

Mothering Under Surveillance: Psychological Dimensions of Welfare Stigma in Low-Income Mothers




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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The claim that “welfare stigma becomes not only a social but also a psychological phenomenon” is central but requires more theoretical anchoring in established psychological frameworks such as Goffman’s stigma theory or Link and Phelan’s conceptualization. Consider integrating such models explicitly to strengthen the conceptual foundation.

It is stated that NVivo was used and thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke’s approach. However, it would be useful to describe how intercoder reliability or audit trails were managed, if applicable.

The quote “Every time someone from the government calls, my heart races...” illustrates anxiety well. It would be helpful to briefly mention whether this somatic stress aligns with known trauma responses or anxiety disorders to strengthen the psychological interpretation.

The structure is useful, but some subcategories (e.g., “Identity Fragmentation”) might benefit from clearer theoretical alignment. How does this concept relate to known constructs like “role engulfment” or “self-concept instability”?

The theme “emotional distance from children” is compelling. The paper should reflect more critically on the long-term developmental implications for children, supported by relevant child psychology research.

The quote “I know what they want to see... so I clean up, dress nice, smile” reveals strategic compliance. However, it borders on impression management or performance for survival—this could be explored with reference to Goffman’s dramaturgical theory.

The final note on the absence of mental health services is crucial. Please elaborate whether mothers explicitly expressed the desire for counseling or if this was inferred. Including direct quotes here would be beneficial.

“Cultural misunderstandings” are mentioned, but the article should specify whether any participants were from ethnic minorities or migrant backgrounds. This would clarify the intersectionality of surveillance.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The discussion of “maternal activation” is insightful, but it would be beneficial to elaborate on how this strategy is psychologically taxing. Are there links to identity performance theories or emotional labor literature?

While the reference to Thai cultural expectations is helpful, the article could benefit from a more detailed account of how Buddhism or regional family structures shape maternal roles in Thailand. This would contextualize surveillance practices in a culturally grounded way.

The assertion that “these dynamics are understudied” in Southeast Asia is compelling but could be supported by a brief review of regional literature to clarify the existing gap.

You cite Herland (2019) on dehumanization. Consider elaborating on how this manifests psychologically in terms of reduced self-efficacy or learned helplessness.

The idea that participants “performed compliance” but felt “hollow” invites further exploration. It would be appropriate to connect this to dissonance theory or theories of emotional suppression.

The discussion of peer support is strong. Could you briefly analyze whether these peer connections offered emotional validation or practical support—or both—and which had a stronger buffering effect?

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.