

## Assertive Communication on Self-Efficacy Sandwich Generation

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Submitted : 13-07-2024, Accepted : 13-08-2024, Published : 13-09-2024

### Abstract

This study is entitled "Assertive Communication on Sandwich Generation Self-Efficacy". The main objective of this study is to determine how assertive communication practices can affect the level of self-efficacy in the sandwich generation, with a particular focus on the assertive communication style model of Fursland and Nathan (2008) to understand how Basic assertion, Empathic Assertion, Consequence Assertion, Discrepancy Assertion, Negative Feelings Assertion, Broken Record in the sandwich generation. Assertive communication, according to Fursland and Nathan's theory (2008), involves a communication style that reflects respect for oneself and others, with the ability to express needs and feelings clearly. This research method is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The research subjects consisted of five core informants who were sandwich generations, and one expert informant who was a Psychologist. The results showed that the Sandwich Generation often faces heavy financial and emotional burdens, such as the cost of caring for parents and the needs of their own families, which can cause stress, fatigue, and social isolation. To overcome these challenges, the application of assertive communication techniques such as Basic Assertion, Empathic Assertion, Consequence Assertion, Discrepancy Assertion, Negative Feelings Assertion, and Broken Record is essential. These techniques help in managing stress, setting boundaries, and increasing self-efficacy. Through clear and effective communication, the Sandwich Generation can improve their psychological well-being, manage expectations, and maintain a balance between personal and family responsibilities. The application of the right strategies, combined with the spiritual values of the Quran, can help them cope better with their dual roles.

**Keywords:** Assertive Communication, Self Efficacy, Sandwich Generation

### Introduction

Sandwich Generation is a term first introduced by Dorothy A. Miller in 1981 to describe a group of adults who face the pressure of supporting three generations at once, including their parents, themselves, and their nuclear family. This term reflects the financial and emotional challenges faced by someone who must care for their parents and children, often without adequate reciprocal support.

According to Schlesinger & Raphael (1993), being a sandwich generation involves the obligation to care for a wider family in addition to the nuclear family. This creates a conflict between family responsibilities and work demands, which are often more severe for someone with a low income. This condition has a negative impact on the quality of life, as well as the level of satisfaction with work and family. The sandwich generation usually has more family responsibilities, higher financial obligations, and less free time compared to those who are not included in this category.

In addition to financial problems, the sandwich generation also faces mental health challenges. A study published by Tirto.id in November 2023 showed that the financial and psychological burdens faced by the sandwich generation were very significant. From a survey of around 1,500 productive-age respondents, almost half identified themselves as the sandwich generation, and the majority of them reported negative impacts on their mental health. This pressure is caused by the dual responsibility of meeting financial needs and health insurance for family members.

The four main factors that trigger the sandwich generation phenomenon in Indonesia are culture, lack of systematic preparation for long-term needs, limited financial capacity, and intergenerational social mobility. Indonesian culture that emphasizes family values requires the sandwich generation to continue to support their extended family, even though they already have their own nuclear family.

The sandwich generation also has difficulty saving and investing because they have to economize and reduce their lifestyle. Research by Mental Health America identified four main stressors for the sandwich generation, including lack of time for themselves, family conflict, complex emotional feelings, and high expectations that lead to feelings of failure and giving up.

The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) projects that the dependency ratio in Indonesia in 2025 will reach 47.2, indicating the burden that will be borne by productive adults. Based on the survey, the respondent population was evenly divided between men and women, with the majority aged between 20-35 years. Most of them work in sectors such as food and beverage, retail, and education. Others are students, self-employed, or housewives.

According to Dr. Zulvia Oktanida Syarif from Pondok Indah Hospital, the sandwich generation is prone to physical and mental fatigue, sleep disorders, feelings of guilt, anxiety, and depression. Some strategies for managing stress include asking for help, taking time for yourself, and maintaining good communication within the family.

The concept of self-efficacy, or belief in one's own abilities, is very important for the sandwich generation. Albert Bandura explains that self-efficacy is related to a person's belief in their ability to face challenges and achieve goals, regardless of actual abilities. Self-efficacy influences behavior and achievement because individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are more confident and able to overcome challenges.

High self-efficacy allows a person to better manage stress and the burden of responsibility. Assertive communication, which involves expressing needs and feelings clearly and firmly, can strengthen self-efficacy. This is important for the sandwich generation, because assertive communication helps them manage expectations from various parties but can set healthy

boundaries. By understanding and improving their self-efficacy and assertive communication skills, the sandwich generation can be more effective in dealing with the burden of their responsibilities, reducing stress, and increasing well-being.

Assertive communication is an important skill that allows a person to express their needs, feelings, and expectations clearly and firmly without violating the rights of others. According to Lange et al. (1976), assertive communication involves personal rights and expressing thoughts and feelings directly, honestly, and appropriately. This skill helps to set healthy boundaries and manage expectations from various parties, which is especially important for the sandwich generation because they are often caught between the needs of their nuclear family and responsibilities to their parents and younger siblings.

Applying Assertive Communication to manage stress helps the sandwich generation to communicate their needs and boundaries more effectively. This includes talking openly about the limitations of their time and resources, as well as expressing their needs for emotional or financial support. Research by Pipas and Jaradat (2010) shows that assertive communication can create opportunities for open discussion, reduce stress due to conflict, and strengthen interpersonal relationships. For example, if a sandwich generation feels overwhelmed by the burden of responsibility, they can use assertive communication to ask for help from family members or find alternative solutions. In this way, they can reduce their burden without feeling stressed or guilty, which can help maintain their mental health.

The application of assertive communication plays a vital role in improving the self-efficacy and well-being of the sandwich generation. By developing assertive communication skills, one can be more effective in managing their responsibilities, setting healthy boundaries, and reducing stress. This not only helps in dealing with daily challenges but also contributes to overall well-being. Understanding and applying the theory of self-efficacy and assertive communication can provide useful strategies to help the sandwich generation better cope with their burdens and achieve a more balanced and fulfilling life.

## **Literature Review**

### **Assertive Communication**

Assertive communication is the ability to express oneself boldly, firmly, and positively, without harming others or allowing oneself to be attacked. According to Sumaryono (2013), assertive communication emphasizes clear and honest self-expression while still respecting the rights of others. Pearson (1983) added that assertive communication involves defending personal rights without violating the rights of others, while Graciela Gris defines assertiveness as the ability to

convey opinions, feelings, and rights honestly while respecting the rights of others. The purpose of assertive communication is to increase self-esteem and respect for others (Baskoro, 2012). In everyday life, assertive communication often faces obstacles, such as concerns that expressing opinions can trigger conflict or stereotypes that challenging authority can be risky. Other obstacles include the tendency to remain silent when faced with different opinions (Sumaryono, 2013). Several factors that influence assertive communication skills include gender, with men tending to be more rational and women more emotional, which can affect the effectiveness of assertive communication. Self-esteem also plays an important role in someone with high self-esteem because it is easier to express themselves.

Cultural factors, age, social status, and education also influence assertive communication skills. Alberti and Emmons (in Rahayu, 2018) define assertive communication as positive self-expression, while Irsyadi (in Widyastuti, 2018) emphasizes the importance of communicating desires and feelings while still respecting the rights of others. The characteristics of assertive communication include the ability to express feelings, needs, and thoughts with confidence, while protecting the rights and feelings of others. In addition, assertive communication includes the ability to refuse requests in a non-aggressive manner and to pay attention to the rights of individuals and others in communicating (Sumaryono, 2013). This also includes having enough self-confidence to convey messages clearly and strengthening interpersonal relationships by maintaining effective and respectful communication.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to overcome various problems and challenges in certain situations. According to Bandura (in Schustack, 2006), self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their ability to deal with difficult situations. Schwarzer and Luszczynska (2005) stated that self-efficacy is related to a person's belief in their ability to perform certain health-related behaviors. Myers (1996) added that self-efficacy reflects the extent to which a person feels capable of doing something. Schunk (in Komandyahrini & Hawadi, 2008) emphasized the importance of self-efficacy in influencing how much effort a person makes, as well as in predicting the success that can be achieved. Woolfolk (1993) also explained that self-efficacy is a personal assessment of their ability to complete certain tasks to achieve desired results. Snyder (2007) added that self-efficacy is an active cognitive process that shapes a person's life. Overall, it can be concluded that self-efficacy reflects a person's belief in their ability to organize and carry out actions to achieve goals, as well as predictions about the effort required to overcome challenges and achieve desired outcomes

## **Sandwich Generation**

The Sandwich Generation, a term first introduced by Dorothy A. Miller in 1981 in the journal "The Sandwich Generation: Adult Children of The Aging" refers to a group of adults who bear responsibility for three generations including their parents, themselves, and their own families. This term describes a situation where a sandwich generation must support their elderly parents or siblings, while also raising their own children, without receiving reciprocal support (Miller, 1981). According to an article on Gramedia.com by Yufi Cantika Sukma Ilahiah and R Adinda (2022), the sandwich generation is also known as the sandwich generation or the squeezed generation which is a group of middle-aged adults who must care for their elderly parents and their children at the same time. This phenomenon can affect anyone who still has parents and children who need support at the same time

## **Methods**

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative descriptive research method. Data analysis was carried out with a diverse and continuous process until the required data was met. This analysis focuses on how the process in the field is accompanied by data collection, starting from a preliminary study to determine the focus of the research before going directly into the field. According to Miles and Huberman, qualitative data analysis is carried out interactively and continuously until the data reaches saturation. The analysis process includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification (Sugiyono, 2016). In this study, triangulation techniques were used, which combined interviews, observations, and documentation to collect data. Data collection procedures must be carried out in a directed manner to obtain in-depth and comprehensive information.

## **Results and Discussion**

The Sandwich Generation must bear the costs of caring for their parents, such as medicine and health care, while also meeting the needs of their own families, such as children's education and daily needs. This financial burden often adds to stress. Sometimes the Sandwich Generation feels caught between two big responsibilities, which can lead to guilt for not being able to provide adequate attention to one party. Prolonged stress can lead to mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, as well as emotional and physical exhaustion.

Social well-being can be affected because they feel isolated due to lack of time and energy for social interaction. Loneliness and social isolation can exacerbate feelings of stress. This study used Fursland and Nathan's (2008) Assertive Communication Style Model, which

provides a framework for understanding how assertive communication can improve self-efficacy in the Sandwich Generation. This model identifies assertive communication techniques that are useful for managing stress, expressing needs, and setting boundaries more effectively.

The Sandwich Generation faces significant challenges in balancing personal and family needs. These challenges include heavy financial burdens and emotional distress. To effectively address these challenges, the application of assertive communication techniques, such as Basic Assertion, Empathic Assertion, Consequence Assertion, Discrepancy Assertion, Negative Feelings Assertion, and Broken Record, are effective solution steps.

Basic Assertion is an important first step that helps the Sandwich Generation to manage family expectations, set healthy boundaries, and maintain a balance between personal and family responsibilities. This technique allows them to communicate clearly and directly, which contributes to managing financial and emotional situations and improving their psychological well-being.

Empathic Assertion further shows how this technique can improve communication and manage conflict by building empathy and assertiveness. This technique helps the Sandwich Generation reduce stress, build support, and maintain a balance between personal and others' needs, increasing self-efficacy and overall psychological well-being.

Consequence Assertion plays a role in managing financial and emotional challenges by setting clear consequences. This technique helps in maintaining healthy boundaries and positive interpersonal relationships, and ensures that expectations and responsibilities are well understood. Consistent application of this technique supports self-efficacy and psychological well-being, creating a more harmonious environment.

Discrepancy Assertion focuses on managing the difference between expectations and reality. With transparent and constructive communication, this technique helps reduce conflict and increase communication effectiveness. Implementing this technique can strengthen the Sandwich Generation's self-confidence and improve their psychological well-being.

Negative Feelings Assertion helps the Sandwich Generation manage negative feelings in a constructive way. This technique allows them to cope with stress and maintain interpersonal relationships, strengthening their mental well-being.

Broken Record plays a vital role in maintaining a balance between personal and family responsibilities. With consistent repetition of messages about boundaries and needs, this technique helps the Sandwich Generation manage expectations and reduce the risk of conflict. It also increases self-confidence and calmness, ensuring that important messages are conveyed clearly.

Overall, managing dual roles for the Sandwich Generation includes a variety of approaches, such as setting healthy boundaries, managing time and finances, and seeking emotional support. It is important to understand one's limitations and plan wisely, as well as find ways to cope with stress. Referring to spiritual values, as highlighted in the Qur'an Surah Al-Isra (17:23), provides guidance on responsibilities towards family, which are relevant to the challenges faced. By implementing strategies that suit their personal needs and situations, the Sandwich Generation can improve their well-being in life so they can better cope with their dual roles.

## Conclusion

The Sandwich Generation often faces heavy financial and emotional burdens, such as the cost of caring for their parents and the needs of their own families, which can lead to stress, burnout, and social isolation. To overcome these challenges, the application of assertive communication techniques such as Basic Assertion, Empathic Assertion, Consequence Assertion, Discrepancy Assertion, Negative Feelings Assertion, and Broken Record is essential. These techniques help in managing stress, setting boundaries, and increasing self-efficacy. Through clear and effective communication, the Sandwich Generation can improve their psychological well-being, manage expectations, and maintain a balance between personal and family responsibilities. The application of appropriate strategies, combined with the spiritual values of the Quran, can help them cope better with their dual roles.

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