Caught in the Middle:
Intergenerational Caregiving Experiences Among Sandwich Generation Filipino Women

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ABSTRACT

Despite the prevalence of sandwich generation Filipino women in the Philippines, their nuanced and unique experiences of being caught in the middle of two or more generations remain an understudied social phenomenon. The present study is a phenomenological research study that aimed to investigate the lived experiences of sandwich generation Filipino women and how they made sense of their circumstances amid the backdrop of intergenerational caregiving and the associated burden they carry. The study utilized purposive sampling in gathering eight sandwich generation Filipino women participants living in Metro Manila, via in-depth interviews. Data was then transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis. Specifically, the findings of the study revealed that these women assume the primary caregiver role and fulfill domestic along with economic responsibilities due to a perceived sense of responsibility to pay back or help their families coupled with gender roles and norms. It is a deliberate choice that they make daily as they go through both rewarding and challenging experiences. In moving forward, they aspire for the future generation to have more agency and autonomy over their lives. The study shed light on the struggles of sandwich generation Filipino women, hence providing information on how different entities can pave the way for the increased visibility of unpaid care work and upholding Filipino women's full rights. Findings of the study could also serve in enhancing policies through legislation such as the Republic Act 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women to examine and shed light about possible gaps in policy formation and intervention catered towards Filipino women's interests.

Keywords: *Sandwich Generation; Intergenerational Caregiving; Primary Caregiver; Caregiver Burden*

INTRODUCTION

Caregiving, in its most basic sense, is one function of the family unit. Family members mainly depend on their family for care and support to meet their material, physical, social, and emotional needs over the life course (Zeybek & Kasap, 2020). The family is deemed the primary institution responsible for raising and socializing children, and caregiving for grandparents and other family members who cannot and/or have difficulties functioning independently (Schulz & Eden, 2016; Zeybek & Kasap, 2020). Given this, intergenerational households consisting of multiple generations living together and depending on each other are ever-present and prevalent across cultures and social classes.

Many Asian societies are deeply rooted and governed by cultural values and norms, including filial piety, altruism, and familism. Thus, family members conventionally view the provision of care as a family function motivated by a sense of commitment and affection (Kadoya and Khan, 2017).

In the Philippine context, the family is at the frontline of securing the welfare of family members, with a focus on children and older persons (Laguna, 2019). These individuals providing intergenerational care are known as the sandwich generation. The concept of "sandwich generation" emerged around the 1980s when a social worker by the name of Dorothy Miller coined the term to describe her challenging experiences of having to balance between attending to the needs of her ill, elderly parents and young, growing children, all while fulfilling the demands of her career (Miller, 1981).

In line with that, the Sandwich Generation who serve as the primary family caregivers may experience caregiver burden, which refers to the level of multifaceted strain perceived and experienced from balancing fulfilling multiple roles, (Marts, 2013; Liu et al., 2020). It is the all-encompassing negative responses, as well as outcomes associated with and/or resulting from assuming the primary caregiver role, with respect to the individual's health and well-being, interpersonal relationships, career, and socioeconomic conditions (Liu & Tan, 2020; Holliday et al., 2022).

For instance, as the sandwich generation tend to the needs of older family members, parent their children, and keep up with other demands, these individuals may experience one or a combination of role ambiguity, or the lack of clarity or certainty in the responsibilities and demands of the caregiver role; role conflict, which involves the caregiver role overlapping with and clashing with other roles; role strain, which refers to the stress experienced in finding it difficult or being unable to meet the demands and expectations associated with the caregiver role given the existence of other roles; and role-captivity, or feelings of being trapped in having to assume the role, which usually occurs as they feel inadequate and develop negative views toward caregiving (Usita et al., 2004; Gordon et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2019). Along the way, they ma2y develop resentment toward care recipients and/or other family members. Their physical and mental health may also suffer. Other than that, the sandwich generation may also develop unhealthy coping mechanisms, have difficulty in managing their time, face financial issues, be impelled to work harder or take on multiple jobs, and miss various opportunities. (Bastawrous et al, 2015; O'Sullivan, 2015; Evans et al., 2016; Estioko et al., 2022).

With these, family caregivers, such as the sandwich generation, may also be considered "hidden patients" who, more often than not are unable or unmotivated to care for their own well-being. That said, the difficulties that come with the family caregiving role are often downplayed and ignored; invisible both to the healthcare system and, sometimes, even the care recipients' family caregivers fend for (Adelman et al., 2014; Holliday et al., 2022).As a predominantly collectivist society, Filipinos put great emphasis on prioritizing and fostering relational bonds, especially within their own families. Family in this sense goes beyond the conventional nuclear structure and encompasses the concept and reality of having extended families, such as grandparents (Alampay, 2011; Chen et al., 2017). The foundation to which Filipino collectivism is rooted in is in the value of having "smooth interpersonal relationships", embodied by the desire for unity, inclusiveness in relationships, and the prioritization of the welfare of the family unit over individual interests (Alampay & Jocson, 2011). In the Filipino psyche, valuing the *kapwa* or the "other" is a central value that guides Filipinos' social behaviors in seeing and putting other people first and fostering harmonious relationships even at one's own expense. Formally referred to as *pakikipagkapwa tao*, it reflects a self that is able to be with and for others. Being inclined towards and embodying a more individualistic persona can be interpreted as separating oneself

from others and appear wrong in Philippine society (Selmer & De Leon, 2001; Alampay & Jocson, 2011; Gabriel, 2017). Another concept and value that embodies the essential system of reciprocal obligations and behavioral expectations underlying social interactions among Filipinos across cultures is *utang na loob*. In simple terms, it refers to a "debt of gratitude" or "debt of the inside" (Lim & Rañola, 2022). A sense of *utang na loob* develops when a person receives favor/s from another person and, in turn, feels obligated to repay, even beyond what is due. Often, this paves the way for a cyclical dynamic of involved parties feeling a mutual sense of moral obligation to one another and helping each other in one way or another (Kaut, 1961; Macaranas, 2018).

In the context of familial relationships, filial piety based on the concept of *utang na loob* is evident in Filipino child-parent dynamics. Generally, children honor and care for their elderly parents to pay them back for raising them and providing for their needs (Lim & Rañola, 2022). They view it as a moral obligation — a way to repay parent figures for bringing them into the world and taking care of them. Not subscribing to the norm involves a certain stigma and bearing the grunt of being seen as someone ungrateful or *walang utang na loob* (Agaton, 2017).

Usually, this entails adult children providing financial support and/or daily care for their aging parents (Chen et al., 2017). With the generally poor economic well-being of the elderly, their daughters commonly become the caregivers providing care and assistance.

Several local studies have been conducted about what it means to be part of the sandwich generation in the Philippine context. One study revealed that sandwich generation Filipino women are not a homogeneous social group, which means that these individuals can come from all walks of life. Across the board, however, it is asserted that these women have taken it upon themselves to embrace and fulfill the obligation of performing multiple roles, including economic, domestic, and community roles, for their intergenerational households in view of their full acceptance of traditional sex roles as a mother, wife, and daughter. Sandwich generation Filipino women acknowledge the challenges and expectations that come with their position but do not deem themselves limited by their situation (Estioko et al., 2022). This attitude towards intergenerational caregiving leaning towards a more positive light is unique among Filipinos, as previous studies which delved into the experiences of the sandwich generation in the Western context show the opposite (Cravey & Mitra, 2011).

The present study seeks to describe the lived experiences of the hat being said, this study is integral in contributing to a nuanced, context-based understanding of the lived experiences of Filipino women caught in between two or more generations in hopes of shedding light on who they are, what they go through, and how they interpret their circumstances.

METHODS

Design. The researcher employed a phenomenological qualitative research design to get an in-depth and nuanced account of the lived experiences of sandwich generation Filipino women. With this, their situation, how they made sense and understood the circumstances surrounding their position as individuals caught in the middle of two or more generations, and their consequent attitudes and behaviors were carefully investigated and analyzed, shedding light on how intergenerational caregiving takes place among them.

Locale. All the participants are permanent residents of cities in Metro Manila. The study specifically focused on the metropolitan area given that multigenerational households in the Philippines are said to be predominantly found in urban settings, particularly in Metro Manila, than in rural ones (Berja, 2008). This living arrangement being more prominent in urban areas may be considered a family strategy, largely attributed to Filipinos' preference to live together with their families to support each other. Besides that, many young Filipino women tend to migrate to and, eventually, permanently reside in Metro Manila in hopes of pursuing better educational and job opportunities in consideration of the current conditions of their households (Lauby & Stark, 1988).

Participants. The participants of the study consisted of eight early to middle-aged adult Filipino women

all residing in cities within Metro Manila. They have at least one dependent child and parent whom they support in the financial, physical, emotional, and instrumental aspects. That said, the living arrangements of the participants vary. Some of them are living in a multigenerational household with the presence of both their parent/s, child/ren, and even other extended family members. Other participants either live in proximity with their child/ren and/or parent/s or maintain close contact with them through Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Participant (P)	Age	Civil Status	Employment
P1	41	Single	Social Engineer
P2	52	Married	Accountant
P3	28	Single	Architect
P4	35	Married	Freelancer
P5	51	Married	Corporate Owner & Employee
P6	55	Married	School Registrar & Preschool Teacher
P7	44	Married	Housewife & Co-Business Owner
P8	41	Married	Human Resources Employee

Instruments. The study developed and utilized a semi-structured interview guide was developed and utilized. It consisted of open-ended questions constructed within a pre-planned thematic framework. The first set of questions focused on getting an account of the lives of sandwich generation Filipino women to establish their background information and lay out a full picture of who they are relative to the multiple roles they play within and outside the household. The second set of questions delved into understanding the multifaceted and dynamic burden they deal with and how it manifests in the various challenges they go through. The third set of questions aimed at understanding the emerging perspectives of sandwich generation Filipino women about intergenerational caregiving. Sample interview questions include: "How are you able to cope with having to do all that you do?"; "What do you prioritize among the multiple roles you have today?" and "Do you have aspirations you wish to pursue but cannot? How so?"

Data Collection. The data collection procedure began by gathering participants through purposive sampling. A set criterion was determined in acquiring participants to ensure that the data collected will be aligned with the research objectives. Specifically, the criteria outlined the following characteristics: (1) Filipino female at birth living in Metro Manila; (2) has at least one dependent child and parent whom she supports in the financial, physical/instrumental, and/or emotional aspects; (3) residing in one household, living in close proximity, or in close contact (able to regularly visit and/or in consistent communication) with the said child/ren and parent/s; and (4) has been put in challenging situations or experienced negative feelings associated with having to support their families.

Data Analysis. The use of thematic analysis was done to capture the nuances of the lived experiences of the participants and identify themes pertaining to the challenges they face with, as well as their emerging perspectives about intergenerational caregiving. In doing so, the researcher first transcribed the interviews and looked into the data to get a grasp of its content. After which, noteworthy segments from the transcriptions were highlighted and grouped into codes or labels. These codes served as the baseline for identifying and grouping patterns of ideas into themes and subthemes. The preliminary themes were reviewed and further developed to ensure they capture the stories of the participants. The next step involved making sense of and interpreting the meaning of each theme. The last step was making the write-up, which involved providing direct quotations and interpretations, backed up by research-based information.

RESULT AND DISCCUSION

The Centrality of the Filipino Family

The centrality of family is deeply embedded within the social fabric of Filipino society, serving as a common feature that underlies how intergenerational relations and interactions within families occur, which, at the same time, lead certain individuals to be sandwiched in the middle of two generations. Across the narratives of the participants, the findings reflect the sandwich generation having strong family ties. Specifically, P8 asserted she is able to move past problems because she has her family by her side. This positive view suggests the essential role her family plays in her life, serving as a source of strength and support:

"Even when sometimes… what do you call this… you're financially lacking…. But your family is there… in time, you know that whatever problems you have, you'll survive it and it'll all work out in the end." She added, *"When I see them happy, it makes me feel happy as well… even when we don't have a lot of money… Even with the simple things that they don't get to experience or have often, when I'm able to share that with them… it just fills me with joy…"*

The family unit is considered the most integral social group in Philippine society (Alampay, 2014; Villalon et al., 2020). Family interests, more often than not, are given precedence over individual interests (Morillo et al., 2013). P2, in particular, had to give up her career to take care of her mother and children:

"Mhmmm… I was a stay-at-home mom for 12 years. Although, actually, at that time, I was at the height of my career. I'm earning well. I have a good company… But it just so happened that at that time, my mom had a stroke. So I was asking myself, 'Do I still have to go working or do I stop for a while to take care of my personal… matters?' It was really hard…looking back…I thought about it and considered the situation, weighing everything…even when it was heavy for me, I just decided to do so and quit… I knew I had to make a decision since it was also at that time that my children were super young.

Evidently, the definition of the family unit goes beyond the nuclear structure. Relationships with extended family members, especially older parents, are deeply valued even after individuals have families of their own (Chen et al., 2017). A sense of responsibility and inclination to pay back are strongly evident, which can also explain why they assume the role as primary caregivers or carers. P2 highlighted how she sees supporting her mother in a positive light, *"I love taking care of her…so, I always tell her when she feels like she has no purpose…it hurts me…because I'd never think that way…'"*

Filial piety is deeply ingrained in Philippine society. Filipino children carry this sense of responsibility or *utang na loob,* and view caring for their elderly parents as a moral obligation that entails honoring, paying respect, and providing for them in consideration of their sacrifices when they were younger (Lim & Rañola, 2022). This is the case despite not having the best relationship. P2 further shared, *"...when I was younger, no matter how hurtful their words became, I would simply accept them… because my parents played a very important role in my life…in raising me."*

This depicts Filipino children's willingness and tendency to excuse the possible negative implications of their parents' behaviors due to a sense of attachment toward the parent as the caregiver (Adarlo et al., 2015). That said, the sense of responsibility toward helping or giving back to parents is often extended to the rest of the family, exemplifying the cultural value of *kapwa*. In particular, the eldest child or *panganay,* or someone who functions as the *panganay* willing to step up as the breadwinner, in the absence of the parent and/or in situations when the family income is inadequate, assumes responsibility in helping meet the needs of the rest of the family (Riñoza, 2017).

Specificallyally, shouldered the weight of supporting her family at an early age given that her father passed away early and her mother was a stay-at-home mom:

"We're four children. I'm the eldest. My mom doesn't work while my father is a government employee. I wasn't born with a silver spoon…And then, my father also passed away early… So, I started working at a young age to support my studies and help the family…I was working… when I was in college. At that time, I was also shouldering some expenses at home."

She currently continuously supports different members of her family besides her child and mother, *"I promised that as much as I can, they can expect from me. Especially when it comes to education… that's where I'm able to usually provide help to my nephews…"*

The sandwich generation, in reciprocity receive support as well. Specifically, P4 expressed that her relationship with her mother is not one-sided. In fact, having her mother by her side during a period of transition has become very beneficial:

"I feel gratitude towards the situation because ahm...very perfect timing that my mother is here...now that I'm about to give birth...although, the space is quite small for all of us given that it's a condo unit with only two bedrooms...But still... It's helping me navigate through life. With the things I can't do on my own, they're helping me out...my mother...it's not one-sided"

As opposed to negative beliefs and attitudes about elderly parents being passive recipients of care, it is said that Filipino older parents are active providers of support to their children and, by extension, grandchildren (Marquez, 2019).

P1 also gets help from her father and mother as they serve as substitutes in taking care of her children given her busy schedule as a working mom. She said, *"Ahm... what I've realized is that... with my parents, I'm lucky with them... because they get to fill in the responsibilities I have with my children... that yes, I am supporting them, but they do the same with me..."* The experiences of the participants reflect that while they, as adult children, provide economic support, as well as daily care and assistance to their elderly parents, the latter, in turn, offer help, usually in the form of managing household tasks and caring for grandchildren (Silverstein et al., 2006, as found in Chen et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, the shared experiences of the participants also revealed how other extended family members, in reciprocity, make it a point to give back, thus taking part in the mutual exchange of support. P8 articulated that, in their family, everyone helps each other out, especially in times of difficulties, *"We help each other out...if you are able to help financially...in the administrative, they can do that for you...so that's how it is...we support each other...for example, someone in the family got sick, it won't work if I'm the one supporting financially and I'm also at the hospital watching over...all the time...someone needs to assist you...yeah it's like that."*

Filipino Women Amidst Gender Norms and Roles

The prevalence of women in the provision of informal care in the Philippines can be greatly attributed to socio-cultural norms involving traditional concepts of family intersecting with gender roles. In particular, a study showed that the daughters, most prominently, take on the responsibility of providing care and support among older people. This is highlighted in P2's response when she detailed one of the reasons why she's the one assuming the family caregiver role for her mother. She said, *"My other siblings, they're two boys...*

This reflects society's view of women being more emotional, nurturing, and accommodating than men, among other gender norms and stereotypes, as intrinsic truths (Glauber, 2017; Tongson, 2018).

Particularly, as her mother exhibited greater parental needs, P2 shared how she makes it a point to check on and visit her mother every day after work to provide her with necessary assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADL) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL). She assists her mother when it comes to feeding, *"... when auntie's not there, I'm the one who makes her dinner..";* personal hygiene, *"I give her a bath, cut her nails, and clean her dentures...*"; managing finances, *"Her electricity, water, and groceries, it's all on me as well...";* and handling health and medical care, *"She's too dependent on her inhaler now, the one you spray for asthma... Besides that, of course you have the vitamins... also the one for cholesterol."*

Despite prevailing traditional concepts of family and gender-based norms and expectations that reinforce women's place in the household, there has been significant progress in Filipino women taking an active part in the formal economy and the expanding array of opportunities made available to them. Their experiences reflect the reality that many Filipino women pursue having their own careers due to a perceived need to help support the family.

Meanwhile, P2, who, as mentioned earlier, was previously a stay-at-home mom for twelve years after deciding to leave her job to take care of her children and mother, cited a different reason for going back to work. She said, *"I remember thinking to myself before going back... 'Can I still try?' I thought that, maybe, this time around... I have to... I have to do something for myself. I had doubts since I was gone for twelve or thirteen years..."* Over time, her resolve to pursue working again prevailed. A huge factor that influenced this decision was seeing her children becoming more independent, *"Eventually, I*

went back to work when my children were older… since when I learned how to work… I shouldered almost everything. It's because I'm also the eldest child… so yeah, I decided to go here because I didn't like our living conditions in Mindanao. I was 17 or 18 at that time."

they were in college already" and her mother being in a better shape, *"After around ten years, my mother was able to walk again… that's what I'm really trying to manage… for her to recover and be in good health… with her therapies… before I leave her as I go back."* With all she has gone through, she reflected and said, *"I gave my time… myself to my family. I think it's about time that I look into the career I want for myself this time around.*

Her sharing provides a glimpse into how her primary motivations to go back to work are driven by aspirations for oneself. However, family evidently remains her priority, which is why their welfare and approval were the primary determining factors to her final decision.

Associated Caregiver Burden and its Negative Implications

The associated burden or strain that the participants carry is multifaceted, which means that it encompasses and affects the different aspects of their lives. For one, P7 detailed how her workaholic lifestyle led to her being unable to fulfill her responsibilities as a parent properly:

"I didn't have time because I was too focused on working before…. My children and I would only see each other at night… With my daughter, the one who practically raised her until she was five years old was her yaya…"

This resulted to a strained relationship between her and her children. She further shared, *"So now, it seems like my children have grown used to not being open… sometimes even lying to us…"* This may not be intentional. From her standpoint, she may have thought that prioritizing her occupational role was her primary responsibility both as a mother and daughter supporting two generations. This reflects role ambiguity, which refers to the lack of clarity or certainty with regards to the responsibilities and demands a role encompasses (McCormack, 2013). Given her background of assuming the breadwinner role since she was young and single, she may have been too preoccupied with providing for the financial aspect that she was not able to take into account that her children have social and emotional needs, among other needs as well.

P7 may not have initially realized how the three main roles she has are overlapping and clashing with each other, also known as role conflict, which eventually led to role strain, or the stress that comes about in the difficulty of meeting the expectations and/or demands of social roles (Creary & Gordon, 2016; Cheng & Santos-Lozada, 2024).

P3, meanwhile shared having negative feelings related to how she deems like she is carrying everything on her shoulders alone, reflecting psychological strain. She elaborated, *"There are episodes… I don't think it's super frequent but there are episodes…I experience feeling anxious lonely, tired… all of that, especially when I do everything alone, mainly supporting the family… sometimes… I feel like it's so lonely. It makes me question why I ended up in this situation."*

The feeling of simply living for other people is a recurring theme for most of the sandwich generation participants. P2 in a moment of vulnerability expressed her thoughts, *"…there are periods when I don't really see myself growing as a person anymore because I barely have time for myself. It's as if you have nothing left for yourself…what's happening is that you just give and give for others."*

She also shared that there were times when her efforts were seemingly unappreciated, further adding to the emotional and mental toll of being in her position, and exhibiting how relationship dynamics between the sandwich generation and members of their family can have certain implications, *"I think one of the lowest points of my life…it's when…there , I feel like I always want to cry and I just hide it from my daughter."* Her thoughts highlight how physical health cannot be seen in isolation from mental and emotional well-being. Deteriorating physical health can lead to detrimental effects on psychological health and vice versa. Particularly, poor mental health is said to be a risk factor for chronic physical conditions in the same way that people experiencing chronic physical conditions are at a risk of poor mental health (Liao et al., 2022)

Social Support and Coping Strategies

The presence of social support is pertinent among the participants. Having a support system can be helpful in alleviating the perceived burden, as in the case of P8 with having her husband around.

"My husband is a good provider… so my situation actually felt a lot lighter. Now, I have someone by my side… of course financially and emotionally… when I have problems, I can feel that…things are not as bad when I married… unlike, when I was still single. I had a feeling that I carry everything on my own…But now, I have someone I can share my struggles with… someone who understands me and my side of the family…"

On the contrary, P6 perceived that the absence of support from her husband may have been significantly contributing to why caregiving becomes more difficult for her than it already is. *"Supposedly, there should be support from the husband, right? There's none…"*

That said, certain coping strategies may also be effective in alleviating burden. In the case of P6, she shared how journaling has become her safe space where she gets to freely express herself and release her emotions. *"...Actually, I do journaling…I write. That's where I release everything."*

Furthermore, she also indulges in simple activities, *"I have things I can do for myself…some spare time or moments where I can insert some time for myself…Sometimes, I get to read…I play with the dogs. I eat ice cream…I eat salad. My daughter gives me chocolates."* Such activities allow her to release pent up emotions and take a moment to breathe and enjoy the little things.

Emerging Perspectives About Intergenerational Caregiving Among Sandwich Generation Filipino Women

Caregiving as a Choice

While it can be said that societal and cultural standards and values compel women to embrace the caregiver role, the participants view being in their position as a deliberate choice that they must decide upon every day. For one, P8 said:

"I always go back to… my core… that I do this for my family, at the same time, they support me. And so, I think when you have that, you'll be able to get through because it's your choice…you know in yourself you can't and don't want to throw your family away."

This follows the line of thinking that, regardless of the challenges, given the situation of being sandwiched between generations, she would go through them as she is more than willing to do anything for her family. In connection, her family serves as a source of strength and assistance that allows her to surpass challenges, which shows how support goes both ways. She gives and receives in return, which possibly contributes to reinforcing the intent behind committing to the role.

Caregiving Provides Both Challenges and Rewards

Building up from the perspective of caregiving being a choice as much as it is a perceived responsibility, it is apparent within the narratives that the sandwich generation Filipino women acknowledge the reality that caregiving can both be rewarding and challenging at the same time.

For instance, P6 articulated, *"...the fact that I'm able to give her a bath, buy her food, buy her what she wants… I appreciate all that… because…I think through this I'm able to make it up to my father…So yeah, I tell my father, 'There, papang, I'm doing my best to give back to mama… for the things I wasn't able to do for you."*

Given the value of strong family ties, it can be said that, for most Filipinos, taking care of and being in the presence of their parents in old age, given the limited time they have left, is seen as a blessing that evokes a sense of positive feelings, seemingly outweighing the more challenging aspects of caregiving.

In line, P2 explained her perceived benefits of being a part of the sandwich generation, which implies a more positive outlook towards her caregiving experiences, *"Being part of the sandwich generation is both challenging and yet rewarding… it's a good experience actually…because you're coping with two generations…And you're in the middle of it. So, you're seeing the progress of both. That's a good thing because you don't get blindsided…"* This introspective take highlights how belonging to the sandwich generation has given her the opportunity to get a closer look into two vastly different generations and broaden her perspectives. This way, she gets to recognize the differences among generations, thus helping her to become more receptive of their needs, as well as the gaps that prevent them all from seeing eye-to-eye at times.

She articulated that one of the challenges lies there, but it is also through recognizing that generational gaps exist that one can move forward in taking active steps to address how that affects them and the next generations, *"How will you lessen the gap in that…what you've negatively experienced in your generation before…you don't want the current generation to go through anymore?"* In line with

that, she further said, *"...since they're exposed to my situation as part of the sandwich generation...and they get to see both sides, the good and the not-so-good...not exactly the bad side, but the disadvantages...they, themselves, can decide on their own on what they want to do if ever they really end up in the same situation as I am."*

Her sharing reflects a new-found sense of purpose in being more intentional with her approach to raising her children and paving the way for them to have more autonomy and agency so that, in the possibility of having families of their own, they can freely decide how they want to go about it.

Aspirations for the future generation's increased agency and autonomy

The sandwich generation's position of being caught in the middle and experiencing the challenges that come with intergenerational caregiving has driven them to push for the future their children has more agency and autonomy. For P5, she explained how she makes it a point to work hard in preparation for her retirement:

"The very reason why I am working hard...why I've prepared for my retirement...it's because I don't want to be a burden... I don't want him to experience all the hardships experienced...or the challenges I've gone through. Also, I want my husband and I to enjoy the fruits of our labor by the time we reach old age."

She highlighted how she desires for her son to have more autonomy in making choices so that he can maximize his life, without being pressured to or bound by having to follow through her footsteps of supporting parents during a time when he can be focusing on building his own career. Furthermore, she also stressed that being financially independent, self-secured, and sufficient is a personal aspiration she has set for herself.

P4 echoed similar sentiments as she saw a similar pattern between her and her siblings and their parents, *"Right now, my sibling and I are the ones supporting the family because when our parents are at their working age, they were able to save a bit... but it's not enough to retire them...so, my ambition is to not have that...to break that generational curse...For me, all is good...but when it comes to my child, I don't know...right? Like, they could be on a different generation with different expectations and different priorities. So, my goal is to have enough for me and my husband to retire, and to be able to hand down or provide for the future of my children...just to jumpstart their life when it's their time."*

It can be inferred from the participants' narratives that, though they willingly fill in the caregiver role, they want their children to pay more attention towards themselves and not be limited by the sense of obligation that comes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study sheds light on the lived experiences and meaning making of sandwich generation Filipino women as they navigate providing intergenerational care to two or more generations. These individuals of diverse backgrounds get caught up in the middle given the centrality of family in Philippine society and traditional norms and roles compelling women to take on the caregiver role. Along the way, they tend to experience the caregiver burden, associated with the challenges that come with having to juggle domestic and economic roles. In moving forward, the sandwich generation revealed how caregiving is both a responsibility driven by social and cultural expectations and a deliberate choice they must make every day; caregiving provides both challenges and rewards; and it is one of their aspirations to pave the way for future generations to gain more agency and autonomy over their lives.

It may be substantial for future researchers with similar research interests to examine relationship dynamics between the care recipients, and how this can, in turn, affect how the caregiving function among sandwich generation Filipino women takes place. Other than that, it may also be noteworthy to further implore upon the intersections of age, gender, and socioeconomic background in analyzing how intergenerational caregiving takes place among the sandwich generation. It may also be significant to delve into existing legislation, such as the Republic Act 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women to examine and shed light about possible gaps in policy formation and intervention catered towards Filipino women's interests.

The impacts of caregiver burden on the care recipients have been touched upon to a certain extent, given that the social well-being of the participants shall be examined as part of the study. However, it did not delve into them and their experiences. Data about this was simply used to provide context. Other than that, the study considered the three defining characteristics of caregiver burden, including self-perception, multifaceted strain, and over time, in capturing its nuances and informing the findings of the study.

It may hold some value to examine a different demographic and locale. For instance, the life stories of individuals of a heterogeneous socioeconomic stratum, such as those belonging to low-income families, may offer a different perspective from the current study. It may also be of interest to make use of quantitative and/or mixed method research designs in examining gender differences in caregiving, for example. In terms of data collection, face-to-face interviews may be carried out for a more dynamic and seamless exchange where body language and non-verbal cues can be observed. When it comes to research methods, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) may be considered as well. In doing so, participants can engage in productive discourse and build upon each other's inputs.

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