

Perceived Stress and Its Impact on Life Satisfaction in the Sandwich Generation

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Abstract: *This study aims to examine the relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction among the sandwich generation using statistical analysis. In this research, a total of 60 sandwich generation adult (30 male and 30 female) from various areas of Sangli City were selected by purposive sampling method. Data collected through Perceived Stress Scale by Sheldon Cohen and Satisfaction of Life Scale by Ed Diener et al. Obtained data analyzed by Mean, SD, student 't' test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method. The findings suggest that gender differential effects of perceived stress and life satisfaction among sandwich generation and higher perceived stress negatively affects life satisfaction.*

Keywords: Sandwich generation, perceived stress, life satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

Perceived Stress:

The concept of perceived stress is one of the primary psychological concepts that explain the level to which an individual perceives their life situations to be overwhelming. Unlike objective stress, which measures the number of demands an individual encounters in their life, perceived stress emphasizes the individual's internal experience. Based on the transactional model by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the relationship between the individual and their environment is dynamic in nature. This relationship starts with primary appraisal, in which the individual evaluates the situation to determine if it is threatening. This is then followed by a secondary appraisal in which the individual evaluates their availability of resources to cope with the stressful event. The individual would experience high levels of psychological stress when they perceive high levels of demands and low levels of resources.

In relation to the concept of the Sandwich Generation, perceived stress is typically comprised of three main aspects: unpredictability, uncontrollability, and overload. Members of the Sandwich Generation usually experience that their lives are being controlled by the unpredictable demands of their aging parents or their children's increasing needs. This usually causes a sense of uncontrollability for these caregivers. This is a critical issue to address because the experience of being "squeezed" from both ends is usually related to the mental and physical well-being of the caregivers. For their mental well-being, it is evident that higher perceived stress is related to increased anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and decreased self-efficacy. For their physical well-being, it is evident that higher perceived stress causes a prolonged "fight-or-flight" response that may result in increased cortisol levels, sleeping problems, and decreased immune functioning.

Life Satisfaction:

In psychological studies, life satisfaction is said to be the "cognitive" or "evaluative" component of subjective well-being. While emotional states such as happiness vary from day to day, life satisfaction is a long-term, global judgment about one's own life. It is "the process by which an individual evaluates their life in terms of a standard or set of standards that they have set for themselves." Unlike what others think about one's life, life satisfaction is "not about the number of 'good things' that happen to a person; rather it is about the quality of the person's life in general." In the



Sandwich Generation, this refers to the balancing act between one's achievements at work, one's family life, and one's own personal satisfaction.

The theoretical foundation on which life satisfaction is based can vary on the Bottom-Up vs. Top-Down theories. The bottom-up theory is based on the premise that life satisfaction is based on the satisfaction one derives in different domains. These domains include one's job, marriage, health, and financial situation. A caregiving situation in which a crisis arises in one's domains, such as the unexpected illness of one's parent, can spill over into one's other domains and affect one's life satisfaction. The top-down theory is based on the premise that one's personality traits, such as optimism and extraversion, can affect one's life satisfaction in a positive way despite crises in one's domains. For the Sandwich Generation, high life satisfaction can act as a buffer to prevent depression.

Sandwich Generation:

The term "Sandwich Generation" is used to refer to a particular set of adults in their 30s, 40s, or 50s, who are said to be "sandwiched" between the responsibilities of caring for their aging parents and their own young children. The "Sandwich Generation" has been a subject of research in psychological studies, where they have been identified to have a unique set of stressors, which are quite different from any other caregiving role. As people live longer and young adults remain dependent on their parents financially, the "sandwiched" years have stretched, making it a subject of mental health research.

The biggest challenge that the Sandwich Generation faces is the conflicting demands that are made on their limited resources. This may be explained psychologically as "role strain," whereby an individual feels that they are being pulled in all directions. They are expected to be supportive children to their elderly parents, while at the same time being a guiding influence to their children. This may lead to burnout due to feelings of fatigue, financial constraints, and the lack of personal time. However, studies have shown that while the "sandwiched" generation may be at risk of burnout, they are at the same time experiencing "generativity," which is a psychological word that describes the feelings of fulfillment that come from providing for the younger and older generation.

The relationship between the Sandwich Generation, perceived stress, and life satisfaction can be best explained using a mediational psychological model. According to this model, the objective impact of being a dual caregiver does not have a direct relationship with life satisfaction; rather, it is moderated through the individual's perceived stress. For a member of the Sandwich Generation who is "sandwiched" between the demands of aging parents and growing children, the experience of role overload occurs when the number of responsibilities is overwhelming, causing increased perceived stress. Studies have shown that there is a significant negative correlation between perceived stress and life satisfaction; that is, as the experience of being overwhelmed increases, the cognitive evaluation of life quality decreases (Cohen et al., 1983).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mukta Karamadi study "Perceived Stress and Life Satisfaction among Adults with and without Chronic Illness" Chronic illness has a significant effect on the lives of people. It might be quite stressful to make adjustments in day-to-day life to manage the chronic illness and reduce the quality of life. There is a two-way relationship between chronic illness and stress. The aim of this study was to compare the level of perceived stress and life satisfaction among adults with and without chronic illness. A brief questionnaire on perceived stress, life change units stress scale, and life satisfaction scale were administered to a sample of 140 individuals consisting of 70 adults with chronic illness and another group of 70 adults without any chronic illness. The sample was selected from different parts of Goa. 't' test was used to measure the significance of difference between the two groups. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of perceived stress level, life change units, and life satisfaction.

Aditi Sethi etl al. research on "The Influence of Perceived Stress on Self-Efficacy and Life Satisfaction in Young Adults". The aim of the present research was to investigate the effect of perceived stress on self-efficacy and life



satisfaction among young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and to find out whether there is a difference between the two genders or not. The sample consisted of 150 participants (N=150) from the population of the university and the city, with 75 males and 75 females. The participants completed three different instruments: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The quantitative results showed that there was a negative correlation between the levels of perceived stress and the levels of self-efficacy and life satisfaction among the participants. This indicates that the higher the levels of perceived stress, the lower the levels of self-efficacy and life satisfaction among young adults. The quantitative results also showed that there was no difference between the two genders with regard to the three variables.

Maria Sheila et. al. studied on "Perceived Stress and Life Satisfaction Among University Students". Based on the research study, the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic makes the populace more susceptible to mental health concerns regardless of their demographics. To exemplify this, aside from the intellectual, psychological, and financial challenges that university students face in entering universities, the COVID-19 pandemic is an additional source of stress for university students in the Philippines. The number of university students seeking counseling has increased ever since the COVID-19 pandemic started in March 2020. This trend continues even when the mode of learning shifts from online or virtual learning to face-to-face learning. This study aimed to find the relationship between stress and life satisfaction among the university business students and how they could be counseled. The university students experienced moderate levels of stress during the epidemic period; however, the students in the university experienced moderate stress during the epidemic period, but through statistical analysis of their responses to the online questionnaires, it was established that despite the moderate stress, they are still satisfied with their lives. The satisfaction of the students with their lives is based on a number of factors, which were discussed during the focus group discussion. However, a significant negative relationship was established between the variables, where the level of satisfaction of the respondents with their lives can be reduced in direct proportion to the level of their stress. The implications, limitations, and recommendations of the study for counseling program development are also discussed.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this research comes from its potential to help solve a rising social and psychological issue in modern society. As life expectancy rises and children stay dependent on their parents longer, more people are facing the burden of being in the Sandwich Generation, where they must balance the high demands of two different generations. This research is significant because it moves from focusing on the "objective" level of work that this generation is doing to their "perceived" level of stress, or their internal coping mechanisms for dealing with this stress. This is vital to mental health professionals so they can develop strategies to help this generation change their perspective on their challenges and alleviate their psychological burdens. Additionally, through the examination of life satisfaction, the research offers a "big picture" view of the well-being of the caregiver. This assists in evaluating whether the stress of being a "sandwich" caregiver is severely impacting their quality of life or if they are finding meaning and purpose despite the struggle. The research can be used as a vital resource to aid policymakers and organizations in developing better support systems, such as flexible work arrangements, support groups, and elder care options. The importance of this research lies in the fact that it advocates for a vulnerable yet vital segment of our society, ensuring that those who care for everyone else are not forgotten to care for themselves.

Aim of the Study:

To study the perceived stress and its impact on life satisfaction in the sandwich generation.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the gender difference in Perceived Stress among Sandwich Generation.
2. To compare the levels of life satisfaction between male and female members of the Sandwich Generation
3. To identify the relationship between Perceived Stress and Life Satisfaction among Sandwich Generation.



Hypotheses of the Study:

1. There will be significant gender difference on Perceived Stress among Sandwich Generation.
2. Male and female would be significantly differ on life satisfaction.
3. Perceived Stress and Life Satisfaction will be significantly and negatively correlated to each other among Sandwich Generation.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Sample –

The sample was selected from Sangli City. Total 60 sandwich generation adult was selected for the present study. The age range from 35 to 40 years and the ratio of gender was 1:1. The present data collected through purposive sampling method.

Psychological Tools -

1) Perceived Stress Scale (PLS) :

This scale has been developed by Sheldon Cohen, Michael Kamarck, and Robin Mermelstein. There are a total of 10 items in this Scale. All the items in this scale are measured on a 5-point scale. The score range of this scale varies from 0 to 40. Minimum score indicates that the level of stress is low, and the maximum score indicates that the level of stress is high. The test-retest reliability coefficient value of this scale is 0.75, and the validity value of this scale is highly significant.

2) Satisfaction with Life Scale :

This scale was constructed by developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin. This scale consist of 5 items and the scale type is 1-7 Likert scale. The range of the scale is between 7 to 35. The reliability and validity value of the scale are highly significant.

Statistical Tools -

The raw data collected from the study was analyzed through both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The raw data was summarized through the application of descriptive statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation. The data was also analyzed through inferential statistical methods such as the t-test and Pearson's product-moment correlation to reveal the relationships between the variables. The methods gave an in-depth understanding of the data.

V. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Sandwich Generation -

The Sandwich Generation is most frequently defined in psychological and sociological literature as a group of middle-aged individuals, ranging in age from 35 to 60, who are caring for their own aging parents and their own children at the same time.

Perceived Stress -

Perceived Stress is operationally defined as the numerical score that a participant receives on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) developed by Cohen et al. (1983) that measures the level to which the participants perceive that their present life situations are unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overwhelming

Life Satisfaction –

'Life satisfaction' describes a global judgment of an individual's quality of life, and it can be quantified by the five-item SWLS scale developed by Diener et al. in 1985. This measure of subjective well-being differs from emotional measures



in that it assesses the long-term, evaluative component, in which higher ratings correspond to an individual's life being closer to their 'ideal' life.

VI. TEST ADMINISTRATION

Data collection was carried out through personal field visits to the Sangli region, targeting a purposive sample of the Sandwich Generation within the range of 35 to 40 years. In order to maintain the integrity of the data, the researcher first established a professional rapport with the participants by providing them with an extensive briefing on the significance and purpose of the study to the field of psychology. This helped in creating an environment of trust and provided more genuine results. A total of 30 participants, both males and females, were recruited for the study. The Perceived Stress Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale were individually administered to the participants. In order to reduce the possibility of 'test fatigue' and to maintain the accuracy of the data, simple and clear instructions were provided to the participants, and intervals were maintained between the two instruments.

Variables of The Study:

Independent Variable : Sandwich Generation Adults
Dependent Variable : Perceived Stress and Life Satisfaction

VII. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 shows the gender differences about Perceived Stress among Sandwich Generation Adults

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	't' value	Significant level
Perceived Stress	Male	30	25.88	8.57	58	3.01	0.01
	Female	30	32.76	9.12			

Table 1 shows the gender difference about perceived stress among sandwich generation adults. For perceived stress the mean value of male member is 25.88 with SD 8.57 and the mean value of female member is 32.76 with SD 9.12. The obtained 't' value is 3.01 which is significant on 0.01 level. Female adult of sandwich generation experience significantly higher perceived stress levels than their male counterparts due to the demanding nature of their work and their extensive family responsibilities. Hypothesis no. 1 "There will be significant gender difference on Perceived Stress among Sandwich Generation" was accepted. Research carried out by Deb et al. (2014) on Indian caregivers found that cultural factors can even strengthen the negative correlation between dual caregiving and mental health for women. As women are "the emotional anchors of the family," they are more likely to internalize the stress of both their aging parents and children, resulting in significantly higher levels of perceived stress.

Table 2 shows the gender differences about Life Satisfaction among Sandwich Generation Adults

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	't' value	Significant level
Life Satisfaction	Male	30	23.25	6.75	58	3.44	0.01
	Female	30	16.86	7.63			

Table 2 shows the gender difference about life satisfaction among sandwich generation adults. For Life Satisfaction the mean value of male member is 23.25 with SD 6.75 and the mean value of female member is 16.86 with SD 7.63. The obtained 't' value is 3.44 which is significant on 0.01 level. Women in the Sandwich Generation are more likely to perform "instrumental activities of daily living," such as bathing, feeding, and medical care for elderly parents, as well as daily household chores and childcare. Men, conversely, often take on more "managerial" or financial roles, such as managing bank accounts or hiring external help. The physical and emotional exhaustion associated with direct, daily caregiving is more taxing and has a direct negative correlation with life satisfaction. Hypothesis no. 2 "Male and female would be significantly differ on life satisfaction." was accepted. Deb, Rewari, & Aneja (2014) focused on a key article from India, and it is interesting to note the local context. The article found that the lack of institutional support for the elderly in family structures puts a significant mental burden on caregivers, which affects their life satisfaction.



Table no. 3 shows the correlation between Stress and Life Satisfaction among Sandwich Generation Adults

Variable	Stress	Life Satisfaction
Perceived Stress	1	-0.53**
Life Satisfaction		1

** = 0.01, * = 0.05

Table 3 shows the relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction among sandwich generation adults. The correlation value between perceived stress and life satisfaction is -0.53 which is significant on 0.01 significant level ($r = -0.53, p < 0.01$) that means perceived stress and life satisfaction is significantly and negatively correlated to each other. It is indicate that hypothesis no. 3 "Perceived Stress and Life Satisfaction will be significantly and negatively correlated to each other among Sandwich Generation." was accepted. Research by Pierret (2006) focused on women in the Sandwich Generation. This study supports your hypothesis that women tend to report higher perceived stress and lower life satisfaction due to the "Double Burden" of professional and domestic caregiving responsibilities.

VIII. CONCLUSION

1. On the basis of the statistical analysis provided in Table 1, a notable difference was found with regard to the levels of perceived stress between the male and female population of the Sandwich Generation.
2. The data provided in Table 2 clearly indicates that a notable difference exists with regard to the life satisfaction levels of male and female participants belonging to the target demographic population.
3. As may be clearly understood from the data provided in Table 3, a notable negative correlation exists between the levels of perceived stress and life satisfaction.

Limitations

1. A small sample size was used in the study. This may affect the generalization of the results to a wider population within the Sandwich Generation.
2. This study was limited in terms of geographical scope. This study was conducted within only Sangli city. This may affect the generalization of results to a wider population.
3. This study was specific to seasonal migrant families. This may affect the generalization of results to a wider population.

Recommendations

1. It is suggested that in the future, the sample size be increased and diversified to obtain more robust results.
2. Future research may also consider incorporating additional psychological variables to obtain a comprehensive picture of the wellbeing of the caregiver.
3. It is suggested that in the future, the geographical scope of the research be extended to cover different districts or states to obtain a comparative analysis.

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