

A Study on The Sandwich Generation Differences in Level of Work-Family Conflict and Marital Satisfaction among Working Couple

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Abstract. Dual-earner couples in the sandwich generation are overcoming unique challenges to their marital satisfaction. Therefore, this study aimed to explore gender differences in work-family conflict and marital satisfaction in dual-earner couples among the sandwich generation. To achieve this, a quantitative method comprising 105 participants (Mage = 39.10; SD = 9.842) from Greater Jakarta, was used. The results showed that there was no significant differences between working men and women in the sandwich generation concerning marital satisfaction and work-family conflict. Based on observations, there was no correlation between work-family conflict and marital satisfaction in women. Conversely, a negative correlation existed between marital satisfaction and the number of children, a trend discovered exclusively in men. In conclusion, this study provided information to improve the marriage quality for dual-earner couples and contributed novel perspective to the discourse on marital satisfaction and work-family conflict.

Keywords: Dual earner, gender differences, marital satisfaction, sandwich generation, work-family conflict

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Introduction

The term "sandwich generation" has become increasingly familiar in contemporary discourse. It was first introduced by Miller (1981) to describe the age group of 45–65 years who already have children and aging parents 65, typically around 65 years old. The term refers to generation of married individuals in mid-adulthood (45–65 years old) who have jobs, live with their parents and families, and are responsible for meeting the needs of dependents (Tebes & Irish, 2000). In this study, the sandwich generation are those financially responsible for their children and biological parents. In Indonesia, the existence of this demographic is not a certainty. However, the Central Statistics Agency or *Badan Pusat Statistik* (BPS) (2020) stated that the productive age group classified as the sandwich generation reaches 58,616 individuals. The number has increased by approximately 5% from similar data in 2000 (BPS, 2020). Upon further examination, the millennial generation currently constitutes 25.87% of the Indonesian population, with majority being used and fall into the productive group (BPS, 2020).

Unique challenges arises for the sandwich generation in Indonesia due to cultural characteristics that prioritize collectivism. A collective culture emphasizes the importance of accommodating shared needs, particularly those of parents and the extended family, over personal aspirations (Puspitasari & Mas'ud, 2018). Individual success in a social context is often associated with the ability to maintain group harmony and prioritize the needs of others (Schreier et al., 2010). Therefore, individuals in the Indonesian sandwich generation perceive various economic, psychological, and sociocultural challenges. Economic challenges are described as one of the tangible difficulties for dual-earner families (where both partners earn income) within this generation (Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003). Various data articulate the economic challenges associated with meeting household needs. An indication is the decline in household consumption rates from 4.7% in 2010 to the current 2.6%, with the pandemic being one of the contributing factors (BPS, 2022). During the same period, there was also an inflation from 1.68% to 2.02%

(Bank Indonesia, 2022). On the other hand, the average salary increase for the Indonesian population is only 1.09% in 2022 (Nurdiana, 2021). Perceived economic challenges significantly impact family-building considerations in the country (Himawan et al., 2017), prompting a reliance on the contribution of the wife to the breadwinning role.

Among the challenges faced, the most prevalent conflict arises in balancing the demands of caregiving and work, specifically within the home (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), work-family conflict is conflict between roles. This is evidenced by the pressure on individuals in their work and family responsibilities. Conflict type is often triggered by numerous demands in both work and family life. Real communication challenges related to delineating work boundaries at workplace and home contribute to role conflict, shaping perceptions for both spouses (Sullivan, 2012).

Various challenges and perceived conflict by couples can be reflected in satisfaction with their marriage. Lamanna and Riedman (2012) stated that marital satisfaction and stability are directly proportional. Shared expectations of roles and responsibilities also lead some couples to complain about a lack of time to fulfill responsibilities (Burke et al., 2017; Putro & Riyanto, 2020). This can impact the lack of investment in quality time to maintain marital relationship, leading to a decrease in marital satisfaction.

In Indonesia, a preference for the hypergamous marriage model can pose a threat to the role of women as a breadwinner and also to their marital satisfaction. This model articulates an ideal marriage between men with higher socio-economic and spiritual status than women (Himawan, 2020; Qian & Qian, 2014). The decision for couples in Indonesia to become dual earner is not without risks and challenges. In society with a strong patriarchal culture and adherence to traditional gender roles (Kuntari et al., 2017), the composition as economic providers present challenges, specifically for women. This happens because the role of women in career does not diminish expectations related to traditional gender roles (Daulay, 2017). The pattern presents a unique context for investigation, considering that in various other countries, the role of the husband in domestic household matters is increasingly socially accepted (Barroso, 2021). Therefore, this study specifically focuses on the sandwich generation couples in Indonesia who are also dual earner in Indonesia.

The cultural context, which emphasizes unique perceptions between men and women in workforce, is evident in the majority of studies conducted on work-family conflict, specifically focusing on women workers (Handayani & Harsanti, 2017; Meliani et al.,

2014; Pratiwi & Sawitri, 2015). On the other hand, the dynamics of work-family conflict on marital satisfaction in men have been an area with less systematic exploration. This report introduces novelty by attempting to compare the analysis of work-family conflict dynamics on marital satisfaction between men and women. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate differences between these genders in dual-earner sandwich generation couples in Indonesia concerning relationship satisfaction and work-family conflict. The results are expected to contribute to the literature by providing empirical evidence about the unique challenges faced by dual-earner sandwich generation couples face based on gender and perceptions of work-family conflict.

This study hypothesizes that in married couples of the sandwich generation, where both partners work, men have significantly different level of perception of work-family conflict and marital satisfaction compared to women.

Methods

Design

The study was conducted in the Jabodetabek area from October to December 2022, using a quantitative method with a cross-sectional design. The focus was on comparing work-family conflict and marital satisfaction variables among participant groups of men and women. The cross-sectional design allowed for the simultaneous measurement of all variables at the same point in time. This design also facilitated differences test to examine distinctions between the 2 groups.

Participants

Through purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods, specific samples corresponding with the study objectives were selected, ensuring the attainment of the target participants. The study aimed to secure a minimum sample of 105 participants for each men and women group, determined by using the sample measurement method through G*Power software version 3.1 with $f = .5$, $\alpha = .05$ (Faul & Erdfelder, 2017). Inclusion criteria consisted of individuals aged 25 and above, married in a heterosexual relationship with children, both partners working full-time, at least one non-working parent, and residence in the Greater Jakarta area.

Instruments

The instrument used to measure level of marital satisfaction was the Relationship Assessment Scale by Hendrick (1998), adapted by Himawan (2017), with a Cronbach's Alpha of .779. This unidimensional tool consisted of 7 items that assess overall relationship satisfaction. Among these items, the 4th and 7th uses inverse scoring. Respondents need to provide answer on

a Likert scale ranging from 1 (low/none) to 5 (high/always). Example of these items included "How well does your partner meet your needs?" and "Overall, how satisfied are you with your marriage?" For the sample in this study, the Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be .856.

The instrument used to determine conflict is Work-Family and Family-Work Conflict Scales by Netemeyer et al. (1996). This tool has been translated into Indonesian by Himawan et al. (2020) with a Cronbach's Alpha of .953. Work-Family Conflict Scale consisted of 5 items representing 1 dimension, with participants responding on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree). Example of these items included "Job demands interfere with my family and household responsibilities" and "The time taken for work makes it difficult for me to fulfill family responsibilities." For the sample in this study, the Cronbach's Alpha value for this measurement tool was .924.

Procedure

This process commenced by identifying potential participants using electronic posters that already contain criteria of participants and links to access the questionnaire. The questionnaire is then uploaded to Survey Monkey and distributed to eligible participants through social media platforms such as LINE, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Telegram. Data was collected from late October to November 2022. Furthermore, demographic data and statements was filled to show fulfilment of criteria. After participating in the study, there is a separate page to show interest in receiving reward of electronic money amounting to Rp25,000.00, which will be raffled on January 20, 2023. The ethical aspects of this report was evaluated and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology, Pelita Harapan University, with the number 01121190035/ETIK/TA/Fpsi-UPH2022.

Participants engaged in the questionnaire, received explanation of their participation form, the objectives, and the associated risks. All information concerning data confidentiality, usage, voluntary nature of participation, absence of penalties for discontinuing participation, and the option to partake in a lottery as a gesture of appreciation were also conveyed to participants. To ensure understanding, participants were required to provide consent through an electronic checkmark, followed by pressing the "Setuju (Agree)" button to access the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, there was no obligation to answer any required questions, ensuring the freedom to choose interested questions. Finally, opportunity was provided to access the study results which comprise participation on the Relasi laboratory's public page ([lab.uph.edu\). The link to this page is also made available in the information sheet.](https://relasi-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Analysis Method

The data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The study initially conducted validity and reliability tests for each measurement tool to assess the feasibility of the constructed measuring instrument. Subsequently, the normality of the data was tested using the Shapiro-Wilks Test to determine the nature of distribution. In this study, the collected details does not follow a normal distribution, hence, non-parametric tests were applied. The Mann Whitney Test was used to observe differences between the 2 groups of samples to be studied. For an additional analysis, the Chi-Square Test was adopted, examining Odds Ratios to identify specific differences between the 2 groups of samples.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Profile of Participants

A total of 105 participants were included in this study, with majority at 64.8% being women. The study was predominantly composed of the sandwich generation aged 25–35 years (47.6%). Furthermore, the number of participants in the 56–65 age category was 4. Majority of participants in this study at 42.9% resided in DKI Jakarta, followed by Tangerang (22.9%), Bogor (13.3%), Bekasi (12.4%), and Depok (8.6%). The average household incomes were Rp 3,000,000–Rp 6,000,000 (36.2%), while 25.7% had a minimum income of Rp 9,000,000. Table 1 summarizes the overall demographic data of participants.

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test shows a non-normally distributed data spread for marital satisfaction ($p = .000$) and Work-family Conflict variables ($p = .000$). Therefore, non-parametric statistical methods are used in this data analysis.

Table 2 provide summary of the correlation between variables, while Table 3 presents the correlation matrix divided by gender. An increase in scores on work-family conflict correlated with a decrease in marital satisfaction scores ($r = -.264$; $p < .006$). However, gender-based analysis results showed that this pattern was only evident in men participants ($r = -.582$; $p = .001$), but not among women ($r = .120$; $p = .330$).

In this study, it was observed that an increase in the number of children was correlated with a decrease in marital satisfaction ($r = -.333$; $p = .044$) within men participant group. Income, length of marriage, and length of work do not correlate with work-family conflict or marital satisfaction, irrespective of gender.

Men and women participants have no significant differences in terms of income level ($\mu = 2.98$; $p = .059$), number of children ($\mu = 2.01$; $p = .059$), length of marriage ($\mu = 92.65$; $p = .059$), and length of work ($\mu = 83.21$; $p = .059$). Therefore, both groups can be assumed to have homogenous demographic backgrounds.

Table 1
Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Men	37	35.2%
	Women	68	64.8%
Age	25 – 35 years old	50	47.6%
	36 – 45 years old	20	19%
	46 – 55 years old	31	29.5%
	56 – 65 years old	4	3.8%
Domicile	Jakarta	45	42.9%
	Bogor	14	13.3%
	Depok	9	8.6%
	Tangerang	24	22.9%
	Bekasi	13	12.4%
Household Income	< Rp 3.000.000	21	20%
	Rp 3.000.000 – Rp 6.000.000	38	36.2%
	Rp 6.000.000 – Rp 9.000.000	12	11.4%
	Rp 9.000.000 – Rp 12.000.000	14	13.3%
	Rp 12.000.000 – Rp 15.000.000	3	2.9%
	> Rp 15.000.000	10	9.5%
	Prefer not to answer	7	6.7%
Number of Children	1	35	33.3%
	2	43	41%
	3	20	19%
	4	5	4.8%
	5	2	1.9%
Length of Work	< 1 year	21	20%
	1-3 years	32	30.4%
	4-6 years	16	15.2%
	7-9 years	9	8.5%
	> 10 years	26	24.7%
Length of Marriage	<1 year	16	15.2%
	1-3 years	26	24.7%
	4-6 years	15	14.2%
	7-9 years	9	8.5%
	>10 years	34	32.3%
Occupation	Civil Servant (PNS)	12	11.4%
	Entrepreneur	48	45.7%
	Private Employee	39	37.1%
	Other	6	5.7%

Description: *significant at p-value <.05; **very significant at p-value <.01

Differences in Marital Satisfaction and Work-family Conflict Based on Gender

The results of the Mann-Whitney Test showed that level of marital satisfaction for men and women does not differ significantly ($\mu = 26.30$; $p = .059$). In terms of work-family conflict scores, the both genders do not have significantly different scores ($\mu = 1228.00$; $p = .840$). Mean values and standard deviations in men and women groups are presented in Table 3. Therefore, it can be interpreted that samples have homogenous scores for marital satisfaction and work-family conflict level.

Discussion

This report focuses on examining gender differences in work-family conflict and marital satisfaction for couples who are part of the sandwich generation and both work in Indonesia. The results shows that there is no significant gender differences in terms of work-family conflict and marital satisfaction, contradicting the initial assumptions of this study. The presumed differences in variables between husbands and wives, as posited by Putro and Riyanto (2020) and Faisal and Sari (2018), were not substantiated by the results.

Both men and women in this study perceive marital satisfaction and work-family conflict at a similar level. The initial assumption that women in the sandwich generation would experience lower marital satisfaction, as posited by (Nuraeni & Suryono 2021), due to their participation in the industry and deviation from traditional gender role expectations, was not validated. Furthermore, gender became a determinant of marriage satisfaction. The absence of significant differences show that women in the sandwich generation willingly undertake their work responsibilities, possibly as a personal aspiration, and not as a unique stressor affecting their marital satisfaction. Some data have recorded an increase in women participation in the industry (Harahap & Lestari, 2018). Meanwhile, others emphasize that the role of working for women has also become part of their aspirations, not only for economic needs but for developing potential (Hidayati, 2016; Renanita & Setiawan, 2018; Himawan, 2020). The limitations of data in this study do not allow for a comparison between women who work voluntarily and those who are being forced. Future studies could delve into this aspect for a more comprehensive understanding.

Level of work-family conflict did not differ significantly between men and women. This result was consistent with previous studies stating that working husbands and wives have similar level of conflict (Wongpy & Setiawan, 2019). This equivalency can be anticipated considering the full working time of both men and women. However, the sources or themes of conflict experienced may differ between both genders.

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Table 2
Correlation between Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age							
2. Income	.354**						
3. Number of Children	.240*	-.079					
4. Length of Marriage	.390**	.294**	.134				
5. Length of Work	.408**	.449**	.077	.615**			
6. Marital Satisfaction	.029	.068	-.235**	.030	.074		
7. Work-family Conflict	-.214*	.020	-.064	-.047	.022	-.264**	

Description: *. Significant correlation at the .05 level (2-tailed); **. Significant correlation at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3
Correlation between Variables in Men (upper diagonal) and Women (lower diagonal)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	<i>M = 38.43; SD = 9.34</i>	<i>M = 3.03; SD = 1.77</i>	<i>M = 1.97; SD = .98</i>	<i>M = 99.73; SD = 103.94</i>	<i>M = 84.65; SD = 98.71</i>	<i>M = 28.05; SD = 4.73</i>	<i>M = 17.59; SD = 8.36</i>
1. Age (<i>M = 39.47 ; SD = 10.15</i>)		.0311	.404*	.665**	.527**	-.209	-.116
2. Income (<i>M = 2.96 ; SD = 1.88</i>)	.376**		-.049	.395*	.510**	-.102	.247
3. Number of Children (<i>M = 2.03 ; SD = .93</i>)	.240*	-.086		.136	0.124	-.333*	.130
4. Length of Marriage (<i>M = 88.79 ; SD = 97.19</i>)	.205	-.225	.134		.786**	-0.085	.019
5. Length of Work (<i>M = 81.37 ; SD = 105.86</i>)	.411**	.439**	.038	.583**		.100	-.145
6. Marital Satisfaction (<i>M = 25.34 ; SD = 6.77</i>)	.118	.111	-.184	.081	.042		-.582**
7. Work-family Conflict (<i>M = 17.47 ; SD = 9.34</i>)	-.251*	-.086	-.145	-.057	.093	-.120	

Description: *. Significant correlation at the .05 level (2-tailed); **. Significant correlation at the .01 level (2-tailed).

For men, the theme may center around the expectations to working maximally in order to provide for their families, leading to a lack of quality time with loved ones. Conversely, women may experience conflict stemming from the expectation to act as caregivers for both children and parents while fulfilling their professional roles. These significant demands have a substantial impact on the development of work-family conflict for both husbands and wives (Colombo & Ghislieri, 2008). Dual responsibilities at home and work have the potential to trigger conflict in both spheres for married couples.

Work-family conflict was observed to correlate with marital satisfaction in men but not in women. In other words, a high level of this variable is followed by a decrease in marital satisfaction among men. Additionally, 2 explanations shed more light on these results. First, conflict within workplace can have implications on the instability of men provider role (Soeharto, 2010). The societal expectation for men to be family breadwinners makes work a crucial determinant of life satisfaction, impacting relationship with partners (Pietra, 2019). For men, the pressure to fulfill the role of the primary breadwinner can render work conflict a threat to family stability, consequently diminishing marital satisfaction. On the contrary, for women, engagement in the industry tends to be an optional role (Handayani & Harsanti, 2017; Pietra,

2019), with less impact on their culturally expected traditional roles. Further analysis can be conducted when work arrangement, scope of responsibilities, and working characteristics of each individual are known. According to previous studies, work-family conflict significantly reduces marital satisfaction for women in specific professions, such as nursing (Pratiwi & Sawitri, 2015) or counseling (Wijayanti & Indrawati, 2016). However, preliminary reports by Himawan et al. (2020) showed that level of work-family conflict is not determined by part-time or full-time jobs. Analysis based on these aspects cannot be performed due to the limitations of the data scope obtained, but it could be an essential outcome to inspire future studies.

This study explores the relationship between the number of children and marital satisfaction in male participants, showing a negative correlation. A total of 2 arguments shed light on these results: 1) financial burden, characterized by an increased economic load on the household, and 2) reduced quality time with partners. Regarding the first argument, the rising cost of living in the contemporary era (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022) amplifies the economic strain on households with additional family members. Economic stressors often spark conflict between partners (Conger et al., 2016), leading to a decline in marital satisfaction. This pattern was not observed in women participants. However, conflict between partners theoretically

impact marital satisfaction for both genders. It is important to note that an increase in income, typically seen as a solution to financial issues, did not correlate with heightened marital satisfaction. Therefore, the second argument may offer a more comprehensive explanation.

The introduction of children into family implies more time for childcare. The role of caregiving in Indonesia is often associated with women. Therefore, an increase in the number of children may take up more time for women, reducing quality time with their husbands. Dissatisfaction arises among husbands due to their wives dedicating a considerable amount of time working (Sunarti et al., 2021). The unique pattern where an increase in the number of children correlates with a decrease in marital satisfaction is specific to men. This can be attributed to men relying on relationships with partners as the primary source for fulfilling emotional needs (Veronika & Afdal, 2021), unlike women who have multiple channels, such as colleagues, friends, or other family members (Dayatri & Mustika, 2021). Specifically, for participants in the sandwich generation, the presence of parents may also be a source of social support that provides essential emotional fulfillment for women. The emotional closeness between wives and parents is a cultural practice often observed in several Asian countries, such as in traditional Japanese culture (Maeda, 2008). In the Indonesian cultural context, this argument is reinforced by studies showing no significant differences in level of psychological well-being between mothers living with and without parents (Puspitasari & Haksama, 2020).

Several limitations were observed in this study, and they were important to consider when generalizing the results. First, the number of participants was dominated by women and only represents a narrow geographic area, limiting generalizability. Gender comparisons need to be interpreted with caution, given that the number of participants in each group is not proportional. Second, the overall sample size only fulfills 50 % of the minimum expected number according to the G*Power calculation formula (Faul & Erdfelder, 2017). The specific characteristics of the participants (having children and parents, as well as partners working full-time) posed a challenge in identifying individuals willing to participate in this study. Finally, the profiles between individuals in the sandwich generation and those who are not can be compared. This is because data from groups outside this demographic were not collected.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study showed that marital satisfaction and work-family conflict in men and women was not different significantly. Based on

observations, work-family conflict and marital satisfaction only correlated in men. The number of children also correlated negatively with marital satisfaction among men. The report was an introductory investigation showing unique patterns in experiencing the dynamics of the sandwich generation in Indonesia, as a relatively underexplored area.

Subsequent studies were expected to strive for a gender-balanced participant representation. These reports could also consider including a control group (e.g., couples not from the sandwich generation or couples not dual earner) to obtain baseline scores for comparison. To provide a more comprehensive overview of marital satisfaction, future investigations could contemplate using a more comprehensive measurement tool for marital satisfaction, thereby assessing various dimensions related to partner satisfaction. Additionally, the number of living parents should be considered in the analysis.

In practical terms, the results add valuable insights in understanding the dynamics of marriages in the sandwich generation, that would be valuable to design appropriate relevant programs/ treatment goals.

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