

Bicultural resilience among foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong: The interplay of ethnic identity, perceived employer support, and sense of community belonging

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Abstract

Foreign domestic workers (FDWs) constitute a vital yet socially marginalized workforce in Hong Kong. To date, limited attention has been paid to the resources that foster their psychological resilience. Drawing on ethnic identity, bicultural competence framework, and ecological model of resilience, this study examined the effect of ethnic identity and host-society resources—specifically perceived employer support and sense of belonging to the community—on the psychological resilience among 398 Filipino FDWs in Hong Kong. Using structural equation modelling, the findings indicated that ethnic identity, perceived employer support, and host-community belonging independently and positively predicted psychological resilience. The effect of ethnic identity on psychological resilience was heightened when perceived employer support was low. The results highlighted the relational process of resilience building among migration workers in which the effect of ethnic identity is contingent on employer–employee relationships. Implications for practice and policy include the importance of ethnically affirming interventions, inclusive community participation, and relationally oriented employer

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education, calling for a multilevel social work approach to resilience building within labour migration systems.

Keywords: bicultural; psychological resilience; migrant workers; Hong Kong; ethnic identity; employers' support; sense of community belonging.

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Introduction

Foreign domestic workers (FDWs) are individuals who migrate across borders to provide paid household and caregiving labour, often under live-in or live-out arrangements, in pursuit of higher incomes ([International Labour Organization \[ILO\] 2021](#); [Bonnet et al., 2022](#)). Existing research documents the structural vulnerabilities faced by FDWs, including blurred work–life boundaries, restrictive living conditions, and experiences of discrimination (EOD) and social exclusion (e.g. [Ho et al., 2023](#); [Sweileh 2024](#)). However, far less is known about the psychosocial resources that support psychological resilience among FDWs. Guided by the ethnic identity theory, bicultural competence framework, and ecological model of resilience ([Berry 2006](#); [Phinney and Ong 2007](#); [Nguyen and Benet-Martínez 2013](#); [Zimmerman 2013](#)), this quantitative study examined how ethnic identity and host-society social resources, namely perceived employers' support and sense of host-community belonging, interacted to shape psychological resilience among Filipino FDWs in Hong Kong. We chose Hong Kong for this study because reliance on FDWs in various advanced Asian economies had intensified in response to the growing number of women in local households taking up full-time job ([ILO 2021](#); [Fordjour and Chan 2024](#)). Considering Hong Kong as one of the first regions in Asia to formally admit Filipino domestic workers into private households through the international labour policy ([Labour Department 2023](#)), the city provided a strategically important context for examining the well-being of FDWs.

Challenges of foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong

FDWs form a substantial proportion of Hong Kong's population, accounting for nearly 65 percent of its multicultural residents, with Filipinos representing the largest group ([Home Affairs Department 2023](#); [Immigration Department 2023](#)). Compared with many Asian contexts, Hong Kong provides relatively progressive labour protections for FDWs, including minimum wage standards, statutory holidays, and paid annual leave ([Islam and Cojocar 2015](#); [Labour Department 2023](#)). Yet, FDWs continue to face

structural disadvantage rooted in their intersecting positions as migrant workers and domestic labourers. Exclusion from permanent residency pathways, coupled with the mandatory live-in requirement, frequently results in overcrowded and closely surveilled living conditions (e.g. [Bagley et al., 1997](#); [Ladegaard 2013](#); [Terrighena and Barron 2020](#)). In addition, the two-week rule following contract termination discourages reporting of mistreatment by FDWs ([Chung and Mak 2020](#); [Lui et al., 2021](#); [Sumerlin et al., 2024](#)). On the other hand, research also used the resilience lens to discuss how FDWs positive mental health and coping capacities could be shaped under multi-layered support structures such as their religious, occupational, and cultural community environments ([Yeung et al., 2021](#); [Garabiles et al., 2022](#); [Choy et al., 2022](#); [Liao and Gan 2024](#); [Wong et al., 2024](#); [Sumerlin et al., 2025a, 2025b](#); [Lai et al., 2026](#), under review). Nevertheless, limited scholarship discussed how heritage and host-society social resources interacted to promote FDWs' psychological resilience against their experiences of social exclusion and marginalization in Hong Kong ([Fordjour and Chan 2024](#)).

Theoretical framework

This study employed the ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and ecological model of resilience frameworks to investigate how various factors collectively and interactively contribute to FDWs' psychological resilience. We conceptualized psychological resilience as FDWs' adaptive capacity emerged through the dynamic interaction between their internal and external system resources ([Zimmerman 2013](#); [Liem et al., 2021](#); [Fordjour and Chan 2024](#)). Internal resources stemmed from their cultural attachment and understanding of the meaning of their ethnic membership ([Phinney and Ong 2007](#)). External supportive systems, on the other hand, referred to FDWs relationships with their local employers and the larger host-society ([Nguyen and Benet Martínez 2013](#); [Zimmerman 2013](#)).

Ethnic identity as a cultural-based psychological resource

We defined the cultural-based internal resource of FDW as their sense of ethnic identity, defined as the emotional attachment, affirmation, and reflective understanding of own cultural heritage ([Phinney and Ong 2007](#)). For marginalized migrant populations, strong sense of ethnic identity provided meaning and purpose in life amid discrimination and social exclusion in the host society ([Phinney and Ong 2007](#); [Rudmin 2009](#); [Balidemaj and Small 2019](#)). Shared cultural practices and community networks buffered migration-related stressors and fostered a sense of 'home away from home' among FDWs ([Umaña-Taylor and Hill 2020](#); [Lai et al., 2022, 2024](#)).

However, despite the strong theoretical conceptualization, comparatively little attention had been paid to testing ethnic identity as a potential resilience-promoting psychological resource among FDWs in Hong Kong. To our advanced understanding of this culturally grounded resource, the present study examined the role of ethnic identity in promoting psychological resilience among FDWs.

Host-society relational resources

We hypothesized that FDWs' resilience was shaped by their host-society relational resources on multiple levels, comprising (a) perceived employer support and (b) sense of belonging to the broader Hong Kong community. Perceived employer support constituted a critical micro-level relational resource for live-in FDWs, as their relationships with employers directly affected their daily living conditions and emotional safety (Chung and Mak 2020; Liao and Gan 2024). Supportive interactions with employers facilitated adaptive engagement and reduced acculturative stress among FDWs (Chung and Mak 2020; Lai *et al.*, 2026, under review; Liao and Gan 2024). On the other hand, sense of community belonging to the host society reflected a macro-level form of relational embeddedness, encompassing inclusion in community spaces and public life beyond the domestic household (Chan and Latham 2021; Estrada-Moreno *et al.*, 2025; Lai *et al.*, 2026, under review). In Hong Kong, FDWs congregated in public spaces throughout the Central Business District on their designated rest day (Chan and Latham 2021). The society recognition of key public sites for this purpose provided a platform for FDWs to sustain ethnic peer networks and to participate in culturally meaningful activities, which in turn, foster their sense of belonging to the Hong Kong community (Lai *et al.*, 2026, under review).

Moderating role of host-society relational resources

Based on the bicultural resilience perspective, resilience among FDWs should be conceptualized as the dynamic product of cross-level synergy—arising from the interaction of ethnic identity and host-society resources (Berry 2006; Phinney and Ong 2007; Nguyen and Benet-Martínez 2013; Zimmerman 2013). However, recent literatures underscore a persistent absence of theory-driven, ecological analyses that examine how promotive factors across own cultural and host-society levels jointly shape the mental health of multicultural groups (e.g. Fordjour and Chan 2024). Seeing the knowledge gap, we further proposed that host-society relational resources enhanced the positive association between ethnic identity and psychological resilience, offering additional evidence on how and under

what contextual conditions FDWs’ psychological resilience could be strengthened.

Conceptual model, objectives, and corresponding hypotheses

The conceptual model (Fig. 1) integrated ethnic identity and host-society relational resources within a relational–ecological framework of psychological resilience. It specified both direct and interaction pathways through which FDWs’ resilience was shaped. Furthermore, successful navigation and adaptation to adversity could further affirm the meaning, value, and continuity of one’s ethnic affiliations (Phinney and Ong 2007; Zimmerman 2013), thereby creating a potential reciprocal feedback loop between resilience and ethnic identity. Owing to the cross-sectional design of the present study, only the unidirectional pathways specified in the model were examined in relation to the study objectives and corresponding hypotheses:

- Objective 1:** To examine the association between ethnic identity and psychological resilience among FDWs (Corresponding hypothesis 1: A stronger sense of ethnic identity was associated with higher psychological resilience).
- Objective 2:** To examine the association between host-society relational resources and psychological resilience (Corresponding hypothesis 2.1: Greater perceived employer support was associated with higher

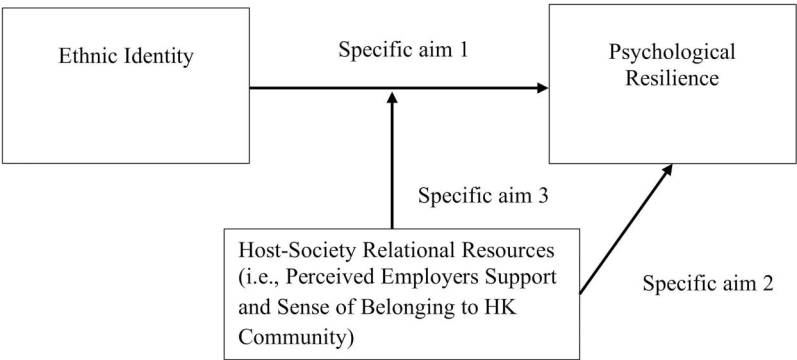


Figure 1. Conceptual model. A schematic diagram illustrating the hypothesized relationships between Ethnic Identity, Host-Society Relational Resources, and Psychological Resilience. Specific Aim 1 examines the direct relationship between Ethnic Identity and Psychological Resilience. Specific Aim 2 evaluates the direct relationship between Host-Society Relational Resources (comprising Perceived Employers’ Support and Sense of Belonging to the HK Community) and Psychological Resilience. Specific Aim 3 investigates the moderating role of these relational resources on the relationship between Ethnic Identity and Psychological Resilience.

psychological resilience; Corresponding hypothesis 2.2: Greater sense of belonging to the Hong Kong community was associated with higher psychological resilience).

Objective 3: To examine the moderating effect of host-society relational resources on the association ethnic identity and psychological resilience (Corresponding hypothesis 3.1: Greater perceived employer support strengthened the positive association between ethnic identity and psychological resilience; Corresponding hypothesis 3.2: Greater sense of belonging to the Hong Kong community strengthened the positive association between ethnic identity and psychological resilience).

Methods

This research adopted a cross-sectional survey design to test the proposed conceptual model (Fig. 1) and relevant hypotheses. Prior to administering the survey, we obtained ethical approval from the human research committee at the corresponding university. Written informed consent was collected before the participants filled out the survey.

Participants and sampling

All participants ($n = 398$, female = 100 percent) were Filipino FDWs working in Hong Kong during the time of the study. The respondents' age ranged from 24 to 63 years old. Their years of working in Hong Kong ranged from 0 to 31 years, with an average time of 7.35 years. Each respondent had an average of 4.17 dependents at their home country.

The inclusion criteria of the participants were Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong aged 18 or above. We employed a non-random snowball sampling as there was no sampling frame of foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong. We started with a seed of 24 Filipino domestic helpers living at different areas in Hong Kong (Qiu *et al.*, 2012), and leveraged on their social networks for participants' recruitment. We invited the seed participants to share their place of gathering during their day off, and we asked them to introduce us to their friends at their gathering venues in Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories (i.e. Hong Kong's three major territories). Our research team then followed our participants and administered a paper and pen questionnaires to their friends.

As rapport was established with our seed participants, we did not encounter significant challenges in recruitment. After completion of the survey, we gave each respondent a small gift coupon as a token of appreciation. Each participant referred us to an average of five to six of their peers in their social network, and we continued to snowball our participants with an average of three waves.

Measurements

All measurements in this study were standardized scale. The survey was administered in English considering that Filipinos in Hong Kong has a high English proficiency. The reliability and construct validity of the scale were tested with the seed participants ($n = 24$) to demonstrate its psychometric properties and socio-cultural applicability of the scale. We further examined the scales' psychometric properties and social-cultural validity of the scales among our survey participants using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Psychological resilience

Psychological resilience was assessed using the Personal Factors subscale of the Protective Factors for Resilience Scale (PFRS) (Harms et al., 2017). In the original validation study, this subscale demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq 0.80$) and supported construct validity, with confirmatory factor analyses confirming the proposed factor structure and expected associations with related constructs, including positive associations with well-being and adaptive coping and negative associations with psychological distress. Although the PFRS has not previously been examined among FDWs or highly marginalized migrant labour populations, the Personal Factors subscale assesses internal psychological resources that are theoretically central to resilience across cultural and migration contexts (Terrana and Al-Delaimy 2023). We further examine the scale's psychometric properties of this scale among our current participants using structural equation modelling (SEM).

Ethnic identity

Ethnic identity was assessed using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney and Ong 2007). The six-item version was used, with responses rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Higher summed scores indicated stronger ethnic identity. Research demonstrated good internal consistency for the MEIM in general and multi-ethnic population samples, with Cronbach's α values typically ranging over 0.80 (Phinney and Ong 2007; Homma et al., 2014). Evidence for construct validity includes a well-replicated two-factor structure (exploration and commitment) and theoretically consistent associations with psychological adjustment outcomes (Phinney and Ong 2007; Homma et al., 2014). Although the MEIM had not been validated specifically among FDWs, it had been psychometrically validated and widely used in adult and immigrant samples, with studies supporting its

reliability, factor structure, and measurement invariance across diverse racial, ethnic, and immigrant groups (e.g. [Phinney and Ong 2007](#); [Brown et al., 2014](#); [Maehler et al., 2019](#)).

Perceived social support (employers)

Perceived social support from employers was measured from Brief Perceived Social Support Questionnaire (F-SozU K-6; [Lin et al., 2019](#)). The scale consisted of six items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not true at all to 5 = very true). A higher score indicated greater perceived social support from employers. A validation study across four countries in general and working adult samples reported internal consistency, with Cronbach's α values over 0.80, along with strong evidence of convergent validity through associations with mental well-being and stress indicators ([Lin et al., 2019](#)). In the present study, items were minimally adapted to reflect the employer–employee relationship among foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong. Although originally developed to assess general perceived social support, the scale captured core supportive functions (e.g. emotional and instrumental support), supporting its theory-driven applicability to employment contexts relevant.

Sense of belonging to Hong Kong community

Sense of belonging was assessed using the Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS; [Peterson et al., 2008](#)). The eight-item scale used a 5-point Likert response format (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree) and assessed perceptions of community membership, emotional connection, and belonging. In the original validation study and subsequent adult community samples, the BSCS demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's α coefficients >0.90) and strong construct validity, as evidenced by its positive associations with well-being, social connectedness, and community engagement ([Peterson et al., 2008](#)). In the present study, item wording was adapted to reflect participants' sense of belonging to the Hong Kong community. Although not developed specifically for migrant worker populations, items in BSCS are aligned with the notion of social integration in the bicultural competence framework ([Nguyen and Benet-Martínez 2013](#)), supporting its theoretical relevance for examining host-society sense of belonging among migrant groups.

Perceived discrimination

Perceived everyday discrimination was assessed using the EOD scale ([Krieger et al., 2005](#)). Nine items captured the frequency of discriminatory experiences in daily life on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = never to 5 = nearly

every day). Higher summed scores indicated greater perceived discrimination. In the original validation study and subsequent applications in general population samples, the EOD demonstrated good internal consistency, with reported Cronbach's α coefficients ranging from 0.74 to 0.87, and strong construct validity, evidenced by its associations with psychological distress and stress-related outcomes (Krieger et al., 2005). In prior studies of migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, perceived everyday discrimination scales have demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.85$) and strong construct validity, evidenced by theoretically consistent associations with psychological distress, stress, and mental health outcomes (Sumerlin et al., 2025a, 2025b).

Covariates

Covariates were the total number of dependents from home, age, and years of working on Hong Kong.

Data analysis

We used Mplus v8 (Kline 2011) to analyze the data using SEM. We first performed exploratory analysis to understand the data set by generating descriptive statistics and covariance matrix of the collected information. EFA was conducted as a preliminary step to assess whether the original factor structures were replicated in the present sample, given the distinct cultural and employment context of FDWs. In the EFA, we specified a maximum rotation of two factor models for each measurement considering the relatively few items in the scales, i.e. less than 10 items per measurement. Chi-square statistics of the one factor versus the two factor models were compared. Theoretical justification and factor loadings were also considered to make the final decision.

Then, a two-stage modelling technique for SEM was used. In the first step of the modelling, we established a CFA model based on the EFA findings. Global fit statistics were used to evaluate the CFA model (Iacobucci 2010): $X^2/df \leq 3$, standardized root mean square close to 0, root mean square of approximation (RMSEA) close to 0, comparative fit index/Tucker-Lewis index (CFI/TLI) close to 0.95. Errors were correlated based on modification indexes (i.e. items with modification indexes greater than 40 were considered), theoretical assumptions, and the order of the items within a scale.

In the second step, the SEMs was built based on the CFA. First, we estimated a main effect model (Model 0). We then estimated two structural equation models with the interaction terms (Model 1: ethnic identity $\times$ perceived employers' and ethnic identity $\times$ sense of Hong Kong community belonging). SEMs with interaction effects were estimated with a

random effect and a maximum likelihood estimator with robust standard errors using a numerical integration algorithm (Muthén and Muthén 2017). Log-likelihood test was used to assess the relative fit of the interaction models (Maslowsky et al., 2015). A statistically significant log-likelihood ratio test (D) suggested that the interaction effect models (Model 2) is better than the main effect model (Model 1) (Maslowsky et al., 2015). The split-sample approach was not employed due to sample size constraints ($n = 398$), which would have resulted in insufficient statistical power for robust estimation of both exploratory and SEM.

Results

Exploratory analysis

Descriptive statistics, the covariance matrix and the values of the means, skewness, and kurtosis of the data are reported as [supplementary materials](#) for the reproduction of the analyses and results. The data matrix was positive definite (Kline 2011). EFA findings on the measurements of perceived discrimination, psychological resilience, and ethnic identity suggested that two-factor solutions yielded slightly better global fit indices compared to the one-factor model. However, inspection of factor loadings in these scales revealed that several items in the second factor had relatively low loadings (e.g. < 0.40), which compromised interpretability and reliability (Cabrera-Nguyen 2010). Considering that the one-factor loadings of these scales are in line with their theoretical assumptions (Krieger et al., 2005; Phinney and Ong 2007; Harms et al., 2017), we retained the one-factor models for these three measurements. For perceived employer support and sense of belonging to the Hong Kong community, there was no meaningful improvement in the fit between one-and two-factor solutions. Thus, all scales were assumed single factor model for consistency with theory and measurement validity.

Confirmation factor analysis measurement model

Table 1 shows the measurement model. Subsequent CFA, i.e. step 1 of the model building, based on the EFA model demonstrated acceptable overall model fit. The chi-square test of model fit was statistically significant, $\chi^2(511) = 1464.23$, $P < .001$, which was common in complex models with large sample sizes (Kline 2011). The RMSEA indicated acceptable fit, $RMSEA = 0.07$. Incremental fit indices were within acceptable ranges, with $CFI/TLI = 0.91/0.91$. Information criteria values were $AIC = 33859.31$, $BIC = 34329.71$, and sample-size adjusted $BIC = 33955.29$.

Residuals were correlated among indicators loading on the same latent construct and were done so to address potential item ordering or shared

Table 1. Estimates for factor loadings, residuals and error correlations of the measurement model.

Indicator	Items reliability	Factor loadings			Measurement errors		
		Unstd.	SE	Std.	Unstd.	SE	Std.
<i>Experiences of discrimination</i> $\alpha=0.909$							
A1 You are treated with less courtesy than other people are.	0.756	1.000	0.000	0.611	1.460	0.112	0.627
A2 You are treated with less respect than other people are.	0.775	1.021	0.060	0.639	1.314	0.102	0.592
A3 You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.	0.762	1.039	0.093	0.671	1.143	0.090	0.549
A4 People act as if they think you are not smart.	0.836	1.296	0.101	0.847	0.574	0.055	0.283
A5 People act as if they are afraid of you.	0.759	1.081	0.092	0.748	0.797	0.066	0.440
A6 People act as if they think you are dishonest.	0.821	1.200	0.094	0.850	0.482	0.046	0.278
A7 People act as if they're better than you are.	0.805	1.386	0.110	0.827	0.769	0.070	0.316
A8 You are called names or being insulted.	0.734	0.908	0.081	0.689	0.789	0.062	0.525
A9 You are threatened or harassed.	0.590	0.519	0.057	0.526	0.610	0.046	0.723
<i>Psychological resilience</i> $\alpha = 0.909$							
C1 I can deal with whatever challenges come my way.	0.867	1.000	0.000	0.698	1.398	0.108	0.513
C2 I achieve what I set out to do.	0.838	0.951	0.045	0.655	1.601	0.122	0.571
C5 I believe in myself.	0.873	1.092	0.066	0.911	0.325	0.038	0.170
C6 I follow through on plans to achieve my goals.	0.900	1.179	0.070	0.918	0.347	0.042	0.158
C13 When I think about my future, I feel positive.	0.842	1.043	0.065	0.876	0.440	0.042	0.233
<i>Ethnic identity</i> $\alpha = 0.924$							
D1 I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.	0.830	1.000	0.000	0.789	0.541	0.046	0.378
D2 I participated in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, customs, and watching movies.	0.826	1.011	0.059	0.790	0.549	0.047	0.376
D3 I have often talked to other people about the meaning of my ethnicity to my community.	0.868	1.055	0.056	0.851	0.380	0.036	0.277
D4 I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.	0.868	1.010	0.056	0.844	0.368	0.035	0.288
D5 I understand what my ethnic group membership means to me.	0.873	0.978	0.056	0.817	0.424	0.039	0.332
D6 I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.	0.840	0.919	0.057	0.781	0.482	0.042	0.391
<i>Sense of Belonging to HK community</i> $\alpha = 0.954$							
D7 I can get what I need in Hong Kong.	0.814	1.000	0.000	0.770	0.573	0.045	0.408
D8 Hong Kong helps me fulfill my needs.	0.852	1.030	0.059	0.814	0.451	0.036	0.338
D9 I feel like a member of Hong Kong.	0.895	1.168	0.061	0.875	0.347	0.030	0.234
D10 I feel belonged in Hong Kong.	0.928	1.238	0.060	0.929	0.202	0.021	0.136
D11 I have a say about what goes on in Hong Kong.	0.866	1.122	0.061	0.847	0.414	0.034	0.283
D12 People in Hong Kong are good at influencing each other.	0.865	1.093	0.061	0.839	0.419	0.035	0.296
D13 I feel connected to Hong Kong.	0.901	1.150	0.059	0.899	0.262	0.023	0.192

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Indicator	Items reliability	Factor loadings			Measurement errors		
		Unstd.	SE	Std.	Unstd.	SE	Std.
D14 I have a good bond with Chinese people in Hong Kong.	0.823	1.035	0.062	0.793	0.527	0.042	0.372
<i>Perceived Support from Employers</i> $\alpha = 0.926$							
E1 I receive a lot of understanding and security from my employer.	0.807	1.000	0.000	0.810	0.437	0.037	0.344
E2 My employer is someone very close to me whose help I can always count on.	0.902	1.200	0.053	0.913	0.239	0.027	0.166
E3 If I need to, I can borrow something from my employer without any problems.	0.829	1.238	0.077	0.747	1.014	0.081	0.442
E4 I like to do things with my employer.	0.851	1.173	0.066	0.798	0.657	0.054	0.364
E5 When I am sick, I can ask my employer for help without hesitation.	0.867	1.196	0.061	0.849	0.463	0.041	0.279
E6 When I am sad, I know I can turn to my employer.	0.892	1.333	0.071	0.840	0.617	0.055	0.294
					Factor covariances		
					Unstd.	SE	Std.
Experiences of Discrimination					0.868	0.136	1.000
Psychological Resilience					1.329	0.173	1.000
Ethnic Identity					0.891	0.098	1.000
Sense of Belonging to HK Community					0.833	0.094	1.000
Perceived Support from Employers					0.835	0.088	1.000
Psychological Resilience ↗ Experiences of Discrimination					-0.117 ^a	0.060	-0.109
Ethnic Identity ↗ Experiences of Discrimination					-0.123	0.050	-0.140
Ethnic Identity ↗ Psychological Resilience					0.472	0.072	0.434
Sense of Belonging to HK ↗ Experiences of Discrimination					-0.117	0.048	-0.137
Sense of Belonging to HK ↗ Psychological Resilience-Self					0.469	0.070	0.446
Sense of Belonging to HK ↗ Ethnic Identity					0.598	0.065	0.695
Perceived Support from Employers ↗ Experiences of Discrimination					-0.145	0.049	-0.170
Perceived Support from Employers ↗ Psychological Resilience					0.440	0.068	0.418
Perceived Support from Employers ↗ Ethnic Identity					0.401	0.056	0.465
Perceived Support from Employers ↗ Sense of Belonging to HK					0.450	0.056	0.540
					Errors covariances		
					Unstd.	SE	Std.
C1 'I can deal with whatever challenges come my way'. ↗ C2 'I achieve what I set out to do'.					0.994	0.099	0.664
A1 'You are treated with less courtesy than other people are'. ↗ A2 'You are treated with less respect than other people are'.					0.853	0.090	0.616
D5 'I understand what my ethnic group membership means to me'. ↗ D6 'I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group'.					0.212	0.033	0.469
D8 'Hong Kong helps me fulfill my needs' ↗ D9 'I feel like a member of Hong Kong'.					0.146	0.026	0.368

Notes. Unstd. = unstandardized coefficients; Std. = standardized coefficients.

^aNon-statistically significant estimates.

method effects. For example, residuals within the construct of psychological resilience, ethnic identity, and sense of belonging to the Hong Kong community were correlated for ordering effect. Within EOD, residuals between 'treated with less courtesy' and 'treated with less respect' were correlated due to their nearly parallel wording.

Main and interaction effect structural equation model

In the SEM, i.e. step 2 of the model building, a main effect model (Model 1) and interaction effect model (Model 2) were established (Table 2). The log-likelihood statistics of the main effect (Model 1) and interaction effect (Model 2) were: $\chi^2(122) = -13815.40$ and $\chi^2(124) = -13797.50$, respectively. The relative model fit of Model 2 versus Model 1, i.e. D statistics, was calculated via a log-likelihood ratio test comparing the log-likelihood values of Model 2 and Model 1, yielding a log-likelihood difference value of $D = 35.8$, i.e. $-2[(-13,815.40) - (-13,797.50)]$. With difference in free parameters in Model 2 and 1 equals 2, based on a chi-square distribution, this log-likelihood ratio test was statistically significant. Hence we concluded that Model 1 was well-fitted models (Table 2).

Main effects

In the main effects model (Model 1 in Table 2), ethnic identity showed a statistically significant positive effect on psychological resilience ($b = 0.23$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.42]). Perceived support from employers also exerted a significant positive effect on psychological resilience ($b = 0.25$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.42]), as did sense of belonging to Hong Kong ($b = 0.21$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.37]). In contrast, perceived discrimination was not significantly associated with psychological resilience ($b = -0.00$, 95% CI [-0.16, 0.15]).

Regarding the covariates, the total number of dependents showed a small but statistically significant negative association with psychological resilience ($b = -0.03$, 95% CI [-0.05, -0.00]), whereas years of working in Hong Kong was not significantly related to psychological resilience ($b = 0.00$, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.02]).

With respect to correlations among the predictors, ethnic identity, sense of belonging to Hong Kong, and perceived employability were positively intercorrelated ($r_s = 0.38-0.58$). Perceived discrimination was negatively correlated with ethnic identity ($r = -0.13$, 95% CI [-0.23, -0.03]), sense of belonging to Hong Kong ($r = -0.11$, 95% CI [-0.20, -0.01]), and perceived employability ($r = -0.19$, 95% CI [-0.30, -0.09]).

Table 2. Unstandardized and standardized estimates of the structural equation model.

	Parameters estimates									
	Model 1 (Main effect)				Model 2 (EI X Sense of Belonging to HK & EI X Perceived Support from Employers)					
	Unstd	SE	Std	95% CI	Unstd	SE	Std	95% CI		
Direct effects										
Psychological resilience										
Ethnic Identity →	0.228*	0.098	0.192*	0.043	0.341	0.246*	0.096	0.211*	0.066	0.371
Sense of Belonging to HK →	0.208*	0.081	0.172*	0.043	0.300	0.204*	0.079	0.171*	0.061	0.323
Perceived Support from Employers →	0.247*	0.088	0.197*	0.063	0.331	0.167*	0.078	0.136*	0.008	0.259
Experiences of Discrimination	-0.002	0.079	-0.002	-0.128	0.124	-0.051	0.073	-0.042	-0.141	0.055
Number of dependents	-0.027*	0.013	-0.140*	-0.053	-0.008	-0.027	0.013	-0.116	-0.253	0.017
Age	-0.003	0.010	-0.024	-0.022	0.104	-0.003	0.010	0.025	-0.093	0.138
Years of work	0.002	0.011	0.012	-0.019	0.128	0.002	0.011	-0.009	-0.112	0.111
Ethnic Identity X Sense of Belonging to HK →	—	—	—	—	—	-0.172	0.112	-0.135	-0.296	0.051
Ethnic Identity X Perceived Support from Employers →	—	—	—	—	—	-0.264*	0.112	-0.201*	-0.365	-0.032
Factor variances and covariances										
	Unstd.	SE	Std.		Unstd.	SE	Std.			
Experiences of Discrimination	0.813*	0.150	1.000		0.814*	0.150	1.000			
Ethnic Identity	0.880*	0.095	1.000		0.882*	0.095	1.000			
Sense of Belonging to HK	0.842*	0.095	1.000		0.839*	0.095	1.000			
Perceived Support from Employers	0.790*	0.105	1.000		0.790*	0.105	1.000			
Ethnic Identity ↔ Experiences of Discrimination	-0.130*	0.051	-0.153*	-0.272	-0.035	-0.126*	0.051	-0.149*	-0.267	-0.031
Sense of Belonging to HK ↔ Experiences of Discrimination	-0.107*	0.049	-0.129*	-0.245	-0.014	-0.106*	0.049	-0.129*	-0.244	-0.013

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Parameters estimates							
	Model 1 (Main effect)				Model 2 (EI X Sense of Belonging to HK & EI X Perceived Support from Employers)			
	Unstd	SE	Std.	95% CI	Unstd	SE	Std.	95% CI
Direct effects								
Sense of Belonging to HK  Ethnic Identity	0.577*	0.065	0.671*	0.584 0.757	0.577*	0.065	0.671*	0.584 0.758
Perceived Support from Employers  Experiences of Discrimination	-0.192*	0.052	-0.240*	-0.366 -0.115	-0.190*	0.052	-0.237*	-0.363 -0.112
Perceived Support from Employers  Ethnic Identity	0.381*	0.066	0.457*	0.342 0.572	0.381*	0.066	0.456*	0.340 0.571
Perceived Support from Employers  Sense of Belonging to HK	0.430*	0.066	0.527*	0.418 0.636	0.429*	0.066	0.527*	0.418 0.637
Errors covariances								
	UnStd.	SE	Std.	95% CI	Unstd.	SE	Std.	95% CI
C1  C2	0.979*	0.149	0.650*	0.549 0.751	0.989*	0.149	0.652*	0.553 0.752
D5  D6	0.259*	0.083	0.539*	0.347 0.731	0.258*	0.083	0.538*	0.347 0.729
D8  D9	0.124*	0.038	0.374*	0.218 0.530	0.124*	0.038	0.374*	0.217 0.530
D12  D13	0.126*	0.045	0.303*	0.136 0.470	0.126*	0.045	0.303*	0.136 0.470
D12  D14	0.240*	0.070	0.413*	0.245 0.580	0.239*	0.070	0.412*	0.245 0.579
E6  E3	0.348*	0.096	0.393*	0.237 0.550	0.347*	0.095	0.393*	0.237 0.548
A1  A2	0.818*	0.145	0.629*	0.510 0.748	0.817*	0.145	0.629*	0.509 0.748

*p > 0.05.

Interaction effects

The interaction between ethnic identity and sense of belonging to the Hong Kong community was not statistically significant ($b = -0.17$, 95% CI $[-0.30, 0.05]$, Model 2 in Table 2). The positive association between ethnic identity and psychological resilience was similar across levels of sense of belonging to the Hong Kong community—consistent with the non-significant interaction term (Fig. 2a).

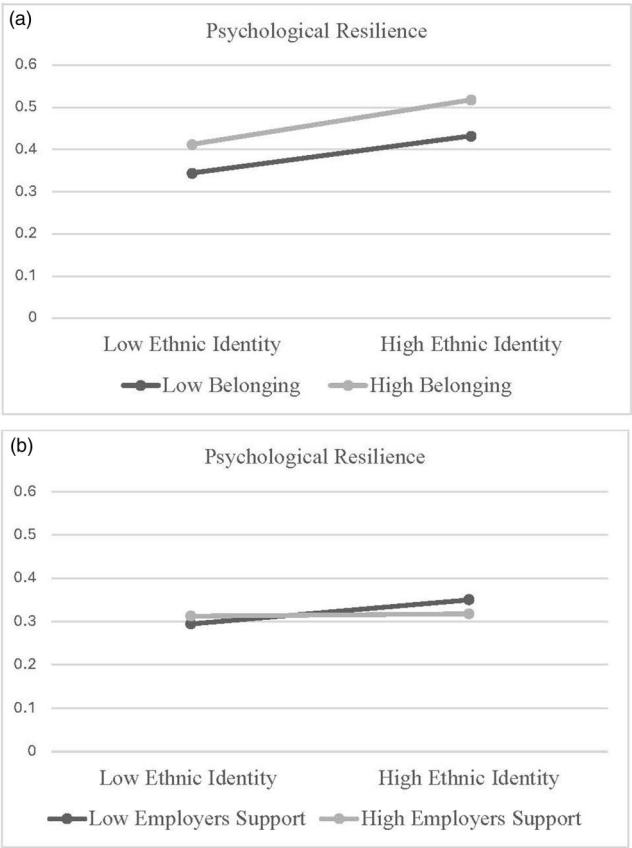


Figure 2. Interaction effects on psychological resilience. (a) Interaction between ethnic identity and sense of belonging to HK Community: Line graph demonstrating how the relationship between ethnic identity (low vs. high) and psychological resilience varies under the conditions of low sense of belonging to HK Community (dark line) versus high sense of belonging to HK community (light line) on psychological resilience. (b) Interaction between ethnic identity and perceived employers' support: Line graph demonstrating how the relationship between ethnic identity (low vs. high) and psychological resilience varies under conditions of low employers' support (dark line) versus high employers' support (light line).

The interaction between ethnic identity and perceived support from employers was statistically significant and negative ($b = -0.26$, 95% CI $[-0.37, -0.03]$). FDWs with high levels of ethnic identity and low levels of employers' support showed the highest level of psychological resilience, while those with weak ethnic identity and low level of employers' support showed the poorest psychological resilience (Fig. 2b). The difference in psychological resilience scores between those with high versus low levels of ethnic identity was minimal in the group with high levels of perceived employers' support.

Discussion

The findings illuminate how psychological resilience is constituted within the bicultural context of transnational domestic labour. Ethnic identity emerged as a salient cultural-based psychological resource particularly when relational supports in the host-society were limited. Host-society relational resources—namely perceived employer support and a sense of belonging to the Hong Kong community—were positively associated with psychological resilience. Consistent with bicultural competence and resilience literatures (Nguyen and Benet-Martínez 2013; Zimmerman 2013), the observed interaction patterns verify that resilience is a context-responsive and relationally negotiated process.

The significant interaction between perceived employer support and ethnic identity reveals a more nuanced resilience process (Phinney and Ong 2007). FDWs who reported strong ethnic identity but limited employer support exhibited comparatively higher psychological resilience, indicating that ethnic identity is a potent protective resource when relational supports in the host environment are weak. This pattern reflects a form of contextual substitution, whereby the functional value of ethnic identity shift across social conditions. When employer support is perceived as reliable and accessible, FDWs appear less dependent on ethnic identity as the primary anchor of resilience. In contrast, under conditions of relational exclusion, ethnic identity assumes heightened significance as a cultural-psychological buffer that sustains well-being in the face of adversity. Although this finding diverges from our initial hypothesis regarding resource amplification, it aligns with empirical evidence demonstrating the protective effect of group identity under marginalization (Phinney and Ong 2007). When individuals experience socio-cultural exclusion, affirmation of one's cultural group helps preserve psychological stability. Yet, reliance on identity-based buffering may provide only temporary protection and does not substitute for the long-term benefits of inclusive relational environments (Berry 2006; Phinney and Ong 2007; Nguyen and Benet-Martínez 2013).

Although the interaction between ethnic identity and sense of belonging to Hong Kong community was not statistically significant, their additive

associations offer insight into how layered cultural and relational resources jointly support well-being. Ethnic identity provides FDWs with cultural continuity and emotional grounding (Phinney and Ong 2007), while a sense of belonging within Hong Kong fosters social integration in migrant labour settings (Chan and Latham 2021; Lai et al., 2026, under review). This dual affirmation functions as a psychological scaffold that supports FDW's psychological resilience.

Surprisingly, perceived discrimination was not significantly associated with psychological resilience in this study (Sumerlin et al., 2024). One possible explanation is that resilience may be more strongly shaped by promotive resources, including ethnic identity and host-society relational resources, than by adversity alone. A second interpretation draws on racial socialization theory, which suggests that preparation for bias and cultural pride may buffer the psychological impact of discrimination, particularly in contexts where discriminatory experiences are anticipated (Umaña-Taylor and Hill 2020).

Findings shall be interpreted in light of the following limitations. First, one of the limitations lies in the study's cross-sectional design, which restricts causal inference and the ability to observe how resilience and its predictors evolve over time. Longitudinal data would be better suited to capture the underlying mechanism from various factors to resilience and the dynamic and cyclical nature of these relationships. Second, the use of non-random snowball sampling, while pragmatic given the lack of a formal sampling frame, may limit the generalizability of findings. Participants who are more socially connected or engaged in community activities may have been overrepresented, potentially skewing resilience scores upward. Third, using a single sample in SEM may increase the risk of overfitting and limit the generalizability of the findings. Accordingly, results should be interpreted as preliminary, and future research with larger samples should seek to replicate the measurement and structural models with split-sample validation. Last, while the study focused on Filipino FDWs to allow for cultural specificity, this limits the applicability of findings to other migrant groups with different cultural backgrounds, migration histories, and social positioning in Hong Kong. Future research can consider comparative designs across ethnic groups and host contexts to deepen understanding of bicultural resilience.

Implications

The current findings advocate for a multi-level, contextually grounded approach to resilience-building that integrates ethnic affirmation, relational support, and structural inclusion. Theoretically, this study advances a relational-ecological model of psychological resilience that positions bicultural adaptation as an emergent process arising from interactions between ethnic identity and host-society relational resources. By integrating insights

from ethnic identity theory (Phinney and Ong 2007), bicultural competence theories (Berry 2006; Nguyen and Benet-Martínez 2013), and ecological models of resilience (Zimmerman 2013), the findings adopt a strength-based narratives to view FDWs and relocate resilience from an individual achievement to a socially produced capacity, shaped by the conditions under which individuals are recognized.

Considering the reframing of resilience as a dynamic product based on the interplay of cultural and social factors, social work interventions must move beyond individual-level support towards the co-construction of culturally inclusive and relationally affirming environments. At the community practice level, social workers can play a catalytic role by partnering with government agencies, private-sector actors, and migrant organizations to create shared spaces that recognize migrants' cultural heritage and social participation for community inclusion. Initiatives such as intercultural community activities, cultural exchange programmes, and participatory events in public venues can foster sustained contact between FDWs and local residents while increasing the visibility of FDWs' labour contributions and lived experiences. On the family level, social workers can organize programmes that cultivate socially inclusive family environment that recognize FDWs as key members of local households. For example, education programmes can be held as school settings to foster children as cultural ambassadors of their own family, bridging their immediate caregivers (i.e. FDWs) with their parents and extended family.

Policy-wise, facilitating FDWs' participation in neighbourhood councils or community advisory structures moves beyond symbolic inclusion towards institutional recognition. This practice can strengthen belonging and social cohesion—conditions foundational to psychological resilience. The strong association between perceived employer support and resilience further underscores the need for targeted in cultural integration policy within domestic-work settings. One promising strategy is the integration of mandatory employer orientation programmes into the hiring process, focusing on respectful communication, cultural humility, workers' rights, and mental health awareness. These initiatives could be delivered through scalable online modules embedded in contract or visa procedures and complemented by structured cultural orientation programmes for FDWs during paid working hours. This policy practice will eventually shape local household into mini-cultural hubs that foster multicultural integration in Hong Kong.

Conclusion

This study achieved its objectives by empirically testing a relational-ecological model of psychological resilience among Filipino FDWs in Hong

Kong. In support of objective 1, ethnic identity was positively associated with psychological resilience, confirming its role as a core cultural-psychological resource. Objective 2 was also supported, as both perceived employer support (Hypothesis 2.1) and sense of belonging to the Hong Kong community (Hypothesis 2.2) independently predicted higher resilience, underscoring the importance of host-society relational resources. With respect to objective 3, perceived employer support significantly moderated the ethnic identity–resilience association, such that ethnic identity was most strongly related to resilience when employer support was low. This compensatory effect reveals the relational-dependent value of ethnic identity. In contrast, sense of community belonging did not moderate the ethnic identity–resilience link, thus not supporting Hypothesis 3.2. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that psychological resilience among FDWs is shaped by both additive and interactive processes, reinforcing resilience as a context-responsive and relationally negotiated phenomenon rather than a fixed individual attribute.

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