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Career or Caregiving: The Dilemma Faced by Women in the Sandwich Generation

Moh. Khusaini ^{1,*}, ¹, Firdaus Finuliyah ², ¹, Alfi Muflikhah Lestari ³, ¹, and Alma Sofi Yuwan ⁴, ¹

Department of National Defense Science, Doctoral Program, University of Brawijaya, 65145, Malang, East Java Province, Indonesia

² Department of Economics, Doctoral Program, University of Brawijaya, 65145, Malang, East Java Province, Indonesia

³ Department of Islamic Economics, University of Brawijaya, 65145, Malang, East Java Province, Indonesia

⁴ Department of Economics, Postgraduate Program, University of Brawijaya, 65145, Malang, East Java Province, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author: khusaini@ub.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the factors of working women in a sandwich generation to decide to work in the non-agricultural sector in East Java Province, Indonesia. The sandwich generation is identical to economic dependents on two families simultaneously: biological children and parents. As a sandwich generation, encouraging women to work develops their careers and for the welfare of their families. The sandwich generation phenomenon has occurred in several countries, including in every region in Indonesia. Many factors, especially structural poverty and economic conditions, can cause sandwich generation. This study uses logistic regression analysis of 2022 National Socioeconomic Data. The research results show that the characteristics of women participating in the nonagricultural sector can be caused by living conditions, education level, digital conditions, and the guarantee of protection from the government.

Keywords: Gender Roles; Non-Agricultural Sector;

Sandwich Generation; Women; Work-Family

Conflict

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1. Introduction

Women workers are potential human resources to play a role and occupy strategic positions in the family and society. Nevertheless, in various cases, women's health and well-being are not prioritized by spouses. There are still women workers who have families who still have to meet the needs of a multigenerational life, referred to as the sandwich generation. The challenge of sandwich generation women workers is not only from the work side but also from the family side. Gender equality in the scope of work is still not optimal, so the involvement of women workers tends to be lower than men workers. Several sectors of the economy have provided opportunities for the women workforce to contribute with several conditions and conditions. This research is essential to determine the factors that can support the sandwich generation women workforce to work in the non-agricultural sector as one of the sectors that is assumed to be stable with a higher income level.

Challenges as a sandwich generation often occur in women workers. Various factors cause the burden of women workers to tend to be layered (Dewi & Wiksuana, 2022). The divorce rate in households is relatively high, requiring women workers to be the backbone of themselves, their children, and their parents (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022). On the other hand, not all elderly parents already have old age security, so they depend economically on their children. Challenges in sandwich generation women workers can result in mental health problems, ranging from anxiety and stress to depression (Abramowska-Kmon, 2018; Turgeman-Lupo et al., 2020).

Traditional and cultural factors can also influence the relationship between women workers and the sandwich generation. In Asian cultures, parents are the obligation and responsibility of children (Noor & Md Isa, 2020; Rayanpour et al., 2022). One of the characteristics of Asians is trying to make families prosperous (Srivastava et al., 2020). Indonesia, as a multicultural country with a majority of Muslims, also affects both directly and indirectly the existence of sandwich-generation women workers (Sudarji et al., 2022). In line with previous research on the characteristics of Indonesians who tend to have a high sense of kinship, thus encouraging productive age workers to live in three generations (Supriatna et al., 2022).

Sandwich-generation women workers in Indonesia tend to increase in line with the increase in population every year. Until now, several economic sectors have provided opportunities for women to occupy strategic positions (Merijanti et al., 2023). However, some women workers need to be fully protected from labor laws that apply, especially workers in the informal sector (Darus et al., 2023). The problem often experienced by women workers is unequal pay. Previous research stated that women workers only earned 77% of the total income earned by male workers (Nilamsari et al., 2023).

One of the factors that determine the selection of economic sectors by sandwich generation women workers is the level of income and sustainability of work. This phenomenon encourages women sandwich generation workers to start switching from the informal sector to the industrial sector or non-agricultural sector. The increase in the transformation of the selection of non-agricultural economic sectors can be partly due to the low employment opportunities in the agricultural sector. On the other hand, there are terms and conditions to participate as laborers in the non-agricultural sector, which is still a problem for some women workers, both in terms of human resource quality factors and the side of the origin of residence.

The characteristics of women workers based on place of residence have different tendencies between urban and rural origins. Discrimination against women workers still occurs in the agricultural sector in rural areas. This problem became a motivating factor for women workers to switch to urban areas and work in the non-agricultural sector (Ao et al., 2016; Huang et al.,



2018; Todaro, 1969; Xu et al., 2019). In addition, the quality of human resources is also one of the supporting factors for opportunities for women workers to work in the non-agricultural sector, such as the level of education and understanding of the development of technology, information, and communication.

The condition of sandwich generation women workers regarding high financial burdens and low welfare levels is still an unresolved issue in contrast to the times and the increase in employment in the non-agricultural sector, which continues to grow. Therefore, this study must be conducted to analyze the factors that influence the decision of sandwich generation women workers to work in the non-agricultural sector in East Java Province. Refers to data on the contribution of the East Java Province sector, which is still dominated by the industrial or nonagricultural sector (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Jawa Timur, 2023). This research is expected to provide an overview of efforts to reduce poverty rates and end sandwich generation through the role of women workers in the non-agricultural sector, both secondary and tertiary sectors.

Literature Review

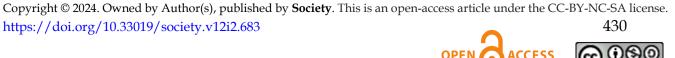
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Research related to the decision of sandwich generation women workers to work in the non-agricultural sector in East Java can be approached from the perspective of labor economics theory and human development theory. Labor economics theory explains that women's decision to work is influenced by financial benefits as opposed to non-financial costs such as time and emotional burden (Miedema et al., 2021). On the other hand, human development theory states that improving the quality of human resources through education and training can open up job opportunities in more productive sectors, including the non-agricultural sector (Tayouri et al., 2023). In the context of the sandwich generation, the quality of human resources, such as education, technological skills, and adaptation to the new work environment, are the main determinants of their participation in the modern labor market.

Structural factors also play an essential role in the decisions of sandwich-generation female workers. The structural shift from the agrarian sector to the industrial sector has created new opportunities for women to work in the non-agricultural sector (Chakrabarti, 2023). However, cultural and social challenges, such as traditional gender roles, remain significant barriers. This research is relevant to understanding the dynamics of the workforce in East Java, where the industrial sector plays a dominant role. However, social barriers and gender discrimination often limit women's access to work in this sector (Ou-Salah et al., 2024). Other factors, such as urbanization and regional economic shifts, have also encouraged women workers to leave the unstable agrarian sector.

In addition, previous research has shown that the dual workload in the sandwich generation may encourage women to seek higher-income jobs in the non-agricultural sector. Economic pressures on multigenerational families are often the main driver for women to increase their participation in the productive sector (Jabeen et al., 2020). Another supporting factor is access to technology and infrastructure, such as the Internet, which can increase women's ability to work in modern industrial and service sectors (Lechman & Popowska, 2020). Thus, this research is expected to provide further insights into how sandwich-generation women can be empowered by improving the quality of human resources and access to jobs in the non-agricultural sector.

The opportunities for women workers tend to be lower compared to men workers. The concept of social identity theory can be one of the illustrations of women's success in the job market (Weerakkody, 2023). The challenge of women workers increases if they have the burden of responsibility on their own families and parents or sandwich generation. The responsibility



of the sandwich generation in caring for parents and children simultaneously as carrying out the role of women workers becomes very heavy to trigger Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and Family-Work Conflict (FWC) in everyday life (Moreira, 2022; Noor & Md Isa, 2020).

The dual roles and responsibilities of sandwich-generation women workers hurt the physical, psychological, emotional, and financial burdens. Supriatna et al. found that the sandwich generation has a significant impact on the psychological burden due to the economic burden that must be faced to meet the needs of multigenerational families (Supriatna et al., 2022). Kubota et al. state that the most apparent difficulties faced by the sandwich generation are mainly from a financial aspect; in this case, the increase in economic value makes the economic condition of the sandwich generation unbalanced due to the high price of essential commodities (Kubota et al., 2022). The increasingly weak health conditions of parents and disruptive work lives are the biggest challenges (Noor & Md Isa, 2020).

Lack of social support, job demands, and other external problems put sandwich generation workers in emotional conflict. Reinforced by the results of Merijanti et al. research, the prevalence of symptoms of mental and emotional problems is found in women workers due to the high burden of career development because career development has a significant role in psychopathological problems in workers (Merijanti et al., 2023). Male workers usually offer financial support, in contrast to women workers are more likely to offer emotional support and help with daily tasks (household chores), which cause physical, emotional, and mental stress (Irawaty & Gayatri, 2023). Sandwich-generation women tend to have a double burden in taking care of the household, caring for children, and caring for the elderly (Pines et al., 2011; Rubin & White-Means, 2009; Srivastava et al., 2020).

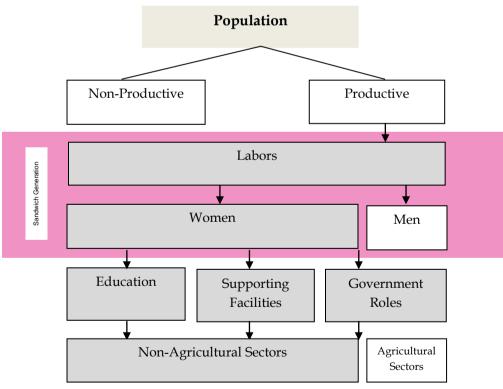


Figure 1. Research Framework Source: Authors (2023)

In general, several previous studies have discussed the role of women's labor force participation in the sandwich generation that must be responsible for generations before and

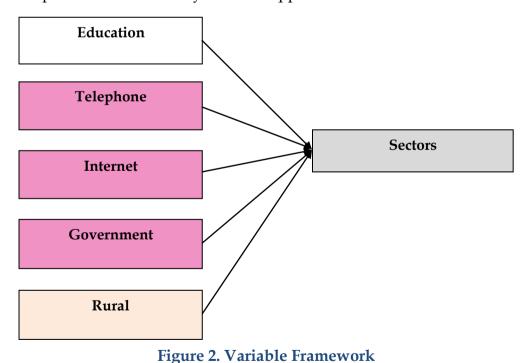
after (Chang & White-Means, 1995; Ettner, 1996; Kolodinsky & Shirey, 2000; Wolf & Soldo, 1994). On the other hand, the most significant role in the sandwich generation should be men, but the women workforce still bears more than 75%. One of the reasons for women to participate in the labor market. However, other factors encourage women to work, such as higher education.

In micro terms, women's participation in the labor market can help families escape poverty by increasing household income (Verick, 2018). In addition, women's labor force participation can be an effort to improve gender equality in the world of work (Shirazi, 2012). The role of women in Indonesia before the COVID-19 pandemic. Job opportunities for women that continue to grow will be directly proportional to the driving factors to work. In general, the willingness of women to work is due to the desire to finance their own needs and the living needs of the people who are their dependents (Sumarsono, 2009).

The layered burden of financial and emotional burdens encourages women sandwich generation workers to participate in sectors that provide high-income levels. To participate in the non-agricultural sector with high-wage offers, quality human resources are needed. The quality of human resources can be affected by environmental conditions and supporting facilities. Environmental conditions can be in the form of residential origin, such as rural or urban. Meanwhile, supporting facilities can be in technology and the Internet.

3. Research Methodology

This research uses secondary data from the 2022 National Socioeconomic Survey (SUSENAS). The number of observations in this study was 15,242 respondents, who were women workers from the sandwich generation in East Java Province, Indonesia. The criteria for labor included in the sandwich generation are women, married, and living with parents. Higher women labor dependents because they have to support themselves and their families.



The variables of this study include human resource factors, supporting factors, and factors of residence origin that can affect the decision of sandwich-generation women workers to

Source: Authors (2023)

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participate in the non-agricultural sector. Furthermore, based on **Figure 2** and **Table 1**, the variables of this study can be known. The quality factor of human resources in this study is the level of education; supporting facility factors are the use of telephone, Internet, and government assistance; and the origin of residence in rural and urban areas. The equation used in this study, ie.

$$Sectors_i = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 Education_i + \gamma_2 Telephone_i + \gamma_3 Internet_i + \gamma_4 Government_i + \gamma_5 Rural_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Based on this equation, it can be seen that the sector variable is a dummy variable. If the sandwich generation workforce works in the non-agricultural sector, it is 1, and if it works in the agricultural sector, it is 0. Next, the equation was estimated using logit regression analysis. As a comparison, the equation in this study was also estimated using multiple linear regression and probit regression analysis.

Variables	Categories	Description
Educational Level	No Educated	Dummy (0)
	Primary Education	Dummy (1)
	Secondary Education	Dummy (2)
	Higher Education	Dummy (3)
Telephone Use	Yes	Dummy (1)
	No	Dummy (0)
Internet Use	Yes	Dummy (1)
	No	Dummy (0)
Receiving Social Assistance	Yes	Dummy (1)
	No	Dummy (0)
Residence (Rural/Urban)	Rural	Dummy (1)
	Urban	Dummy (0)

Table 1. Variable Description

4. Results

The estimation in this study was carried out through three methods, namely Ordinary Least Square (OLS), logistic regression analysis, and probit regression analysis. These three methods are used to determine the factors that determine the decision of women workers from the sandwich generation to work in the non-agricultural sector in East Java Province, Indonesia. Based on the estimated results, the three methods, both OLS, logistic regression analysis, and probit regression analysis, show the same tendency of results in the model used. However, the use of Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression still has various areas for improvement, one of which cannot accommodate the heterogeneity of the data owned. Meanwhile, the weakness of probit regression analysis is that it cannot estimate variables with two categories. Therefore, this study tends to use the results of logistic regression analysis.

The estimation results show that the decision of sandwich generation women workers to work in the non-agricultural sector is influenced by the level of education, supporting facilities owned, and origin of residence (**Table 2**). The level of education is one of the factors that can

increase the decision to work in the non-agricultural sector. That is, the higher the education level of sandwich generation women, the higher the tendency to choose to work in the non-agricultural sector.

Table 2. Estimation Result

Variables	Ordinary Least Square (OLS)	Logit Regression Analysis	Probit Regression Analysis	
Dependent Variable Non-Agricultural Sectors				
	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients	
Cons	-0.0195406	-6.0627	-2.74481	
Education	0.0175561*	1.524022*	0.5805265*	
Telephone	0.0085378*	1.324707*	0.6395726*	
Internet	-0.0333249*	-2.349824*	-1.112673*	
Government	-0.0033666	-0.2324229	-0.11124	
Rural	-0.227979*	-1.756362*	-0.7113979*	

^{*}sig < 0.05

Source: Authors (2023)

Sandwich-generation women workers who have low levels of education tend to choose to work in the informal sector. One is caused by a need for more confidence in competing in the labor market. Previous research states that women with education, knowledge, and skills are one of the main barriers to being accepted into the job market in Turkey (Landig, 2011). Low school enrollment rates mean that women's education levels tend to be lower when compared to men's education levels in Ghana (Nordensvard, 2014). As a result, women with less education are more likely to work as domestic helpers or help families at home. In the Indonesian context, the situation for sandwich-generation women workers mirrors global trends, where lower education levels often push women into the informal sector. Many women in Indonesia, particularly those in rural or underdeveloped regions, face significant barriers to accessing quality education due to poverty, cultural norms, or inadequate infrastructure.

The informal sector remains a dominant source of employment, particularly for women in the sandwich generation who must balance work with familial responsibilities. These women are often employed as domestic helpers and caregivers or engage in small-scale home-based industries due to their flexible schedules, which allow them to manage their dual roles (Krishnan & Chopra, 2022). However, such jobs typically offer low wages, lack social protection, and do not provide opportunities for career advancement. This condition exacerbates their financial and psychological burdens, as they are required to support both their children and elderly parents without adequate economic stability or government support.

The second factor that can be a factor driving the decision of women sandwich generation workers to work in the non-agricultural sector is the use of telephones. The development of technology, information, and communication is one way related to information disclosure that sandwich generation women, such as job vacancy information, can access. However, in contrast to the influence of telephone use that positively influences the decisions of women workers, internet use has a negative effect. That is, sandwich-generation women who use the Internet

tend to make lower decisions to work in the non-agricultural sector. Internet use is not always used for positive things, but there is another negative side that can influence an individual's decisions. Meanwhile, the factor of assistance facilities provided by the government has yet to influence women's decisions to work in the non-agricultural sector.

The use of the telephone as a form of digitization can influence the decision of sandwich generation women workers to choose to work in the non-agricultural sector. The increased use of technology, information and communication is proven to encourage women's opportunities for entrepreneurship in Turkey (Landig, 2011). The telephone can serve as a medium of promotion and improvement of women's digital literacy. The development of technology, information, and communication can also affect the use of productive resources more effectively and efficiently (Gichuki & Mulu-Mutuku, 2018).

In Indonesia, the role of technology, particularly telephone usage, is increasingly significant in shaping the decisions of sandwich-generation women workers to transition to the non-agricultural sector. Access to telecommunication devices allows these women to receive timely information about job vacancies, networking opportunities, and potential income sources, which is crucial for balancing their dual responsibilities. However, the impact of internet usage appears mixed. While it offers access to broader opportunities, its unproductive or negative use can detract from decision-making related to employment. For sandwich-generation women in Indonesia, expanding access to productive technology use could empower them to secure higher-income and stable jobs in the non-agricultural sector, thus reducing their financial and psychological burdens.

The third factor that can influence the decision of sandwich generation women workers to work in the non-agricultural sector is the origin of residence. The characteristics of the non-agricultural sector that tends to be close to urban areas affect the employment opportunities of sandwich-generation women workers in the vicinity. Therefore, women sandwich generation workers from rural areas tend to have lower decisions to work in the non-agricultural sector than women in urban areas. The origin of residence can also affect the mindset and quality of human resources. Previous research has shown that rural women tend to choose to work as domestic helpers (Courtis & Pacecca, 2014; Gil Araujo & González-Fernández, 2014). Another study shows a tendency for rural women to be satisfied working in the agricultural sector around their homes (Bigler et al., 2017; Bose, 2017; Drucza & Peveri, 2018).

In Indonesia, the origin of residence plays a crucial role in shaping the employment decisions of sandwich-generation women workers, particularly their participation in the non-agricultural sector. Women in rural areas often face structural barriers such as limited access to education, transportation, and job opportunities, which reduce their likelihood of transitioning to non-agricultural work compared to their urban counterparts. Additionally, cultural and societal norms in rural regions often encourage women to work in the agricultural sector or as domestic helpers due to proximity to their homes and traditional gender roles (Ali & Kamraju, 2023). In contrast, urban areas offer more diverse job opportunities, better infrastructure, and exposure to non-agricultural industries, which can influence women's decisions to seek employment outside the agricultural sector. For sandwich-generation women, improving access to urban opportunities through better transportation networks, skill development programs, and rural economic development initiatives could be pivotal in enabling them to secure higherincome and more stable jobs, thereby alleviating their multigenerational responsibilities.



5. Discussion

Every household's effort to get out of poverty and the end sandwich generation are not only pursued by men workers but also by women workers. The demands of multiple financial burdens are a motivating factor for women workers to work and bear the burden of expenses for themselves, their families, and their parents. However, the participation of women workers tends to be uneven or at least the same as that of men workers. In some sectors, women workers cannot occupy strategic positions due to abilities, knowledge, and skills that cannot be the same as men workers. This problem makes women workers not optimally accepted in the productive economic sector.

The choice of women workers for the end sandwich generation, one of which is to contribute to the non-agricultural sector. As a secondary and tertiary sector, the non-agricultural sector is an option because the income level tends to be high when compared to the primary sector. However, to have opportunities to work in the non-agricultural sector, women workers are still constrained by the quality of human resources that tend to be low. The level of education is the main factor considered to be able to work in the non-agricultural sector. On the other hand, knowledge of telephone use and the positive side of the Internet are also additional points considered by the non-agricultural sector.

The problem of women workers participating in the non-agricultural sector due to low education levels also occurs in East Java Province. Meanwhile, if women have higher education, it can open up career opportunities in the non-agricultural sector (Ghasemi, 2015; Jelen, 2011; Webster & Haandrikman, 2017). The quality of human resources of women workers can also be known through the origin of residence. The tendency of women workers from urban areas to work in the non-agricultural sector can have an indirect impact on the opportunities of women workers from rural areas. Meanwhile, opportunities to work in rural areas also need to be higher. This problem encourages women workers with higher education in rural areas to migrate to urban areas to work in the non-agricultural sector (Schoen, 2019).

The opportunity for women workers to work in the non-agricultural sector should be the government's primary concern to reduce poverty rates and end sandwich generation. The government can start to develop and create jobs evenly in rural areas and urban areas. Once the infrastructure is available, development focuses on improving the quality of human resources, especially for women workers who tend to be vulnerable. Improving the quality of human resources can be done through opportunities to take formal and informal education, periodic training, and debriefing. In addition, increasing understanding of the benefits and uses of technology, information, and communication must also be considered, especially for women workers from rural areas.

6. Conclusion

Based on the analysis using SUSENAS 2022 data, the factors that influence the decision of women workers of sandwich generations to work in the non-agricultural sector are the level of education, telephone and Internet use, and the origin of residence. That is, sandwich-generation women workers with a high level of education, have a telephone, and come from urban areas tend to have a higher decision to work in the non-agricultural sector when compared to other sandwich-generation women workers. Internet use by women sandwich generation workers can also influence decisions to work in the non-agricultural sector. However, if the Internet is not used for productive purposes, it can be an obstacle to the decision of sandwich generation women workers to work in the non-agricultural sector.



The participation of sandwich-generation women workers in the non-agricultural sector is challenging. Inequality of opportunity in several productive economic sectors is one of the obstacles for sandwich generation women workers to work and occupy strategic positions. The opportunity for women workers to work in the non-agricultural sector should be the government's primary concern to reduce poverty rates and end sandwich generation. The government can start to develop and create jobs evenly in rural areas and urban areas. Once the infrastructure is available, development focuses on improving the quality of human resources, especially for women workers who tend to be vulnerable. Improving the quality of human resources can be done through opportunities to take formal and informal education, regular training, and debriefing, including those related to understanding digitalization.

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8. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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About the Authors

1) Moh. Khusaini obtained his Doctoral degree from the University of Brawijaya, Indonesia, in 2006. The author is a Professor at the Department of National Defense Science, Doctoral Program, University of Brawijaya, Indonesia.

E-Mail: khusaini@ub.ac.id

Firdaus Finuliyah obtained her Master's degree from the University of Brawijaya, Indonesia, in 2024. The author is a student at the Department of Economics, Doctoral Program, University of Brawijaya, Indonesia.

E-Mail: finuliyahfirdaus@gmail.com

Alfi Muflikhah Lestari obtained her Master's degree from the University of Brawijaya, Indonesia, in 2017. The author is a lecturer at the Department of Islamic Economics, University of Brawijaya, Indonesia.

E-Mail: alfilestari7@ub.ac.id

Alma Sofi Yuwan obtained her Master's degree from the University of Brawijaya, Indonesia, in 2024.

E-Mail: almasofiy@gmail.com

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