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# Management or Exploitation? Employers of Family Migrant Care Workers' Perspectives

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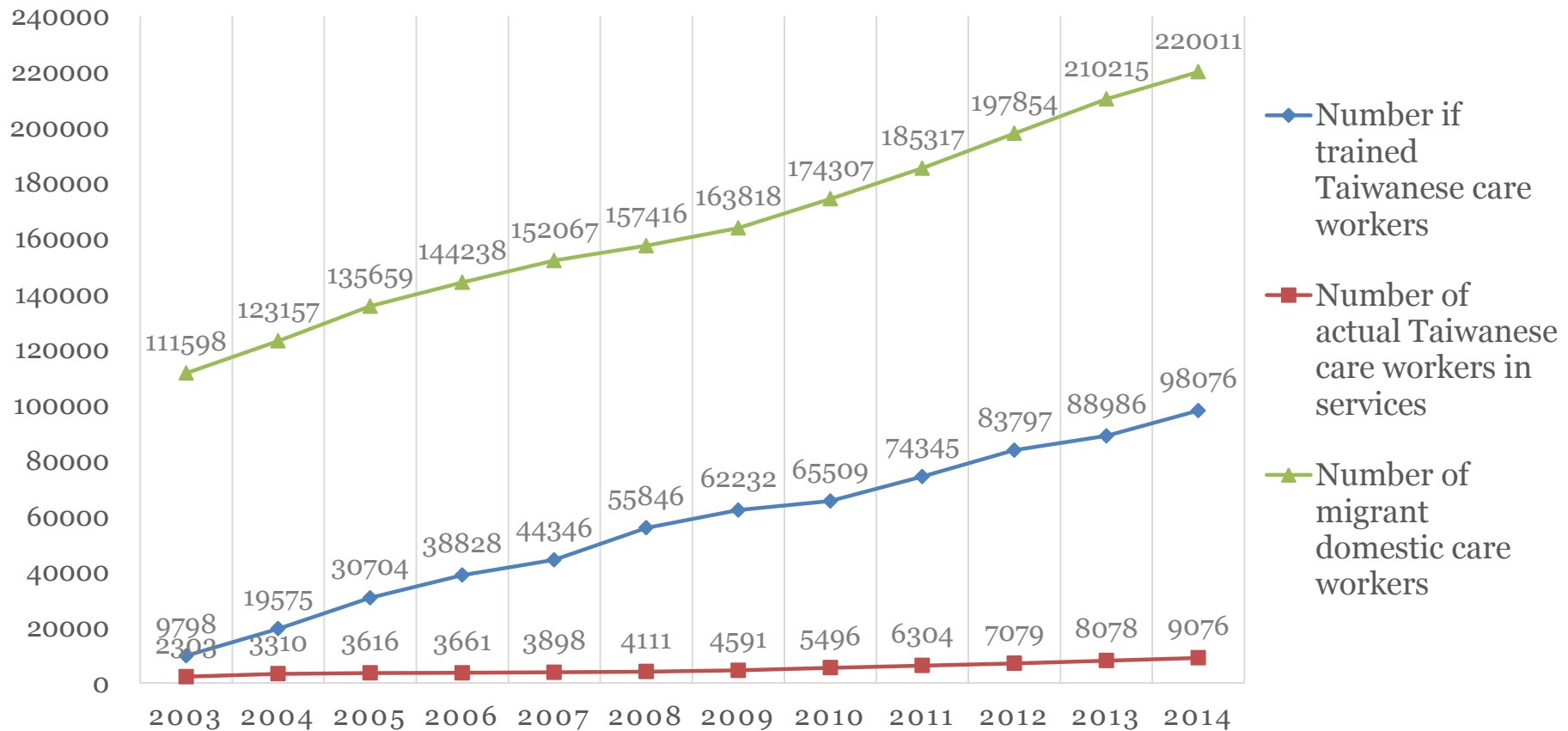
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# A Comparison of the Number of Trained Taiwanese Care Workers, Actual Taiwanese Care Workers in Home Service, and Family Migrant Caregivers



# An Important Distinction

- Home care workers:
  - Taiwanese citizens
- Family migrant caregivers
  - Foreigners hired for personal care in the home
  - Most come from Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines
  - Limited to 9 years of work in Taiwan; no opportunity for citizenship

# Policy Principle

- Importing workers = a **short-term tactic** to **supplement** the shortage of local care workers.
- Taiwan aims to increase the salaries and benefits of Taiwanese care workers to attract and retain them.
  - The policy principle is ‘supplementation’

# The Facts!

The number of family migrant caregivers has gone from 306 in 1992 to 210,000 in 2015.

The result is clearly **substitution!**

# Taiwan's History and Policies Related to Family Migrant Caregivers and Home Care Services



# Taiwan's Historical Context

## Background

1. “Greying” population increasing
2. Fertility rate declining
3. Double-salary families increasing

Since **1992**, the Taiwan gov't has allowed **family migrant caregivers** to care for the elderly, the disabled, and the sick, as well as young children.

# Dual Systems in the Home Care Services Sector

- Home care service is divided into two sectors
  - “Home care workers” are Taiwanese:
    - Included in the plans of the Labor Standards Act (2009)
    - 90-hr. gov’t-subsidized pre-vocational training
    - Salary is NT\$180/hr.
    - Hired by non-profit organizations only
    - Job content is confirmed through a service contract signed by the supervisor and employer
      - Ambiguity and disputes with employers are negotiated by supervisors
      - Work conditions and job content are clear and protected



# Dual System in the Home Care Services Sector

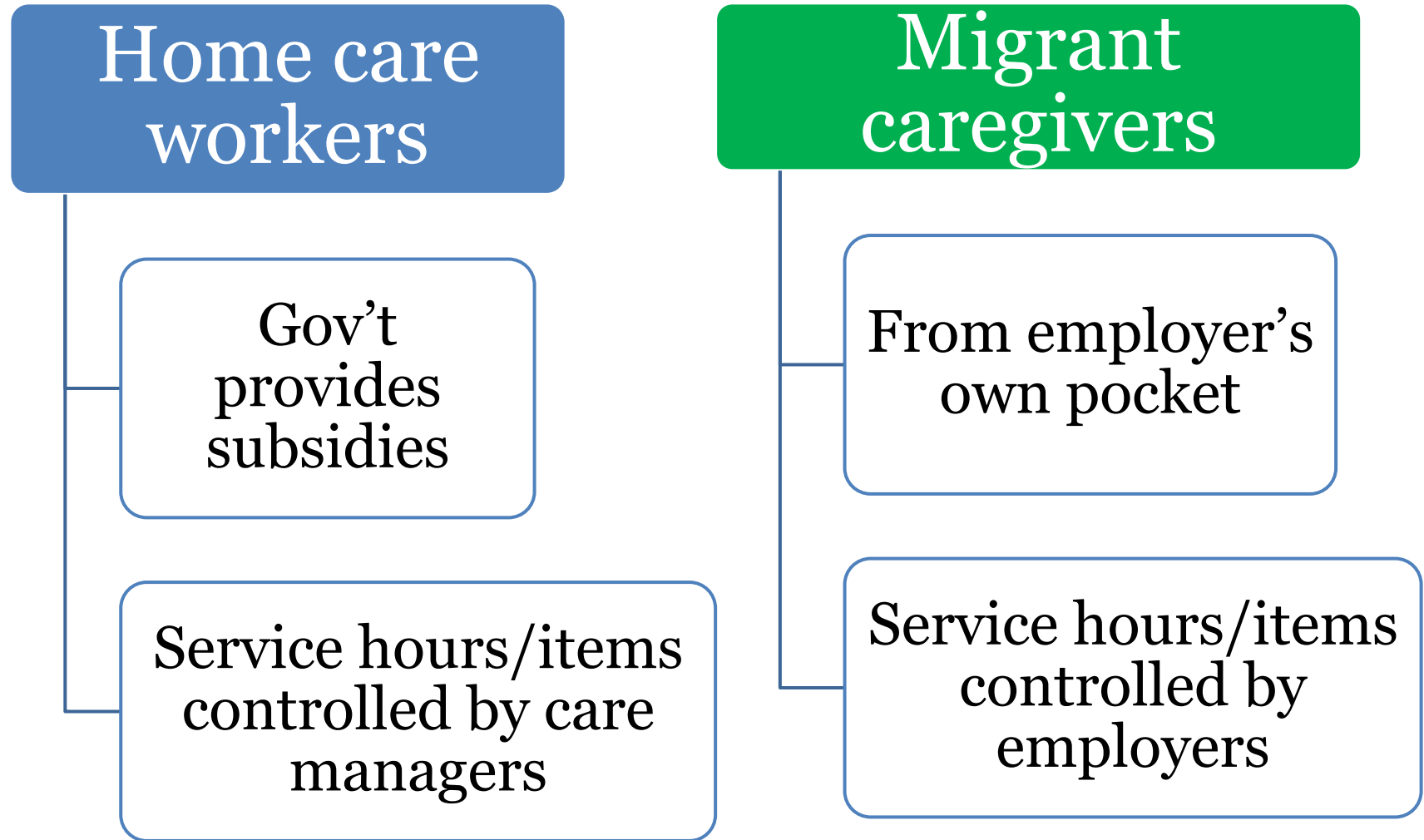
- Family migrant caregivers hired by individual families/care recipients
  - Caregiver has no freedom to change employers unless
    - Family emigrates
    - Care receiver passes away
    - Employer is unable to pay the salary as stipulated in the contract (Source: Employment Service Act)

# Dual System in the Home Care Services Sector: Subsidies

- Criterion 1:
  - 1-2 ADL items: 25 hrs.
  - 3-4 ADL items: 50 hrs.
  - 5(+) ADL items: 90 hrs.
- Criterion 2:
  - Low-income households: 100% subsidized
  - Lower middle class-incomes: 90% subsidized
  - Middle class incomes: 70% subsidized

# Dual Systems in the Home Care Services Sector

## --From the User's Perspective



# Dual System in the Home Care Services Sector

- To save job opportunities for local home care workers, if a household replaces the original local care worker with a migrant caregiver, the government will stop in-home service subsidies.
  - Employment opportunities for Taiwanese home care workers are guaranteed through the dual system of in-home care services.

# Research Question

- This research examines the policies and regulations for employing and managing family migrant caregivers and local home care workers
  - **The purpose of this study is to demonstrate:**
    1. Why family migrant caregivers have replaced Taiwanese home care workers;
    2. Why adult Taiwanese children prefer hiring migrant caregivers;
    3. Why the management of family migrant caregivers has become exploitative.

# Data Sources and Methods

- Research methods
  1. Secondary data analysis
  2. In-depth interviews
    - 30 family migrant caregivers' employers
    - 2 brokers
    - 2 medical specialists
    - 2 labour department officials
    - 14 home care organizations managers

Why do adult children prefer  
to hire migrant caregivers?

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# Social Learning Effect (1)

- Accessibility and availability of migrant caregivers is higher than home care
  - Compared to home care, migrant's brokers help employers with documents and applying for procedures
  - Employee must live in employer's home
    - Sharing living space with care receiver (no private accommodations)
    - Providing opportunities for requesting migrant caregivers do any task at any time
  - Work hours are set by the employer
    - Extended by default to 24 hours on standby
    - Monthly salary fixed at NT\$15,840
      - Roughly US\$510/mo.; 21% below Taiwan's minimum wage
    - Most have no regular time off.



## Family migrant caregivers are “**more flexible**” than Taiwanese home care workers!

- Most employers complain about Taiwanese home caregivers being paid hourly and that these services are provided mostly during the daytime only.

*“I had a Taiwanese caregiver. But she was not a member of my family, so I could not leave all the responsibility to her... In addition, Taiwanese caregivers only look after patients; they don’t do housework. I am really tired after work and I still need to pick up my children and look after their homework, so I really don’t have the time and energy to do more (care)...”*

--Ms. Huang, family migrant caregiver employer

# Migrant caregivers are **cheaper** than Taiwanese home care workers!

- Minimum wages (2015):
  - Monthly salary workers: NT\$20,008 (+overtime)
  - Hourly wage for Taiwanese laborers: NT\$120
  - Hourly wage for **home care workers**: NT\$170
- Migrant caregivers' salary is fixed at NT\$15,840 (= \$99/hr. by comparison) per month (since 1992)
  - Per hour wage = NT\$22 (24 hours/7 days/month)

# Why “management” of family migrant caregivers became exploitative

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# The boundary between family caregivers and non-family paid caregivers is blurred

- Employers on how family migrant caregivers can bear such long work hours:
  - *‘That’s how I took care of them before!’*
- The close correlation between caregivers’ long work hours and where they work:
  - Living alongside clients, unless exempted from feeding or nighttime bathroom duties, caregivers rarely get enough rest
  - Caregivers’ rest time, both in quality and quantity, is very likely insufficient.

## Social Learning Effect (2)

- According to traditional Chinese culture...
  - Disabled elderly are afraid of nursing homes
  - Adult children are expected to handle care
  - Criticism/gossip from other family members and others carries very heavy weight, including loss of face
- Hiring migrant caregivers has become the popular choice
  - Disabled parents can stay at home
  - Children can balance care responsibility and work
    - The stigma of “stranger care” has now become a privilege

# Exploitation: the cultural explanation

1. Short-term supplementary workers “don’t need” equal benefits.
2. Those from ‘less-developed Asia’ have lower social status than locals or other white-collar foreign professionals.
3. Foreign caregivers come to Taiwan for economic gain, not out of need of employment.
4. The home is ‘not a workplace’; family privacy is important and highly respected
  - Hiring a family migrant caregiver makes one less willing to accept so many legal restrictions, which are “intrusive and a violation of personal liberties.”

# Conclusion

The impact of the current  
long-term care system in  
Taiwan



# From “stranger care” to “privilege”

- In the past, Taiwanese families preferred family members as caregivers.
- Hiring a foreigner for providing home care was unacceptable.
- The unavailability and inaccessibility of home care services
  - + the fear of using institutional care services
  - + the social learning effect
  - “stranger care” is now a privilege!

# The Reality of Taiwan's Long-Term Care Policy

- The stated goal: keep the role of migrant care workers as supplementary
- The reality: **substitution!**
- The result of importing care workers after 23 years...
  - **Most employers have given up better-quality care because family migrant caregivers provide affordable 24-hr service.**

# The Policy Implications

- Dual-care manpower policy cannot protect the job opportunities of Taiwanese care workers in the home.
- The policy design should consider both the service provider's and the user's perspectives
  - The policy being from the user's point of view allows "management" of family migrant caregivers fewer restrictions.
  - "Management" has become "exploitation"

Thank you for your attention!

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