



Communication Experiences of Sandwich Generation Women in Undertaking Multiple Roles in the Family

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ABSTRACT

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Women are often faced with multiple roles within the family, including as wives, mothers, children, and individuals who contribute to the household economy. In the Indonesian cultural context, the sandwich generation phenomenon is reflected in the position of women who are often faced with dual roles, not only being responsible for children but also continuing to care for elderly parents. These roles often cause emotional, financial, and physical stress. This study aims to describe the communication experiences of sandwich generation women in Kupang City in carrying out dual roles in multigenerational families. The research method used is qualitative with Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach through in-depth interviews. The results show that the communication experiences of sandwich generation women in Kupang City face multigenerational responsibilities. Through daily communication, they strive to balance various roles while building a shared understanding of every family decision. Based on Alfred Schutz's phenomenological perspective, two types of motives were found in carrying out dual roles: the because motive, which is rooted in past experiences, moral responsibility, and the family's economic condition, and the in order to motive, which is oriented towards long-term goals such as creating economic stability and family welfare. These two motives are influenced by a stock of knowledge encompassing life experiences, cultural values, and religious teachings, which together shape the reflective awareness of sandwich generation women in facing the social and economic demands of multigenerational families. Future research could explore the communication conflicts sandwich generation women experience in navigating their dual roles.

KEYWORDS:

Women, Sandwich Generation, Communication Experience, Dual Role Motives, Phenomenology

1. INTRODUCTION

Women play a central role in family and community life, both as mothers, wives, daughters, and individuals contributing to various aspects of life. Traditional roles place women in reproductive roles (housekeeping, bearing and raising children, and caring for their husbands), devoting their entire lives to the family (Indah Ahdia, 2013).

The culture of reciprocity towards aging parents is a highly respected and passed down through generations, where children, especially daughters, are considered to have primary responsibility for caring for and meeting the needs of their elderly parents. This practice is increasingly evident in

multigenerational households, where women, both as daughters and daughters-in-law, are often positioned as primary caregivers responsible for the physical, emotional, and well-being of their parents, while other family members tend to play a supporting role. The majority of elderly expect to be cared for, loved, and receive financial assistance and healthcare services that can be provided by their daughters (Made Riasmini et al., 2013). Women bear a greater share of the caregiving burden (4.7%) than men (2.7%) (Khusaini et al., 2024).

This reality reflects the phenomenon of dual roles in families known as the sandwich generation. This term was first used The term was popularized by Dorothy Miller in 1981 to describe a situation in which individuals, particularly women, are caught in the dual role of caring for children and aging parents simultaneously. The sandwich generation is a generation caught between the demands of children and the

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responsibilities of caring for aging parents (Noor and Isa, 2020).

These demands from both sides can cause high emotional stress, and financial burdens add to the pressure. Sandwich generation women, who are constantly faced with multiple challenges, are more likely to experience stress, burnout, depression, and other mental health problems. Individuals are potentially experiencing mental and physical health problems, even decreasing productivity (Hopps et al., 2017). Sandwich generation women, both employed and unemployed, report that the increasing burden of caring for their children and elderly parents or in-laws has resulted in time constraints (Marum, 2020) (in Khusaini et al., 2024).

The sandwich generation phenomenon tends to be more prevalent in developing countries, where there is always a drive to live within the family, and many people in developing countries still live with their grandparents and great-grandparents under one roof (Amalianita & Putri, 2023). According to a 2022 survey by Jakpat, 50% of the 3,691 respondents admitted to being in a sandwich generation situation, where they simultaneously have to support elderly parents, children, and even themselves. himself (Jakmin, 2022).

The cultural reality in East Nusa Tenggara shows a strong patriarchal culture that worsens the position of women and children in society, where women's roles are still often limited to domestic work and there is a lack of awareness of children's rights (Maria & Gero, 2024).

Communication experiences arise from the communication activities carried out by individuals in social interactions. According to Suprato, human life in the world cannot be separated from communication activities because communication is an integral part of the system and order of human and/or community social life (Milyane et al., 2022). When individuals are faced with a social phenomenon, they certainly have unique communication experiences, which serve as the basis for motivating the phenomenon they experience. These experiences include how they interact, convey feelings, and understand the situations around them, thus shaping their perspectives and responses to the phenomenon. Thus, communication experiences are key to understanding and interpreting the social realities faced by individuals.

In the dual roles of both childcare and care for the elderly, communication plays a crucial role and is a key factor influencing women's ability to navigate the various challenges they face. When women are in this position,

They are often faced with a variety of demands that require effective communication skills to manage interactions with other family members. Good communication enables women to clearly communicate their needs, expectations, and boundaries, as well as to listen to and understand the needs and feelings of others around them.

Based on the description of the background above, the researcher is interested in describing how the communication experience and motives of the dual role of sandwich generation women in Kupang City. This research is also expected to add to the academic literature related to the sandwich generation phenomenon in Indonesia, especially in Kupang City, increase understanding in the phenomenological study of communication experiences, provide a new perspective in communication and gender studies regarding the burden of women's roles in the family, become an inspiration for every individual who is in a similar condition, increase awareness and understanding of the government and local communities to be able to support the welfare of women who face dual roles, and become a reference for subsequent researchers who want to research the sandwich generation phenomenon, both in Kupang City and other regions, thus enriching the academic literature in the field of communication and family.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach developed by Alfred Schutz. This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal meaning.

The subjective experiences of individuals in everyday life are explored through a process of intersubjectivity between researchers and informants. Schutz emphasized that social meaning can only be understood through individuals' direct experiences in their lifeworlds. The paradigm used is the constructivist paradigm, as social reality is considered a construct of individual experience, interpretation, and reflection. Through this paradigm, the research focuses on deeply understanding the communication experiences and motives of sandwich generation women in carrying out dual roles in Kupang City.

Data were obtained through in-depth interviews and documentation. Interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner to allow informants to freely and reflectively describe their experiences, while documentation was used as a complement to verify data from written sources such as books, scientific journals, and survey reports. Data collection techniques used triangulation to increase data validity by comparing results from various sources and methods.

The research subjects consisted of six sandwich generation women in Kupang City who met the criteria based on Noor & Isa (2020), namely having dual roles in the family, bearing the financial burden for two generations, experiencing work-family conflict, being of productive age (30-60 years), and living with two different generations in one house. Informants were obtained through snowball sampling, starting with two initial informants who then recommended other informants. The six informants came from four sub-districts in Kupang City: Penkase Oeleta, Oebufu, Manulai II, and Kelapa Lima.

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The collected data was analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and verification or drawing conclusions. The reduction process was carried out by sorting information relevant to the research focus, namely communication experience and dual role motives. Data presentation was carried out by organizing interview results into narrative form and direct quotations for easy understanding. The final stage, verification, was carried out by comparing field findings with Schutz's phenomenological theory, the concept of communication experience, and the concept of the sandwich generation.

The entire research process was conducted over two months in Kupang City. Data validity was tested using source and technique triangulation to ensure high validity of the information obtained. Through the application of this phenomenological method, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of how sandwich generation women in Kupang City interpret and motivate their dual roles in the context of their lives can be gained family multigenerational.

III. RESULTS

The Communication Experience of Sandwich Generation Women in Carrying Out Dual Roles in the Family

1. Everyday Experience

The informants' routines illustrate the division of roles between caring for the home, children, elderly parents, and work. Through daily communication, they strive to maintain harmony and build shared understanding within the family. Informants such as FTA, BN, DC, DF, and PG demonstrate that their actions are not merely routine, but symbols of care and responsibility carried out through social interaction and nonverbal communication. However, not everything runs smoothly. Such as GKB's experience of conflict with her mother due to differing views on women's economic roles. Overall, these everyday experiences demonstrate the resilience and adaptive strategies of sandwich generation women in balancing emotional, physical, and financial responsibilities.

2. Typification of Meaning

In the context of Schutz's phenomenology, the typification of meaning is evident in how women interpret their dual roles as moral obligations, compassion, and spiritual devotion. PG, DF, and FTA interpret their dual roles as moral responsibilities rooted in cultural and religious values, while GKB interprets their dual roles as an expression of gratitude and a critical reflection on patriarchal family culture. This suggests that Typification of meaning is dynamic—it can change according to life experiences and an individual's reflective awareness of their social world.

3. Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity is evident through the support between family members in sharing responsibilities and understanding each other's conditions. For example, FTA and DC received

support from their husbands and siblings in caring for their parents, while BN, PG, and GKB received emotional support from their partners, family, and peers experiencing similar situations. This process of sharing meaning strengthens solidarity and helps them maintain psychological balance amidst the pressures of life. Thus, positive communication, empathy, and mutual assistance are the keys to the intersubjectivity of sandwich generation women in multigenerational families.

IV. DISCUSSION

Motives of Sandwich Generation Women in Kupang City in Carrying Out Dual Roles in the Family

1. Motive Because (Because Motive)

Motives arise from past experiences and socioeconomic conditions that demand women's actions. For example, PG and DF take on significant roles due to their families' economic constraints; BN accepts responsibility because her brother-in-law has been transferred; while DC and FTA are motivated by their parents' health and past experiences. These motives demonstrate that their actions stem from moral awareness and life experiences that shape a sense of responsibility.

2. Due Motive (In Order to Motive)

Motives relate to desired long-term goals. PG focuses on the health and well-being of parents, GKB hopes its current support will become a social investment for the future, while other informants strive to create economic stability and family harmony. These motives emphasize that their dual roles are not simply reactions to circumstances, but reflective actions directed toward the hope and sustainability of family well-being.

3. Stock of Knowledge

Knowledge bases serve as the basis for interpreting and carrying out dual roles. FTA learns from past negative experiences to be more careful in sharing responsibilities; PG builds empathy from family experiences; GKB interprets its role based on spiritual values and self-reflection; DF draws on religious teachings; while DC and BN interpret their roles through gratitude for their parents' sacrifices and their experience caring for the elderly. This knowledge base, formed from experience, cultural values, and religious teachings, serves as a practical and moral guide in determining the daily actions of sandwich generation women.

V. CONCLUSION

The communication experiences of sandwich generation women in Kupang City show how social interactions and meanings are formed in multigenerational family dynamics. Through daily communication, they strive to balance their roles as children, wives, mothers, aunts, and as the primary and supporting family members, while continuously building a shared understanding of every decision they make. Based

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on Alfred Schutz's phenomenological perspective, these experiences are the result of subjective meaning construction through the process of typification of meaning and intersubjectivity in daily routines, where each individual interprets their life experiences based on their values, culture, and the social situations surrounding them. These findings indicate that positive communication, emotional support, and reflective awareness are essential foundations for maintaining psychological balance and role continuity amidst the social and economic demands of multigenerational families in Kupang City.

Meanwhile, the motives of sandwich generation women in Kupang City in carrying out dual roles reflect the connection between past experiences (because motive) and life goals they wish to achieve in the future (in order to motive), both of which are equipped with a stock of knowledge. The because motive is driven by life experiences, family economic conditions, and a sense of responsibility towards parents, children, and family. Meanwhile, the to motive is oriented towards long-term hopes, such as the desire to create economic stability to provide a decent life for their families. Both motives demonstrate that the actions of sandwich generation women in Kupang City are not merely reactive, but rather the result of reflective considerations based on a stock of knowledge derived from past experiences and values they have long internalized, such as caring for family members, respect for parents, and religious teachings that emphasize the importance of devotion and love within the family.

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VII. DISCLOSURE

The researcher expressly states that all information written in this study is information obtained voluntarily from informants so that there is no conflict regarding the research data as a whole.

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