentrated on her husband (Unnamed Reporter 2023a). In addition, one etnet article argued that, contrary to assumptions, the end of caregiving duties does not necessarily bring relief, as it often marks the beginning of a complex grieving process, with individuals frequently experiencing employment barriers while re-entering the workforce, especially middle-aged/older individuals (Ning 2023).

Furthermore, two HK01 articles reported that 80% of employed respondents of the "Family Caregivers of Patients with Advanced Illnesses" survey conducted by the School of Health Science at Caritas Institute of Higher Education experienced extra stress due to caregiving duties, with over a third (36.9%) believing that workplace discrimination against caregivers was common (Y. M. Sum 2023; Unnamed Reporter 2023b). Most CEs said their workplaces lacked CFPWs, which led to challenges with daily care tasks and with accompanying patients to medical appointments. Respondents suggested improvements in practical support, leave arrangements, and the use of technology to alleviate burdens.

One article in Oriental Daily reported the findings of a 2023 survey conducted by Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service Center, which showed that 80.5% of respondents would disclose their role as a caregiver in the workplace but expected the company to provide flexible working hours; acceptance from their supervisors and coworkers was equally important (Unnamed Reporter 2024f). Similarly, in another Inmedia article reporting the findings of the same survey, an interviewee caring for her son echoed these needs and expectations while emphasizing the non-monetary benefits of working for CEs (Unnamed Reporter 2024e). She told the outlet that work helps her relieve emotional stress and that she hopes employers will be more accommodating to caregivers.

Although a 2019 article in AM730 reported that many companies have reportedly begun developing employee benefit policies to support working caregivers, offering flexible working hours, paid caregiver leave, caregiver travel allowances, and sharing experiences and community resources (Wai 2019), more recent studies did not provide any discourse on whether such initiatives have been implemented.

3.7.2. Advocacy for Equal Opportunities

As reported in one HK01 article, the EOC has long advocated for comprehensive policies to support caregivers, urging the government to significantly expand respite care and other support services to give caregivers much-needed breathing space (Unnamed Reporter 2023b). Chu Man-kin, the chairperson of EOC, expressed hope that caregivers' burdens will ease—and that their lives may even improve beyond pre-COVID conditions as Hong Kong moves toward post-pandemic recovery (Unnamed Reporter 2023b). A year later, the same outlet reported EOC's hope to enhance public awareness of cognitive disorders, to create a workplace that is friendly to individuals with cognitive disorders, and to call on employers to support employees with cognitive disorders and working caregivers

([Unnamed Reporter 2024g](#)). The article asserted that this not only helps avoid legal violations but also fosters a caring societal image for organizations, making it a wise strategy.

4. Discussion

This study examined how caregivers are represented in Hong Kong newspaper articles and identified five interrelated themes: governmentality and biopower, social support, denormalization, culturally influenced challenges, and workplace complexities. Central to these representations is the positioning of caregivers as regulated subjects, governed by bureaucratic eligibility criteria, standardized assessments, and fragmented welfare provisions. Although government-led support schemes exist, media portrayals suggest that demand for respite care, mental health services, and financial assistance remains largely unmet due to limited resources, restricted access to information, and complex administrative procedures. Consequently, most reported support for caregivers appears to be provided by NGOs rather than the government directly.

4.1. Caregivers as Moral Subjects

Hong Kong Newspaper articles often frame caregivers through celebratory narratives that portray them as “invisible heroes.” While such portrayals acknowledge caregivers’ moral worth, they also normalize self-sacrifice, negate invisible labor (e.g., emotional work and unpaid family care), and obscure caregivers’ structural needs while masking systemic underfunding, weak labor protections, state abandonment, and policy shortcomings ([Holland 2025](#); [Jackline 2025](#); [Jiang et al. 2024](#); [Sharma and Singh 2025](#)). This narrative, alongside Confucian norms of filial duty, can also reinforce a culture of silence and endurance to stigmatize help-seeking behavior and foster the expectation that caregiving be absorbed as a personal, noble moral duty ([Jiang et al. 2026](#); [Yu et al. 2025](#)). Overall, such narratives can inadvertently marginalize caregivers’ identities, lived experiences, and contributions ([Ng and Indran 2021a, 2021b](#)).

Our analysis also indicates that such discourses on the normalization of caregiving as an individual moral obligation disproportionately affect women, who, according to surveys cited in the newspaper, comprise over 80% of caregivers in Hong Kong. Also, as evident in the newspaper discourse, females often face compound pressures when balancing employment and caregiving responsibilities in the absence of robust CFWP. Recent studies corroborate Hong Kong’s informal caregiving landscape as being heavily gendered, with females expected to shoulder the majority of the caregiving burden ([Chui et al. 2026](#); [Yi et al. 2024](#)). [Chui et al. \(2026\)](#) reported that among older informal caregivers aged $\geq 50+$, 86.5% were females, whereas [Yi et al. \(2024\)](#) reported that females comprised 65.7% of the informal caregivers of individuals with disabilities and chronic diseases in Hong Kong, with both studies underscoring the high socioeconomic cost and suboptimal personal well-being due to this disproportionate burden on females. Not surprisingly, the newspapers included in the current study heavily relied on examples of female caregivers experiencing intense guilt, self-erasure, and psychological distress, often suffering in isolation until a tragedy made their struggles publicly visible.

4.2. Welfare Conditionality

Our findings are complementary to the CADA of Hong Kong’s newspapers reported by [Yip and Pang \(2025\)](#), in which a neoliberal interpretation of Confucian filial piety in the narratives shifted responsibility for caregiving from government to family, which, in turn, relied heavily on community support. This shifting responsibility is facilitated, if not caused, by rigid bureaucratic requirements for eligibility for government assistance and by limited access to and availability of information. In our sample, examples of rigid bu-

reaucratic requirements for caregivers, such as providing ≥ 80 h/month of care, qualifying for low-income household status, or needing to travel to different districts to avail of assistance, were common. For a full-time caregiver or a CE, a high administrative burden such as organizing the documentation to prove that various regulatory and discretionary criteria are met can itself be a deterrent to seeking governmental assistance due to time constraints or the inability to leave the care recipient on their own (Herd et al. 2013; Herd and Moynihan 2019). When viewed through the Foucauldian lens of governmentality and biopower, the discourse emerging in Hong Kong's newspapers portrays state welfare mechanisms as regulatory gatekeepers rather than empowering support structures and caregivers as "regulated subjects." Such findings are not surprising, given Hong Kong's long-standing non-interventionist economic philosophy characterized by fostering a culture of self-reliance or "citizen responsibility" and reducing public expenditure (Wang 2018; Wong et al. 2010).

Criticisms of Hong Kong's state welfare policies as overly complicated, reactive, fragmented, and inadequate to meet overwhelming public demand were also prominent and explicit in newspapers' discourse. Such criticism is also evident in academic and grey literature. Several researchers have previously noted that the available financial assistance, psychiatric services, or respite services do not adequately address the needs of caregivers, contributing to financial strain and burnout (Chan et al. 2010, 2021; Lee et al. 2025b; Tsien and Ng 2010; Wong et al. 2012; Yiu et al. 2020). Similarly, a consultancy study report by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Consulting Team noted that several governmental schemes, such as care services for older adults, are fragmented and reactive rather than preventive (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University Consulting Team 2022).

Moreover, given the stigmatization of social welfare through Government–business alignment (Chan 2010; Yu 2021), it is not uncommon for welfare recipients to forego the benefits and become self-reliant (Wong and Lou 2009). Consequently, family members absorb much of the caregiving burden with support from a small network of friends, neighbors, and religious organizations (Chan et al. 2023; Cheng et al. 2013; Lou et al. 2011). Therefore, the media representation of the social welfare system for caregivers observed in this study aligns with current academic discourse. Surprisingly, though, most newspaper articles urged the government to increase resources and develop policies (including CFWP) to support caregivers, quoting ordinary citizens, caregivers, legislators, academics, social workers, healthcare professionals, and the EOC, which deviates from the prevailing ideology of self-reliance (Chan 2010). This call for greater governmental support, both in terms of financial assistance and policies, has also been echoed in the broader academic literature (Fan and Yung 2023; Lee et al. 2025a; Lo et al. 2025).

In line with the recommendation for cash incentives for caregivers (Fan and Yung 2023), a recent study by Guo et al. (2025) found that a larger proportion of families with care-dependent individuals in Hong Kong had a monthly family income below the median than families without care-dependent individuals (65.11% vs. 50.83%). Interestingly, less than half of families had access to informal or formal social services from the Government, NGOs, or religious groups irrespective of care-dependent status (Guo et al. 2025), which can indicate the lack of adequate social services, lack of adequate information to avail social services, or strict eligibility restrictions limiting the number of families eligible for applying for and availing support through social services. Our findings suggest that all the above barriers to caregiving support may also apply to caregivers in Hong Kong.

In addition, Guo et al. (2025) found no association between participation in social services and caregivers' physical and mental health, as well as their life satisfaction. This observation is somewhat paradoxical, as access to social services is generally associated with a reduced caregiver's burden in much of the Western world (Arlotto et al. 2022; Funk 2019;

Olsson et al. 2016; Rodakowski et al. 2012; Stephanou 2023; Theng et al. 2023). Guo et al. (2025) argued that the stigma surrounding caregiver burden, stemming from the social expectation in Asian cultures to silently accept caregiving obligations as a duty, may discourage caregivers from seeking social support services. This theme also emerged prominently in the current study.

4.3. Workplace Invisibility

The intersection of postcolonial neoliberalism and Confucian ethos has been instrumental in shaping Hong Kong's socio-economic culture with expectations of high workforce participation while shouldering traditional family care obligations (Dai 2025; Leung et al. 2019). However, the double burden of work and family responsibilities, combined with the pervasive lack of CFWPs in Hong Kong, as highlighted by the newspaper articles included in the current study, creates intense structural tension for CEs. Newspaper coverage indicated that CEs largely relied on community support, informal arrangements, supervisor discretion, and unscheduled leave to fulfill their work and care obligations, with rare opportunities for self-care. Thus, the immense burden experienced by CEs remains largely invisible in corporate discourse.

These findings provide support and qualitative depth for earlier studies on CFWPs in Hong Kong. Lee et al. (2024) showed that about 76% of Hong Kong CEs chose not to disclose their CE status, the most common reason being the perceived inappropriateness of sharing private matters at work, followed by CEs not needing help, an unsympathetic environment, fear of being misunderstood, and fear of unfair treatment. In the study by Lai (2023), while more than 70% of Hong Kong CEs had utilized the available CFWPs, over one-third believed that discrimination against caregivers was prevalent in the workplace. Some attributed this to employers' expectations of total employee commitment, leaving no room for personal considerations. Others cited inadequate work–life balance and an overemphasis on business interests as contributors to their burden. All the above factors leave CEs struggling to balance their dual roles as caregivers and paid employees (Lee et al. 2025b).

Moreover, Lee et al. (2025b) demonstrated that CFWPs in Hong Kong were primarily limited to discretionary annual leave, and upon exhausting their annual leave, they could take unpaid leave. In addition, a thematic analysis of the opinions of CEs, employers, and healthcare professionals highlighted a severe lack of quality information and resources for CEs (Lee et al. 2025b). The lack of robust CFWP in Hong Kong, along with suboptimal social services, the social norm of individuals shouldering most caregiving responsibilities, and perceptions of stigma associated with seeking help, can have a crippling impact on individuals juggling caregiving and paid employment. For instance, Keita Fakeye et al. (2023) observed that one in four CEs experienced work absences (absenteeism) or reduced productivity when working due to caregiving responsibilities (presenteeism) over a one-month period. Furthermore, caregiving was found to reduce work productivity by a third, which costs businesses an average of \$5600 per employee (Keita Fakeye et al. 2023). Thus, the incentives of developing robust CFWP in Hong Kong span the individuals (promote well-being and reduce workplace conflicts), organizations (reduce absenteeism and turnover, increase productivity, and reduce expenditure), and the society at large (more citizens available for participation in the workforce) (Darragh et al. 2015; Lee et al. 2024; Mofidi et al. 2019).

4.4. Limitations

While this study provides important insights into the discursive construction of caregiving discourses in Hong Kong's newspapers, it has some limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the emphasis on power relations and discourses within an FDA can

inherently prioritize structural interpretations over individual agency, thereby overlooking caregivers' lived experiences (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2017). Second, despite efforts to ensure analytical rigor through iterative reading by multiple authors, the interpretive nature of the FDA may introduce subjectivity in coding and analysis (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2017). Third, there is an inherent risk of losing cultural nuances and original linguistic subtleties that convey power dynamics and subjectivity during translation, despite efforts to minimize this through meticulous note-keeping. Fourth, our search strategy yielded only 27 papers over 8 years, indicating that our analysis may be potentially skewed toward dominant discourses. Several other exclusions may also have contributed to this skew. For example, we included only digitally available mainstream media from Hong Kong, which may fail to capture the full spectrum of evolving narratives. Voices in print-only and other media, which often target specific audiences such as migrants, may offer more diverse or counter-hegemonic narratives. Our analysis also excluded social media, which may be more influential in shaping discourses among youths and young adults. In addition, our caregiver-centered search strategy may have excluded portrayals of care recipients, thereby offering an incomplete picture of the overall care discourse in Hong Kong's newspapers. Lastly, nearly half of the included articles (13 out of 27) were from two outlets (HK01 and Oriental Daily), which may skew the findings towards the editorial stance and political leanings of these outlets.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of recent media narratives suggests that tensions between Confucian filial piety and postcolonial neoliberalism, amid Hong Kong's rapidly aging society, create a dilemma for caregivers who must fulfill dual expectations of providing care while striving for financial stability. Hong Kong's non-interventionist, self-reliant economic approach has fostered biopolitical governance with conditional support, the normalization of caregiving, and the stigmatization of help-seeking, exacerbating caregiver burden. These findings deepen understanding of the implicit norms and assumptions that shape public perception and policy discourse on caregiving in Hong Kong, underscoring the need for urgent, substantive, systemic policy reform to address the underlying caregiver burden.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

CE	Caregiver Employees
FDA	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
HKCS	Hong Kong Christian Service
SoCO	Society for Community Organization
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
CFWP	Caregiver-Friendly Workplace Policy

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