

**CARE, SILENCE, AND INVISIBILITY: A CAREGIVER-CENTERED
READING OF *BIG WORLD***



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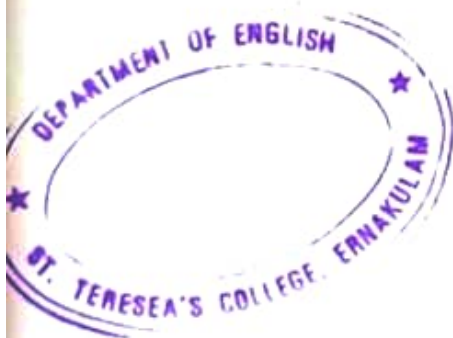
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Abstract

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This dissertation explores how the 2024 Chinese film '*Big World*,' directed by Yang Lina, brings to light the quiet but intense emotional burden carried by caregivers within middle-class families—especially those caring for a loved one suffering from disability or chronic illness. While stories around disability often focus on the person who is unwell, this study has its attention to those who silently support them. This project draws on theories from medical humanities, ethics of care, trauma studies, disability studies, and also Foucault's biopolitics to interpret the film's portrayal of caregiving. These frameworks show how systems built around productivity, efficiency, and able-bodied ideals marginalized not only the ill but also those who care for them. This study calls for the recognition of caregivers as emotional survivors, people who carry pain not through words, but through their acts of endurance.



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I hereby declare that this project titled “Care, Silence, and Invisibility: A Caregiver-centered Reading of *Big World*.” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Ms. Parvathy G., Assistant Professor (On Contract), Department of English.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled “Care, Silence, and Invisibility: A Caregiver-centered Reading of *Big World*. ” by Mishma Varghese is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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Introduction

Care is often seen as an act of love, responsibility, and a moral duty within the family. It is mostly connected with nurturing and protecting the mental and physical health of the person under care. However, care is not actively recognized as a labor mainly when done by the members of the family, and that mostly falls under the duties of the women in that family. Care is something that is done daily, and it is a long-term responsibility. It requires both physical and mental effort and sacrifice. In most of the families the caregiving is done naturally by women and not because they choose to do it. As a result, emotional and psychological costs of caregiving remain unseen and unacknowledged.

Caregivers are expected to be silent. Their exhaustion and frustration are considered personal weaknesses. When care is seen as more of a moral duty than labor, a caregiver's emotional needs are being ignored. Then forms the idea that a "good" caregiver is someone who does not complain and loves unconditionally. When someone fails to act up to these expectations, they are naturally considered a "bad" caregiver. Caregiving becomes a space where both love and burden exist, but only love is allowed to be visible. This invisibility is gendered because mostly mothers are expected to have patience and emotional stability in all situations.

Society treats motherhood as sacred so that they cannot even complain about the difficulties they are facing. They are treated as machines who can

always regulate their emotions for the sake of their family. And that emotional restraint produces silence, guilt, etc. Simone de Beauvoir explains that womanhood itself is socially produced rather than biologically fixed. Her one famous quote is “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir). This reveals how mothers are trained to be constantly available emotionally, turning care into a moral expectation.

Earlier movies that dealt with caregiving often presented it as an emotionally rewarding role and gave less attention to the emotional strain carried by the caregivers. In many stories, care is shown as an act of love and sacrifice rather than a role that demands continuous responsibility. For instance, *The Intouchables* (2011), directed by Oliver Nakache and Eric Toledano, portrays caregiving as a life-changing friendship, where care brings freedom, humor, and emotional healing to both involved. Likewise, the Malayalam film *Thanmathra* (2005), directed by Blessy, depicts caregiving within the family as a silent moral duty and the caregiver’s suffering as something natural and expected. In a similar way, *Me Before You* (2016), directed by Thea Sharrock, frames caregiving through romance and emotional transformation, where it reshapes the personal life of a caregiver. These representations tend to normalize the sacrifice, especially for women, and overlook the invisible emotional labor. This gap in representation makes it necessary to rethink caregiving as a complex emotional experience rather than an idealized role.

The film *Big World* (2024), directed by Yang Lina, provides us a great

space to examine the complexities of caregiving. While the film is mostly centered on disability, it also reveals the story of maternal invisibility. At its center is the mother whose life has entirely been shaped by the responsibilities, guilt, and societal expectations. Unlike the traditional way of portraying motherhood, which is warm and unconditional, *Big World presents* a mother whose love is shown in the form of control, fear, vigilance, etc. Her way of care is protective and practical, which leads the people around her to misinterpret her intentions.

The dissertation titled *Care, Silence, and Invisibility: A Caregiver-centered Reading of Big World (2024)* is not a disability narrative but a caregiver-centered text. The project argues that the mother's silence, guilt, and strictness are not due to her emotional failure, but they are the result of long-term emotional labor and social expectations. Her withdrawal from public joy and eventual breakdown show how emotional labor can erase a caregiver's identity. The importance of this study lies in its focus on the often ignored world of caregivers and their emotional struggles. While disability studies center the experiences of a disabled person, the people who take care of them and their trauma and invisibility are ignored. This project shifts the attention towards the silent laborers of the family who carry long-term psychological consequences.

The theoretical framework of this study draws from the ethics of care, from the works of Carol Gilligan, Virginia Held, and Eva Kittay, which emphasizes care as a moral practice formed by responsibility and

relationships. Carol Gilligan challenges the traditional moral theories. She argues that care is rooted in listening. She explains that our decisions are often shaped by the emotional connection and lived relationships, and that makes caregiving an ethical practice rather than a personal choice. Virginia Held further adds to this idea. For Held, caregiving involves continuous responsibility and emotional engagement. When this responsibility is imposed rather than chosen, it becomes moral pressure. Eva Kittay extends this theory by focusing on dependency. Kittay's idea of dependency highlights how caregivers are expected to give endlessly without recognition, making care deeply unequal. Together, these theorists frame caregiving as a moral duty shaped by expectations and gender rather than pure selfless love. Through the concept of emotional labor by Arlie Hochschild, we can further understand that a mother is required to control her emotions for the benefit of her family, suppressing every emotion she has.

Michael Foucault's idea of biopolitics makes us understand how society places women in a place where they are supposed to accept caregiving as their duty. Through biopolitical power, caregiving is naturalized as a woman's duty. Foucault explains modern power works by "taking control of life itself," shaping how people within the family understand their roles (History of Sexuality 143). In *Big World*, the mother's silence and endurance are the result of a system that governs women through guilt and moral obligation.

This project is divided into three chapters. Chapter one establishes the theoretical

framework, introducing the ethics of care, emotional labor, and biopolitics as tools for understanding caregiving. Chapter two examines how caregiving and guilt are passed down across generations of women within the family with reference to the film *Big World*. Chapter three examines how sustained emotional labor leads to mothers' existential withdrawal. Together these chapters reveal how the caregiver is being erased as she holds the family together.

Chapter 1

Emotional Survival in Silence : Care as Repetition and Restraint

Caregiving is an act of taking care of someone who is unable to take care of themselves due to an injury, illness, or disability. According to Medline Plus (U.S. Health & Human Services), it can include both physical and emotional support given to that person. The Quebec Observatory on Caregiving defines it more broadly, explaining that the support takes various forms—providing transportation, personal care, housekeeping, offering emotional support and medical treatments, or coordinating services and care.

A caregiver can be an individual or a group of people who support someone who cannot manage alone due to disability or illness. Caregivers can be of two types: professional caregivers (nurses and social workers) and non-professional caregivers (family and relatives). In a way caregiving is universal because we humans depend upon different people in some stages of our lives, like in childhood, illness, or old age. When a person in the family is disabled and unable to take care of themselves, they depend on the members of the family, especially the women. They are seen as a hidden figure in the family and society, who is responsible for taking care of that person without any complaints.

Society perceives caregiving as a "duty" and "women's work." They are supposed to fulfill that duty without fail, and if they are to complain, they are

considered irresponsible, and society frames it as a lack of love towards that disabled or ill member. Caregiving mainly falls under the duties of a woman, especially the mother. Society has glorified and idealized the act of caregiving so that it should be done without complaints, equating the person as a support system of that family when no clear support or recognition is given to them. They are silenced by the other family members and the society because sacrifice is expected out of them.

The disabled person is given both physical care and emotional care by the caregiver. Physical care includes feeding, bathing, medical treatments, etc. They are visible acts by the caregiver that are measurable, but the emotional care that includes patience, restraint, sacrifice, and silence are taken for granted and invisible. Emotional care is the least recognized.

Caregiving is often undervalued because in our society and economy only a real profit-earning or a productive act is considered ‘real work,’ and they are rewarded in their own ways, whereas feeding a sick person, sitting beside them, and making them emotionally stable produce no profit; hence, they are considered ‘non-work.’ The countless hours of unpaid work, such as caregiving, are given less support and become invisible within one's families.

Arlie Hochschild’s concept of ‘emotional labor’ teaches us that managing one's own emotions and feelings for the comfort of others is a form of work, though it's rarely acknowledged (Hochschild, *Managed Heart* 7). They are mistaken as natural affection. Nancy Fraser, in her essay “Contradictions of

Capital and Care,” argues that reproductive labor—feeding, raising children, and caring for the sick—are the things that keep capitalism running, yet they are unpaid, and they are naturalized as women’s duty by erasing the emotional weight (Fraser, “Contradictions” 100). Caregiving is linked to women’s sacrifices, and it is not recognized. Rather than acknowledging it as exhausting work, society masks it as sentimental love and care. Due to this, caregivers are marginalized and institutionally unsupported.

The act of caregiving is often sidelined as a private matter, yet many psychologists have found it a matter of great emotional significance. To understand the silence, restraint, and repetition that show the caregiver’s life in the *Big World*, certain theories that highlight the hidden struggles, emotional work, and impact of long-lasting trauma are explored.

The ethics of care challenges the idea that morality is only about justice, rules, and laws. Carol Gilligan, in her book, *In a Different Voice* (1982), reveals that many choices are made by listening, responding, and taking responsibility for others and not by rules (Gilligan 32). The act of caregiving is not just a private task, but it shapes human relationships. Virginia Held supports this fact by saying this is not just a family matter. According to her, care is the foundation of all societies (Held 11). Eva Kittay, in *Love’s Labor* (1999), calls this “dependency work.” She reveals that every individual goes through the phase of dependence, whether in childhood, old age, or illness, and these caregivers make life possible (Kittay 29). Yet, this is unpaid work mainly done by women in a family so that society ignores its values.

When we broaden and link these thinkers, we understand that caregiving is more than just a private sacrifice made by a person, and it is a foundation itself. Still, society takes it for granted and forces it to silence. Caregiving is also closely related to trauma. Cathy Caruth explains trauma as something that cannot be processed and fully spoken when experiencing it. Instead, it returns again through silence and bodily gestures (Caruth 5). In caregiving it grows quietly through the restraint acts and watching our loved one's suffering. Lisa Diedrich says that it is not only psychological but also physical and social. The presence of trauma can be seen in gestures like silence at the dinner table, not being able to open up, tired repetition of routines, and unspoken grief (Diedrich 14). The mother in *Big World* reveals this trauma. Her survival depends on her silence that projects her unhealed wounds.

Another useful idea provided by Arlie Hochschild is the concept of 'emotional labor.' In her book "The Managed Heart," she has very deeply portrayed emotional management with the help of the example of the work done by the flight attendants and how they are trained hard to control their emotions by staying calm and composed and being patient in any situation, trying to hide their irritation and stress (Hochschild, *Managed Heart* 8). This emotional management, according to Arlie, is real work, though it is often invisible.

Caregiving in the family also performs similar tasks. A mother working for her family without showing exhaustion, anger, tiredness, or despair so as to not worry her other family members. She may also suppress her grief to appear strong before her family. This emotional control is not simply natural love as

preached by the society but a form of labor that requires sacrifice and patience.

Through Arlie Hochschild's theory we can see that caregiving is not only done in the form of physical tasks but also involves emotional labor. This silence and struggle are not a sign of strength but proof of hidden labor. All these frameworks—ethics of care, trauma theory, and emotional labor—give us a proper and broad understanding of the life of a caregiver. All these explain how caregiving, though important, often appears hidden and undervalued. They provide the necessary ideas to read the silence and small gestures in the movie *Big World* not as ordinary natural habits but as signs of emotional survival.

The word "sacrifice" is closely tied to the word "caregiving." Mothers, wives, and daughters are often praised for compromising their time, physical and mental health, and ambitions and desires to take care of the people around them. This appears respectful, but in reality it creates a cultural trap that assumes sacrifice is natural to women. It turns mental labor into an act of virtue.

In everyday life we can see that a caregiver spends their days and nights working both physically and mentally watching over the ill member of the family or goes to the extent of giving up their career to manage everything. These are not choices made by them out of their free will but are due to the pressure shaped by social expectation. Society is, in a way, romanticizing a form of exploitation.

While Gilligan and Kittay prove that caregiving is the moral foundation of life, Hochschild makes us see that caregivers suppress their own feelings to protect others. Later they are forced into silence. In trauma theory this silence is

not a simple resilience but something that can cause a deeper and unacknowledged wound. By calling this a “sacrifice,” society is deliberately ignoring the suffering behind it.

In *Big World*, the mother's silence and her repeated routines show this particular tension. She is seen as a strong woman because she does not voice her despair, but this strength is the sign of a deeper trauma. Due to this, her survival is only possible by suppressing her own grief and anger and restraining her life into routines that do not leave space for her own needs. Thus, caregiving is a mechanism through which hidden work is normalized and trauma is covered. To make the efforts of a caregiver visible and valuable, and to see this sacrifice as labor and not just ‘love,’ the first step is to accept the caregivers as central figures rather than marginalizing them from family and society.

Caregiving is not just emotionally invisible but also invisible in terms of space. The act of caregiving is mostly set in private spaces—bedrooms, hospital wards, etc. These spaces are mostly away from the visibility of the public but are associated with routines. Caregiving is confined to a private environment that rarely receives attention beyond the family. Hence, caregiving is not only socially marginalized but also spatially erased.

Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics reveals how modern societies frame which lives should be visible in the public domain. Those people who are considered "productive" are given space and value, whereas people who are dependent and people helping them are sidelined (Foucault 139).

Care always happens in the shadows of society and in places that are not given cultural importance. We often notice how private spaces become places of silent survival that goes unnoticed and unacknowledged.

Chapter 2

Care as Inheritance: The Intergenerational Transmission of Silence

In the movie *Big World*, directed by Yang Lina, the theme of silence is shown as a secret language that reveals what the character cannot say aloud. What we perceive as silence is the years of unspoken expectations weighing on the character of the mother. In this film we can see the care as not only an act of love but something that is inherited as a duty and endurance. Taking care of a person is not something that she learns, but she learns she must take care. The restraint and fear of judgment that we see in her are not her personal habits, but they are the result of women being taught to hold every emotion inside if she loves the person.

To understand how *Big World* has portrayed care as inheritance, this chapter applies ideas from the ethics of care through the works of Carol Gilligan, Virginia Held, Eva Kittay, and Arlie Hochschild's idea of emotional labor. One of the earlier scenes that proves the inheritance is around (00:09:34), where the grandmother tells the mother, "If it wasn't for me, you would've left him out for the dogs in the trash." These cruel words are spoken as if they are the truth, and this happens when the mother is cleaning her son after he comes home drunk. The mother did not show her anger. This shows that the grandmother is claiming credit for the child's survival, and she portrays the mother's struggles as failure. These kinds of expressions are subtly used to erase the importance of the mother's struggles and care she has for her son.



Fig. 1. The grandmother saying the mother would have abandoned Chunhe (00:09:35). Scene from *Big World*, directed by Yang Lina, 2024.

When we look at this through the lens of Carol Gilligan, we can see that the grandmother's voice represents the society's approval, reminding us that a mother must always be selfless. Grandmother's care is very visible, and it is praised. She takes Chunhe to public places, supports him in every little thing, takes him to meet her friends, and does everything that the public approves as love. On the contrary, Mother appears withdrawn and tense, and she always asks and worries about his studies and handwriting (00:09:16). The grandmother's care is visible, but the mother's silence is viewed as ungrateful. This unequal visibility is how care becomes a moral hierarchy—a tradition of judgement masked as affection.

At 01:46:50, the grandmother admits that she left her daughter to work in Tibet alone and was not there for her when she needed her the most. This confession connects the attitudes of two generations of women. The mother never learned tenderness because she grew up without it. The absence of the grandmother in the life of the mother shows the mother's uncertainty. They are caught in the same pattern—one passes on silence, the other inherits it.



Fig. 2. The grandmother confessing she was not there for her daughter when she needed her most (01:46:50). Scene from *Big World*, directed by Yang Lina, 2024.

In this way, *Big World* turns an ordinary family story into a study of moral inheritance. The grandmother's approval becomes the mirror in which the mother measures her worth. That mirror never provides her satisfaction. The thing they think is love is also turned into a competition, one proving she is capable and the other proving she is repentant. The world of care is not shown through dialogues but through actions. The mother's repeated actions, like cleaning up every mess

and being protective of him, and her distance from happiness prove that women do not simply learn to care; they learn the version of care that makes the society comfortable. The mother's daily life consists of small acts that are seen as a routine. Early in the film, she is shown as cleaning his room in the morning (00:11:55). It has become part of her everyday life. Virginia Held writes that care should be a moral value chosen freely, but this mother has no choice in it.

Later in other scenes she is anxious about his studies. At (00:22:13), she tells Chunhe to choose a college near to home, showing her protective nature, and she cannot bear to stay away from him. This protectiveness slowly becomes a cage for him. It is her fear of being a failed mother once again. Eva Kittay's concept of *dependency work* explains this: caregivers sustain others by giving parts of themselves until their own independence disappears. This disappearance is very vivid in this story.

The grandmother allows Chunhe freedom. She allows him to do whatever he wants and to go to whichever college he prefers, and she is willing to pay for him (00:32:55). From these differences between characters, Yang Lina shows two moral worlds colliding: one of freedom and one of anxious duty. The society celebrates and calls the grandmother "strong" because she is seen as an ideal caretaker who smiles and does everything but calls the mother "difficult" because she worries too much. The good and bad lies in how society reads the emotion. They celebrate the visible joy and judge the quiet pain. In the *Big World*, motherhood is shown as a sacred duty and a moral test that can never be passed. The mother shows her care through everyday actions like choosing his clothes (00:35:14) and making sure he gets enough rest and food (01:00:16). These

actions are her way of showing love, but it is viewed as interference or unnecessary. Her care is so constant that people have made it invisible, and when she is angry and tired, she is labelled as a failed mother. The film makes us see that her frustration is not a lack of love but the love that has become heavy because of guilt and fear.

The Weight of Unseen Care

The second half of *The Big World* shows how the actions of the mother are misunderstood, and her experience of caregiving becomes heavier as her son grows old. Her actions are seen as constant, and the emotional meaning behind those actions is invisible to the people around her. The audience interprets these actions as “control,” but in reality she is trying to reinforce the only identity that the society allows her to have—that is, the identity of a responsible, self-sacrificing mother. She did not choose this identity, but it is her way of coping with the guilt she bears, as she believes herself to be the reason for her son’s disability. Living a life trying to prove that she deserves forgiveness. This silent pressure becomes her inheritance, shaping every choice she makes. One of the strongest examples of this comes from the scene when Chunhe tells his friend that people like his mother think that he needs nothing other than eating and excreting.



Fig. 3. Chunhe says people believe they don't need anything other than eating and excreting (01:06:12). Scene from *Big World*, directed by Yang Lina, 2024

His words show how deeply he is influenced by society's judgment. He considers his grandmother a “good” caregiver because she is cheerful and lets him do whatever he wants to do, whereas he sees his mother as restrictive and overprotective, as she is always worried about what could go wrong. From this we can understand that children often learn to value the cheerfulness and freedom by dismissing the caregiving that comes from fear and emotional labor. The mother becomes the obstacle here, and the real reason behind her behavior remains unseen.

The confrontation scene is another major example where Chunhe tells his mother that his disability is her fault. Even though his words are cruel, they come from the world he grew up in—where mothers are always held accountable for everything that happens to their children. The mother's raw pain is seen later when she replies that she despises him. She says this not really because she

despises him but because it was the breaking of the weight of the guilt she carried all alone. She truly believed that she was responsible for his condition, and when she heard it from her son, the guilt she had all along burst out, and when that happens, she is labeled as a bad mother. The scene shows what an inherited silence looks like when it finally cracks. This moment is the collapse of silent endurance. It is not hate but exhaustion. The imbalance is way more vivid in this scene. The roles of grandmother and mother are different and unequal, yet society judges them as if they are the same. The grandmother is not responsible for his daily needs, routines, and safety, and this makes her caregiving lighter and easier than the mother's.



Fig. 4. Chunhe is accusing his mother of his disability (01:10:54). Scene from *Big World*, directed by Yang Lina, 2024.

The one emotionally significant scene is when the mother tells Chunhe about his birth and the guilt she has carried since then. This is the first time she actually talks about her emotional pains. She admits that she feared she pushed him the wrong way during delivery, and this fear shaped her entire life. She did

not celebrate his birthdays because she believed she did not deserve to and did not apply for a disability card because she could not face the fact that she is responsible for his condition. This scene reveals that the mother's anxiety, protectiveness, and anger are not signs of lesser care but the traces of trauma. Lisa Diedrich explains that trauma is not something that happens once, but something that continues to shape how a person moves throughout the world, influencing every aspect of their life and ways of relating to others (Diedrich).

The father in this movie is mostly absent from caregiving responsibilities, reinforcing the idea of inherited silence. He only appears in joyful moments and never in conflict situations. His absence is seen as so natural that no character questions it, even when the son blames his mother for her actions. His absence shows the next generation that caregiving is a woman's responsibility alone. The mother not only carries her emotional labor but also the responsibilities society refuses to assign to men.

All these scenes portray how care becomes a burden that is passed across generations. The grandmother inherited the silence from her own mother, the mother inherited the guilt from her grandmother, and the son inherited the habit of misunderstanding someone who cares the most. The film *Big World* exposes this cycle in a very subtle way, proving that what we see as everyday family conflicts are not just that but the struggle, guilt, and pressure weighed on the women or anyone who loves their family and does their "duties" without any complaints. Their love is so deep that it is easily misunderstood, unrecognized, and

unrewarded. This part of the film reminds us that caregiving cannot be measured by smiles and cheerfulness. Sometimes the most loving care is the kind that leaves a person tired, exhausted, quiet, and afraid of failing again.

Chapter 3

Space, Guilt and the Caregiver's Disappearance

In the *Big World*, caregiving is not just an inheritance; it slowly shapes the person where he or she is allowed to exist and how that person slowly disappears from everyone's world as an individual human being. As the film progresses, the mother silently disappears from people's memory and sometimes even from her own self. Her identity seems to slowly fade; she is not anymore recognized as a woman or an individual but only as a "mother" who needs to accept everything that comes her way without hesitation or complaining. This chapter explores caregiving as something that shrinks the world of the caregiver. Using Foucault's ideas on how power controls bodies and Arlie Hochschild's concept of emotional labor, this chapter explores how a caregiver disappears quietly.

Michael Foucault says that power does not always operate through force, but it also can operate through habits, routines, and expectations that people begin to obey even without them realizing it. In this film no one commands the mother to do caregiving or to remain silent and to keep everything to herself. Yet she does, because of the guilt, duty, and fear that are holding her stronger than anything. The grandmother is moving freely to public places, having enjoyment of her own, but the mother is mostly seen in domestic areas like the dining area, inside bedrooms, and the hall, and even when she is travelling out for work, she calls Chunhe to check on him. She is never seen sitting relaxed in this movie. Her body might have left the house, but her responsibilities remained still, and her

freedom is partial. We do not see her laughing, sitting comfortably doing something she loves, or existing as an individual; she is always seen either with Chunhe or with Grandmother. In Foucault's terms, she has internalized surveillance—she polices herself and monitors her thoughts and her behavior. She believes that she needs to prove that she is a good mother, as she believes she failed once during childbirth and is deliberately trying to fix something that has been haunting her throughout her life.

For Grandmother, care becomes a movement; she meets people and takes Chunhe to birthday parties and other social spaces. Her type of care brings life to him. For the mother, care is containment. It shrinks her world to routines like checking on his studies, cooking for them, selecting his clothes for the college he should apply to, and constantly worrying about him. This doesn't mean that Grandmother loves him more but only that it is seen by the society. Here the film keeps forward an argument that some caregivers grow while caring, while some caregivers vanish while caring because society only validates one kind of love.

Arlie Hochschild describes emotional labor as the effort of regulating one's feelings for others. Here both the women do emotional labor but in different ways. The grandmother is like a ray of happiness, and she is lively and welcoming. Most importantly, her emotional labor is visible, and everyone admires it, and she is given the title of a "good" caregiver. On the other hand, Mother takes on fear and guilt and continues to do things when she is mentally exhausted, but her emotional labor is silent. The mother performs her duties like a routine even as a working woman. As we can see, the father character is almost

absent in the scenes where they take care of Chunhe, but the mother's care is treated as less because she is not cheerful. Society decides the accepted emotions in motherhood, like warmth, care, and joy, but they always fail to see the other side that holds fear, anxiety, tiredness, etc. She becomes an undeserving mother just because her love is not so soft and bright. The one who suffers the most disappears the fastest.

The confrontation scene becomes the emotional center of this chapter. When Chunhe says that his disability is her fault, we can see the son reflecting the very idea of the society that a mother is responsible for her child's growth, pain, failure, birth, etc. The mother replies that she despises him, and everyone is shocked. That was not hatred. It was her lifetime guilt exploding. In the hospital she opened up for the first time, saying that during his birth she feared that she pushed him wrong. This reveals how her whole life is built on guilt. It was her punishing herself long before anyone else could. This shows that her disappearance was traumatic and she lived quietly.

Throughout the movie *Big World*, we can see the mother as a character who moves around carrying an invisible weight. Everyone was really focused on her frustration, sharp tone, strictness, etc., but nobody even once bothered to ask where these emotions come from or what they are made of. Chunhe misunderstands his mother's behavior as control, and her mother reduces her worrying to failure, and her own home becomes a space where she cannot express herself. Later on in the film we can clearly see that her family waits for her breaking point, but nobody ever tries to understand what pushed her toward that

explosion. We always blame someone for getting angry but do not stop and ask what really caused that emotion in the first place. The moment when the mother finally explodes and tells Chunhe that she “despises him” is shown as proof that she is the unreasonable and unloving mother she was always thought to be. The explosion of her emotions was not sudden. This was the result of years of silence and guilt. Hochschild’s idea of emotional labor helps us understand this. The mother is always managing her emotions for others’ sake. She hides her anxiety and guilt because society expects a “good” mother to do so. As time passes by, the emotions become heavier than caregiving.

Later, when she says the truth about his birth—that she feared she pushed him wrong—that’s when we know that she has been living believing it as only her fault. No one asked about that earlier. She kept all the pain inside with a belief that it was her duty to carry that guilt. Foucault’s biopolitics helps explain this: society builds mothers into believing that their emotions should be controlled or erased so as to perform as an ideal mother. The more she chased it, the more she disappeared. This portrays a hurtful logic that a caregiver receives attention only when they break down and not when they need support. The grandmother consoles Chunhe and offers him everything he wants, but nowhere in this film do we see the mother being asked about her tiredness, or does anybody check on her. Her emotions are considered irrelevant. Even when she explodes, it is considered more of a personal failure than a result of emotional labor. Her silence has already shaped how her family sees her. Caregivers are generally expected to be strong and selfless.

Another idea shown in *Big World* is that the mother is expected to love unconditionally and without limits, and if she cannot do that, she is marked as a failure. Her love is interpreted as control, suffocation, and coldness, and she does not fit the shape of a “perfect mother.” The feminists call this mystification of motherhood: the belief that a mother is a sacred being. In reality, especially in the context of disability, care is different and emotionally very demanding. In this film the mother is judged for not fitting the ideal type of mother. The grandmother's line makes this even clearer. When she talks to Chunhe about how she left her young daughter alone to work in Tibet, she says, “No one taught her how to be a good mother.” In this moment the grandmother unknowingly reinforces the very idea that has been killing her daughter throughout her life. She confirms that her daughter is not up to the expected standard.

The people around her failed to consider or understand the possibility that she is struggling with her emotions or is carrying guilt. Instead, people assume that it is because nobody could teach her to become a good mother. This line also shows that the grandmother believes her way of caregiving is correct because Chunhe is free and happy with her even though she is not the primary caregiver and does not go through the emotional labor like a mother every single day. Her role is lighter because no one is going to blame her for not caring for him, and she can freely love him, but in the case of the mother, it is different because if there is any change in the expected way of mothering, she is judged for that; therefore, her role is heavier.

The real love that the mother shows her son does not match the fantasy of motherhood that always expects mothers to be gentle, caring, and emotionally available every time and also one who is ready to sacrifice themselves for the people around them. And because the mother in this movie does not exhibit these characteristics, every time she is judged as a cold, unloving person. *Big World*, that if a mother does not do things or love according to the way that society finds correct or comfortable, then they rewrite their intentions. A mother who is trying to hold everything together but fails under pressure is already projected as a “bad” mother. The grandmother's words become the final confirmation that the mother had failed as someone who loves unconditionally. What they failed to understand was that some mothers do not love less but love under pressure, and the love under pressure is still love but just looks different.

Conclusion

On reading the film *Big World* through a caregiver-centered theoretical framework, the project shows how the duties of caregivers are invisible yet emotionally demanding. By analyzing the film through the ethics of care, Arlie Hochschild's concepts of emotional labor, and Michael Foucault's idea of biopolitics, these studies reveal how caregiving is shaped by moral expectations, gendered responsibility, and social regulation. The analysis brings to light the life of caregivers and their emotional trauma when they try to sustain the family that leads to the erasure of their emotional and social presence, especially of mothers.

The film exposes that the care is not always visible, cheerful, and gentle but often structured through silence and guilt. The study points out how the frustration of the mother is mainly from unacknowledged responsibility rather than lack of love. Rather than showcasing caregiving as a pure sacred role, *Big World* challenges the ideal notion of motherhood as unconditional love and fulfillment. In this film the mother is presented as a figure who is practical, anxious, and constrained, leading others to think her actions are controlled. The film helps in understanding how the society clings to the idea of "good mother" and how deviating from the socially accepted way of love and care can be considered a moral failure. Through this representation, the film invites us to reevaluate how the emotions of the caregivers are valued in this society.

The emotional breakdown that happens in the film serves as a critical moment where the caregiver's silence is finally broken. This moment reveals how

the people around them consciously or unconsciously wait for the caregivers to absorb the blame and guilt without even attempting to question the emotional weight they carried. By putting forward the experiences of a caregiver's emotional labor, the study encourages a wide understanding of care as a shared moral and social responsibility rather than an individual's burden, naturally borne silently by women.

In conclusion, *Big World* is seen as an important cinematic text that questions how care is valued and judged within the society. The film urges the viewers to look beyond the act of visible affection and recognize the silent laborers who sustained the family. Recognizing caregiving as labor—emotional, psychological, and moral—is essential in understanding the humane way of care, one that acknowledges not only those who are cared for but also those who carry the burden of care.

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