

Staying Strong in the Middle: A Literature Review on Sandwich Generation Resilience

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Abstract: The sandwich generation phenomenon is commonly observed in developing countries, including Indonesia. This generation is caught between the responsibilities of caring for aging parents and raising children, resulting in dual roles that are susceptible to role conflict. These role conflicts can affect not only personal life but also work and family domains. However, not all individuals experience the same negative impacts, as some are able to adapt positively through resilience. Resilience enables individuals to endure and thrive amid complex role demands. This literature review aims to explore the dynamics of resilience within the context of the sandwich generation and to identify the factors that contribute to enhancing resilience. The method used was a literature review, with a total of 10 articles included based on the screening process. The findings indicate that resilience in the sandwich generation is influenced by both internal and external factors. Moreover, resilience plays a critical role in promoting psychological well-being, improving quality of life, and strengthening individuals' adaptive capacity.

Keywords: Resilience; Sandwich generation; Role conflict.

1 INTRODUCTION

The sandwich generation phenomenon is a condition frequently observed in developing countries. This is due to societal mindsets that tend to encourage living in extended family arrangements, where many people still reside with their grandparents or even great-grandparents under one roof (Amalianita & Putri, 2023). In Indonesia, cultural practices emphasize filial commitment, characterized by high levels of dedication to easing parents' lives, including providing care and support during old age. Furthermore, data from the Central Statistics Agency show an increase in the number of households in Indonesia with elderly family members, from approximately 27.88% in 2019 to 33.16% in 2023. This situation fosters the emergence of intergenerational roles and responsibilities, commonly referred to as the sandwich generation, a term first introduced by Miller (1981). The sandwich generation refers to individuals who are "sandwiched" between two generations—aging parents and their own children and family. This condition can lead to role conflict, especially when individuals face difficulties in fulfilling their responsibilities, causing some roles to be neglected or poorly executed (Khalil & Santoso, 2022). Such role conflict affects not only personal well-being but also impacts work and family domains. According to Cerrato & Cifre (2018), in the work context, dual-role conflict may reduce performance and job satisfaction. In family life, it may lead to increased conflict and decreased family satisfaction. However, some individuals are able to adapt positively and overcome these pressures through what is known as resilience. Connor & Davidson (2003) define resilience as an individual's capacity to survive and thrive when facing difficult challenges or situations. Similarly, Vella & Pai (2019) state that resilience always involves exposure to adversity, followed by positive outcomes.

Based on the explanation above, the sandwich generation is a condition that can be experienced by any individual, regardless of gender. This condition may be influenced by cultural factors, economic conditions, multigenerational family structures, and limited access to formal care services. Individuals in the sandwich generation face significant challenges and pressures due to their dual roles, which have the potential to create conflict and reduce psychological well-being. However, resilience enables individuals to endure and adapt amidst these role-related pressures. Previous research by Priyandoko (2023) examined the resilience of the sandwich generation with a focus on women. Through this literature review, the researchers aim to examine resilience within the context of the sandwich generation among both men and women. The findings are expected to contribute to a theoretical understanding of the challenges faced by members of the

sandwich generation, as well as highlight resilience as an adaptive capacity that enables individuals to cope with such conditions.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method used in this study is a literature review. Data were collected from national and international journal databases, primarily through Google Scholar. The article search was limited to publications from the last ten years (2015–2025). The keywords used in the search were “resilience” or “resiliensi”, and “sandwich generation” or “generasi sandwich”. After identifying several articles, the next step was to screen them based on the inclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria for article selection were as follows: (1) the article was an empirical study (quantitative or qualitative) or conceptual paper that theoretically discussed resilience; (2) the participants in the empirical study were adults in the sandwich generation, or adults generally within the age range typically associated with the sandwich generation; and (3) the article was available in English or Indonesian and could be accessed in full-text form. Based on the search and screening process, a total of 10 articles met the inclusion criteria and were relevant to the research topic.

3 RESULTS

Based on the search conducted via Google Scholar, 10 articles were found that were relevant to the research topic.

Table 1. Data Extraction Results

No	Author, Year & Title	Publication	Method & Partisipant	Result
1	Poegoh & Hamidah. (2016). Peran dukungan sosial dan regulasi emosi terhadap resiliensi keluarga penderita skizofrenia.	INSAN Jurnal Psikologi dan Kesehatan Mental, 1(1), 12—21.	Method: Quantitative. Participants: 60 family members or caregivers of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia who were previously hospitalized at Dr. Radjiman Wediodiningrat Lawang Mental Hospital.	The results of the study indicated a significant relationship between social support and emotion regulation with resilience. The relative contribution of social support to resilience was 20.9%, while the relative contribution of emotion regulation was 14.6%.
2	Digdyani & Kaloeti. (2020). Hubungan antara regulasi diri dan resiliensi dengan kualitas hidup pada perawat Rumah Sakit Swasta X di Kota Semarang.	Jurnal Empati, 7(3), 1013—1019.	Method: Quantitative. Participants: 185 nurses employed at Private Hospital X in Semarang City, with a minimum of one year of work experience and at least a diploma-level (DIII) education.	The results of the study showed a positive relationship between self-regulation and resilience with the quality of life among nurses at Private Hospital X in Semarang City. Resilience was the most significant factor influencing quality of life, with a contribution of 21.3%.
3	Rozalinna & Anwar. (2021). Rusunawa dan sandwich generation: Resiliensi masa pandemi di ruang perkotaan.	Brawijaya Journal of Social Science, 1(1), 63—79.	Method: Qualitative with a descriptive approach. Participants: 4 individuals from the sandwich generation who live in urban Rusunawa (low-cost rental apartments) located in East Java, with low incomes below the regional minimum wage (UMR), making it difficult for them to afford home ownership.	The results of the study show that the decision on where to live made by members of the sandwich generation residing in Rusunawa (low-cost rental apartments) in urban areas of East Java, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, did not significantly influence their ability to build resilience. This was particularly evident amid economic limitations and the impact of the pandemic, which brought restricted access and increased vulnerability.

4	Priyandoko & Rahmasari. (2023). Resiliensi pada perempuan sandwich generation.	Character: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi, 10(1), 125—142.	Method: Qualitative with a case study approach. Participants: 3 women who were married, employed with an income around the regional minimum wage (UMR), aged between 40–49 years, and responsible for supporting their elderly parents. In this study, two significant others were also selected for each participant, resulting in a total of 6 significant others.	The results of the study show that women in the sandwich generation demonstrate strong resilience skills despite experiencing pressure from multiple roles. This resilience is supported by three main factors: self-regulation, interpersonal support from family, and the ability to find meaning in life experiences.
5	Raja, Viena & Merida. (2023). Resilience in the sandwich generation	Jurnal Spirits, 14(1), 34—46.	Method: Comparative quantitative. Participants: 45 men and 45 women who were married, resided in Bekasi City, aged between 20 and 45 years, and classified as part of the sandwich generation.	The results of the study showed that the level of resilience among sandwich generation individuals, both men and women, was in the moderate category, with a percentage of 97.2%. These individuals demonstrated a fairly good ability to adapt and overcome various life challenges, supported by personal competence, religiosity, and optimism in facing stressors.
6	Fatmasari & Ambarwati. (2024). Konsep diri dengan resiliensi pada sandwich generation.	Jurnal Ilmiah Psyche, 18(1), 1—16	Method: Quantitative with a correlational design. Participants: 149 individuals classified as belonging to the sandwich generation, with the following criteria: aged 18–40 years, employed, married, having children, and financially supporting their parents.	The results of the study showed a significant positive relationship between self-concept and resilience among individuals classified as belonging to the sandwich generation.
7	Franscois & Suparman. (2024). Pengaruh resiliensi terhadap psychological well-being pada generasi sandwich.	Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang, 10(4), 250—259.	Method: Quantitative. Participants: 233 individuals identified as belonging to the sandwich generation, aged between 21 and 45 years.	The results of the study showed a strong correlation between resilience and psychological well-being. Resilience contributed significantly to psychological well-being, explaining 37.8% of the variance.
8	Nurfaiza, Suryati & Putra. (2024). Implementasi konseling individu dengan teknik miracle question dalam meningkatkan resiliensi terhadap produktivitas sandwich generation women.	Berkala Ilmiah Pendidikan, 4(3), 657—668.	Method: Qualitative with a case study approach. Participant: Client A, identified as belonging to the sandwich generation.	The results of the study showed that the implementation of individual counseling using the miracle question technique to improve the productivity of sandwich generation women was carried out in three stages: the initial stage (planning), the core stage (intervention activities), and the final stage (evaluation). The use of individual counseling with the miracle question technique provided additional insight into strategies for enhancing resilience, thereby enabling sandwich generation

				women to increase their productivity levels.
9	Azzahra & Qarni. (2025). Emotional regulation and resilience of middle adulthood in the sandwich generation.	Sosiohumani ora: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora, 11(1), 228—240.	Method: Quantitative. Participants: 54 middle-aged adults identified as belonging to the sandwich generation, residing in Perawang Barat, Tualang.	The results of the study show that emotion regulation ability contributes significantly to enhancing resilience in middle-aged adults who are part of the sandwich generation.
10	Widhigdo, Saputra & Valencia. (2025). The secret of sandwich generation resilience: Finding mental well-being through attachment to God.	Psikoborneo: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi, 13(1), 142—148.	Method: Quantitative. Participants: 356 respondents aged 30–60 years, who were employed, had at least one child under the age of 18, provided care for their parents or in-laws, and lived with or in close proximity to their parents or in-laws.	The results of the study show that attachment to God plays a significant role in strengthening resilience, thus positively impacting the mental well-being of individuals in the sandwich generation.

4 DISCUSSIONS

The sandwich generation is essentially a condition that can be experienced by any individual, both men and women. According to Irawaty and Gayatri (2023), men tend to provide financial support, while women typically offer emotional support and assist with daily household tasks. However, in recent times, women may also serve as heads of households or act as the primary breadwinners. Based on this, resilience is considered one of the most important aspects for individuals in the sandwich generation, as they face complex conditions involving dual roles and responsibilities—caring for aging parents while raising children. A study by Raja, Viena, and Merida (2023) found no significant differences in resilience between men and women in the sandwich generation.

The resilience possessed by individuals has a significant positive impact on their psychological well-being. This is supported by a study conducted by Franscois and Suparman (2024), which identified resilience as one of the factors influencing psychological well-being in the sandwich generation. In addition, resilience also plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of life. This is consistent with a study by Digdyani and Kaloeti (2020) involving nurses at Private Hospital X in Semarang City, which found that individuals with high resilience and adaptability in coping with work-related pressures and daily life challenges are better able to maintain an optimal quality of life. In the context of the sandwich generation, resilience enables individuals to withstand pressure, manage stress, and adapt positively in difficult situations, thereby supporting the development of a more balanced, meaningful, and mentally healthy life.

The resilience possessed by individuals can be influenced by various factors. One internal factor that affects resilience is self-concept. This is supported by a study conducted by Fatmasari and Ambarwati (2024), which found that a positive self-concept among individuals in the sandwich generation fosters an optimistic outlook, hope, and confidence when facing pressures. This finding aligns with a study by Priyandoko and Rahmasari (2023), which showed that self-concept influences how sandwich generation women interpret life experiences.

In addition, self-regulation is another internal factor that contributes to resilience, and it is closely linked to emotional regulation. A study by Poegoh and Hamidah on families with schizophrenia found that emotional regulation plays a role in strengthening resilience. Similarly, a study by Azzahra and Qarni (2025) revealed that emotional regulation helps individuals remain stable under pressure, manage emotional responses, and reduce the negative effects of emotional stress. In the context of the sandwich generation, emotional regulation enables individuals to cope with dual pressures—caring for elderly parents and meeting the needs of their children—while maintaining family harmony and lowering stress levels.

External factors that can influence resilience include social support. This is consistent with a study by Poegoh and Hamidah (2016), which found that social support significantly affects resilience in families with schizophrenia. A similar finding was reported by Priyandoko and Rahmasari (2023), who highlighted that interpersonal support from family members plays a critical role, particularly in the context of the sandwich generation. In addition, economic factors are also crucial, as shown in a study by Rozalina and Anwar (2021), which explained that financial limitations and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic hindered individuals in the sandwich generation from developing resilience.

Another influential factor is spirituality, specifically attachment to God. A study by Widhigdo, Saputra, and Valencia (2025) showed that attachment to God can strengthen resilience and positively impact the psychological well-being of individuals in the sandwich generation. Spiritual attachment plays an important role in enhancing resilience by providing emotional security, reducing anxiety, and fostering optimism, meaning in life, and emotional well-being. Spiritual practices such as prayer and self-reflection serve as effective coping strategies, while involvement in religious communities enhances social support. Furthermore, attachment to God encourages more understanding in communication and parenting practices within families and helps reduce internal conflicts by promoting self-confidence and belief in divine power.

Based on this, efforts to develop and strengthen resilience are essential for managing the complex roles and responsibilities faced by individuals in the sandwich generation. One form of intervention that can be applied is counseling services. A study conducted by Nurfaiza, Suryati, and Putra (2024) found that individual counseling can improve the resilience of women in the sandwich generation, thereby enhancing their productivity levels.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The sandwich generation refers to a group of individuals who face complex challenges due to dual roles and responsibilities. This condition is experienced by both men and women and has the potential to cause psychological stress and role conflict, which can negatively impact overall well-being. In coping with such pressures, resilience is a crucial aspect that enables individuals to endure, adapt, and lead a more balanced and meaningful life. Resilience has been shown to have a positive impact on psychological well-being and quality of life, and it can be influenced by various factors. Internal factors such as self-concept, self-regulation, and emotional regulation contribute to shaping an individual's adaptive capacity. Meanwhile, external factors such as social support, economic conditions, and spirituality—particularly attachment to God—also play an important role in strengthening resilience in individuals navigating the demands of the sandwich generation. One effort that can be undertaken to enhance resilience, especially among individuals in the sandwich generation, is the provision of counseling services. Counseling has been shown to foster resilience, strengthen adaptive functioning, and promote individual productivity in fulfilling dual roles. Therefore, the provision of systematic psychological support is essential in helping individuals from the sandwich generation manage role-related burdens and life pressures more effectively.

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