Community Storytelling Networks and Empowerment of Migrant Domestic Workers:
A Communication Infrastructure Approach

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Guided by communication infrastructure theory, this study examines the role of storytelling agents and integrated connectedness to community storytelling networks (ICSN) in empowering disenfranchised groups, particularly migrant domestic workers (MDWs). This study is based on survey data from 402 Indonesian MDWs in Hong Kong. The analysis identified a positive association between ICSN and civic participation as a form of behavioral empowerment. Moreover, ICSN also significantly influenced intrapersonal empowerment, which operated via social support. These findings shed light on the potential of ICSN in empowering marginalized groups, and thus, more effort should be devoted to strengthening the workers' connections to their community storytelling networks.

Keywords: storytelling network, empowerment, communication infrastructure, social support, migrant domestic workers

Cross-border movement for economic purposes has become a rising trend in this globalization era, as evidenced by the number of migrant workers that jumped from 90 million in 2005 to 164 million in 2017 (International Labour Organization, 2018). Among this foreign worker community, migrant domestic workers (MDWs) are increasingly popular because of steady global demands for household services (Gallotti, 2016). In this context, the MDW is an international migrant whose primary responsibility is housekeeping, including cooking, housecleaning, or caregiving (Cheung, Tsoi, Wong, & Chung, 2019).

MDWs are arguably a vulnerable and marginalized community. Unlike the immigrants who reside permanently in the host country, MDWs are sojourners who stay abroad for a certain period and return to the homeland afterward (Matsaganis, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). The temporariness of the migration poses many challenges to their lives and increases the marginalization of the groups. Their status as temporary laborers inhibits them from obtaining the same privileges as permanent residents (Basok & George, 2021). They also have insufficient protection from the state in various aspects, including job security, rights to citizenship and unionization, or even access to health services (Jamil &

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Kumar, 2021). Restrictions imposed on these short-term workers also inhibit them from integrating and cultivating a sense of belonging to the host community (Basok & George, 2021; Lenard & Straehle, 2010). Moreover, MDWs are prone to being subjected to exploitative, discriminative, and abusive behaviors (Cheung et al., 2019). They are frequently treated like invisible individuals and have no opportunities to voice their thoughts (Kaur, 2013).

Given the numerous challenges they encounter, MDWs need to empower themselves to solve hardships and advocate for their rights. This empowerment can be cultivated when they can secure ample social assistance (Oh & Lee, 2012). Social support serves as a resource for individuals to improve their well-being and cope with challenging situations (Chib, Wilkin, & Hua, 2013), which contributes to the enhancement of individual empowerment (Barak, Boniel-Nissim, & Suler, 2008).

These social aids can be acquired through interactions with numerous social actors in the community (Chib et al., 2013). The communication infrastructure theory (CIT) developed by Ball-Rokeach, Kim, and Matei (2001) has documented several vital stakeholders, conceptualized as "storytelling agents," including local media outlets, community organizations, and interpersonal communication, which may provide social resources and empower the migrant community. These agents are interconnected and build storytelling networks in the migrant community. Integration into the community storytelling networks can bring positive impacts, such as the provision of social support (Oktavianus & Lin, 2021) and various civic outcomes (Kim et al., 2019; Nah, Lee, & Liu, 2022).

A growing body of CIT literature has exhaustively examined the potential of community storytelling networks for health communication (Kim, Moran, Wilkin, & Ball-Rokeach, 2011; Oktavianus & Lin, 2021), family communication (Wilkin & Ball-Rokeach, 2009), civic engagement (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a, 2006b), and many others. However, little scholarly attention is devoted to systematically examining the relationship between storytelling agents and the empowerment outcomes in MDW communities. Apart from that, a substantial body of CIT literature focuses on exploring the contexts of immigrant communities, including Latinx communities (Kim, Jung, & Ball-Rokeach, 2006), African Americans (Kim et al., 2011), and Asian groups (Kim & Kim, 2021), but CIT studies scrutinizing the storytelling network of sojourners such as MDWs, who have different characteristics and challenges than the immigrants, are still relatively scarce.

To fill the voids in the literature, this study aims to unravel how the connections to community storytelling networks provide social support and empower MDWs. This study surveyed 402 Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong to test the relationships among storytelling networks, empowerment, and social support. In addition, this study also investigated the role of the storytelling agents individually. The findings advance the literature on CIT by explaining the importance of storytelling networks and agents in supplying social resources and empowering marginalized groups, especially domestic workers. This study also extends the application of CIT to sojourner communities. Understanding the role of integrated connectedness to community storytelling networks (ICSN) also bears practical implications for policymaking and public campaigns targeting migrant worker communities.

MDWs in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is an appropriate setting for studying issues concerning MDWs as it has a long-standing employment practice for foreign workers. The city has admitted migrant workers since the early 1970s when the government promulgated the policy of domestic workers in 1973 (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2017). Hong Kong also has been a popular destination among foreign domestic workers and employed more than 385,000 in 2018 (Leung, 2019), up from around 120,000 workers in 1993 (Constable, 2007). Moreover, the city has one of the highest densities of MDWs in the world, with approximately one in every eight households recruiting a housekeeper (Kuo, 2014).

Most workers in Hong Kong come from the Philippines and Indonesia. However, these two groups are different in various aspects. For instance, Filipinos commonly have better education as many hold bachelor's degrees and migrate to become domestic workers, which gives them a higher income than a white-collar job in their homeland. They are also fluent in English (Liao & Gan, 2020). On the other hand, Indonesian workers often have insufficient English skills and come from lower educational backgrounds (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2017). This condition may limit their access to resources in their host societies. Moreover, workers from the Philippines are also assertive and more aware of their rights than the Indonesians (Constable, 2007). This situation puts Indonesian workers in a more disadvantaged position than Filipino workers. Therefore, this study focuses on the voices of Indonesian MDWs in Hong Kong.

Although MDWs can obtain many benefits from working overseas, they are haunted by various issues and problems that enhance their vulnerability. Many Indonesian workers do not possess adequate knowledge about their rights, working contracts, and the environment of the host society (Prihatin, 2007). Hence, on many occasions, they are not aware of when their rights are violated. In addition, many workers are being overworked by their employers. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that most workers live and work in private households, which leads to minimal surveillance by the government and other institutions (Kaur, 2013). Workers are also prone to being subjected to mistreatment and abusive behaviors (Robinson, 2000). Apart from that, some have to endure poor living conditions (Kaur, 2013).

Communication Infrastructure and Community Storytelling Network

CIT offers a theoretical framework to understand how social networks may help marginalized communities, including MDWs. This theory sheds light on how the storytelling process through numerous communication channels in a particular locale affects community building, participation in civil society, and other civic outcomes. Communication infrastructure itself is "a storytelling system set in its communication action context" (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001, p. 396). The approach encompasses two crucial elements: the communication action context (CAC) and the storytelling system. The CAC entails resources in the community that facilitate or hinder communication processes among community members (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b). However, this study focuses more on the storytelling system, which comprises daily conversations and stories in a neighborhood developed and circulated by various communication resources or "storytelling agents," including interpersonal relationships, community organizations, local media, and mainstream media. These storytellers interact with one another to produce and share stories related to the

community and establish a web of storytelling agents, conceptualized as the "storytelling network" (Kim et al., 2019). This network can positively impact migrant communities (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a).

Although many storytellers are involved in storytelling networks of the migrant community, CIT primarily focuses on three agents: interpersonal communication with other individuals (e.g., friends and neighbors), local or geo-ethnic media, and community organizations (Kim et al., 2019). The interpersonal network is vital, especially for MDWs, as talking to others helps them acquire and digest information about social issues emerging in their communities (Baig & Chang, 2020). The interpersonal conversation is also a potent driver of actions. Moreover, local media remain central in the lives of migrants, including MDWs, as they supply information relevant to the community (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b; Oktavianus, Sun, & Lu, 2022). These media also become a platform to voice the group's concerns and interests, which are often ignored by the mainstream media of the host country (Matsaganis et al., 2011). Besides local media, community organizations also provide personal resources for individuals and become a platform for establishing social interaction (Nah, Kang, Chen, & Hustedde, 2016). Community groups, such as migrant unions, are also appropriate venues for migrant workers to seek tangible help (Baig & Chang, 2020).

Several studies have explored the social networks of domestic worker communities and the benefits of connections to storytelling agents. Chung and Mak (2020) discovered that MDWs in Hong Kong maintained interactions with employers, compatriots, and family members. The study by Baig and Chang (2020) found that Indonesian and Filipino workers contacted local organizations, including nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations, employment agencies, country consulates, and the Hong Kong Labor Department, to find help. Aside from that, Indonesian workers rely on mainstream media in Hong Kong and Indonesia to obtain news regarding home and host societies (Oktavianus & Lin, 2021). They also consume ethnic media, including *Suara*, *KINDO*, *Apakabar Plus*, *Berita Indonesia*, and other migrant-made media. These news outlets provide access to information and become an advocacy tool for MDWs in the city (Wahyudi & Allmark, 2018).

However, it is worth noting that while connections to the three primary storytelling agents may engender different impacts on individuals, CIT proposes to focus on ICSN (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b). ICSN takes into account the strength of each connection to the storytelling agents and the added value when these connections form a network (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b). The underlying assumption behind the concept of ICSN is that the key storytelling agents in a community interact with each other and "combine to foster values that are greater than the sum of its components" (Nah & Yamamoto, 2017, p. 181). For example, local media consumption may stimulate interpersonal communication as individuals share their community's stories that they obtain from media (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001).

Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2006b) have developed a way to operationalize ICSN by summating interaction terms among three community storytelling agents, including interpersonal storytelling, local media, and community organizations, as shown in the equation below. LC represents the connectedness to local press, while INS is the connectedness to interpersonal networks, and OC is the connectedness to community organizations.

$$\text{SN} = \sqrt{\text{LC} \times \text{INS}}\ \sqrt{\text{INS} \times \text{OC}} + \sqrt{\text{LC} \times \text{OC}}$$

A pronounced proliferation of literature has found empirical evidence about how ICSN produces various civic outcomes and assists individuals in achieving their everyday goals. One of the early CIT studies found that ICSN was an essential driver of civic engagement, including community participation, neighborhood belonging, and collective efficacy (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b). Similarly, a study by Kim and Kim (2021) also confirmed that ICSN predicted collective efficacy and community engagement, aside from facilitating integrative adaption among the Korean Chinese community in Seoul. These past findings suggest the potential of ICSN to empower MDWs in their everyday lives.

Empowerment

Empowerment refers to "the capacity of individuals, communities, and groups to access and use their personal/collective power, authority, and influence, and to employ that strength when engaging with other people, institutions, or society" (Punie, 2011, p. 9). The empowerment theory suggests that at the heart of empowerment is the effort to acquire control. The conceptualization of empowerment encompasses several crucial components, including "participation with others to achieve goals, efforts to gain access to resources, and some critical understanding of sociopolitical environment" (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 44).

Empowerment is a multidimensional construct, and two commonly examined components are the intrapersonal and behavioral aspects (Zimmerman, 2000). Intrapersonal empowerment deals with individuals' beliefs in their ability to overcome problems and influence their sociopolitical environment. This domain involves perceived control, competence, and efficacy (Speer & Peterson, 2000; Zimmerman, 1995). Perceived control is understood as people's belief that they can make an influence in many settings, including the family, workplace, or even society (Zimmerman, 1995). Perceived competence is related to the perception of the ability to complete a task well (Li, 2016). Lastly, self-efficacy is someone's belief in their ability to achieve the desired outcomes (Maddux, 1991).

Intrapersonal empowerment is essential to increase the quality of MDWs' livelihoods as they need to alter their self-perception as migrant workers to improve their conditions. Domestic workers often see themselves as passive victims or enslaved people, which inhibits them from developing a positive attitude and the courage to convey their opinions or thoughts. Therefore, intrapersonal empowerment helps MDWs view themselves as valuable humans working a proper job. By doing so, they can fight for their rights and make their voices heard (Briones, 2009).

Another vital aspect of empowerment is the behavioral domain, which concerns the actions performed by individuals to affect the outcomes (Zimmerman, 1995). The behavioral element emphasizes individuals' participation in activities that can potentially improve their situations or communities. It covers a broad range of activities, such as how someone copes with stress and how an individual works in a group to achieve social change. Hence, the measure for this component is contingent on the context (Speer & Peterson, 2000). However, past studies pinpoint the importance of civic or community participation as a form of behavioral empowerment (Miguel, Ornelas, & Maroco, 2015). For MDWs, involvement in civic activities is essential as it activates collective coping and stimulates social change in the community (Jiang, 2018).

These two dimensions of empowerment, however, flow on different levels. Speer (2000) asserted that intrapersonal empowerment would lead to participation or behavioral component. The greater the intrapersonal empowerment of individuals is, the more likely they are to participate in an action. Likewise, Zimmerman (1995) has suggested that the intrapersonal domain "provides people with the initiative to engage in behaviors to influence desired outcomes" (p. 589). He further argued that people needed to believe they could reach their goals before taking action to accomplish them. Therefore, this study proposes the first hypothesis:

H1:   *Intrapersonal empowerment is positively associated with behavioral empowerment.*

Past studies have also shown that ICSN can potentially foster individuals' empowerment. For instance, intrapersonal empowerment can be improved through interpersonal communication. By having conversations with other members of the community, individuals can acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the situation they are in. Hence, they can solve their challenges (Speer & Peterson, 2000). Community organizations can also empower individuals by offering new knowledge and organizing skills (Chan, 2012). Moreover, local media provide community members with necessary resources, such as information about the neighborhood (Lin, Song, & Ball-Rokeach, 2010). These kinds of media are also often used to voice the thoughts and demands of marginalized groups, including migrant workers (Lin & Song, 2006; Yu & Matsaganis, 2019). Hence, local media are a powerful vehicle of intrapersonal empowerment.

Apart from that, ICSN has also been seen as a strong predictor of civic participation (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a, 2006b; Kim et al., 2019), which is an essential element of behavioral empowerment for migrant workers in Hong Kong. Unlike many other places where MDWs' rights to establish organizations and organize demonstrations are denied, Hong Kong gives these rights to the workers. Participating in rallies, protests, volunteer activities, petitions, and other community activities can nurture solidarity and collective understanding of migrant workers in the city. In addition, the workers can gather support and voice their concerns or demands to the government and other stakeholders (Lai, 2010). Drawing from these arguments, this study formulates the next hypothesis:

H2:   *ICSN is positively associated with (a) intrapersonal and (b) behavioral empowerment.*

Social Support

Past studies have noted that empowerment often arises when people secure ample social resources (Oh & Lee, 2012). This social support may come in various forms, including emotional, informational, and relational assistance. Emotional support involves positive expressions that bring comfort and foster the feeling of being cared for (Bambina, 2007). This assistance is essential for MDWs to promote emotional relief, self-confidence, and a sense of control, which subsequently lead to a better sense of empowerment (Barak et al., 2008; Chib et al., 2013). In addition, informational aids entail facts, advice, or news that may enhance workers' knowledge, guide them on how to handle their situations, and motivate them to take action to solve their problems (Oktavianus & Lin, 2021). Lastly, relational support provides companionship for other people, which is important for migrants (Sherbourne & Stewart, 1991). It reduces the feeling of

social isolation and enhances one's interaction skills and sense of belonging, which consequently translate into empowerment outcomes (Barak et al., 2008).

Social support can influence people through direct supportive action and indirect buffering effects of perceived available support (Haas & Lannutti, 2021). Both psychological support and supportive actions help maintain someone's well-being (Cohen, Underwood, & Gottlieb, 2000). The actual expressions of support may promote coping performance. Social support also reduces the adverse psychological effects by altering people's negative perceptions regarding stressful situations (Lakey & Cohen, 2000).

MDWs can derive these resources from their social networks or, in this context, ICSN. Chung and Mak (2020) found that MDWs in Hong Kong secured social support from their friends, family members, and community organizations, such as faith-based groups. Similarly, Oktavianus and Lin (2021) discovered that Indonesian workers obtained emotional, instrumental, and informational support from their local peers, family members, and migrant organizations in Hong Kong while media outlets supplied primarily informational resources. The study by Bernadas and Jiang (2016) also revealed that Filipino workers in Hong Kong relied on their informal networks, such as friends, family members, and employers, as well as other channels like the Internet, social media, and mainstream media to seek and scan information.

Prior literature has also hinted at the potential of social support in mediating the influence of ICSN on empowerment outcomes. Chib and colleagues (2013) researched migrant workers in Singapore and found that mobile phone use influenced migration stress via social support. When the workers attended to their mobile phones to perform various activities, such as browsing the Internet or receiving and making calls and sending messages, they were able to gain social support, which subsequently alleviated their stress. Another investigation by Oh and Lee (2012) suggested that engagement in online community activity increased people's perceived social support, which subsequently engendered a sense of empowerment. However, there is still a lack of empirical evidence regarding the mediating role of social support in the relationship between ICSN and empowerment outcomes. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses and research question:

H3:   ICSN is positively associated with perceived social support.

H4:   Perceived social support is positively associated with (a) intrapersonal and (b) behavioral empowerment.

RQ1:   To what extent does social support mediate the relationship between ICSN and empowerment outcomes?

Although this study focuses on analyzing the effects of ICSN, prior literature has indicated that each storytelling agent may play a unique role. For instance, Baig and Chang (2020) discovered that migrant workers in Hong Kong sought emotional and financial assistance from their informal networks, such as friends and family members, while they turned to nonprofit or other formal organizations to help them solve work-related problems. However, little has been discussed regarding how the community storytelling agents

of MDWs in Hong Kong influence social support and empowerment outcomes. Therefore, the following question is put forth:

RQ2: To what extent do connections to interpersonal communication, community organizations, and media outlets influence social support and empowerment outcomes?

Figure 1 further illustrates the proposed model derived from the aforementioned hypotheses.
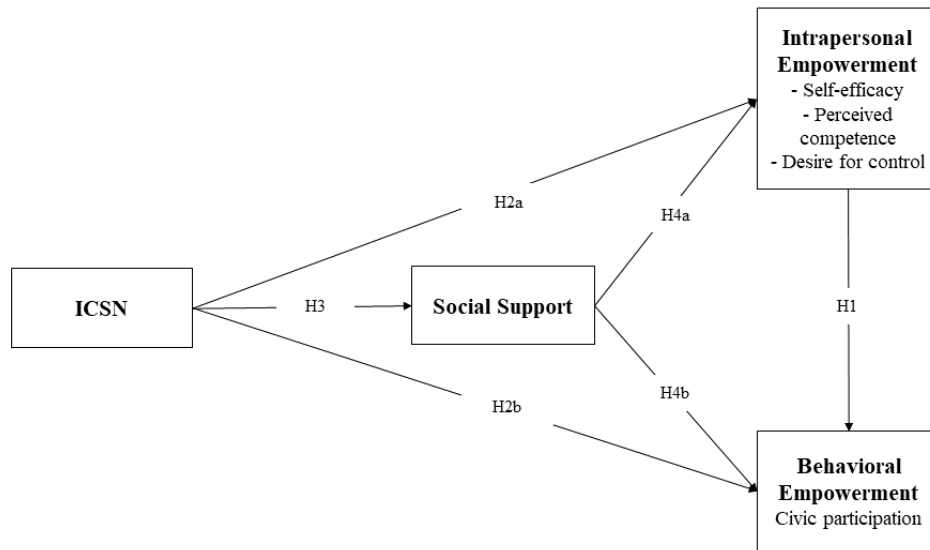
Figure 1. Proposed model examining the influence of ICSN on empowerment and social support.

Method

Data Collection

A cross-sectional survey of 402 Indonesian MDWs in Hong Kong was administered to examine the relationships among ICSN, social support, and empowerment. Given the nature of the MDW population, conducting a survey with random sampling is challenging as it is difficult to define a proper sampling frame (Chung, Liao, & Fong, 2020). Therefore, this study employed purposive and snowball sampling to recruit the participants. This study purposively only recruited Indonesian workers, and the participants were approached on Sundays when they flocked to public areas on their day off. Before the survey was administered, interviews with six migrant unions' officials were conducted to locate the social hubs of Indonesian MDWs from the three main regions of Hong Kong (i.e., New Territories, Hong Kong Island, and Kowloon). Social hubs are understood as spots with a high number of workers gathering during their rest days (Chung et al., 2020). Three locations were chosen based on the results of the interviews: Causeway Bay (Hong Kong Island), Mong Kok (Kowloon), and Ma On Shan (New Territories). Moreover, this research

only obtained responses from those under employment during the data collection as the experience for those in-between jobs or unemployed might be different.

The use of purposive sampling, however, came with its limitations. Some members of the population were isolated and unreachable by the researcher as they were not allowed to leave home even on their legal days off. These workers were prone to receive abuse or harassment (Chung et al., 2020). Hence, this study also employed snowball sampling by asking the respondents to recommend members of the community they knew. This referral technique was suitable for recruiting a special group of people who were not easy to locate, including MDWs, and had been employed by past studies analyzing international laborers (Chib et al., 2013; Parreñas, 2000). In total, this study collected responses from 402 female participants.

Procedure

A paper-and-pencil survey was administered from June to August 2020. Before data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the affiliated university. The participants were reminded not to report any identifying information on the survey. All participants received a coffee shop coupon worth HK$25 (approximately US$3) as a token of appreciation for their participation.

The survey was conducted in Indonesian. The questionnaire items in English were translated into Indonesian and went through a forward-and-back translation process. All the items were first translated into Bahasa Indonesia by a professional translator. To ensure there was no alteration of the meaning during the translation process, one of the researchers, along with a linguistic expert, rechecked and revised the translation if necessary. Following that, a committee member of the migrant workers' association also reviewed the cultural equivalence of the survey questionnaire. The Indonesian questionnaire was then translated back into English by another independent professional translator. The researcher then checked the similarity of the back-translation with the original measurements. Two rounds of pretests with a total of 20 Indonesian migrant workers were also performed afterward.

Measurements

Behavioral empowerment or civic participation was measured using the modified items from Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2006b) and Kim and Kim (2021). The participants were asked to report any of the six activities they had ever participated in during their stay in Hong Kong, including making donations, participating in volunteer work, demonstrations, petitions, events for MDW communities, and discussions on issues related to migrant workers. Each item was answered with yes (= 1) or no (= 0). The summative index of the responses constructed the behavioral empowerment variable (M = 2.26, SD = 1.29).

Intrapersonal empowerment was measured using the items adapted from Leung (2009) and Li (2016) and measured using the three dimensions: Self-efficacy (five items), perceived competence (four items), and desire for control (five items). A 7-point Likert scale captured the responses (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). A second-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed, and three items with low factor loadings were removed. The analysis of 11 items indicated a good model fit, $\chi^2(41)$ =

144.47, $p > .001$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .94, goodness of fit index (GFI) = .94, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .92, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .08. The factor loadings of the 11 items ranged from .62 to .87 and were all significant ($p < .001$). The items formed a measure for intrapersonal empowerment (M = 4.73, SD = 0.94, Cronbach's a = .86).

Social support was evaluated using the Medical Outcomes Study—Social Support Survey (MOS-SSS; Leung & Lee, 2005; Sherbourne & Stewart, 1991). The original measurement consisted of four dimensions: instrumental support, emotional and informational support, positive social interaction, and affection. However, instrumental support was excluded as it tended to assess health-related tangible aids (Leung & Lee, 2005). The respondents then had to answer the question, "How often is each of the following kinds of support available to you if you need it?" with 11 types of support—four items for emotional and informational support, three items for positive social interaction, and four items for affection. The respondents answered using a 5-point scale, from 1 = "none of the time" to 5 = "all of the time." A second-order CFA was performed with the 11 items. The results showed a marginally acceptable model fit, $\chi^2(41)$ = 200.35, $p > .001$, CFI = .94, GFI = .92, TLI = .92, and RMSEA = .098. However, the factor loadings for all items were above .7 (range = .74 to .86) and were significant ($p < .001$). Moreover, Cronbach's a for all dimensions was above .8, and average variance extracted (AVE) coefficients were above .6, which suggested good construct validity. The average score of the 11 items was used as the composite measure for social support (M = 3.5, SD = 0.74, Cronbach's a = .91).

Connection to interpersonal communication was analyzed using a single item from Kim and Kim (2021), which asked how often the participants discussed issues in their neighborhood with their friends (M = 4.52, SD = 1.28). The responses were evaluated using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "do not talk at all" to "talk all the time."

Connection to community organizations was measured using the questions from Kim and Kim (2021). Respondents needed to indicate whether they had participated in any of the migrant community organizations during the past year: recreational, neighborhood, religious, sports and cultural, political, educational, volunteerism, and work/labor. The sum of the eight scores represented the connections to community organizations (M = 2.59, SD = 1.45).

Connection to media was captured using the modified items from Kim and colleagues' study (2019). The measurement asked, "How often do you use this service to get local news and information?" for eight media channels, including local media (print media, online media, television, radio), Indonesian mainstream media, Indonesian ethnic media, online neighborhood communities, and social media. The participants responded with a 6-point scale ranging from 1 = "not at all" to 6 = "always." The average score of the eight items represented the variable of connection to media (M = 2.95, SD = 0.83, Cronbach's a = .73).

ICSN was calculated using the equation formulated by Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2006b), which had been widely used by past studies (Kim et al., 2019; Nah & Yamamoto, 2017; M = 9.51, SD = 2.38, range = 4.11–17.32).

Control variables in this survey included age (M = 36.12, SD = 7.63), monthly income (M = HK\$4,580.52, SD = 169.58), educational level (45.5% had attended middle school), marital status (50.5% married), social networking site (SNS) use (M = 8.03, SD = 4.84), number of language they were proficient in (median = 2), duration of residence in Hong Kong (M = 6.94 years, SD = 4.75), and the number of employers they ever worked for in Hong Kong (median = 2). This study also measured their interest in local (M = 3.56, SD = 0.77) and migrant-related issues (M = 3.86, SD = 0.75) using modified items from the study by Kim and colleagues (2019).

Data Analysis

This study analyzed the data using PROCESS macro v4 for SPSS developed by Hayes (2018). The proposed hypotheses were analyzed using Model 6 while the first research question was examined using Model 4. This study employed 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrap samples and a 95% confidence interval (CI). The indirect effect was statistically significant when the 95% CI did not span zero (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). A series of linear regressions were performed using IBM SPSS 27 to address the second research question.

Results

The main objective of this study is to elucidate how MDWs' ICSN influences social support and empowerment outcomes, especially the sense of empowerment and civic participation. Figure 2 describes the results of the analysis.
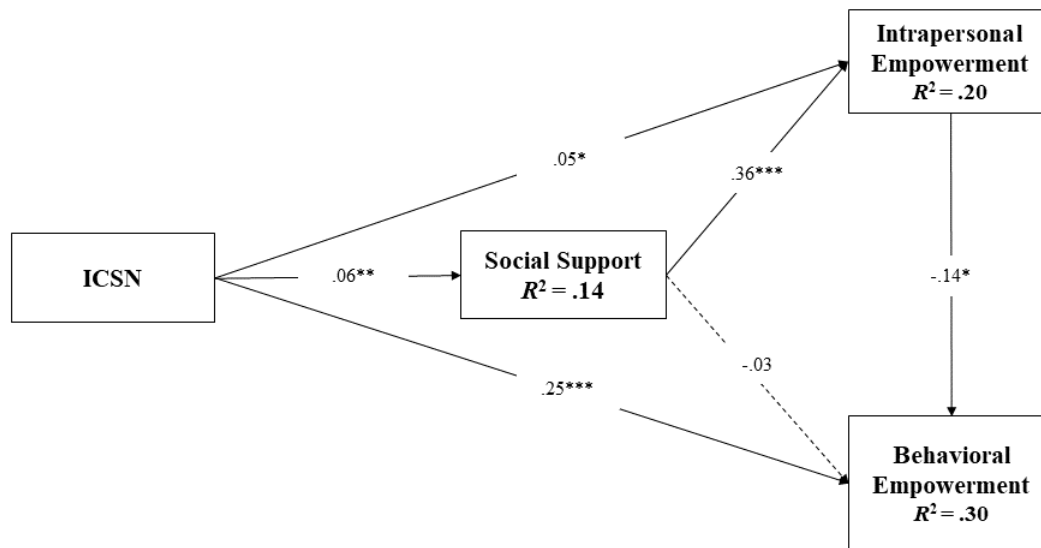
Figure 2. The effects of ICSN on social support and empowerment.
Note. Numbers are unstandardized coefficients.
*p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001. Solid lines represent significant paths, whereas dotted lines suggest nonsignificant relationships.

H1 proposed that intrapersonal empowerment was positively related to behavioral empowerment. However, the results revealed that contrary to the expectation, intrapersonal empowerment was negatively related to behavioral empowerment ($B = -.14$, $SE = .06$, $p < .05$). In other words, the more intrapersonally empowered someone was, the less likely their engagement in community participation. Therefore, H1 failed to receive support.

H2a and H2b postulated that ICSN was positively related to intrapersonal and behavioral empowerment. The results showed a significant positive association between ICSN and intrapersonal empowerment ($B = .05$, $SE = .02$, $p < .05$). Moreover, ICSN was significantly associated with behavioral empowerment ($B = .25$, $SE = .03$, $p < .05$). These findings lent support to H2a and H2b.

H3 stipulated that ICSN was positively associated with perceived social support. In addition, social support was positively related to (H4a) intrapersonal and (H4b) behavioral empowerment. As shown in Figure 2, ICSN had a significant positive relationship with perceived social support ($B = .06$, $SE = .02$, $p < .01$), supporting H3. Furthermore, social support was also significantly related to interpersonal empowerment ($B = .36$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$). However, no significant association was found between social support and behavioral empowerment ($B = -.03$, $SE = .08$, $p > .05$). Hence, H4a was supported, but H4b was not.

RQ1 addressed the mediating role of perceived social support in the relationships between ICSN and empowerment outcomes. The results of simple mediation analyses confirmed that social support mediated the relationship between ICSN and intrapersonal empowerment (effect = .022, $SE = .008$, 95% CI = .001 to .038). In other words, ICSN enhanced MDWs' perceived social support, which in turn, increased their interpersonal empowerment. However, the results did not find a significant indirect effect of ICSN on behavioral empowerment via social support (effect = -.005, $SE = .006$, 95% CI = -.017 to .006).

Finally, RQ2 inquired about the relationships among each storytelling agent and social support, intrapersonal empowerment, as well as behavioral empowerment. Concerning social support, as shown in Table 1, the findings revealed that interpersonal communication, community organizations, and social media were significantly associated with social support. Interestingly, ethnic media had a negative association with social support. Moreover, interpersonal communication, local online media, and online neighborhood communities had significant positive relationships with intrapersonal empowerment. Lastly, community organizations, local online media, and Indonesian mainstream media were found to be significantly associated with behavioral empowerment. However, local television was negatively related to behavioral empowerment.

Table 1. Standardized Linear Regression Coefficients Predicting Social Support and Empowerment Outcomes.

	Social Support	Intrapersonal Empowerment	Behavioral Empowerment
Control variables			
Age	−.012 (.006)	.029 (.008)	.010 (.009)
Income	−.027 (.000)	−.072 (.000)	.059 (.000)
Education	.024 (.046)	.060 (.059)	.098 (.064)*
Marital status[a]			
Married	−.080 (.102)	.064 (.130)	−.022 (.142)
Divorced	−.079 (112)	.188 (.144)**	−.027 (.156)
Language proficiency	.002 (.059)	.012 (.076)	.078 (.082)*
Number of employments	.074 (.025)	.005 (.032)	.022 (.034)
Duration of residence	.031 (.010)	.049 (.013)	.079 (.014)
SNS use	.036 (.008)	−.066 (.010)	.093 (.011)*
Interest in local issues	.045 (.062)	.060 (.079)	.002 (.086)
Interest in migrant issues	.062 (.062)	.063 (.079)	.082 (.086)
Predictors and moderators			
Interpersonal communication	.135 (.029)**	.130 (.037)*	−.048 (.041)
Community organizations	.129 (.025)**	.049 (.032)	.533 (.035)***
Local print media	.039 (.033)	.028 (.042)	−.036 (.045)
Local online media	−.060 (.033)	.124 (.042)*	.149 (.045)**
Local television	.084 (.025)	.035 (.032)	−.111 (.035)**
Local radio	.008 (.031)	−.007 (.040)	−.044 (.044)
Indonesian mainstream media	.012 (.031)	−.112 (.040)	.108 (.044)*
Ethnic media	−.125 (.032)*	−.054 (.041)	.003 (.044)
Online neighborhood communities	.069 (.031)	.188 (.040)**	.011 (.044)
Social media	.197 (.031)**	.025 (.040)	.024 (.041)
R²	**.211***	**.178***	**.487***

Note. [a]Reference = single. *N* = 402. Standard errors were in parenthesis.
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Discussion and Conclusion

Adopting key ideas from CIT, empowerment theory, and social support theory, this study unravels the potential of community storytelling networks, consisting of connections to interpersonal relationships, community organizations, and media outlets, in providing social support and empowering disenfranchised communities, especially Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong. Moreover, this study also delves into the unique role of each storytelling agent. The findings unveil the potential of community storytelling networks in empowering migrant communities, particularly MDWs, by providing social support and promoting a sense of empowerment as well as civic participation.

This study discovers that individuals' integration into community storytelling networks has empowering effects on MDWs. This finding is consistent with empowerment literature, suggesting that community involvement, represented by the connections to community storytelling networks in this study, leads to empowerment outcomes (Speer & Peterson, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). This situation may happen as the connections to community communication channels enable individuals to access numerous resources, including social, political, and human capital, which help them reach their personal and collective goals (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001).

However, relationships between ICSN and empowerment are rather complicated as there are different mechanisms through which community storytelling networks produce empowering effects on migrant workers. For instance, this study discovers that ICSN directly influenced behavioral empowerment or civic participation. In other words, MDWs are more likely to be involved in civic activities to improve their conditions when they have stronger connections to integrated storytelling networks. This finding echoes the existing CIT literature asserting that connections to storytelling networks strongly influence community participation (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a, 2006b; Nah & Yamamoto, 2017). The storytelling networks enable the migrants to identify the issues in their community, which encourages them to act to solve the problems. Studies investigating the communication behaviors of Indonesian migrant workers also found similar results. Allmark and Wahyudi (2016) suggested that Indonesian workers and community organizations interacted on social media to organize and mobilize rallies to solve their collective problems. In a similar vein, Wahyudi and Allmark (2018) also reported that Indonesian ethnic media prompted civic participation as the media outlets promoted and provided information about issues surrounding the community.

Furthermore, the analysis found the mediating effect of social support in the association between ICSN and intrapersonal empowerment. Barak and colleagues (2008) explained that relationships with other people and involvement in groups enabled individuals to acquire ample social support, including information, emotional, and other aids. These different kinds of assistance foster empowerment as the support allows individuals to develop self-confidence and obtain cognitive resources. Hence, the influence of ICSN on intrapersonal empowerment may operate via social support.

This study also confirms the potential of storytelling networks in supplying social resources as this investigation identifies a significant positive relationship between ICSN and perceived social support. The workers' integration into the storytelling networks enables them to access information and other

resources to solve their problems and achieve their goals. Therefore, the more connected individuals are to their storytelling networks, the more likely they are to develop the belief that there is available support for them (Matsaganis & Wilkin, 2015). These results support the existing evidence regarding the role of storytelling agents in MDW communities as sources of social support (Baig & Chang, 2020; Oktavianus & Lin, 2021).

However, it is worth noting that contrary to the expectation, this study discovers a negative association between intrapersonal and behavioral empowerment. In other words, the sense of empowerment may discourage the workers from taking action for their community. One possible explanation comes from the argument of Riger (1993), asserting that intrapersonal empowerment can induce individualism among empowered individuals and create competition. This situation occurs as the sense of empowerment increases their self-confidence and competence. Consequently, people refrain from engaging in community participation or behavioral empowerment. Therefore, being intrapersonally empowered may not always have a positive impact, instead, it can potentially generate adverse consequences.

Lastly, in addition to the effect of ICSN, this study also examines the role of the storytelling agent individually. The findings show that Indonesian workers in Hong Kong were connected to rich and complex storytelling networks consisting of multiple storytelling agents from different levels of the communication infrastructure. However, unlike the existing CIT literature that predominantly focuses on geo-ethnic storytellers sharing the same ethnicity and place (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a; Lin & Song, 2006), the workers' networks comprised storytellers not only from the host society but also from the country of origin, such as homeland media. One possible explanation for this is their status as temporary workers. Sojourners are known for building ties with local and overseas social circles, particularly people from their home country (Ong & Ward, 2005). This occurs as they realize they need to return to their home country one day. Therefore, they sustain their connections to the storytellers on their native soil so that they are not left behind when they move back home. The temporariness also requires the MDWs to preserve their identities as Indonesians, and thus, there is the need to connect to storytellers from Indonesia, such as the homeland media. However, it is noteworthy that this study only evaluates the connections to homeland media but does not cover interpersonal communication and community organizations from the home country. Therefore, future studies can also further examine the connections to storytelling agents from both the host and home societies.

This study also discovers that each storytelling agent is essential in supplying social support and generating empowerment outcomes among Indonesian MDWs in Hong Kong, in line with prior research findings (Baig & Chang, 2020; Oktavianus & Lin, 2021). Interestingly, some types of media outlets produce counterproductive effects. For instance, ethnic media had a negative association with social support. This may happen as MDWs find that some media outlets circulate clickbait and sensationalize their news stories. This induces unfavorable psychological effects, such as fear and panic, instead of offering informational resources (Oktavianus & Lin, 2021). It is also noteworthy that local television negatively affected behavioral empowerment. This situation may occur as compared with the English-language media, local broadcast media may not necessarily promote civic participation among MDW communities as their stories focus more on the employers and how they also become the victims,

such as deceptions of MDWs (Groves, Siu, & Wong, 2022). Despite these potential drawbacks, the storytelling agents still generate positive outcomes among MDWs in Hong Kong, especially when they are interconnected and establish an integrated storytelling network.

The findings of this study are not devoid of caveats. First, it is challenging to employ probability sampling for hard-to-reach communities, such as MDWs, given that there is no available known sampling frame for the workers in Hong Kong (Ye & Chen, 2020). Hence, this study used nonprobability sampling to recruit the respondents, which was commonly adopted by past research involving migrant workers (Cheung et al., 2019; Chib et al., 2013). However, convenience sampling may have compromised this study's external validity. Subsequent studies are recommended to adopt random sampling or a more sophisticated method. Second, CIT comprises two components, storytelling networks and CAC (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a). However, this study focuses on storytelling networks while controlling the effects of CAC in the analysis. Hence, future studies may also want to examine the influence of CAC on MDWs.

Despite these limitations, this investigation contributes to the scholarship on CIT. First, prior CIT literature commonly concentrates on community-level effects of ICSN, such as community belonging or attachment (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a) and civic participation (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b; Kim & Kim, 2021). However, in addition to community-level outcomes, this study also examines personal or individual consequences of ICSN, particularly intrapersonal empowerment, which remains underexamined. Second, this study also unveils the mechanism behind the influence of ICSN on empowerment, specifically through social support. Therefore, this research integrates multiple theoretical frameworks, including the social support theory and the empowerment theory, under the big umbrella of communication infrastructure perspective to explain the role of storytelling networks in providing social support and empowering disenfranchised groups such as migrant workers. Third, while CIT literature predominantly devotes more attention to the storytelling networks of immigrants in the United States, this study delves into the experience of sojourners and the context of Asian society, which remains understudied. Exploring this population offers additional insights as the temporariness of the migration may also result in different communication behaviors. For instance, Indonesian workers in Hong Kong in this study are connected to storytelling agents from both the home and host societies.

This study also provides practical implications. The results suggest that interpersonal networks and community organizations play an important role in supplying social resources, generating a sense of empowerment, and promoting civic participation. However, some agents, such as local television and ethnic media, can potentially contribute negatively to the provision of social support and empowerment outcomes for MDWs in Hong Kong. Despite these undesirable consequences, when the storytelling agents are interconnected and establish a solid network, this integrated communication system can influence the community positively. Hence, public campaigns, especially community interventions targeting MDWs in Hong Kong, should devote more effort and attention to building integrated storytelling networks and strengthening MDWs' connectedness to the networks.

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