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Exploring the Job Demands and Resources of Sandwich Generation Female Employees in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The significant challenges faced by the Sandwich Generation have garnered considerable attention over the past few decades. However, the unique job demands and resources experienced specially by female employees within this demographic are rarely addressed. This study examines the work-related demands encountered by Sandwich Generation female employees due to their caregiving responsibilities and the resources drawn upon, using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. Data was gathered through fourteen semi structured interviews with Sandwich Generation female employees across various sectors. Data were analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that many female employees face high job demands while having limited job resources. Furthermore, the job demands associated with being part of the Sandwich Generation can be classified as job hindrances, as they impede personal growth, learning, and goal achievement while increasing stress levels. While previous research using the model has focused on the emotional demands of interactions with clients or colleagues, the current findings emphasize the gendered emotional burdens related to juggling caregiving responsibilities alongside work.

Keywords: *Job demands, Job resources, JD-R model, Sandwiched generation, Female employees*

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Introduction

One specific group within the organisation's diversity is Sandwich Employees. These individuals often balance the needs of both their ageing parents and their children, placing them in a unique socioeconomic situation (Noor & Isa, 2020). These adults who care for both their children and ageing parents while also balancing work and family responsibilities are referred to as the "Sandwich Generation" (Hammer & Neal, 2008; DeRigne & Ferrante 2012). Understanding and addressing the job demands and resources of Sandwich employees is also important for effective people management and can help enhance the overall success of the organisation (Noor & Isa, 2020).

Miller (1981) introduced the concept of the Sandwich Generation, also known as the Command Generation. He argues that individuals in this generation encounter various types of stress, including having to deal with several crises of family members across different generations simultaneously, such as limited leisure time due to caregiving responsibilities and managing financial status with caregiving duties. Over time, the concept has garnered increased attention in the literature due to demographic factors such as increased life expectancy (Zarulli et al., 2021; Meyer et al., 2020), longer lifespans (Impact of Medical Advances on Life Expectancy | Swiss Re, 2023), and delayed childbearing. Many couples choose to have children later in life for various reasons, such as career aspirations, education, and financial stability. As a result, they are faced with the challenge of simultaneously caring for young children and aging parents (Li et al., 2022; Balasch & Gratacós, 2012; Zsembik & Gui, 2016; Alburez-Gutiérrez et al., 2021). The traditional extended family structure has evolved into smaller nuclear families. With fewer siblings and relatives

available to share caregiving responsibilities (Alburez-Gutiérrez et al., 2021; Ro, 2022) and the dynamics of economic pressures, such as rising education, housing, and healthcare costs, family budgets are strained (Terkoğlu & Memiş, 2022).

In this context, Employees from this sandwich generation are integral to organisations, as they attempt to balance their careers with the responsibility of supporting their dependents. Consequently, organisations must pay close attention to this demographic when addressing handling people effectively (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2001). This can be achieved by identifying the unique job demands faced by sandwich employees and providing tailored support to help them effectively manage their professional responsibilities alongside their caregiving duties (Yuniari & Saskara, 2023).

Sri Lanka has experienced a significant drop in childbirth in recent decades. According to the United Nations, the average Sri Lankan woman gives birth to around two children in her lifetime, as of 2020. This is a sharp difference from 1950 when the average woman had nearly six children. The fertility rate in Sri Lanka has declined by almost 70% since then (Prasangi et al., 2021). In addition, when it comes to the ageing population based on the 2012 census, 12.4% of the population was 60 years or older. This rate is projected to double by 2041, making Sri Lanka's elderly population a significant portion of the overall population. Moreover, Sri Lanka as a developing country has encountered difficulties in its social assistance mechanisms, especially given recent economic hardships and the COVID-19 pandemic. As of June 2023, a quarter of Sri Lankans were reported to be living in poverty, and over 50% did not have access to social protection programs (World Bank Group, 2023). Hence it is evident that Sri

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Lanka has a workforce that faces significant challenges, who are managing the pressures of a limited social support system and a rising cost of living.

In contrast, Europe and America generally possess more established and comprehensive social support systems, which are typically better financed and more effectively managed (Brown, 2016). These systems usually cover a larger portion of their populations and provide a wider array of services which has been explored by the previous global literature especially focusing on experience and coping mechanism of sandwich generation caregivers (Timmers & Lengeler, 2022; Yuniari & Saskara, 2023; Noor & Isa, 2020; Sudarji et al., 2022). Nonetheless, there exists a relative dearth of research examining related caring patterns within Sri Lankan contexts.

Although international studies increasingly explore the Sandwich Generation, the Sri Lankan context reveals a distinctly gendered caregiving pattern. Caregiving in Sri Lanka is overwhelmingly feminised: between 70–75% of caregivers of older adults are women in their early to mid-50s—the same age bracket typically associated with the Sandwich Generation (Rathnayake et al., 2025; Wijesinghe & Samaranayake, 2021). Therefore, female sandwich-generation employees represent a uniquely burdened yet underexamined group whose experiences require focused scholarly attention.

This study emphasizes the underexamined context of Sri Lanka, where institutional social support systems are limited and cultural norms predominantly allocate caregiving responsibilities to women employees. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework provides a relevant lens for examining how Sandwich Generation employees read their competing

obligations. Demerouti et al. (2001) characterize job demands as the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of work that require sustained effort and result in physical and mental expenditures. These expectations can be mitigated by workplace resources factors that enhance the achievement of professional goals, reduce stress, and promote personal growth. When expectations surpass available resources, individuals may experience burnout, reduced well-being, and worse job performance.

Hence, this study specifically aims to identify the most pressing job demands faced by Sandwich Generation female employees in Sri Lanka, evaluate the resources available to them within their work environments, and assess the impact of these factors on their well-being.

Literature review

Defining Characteristics of the Sandwich Generation

The sandwich generation can be defined as people who are responsible for caring for both their children and their ageing parents, while also juggling a career (Hammer & Neal, 2008; DeRigne & Ferrante 2012). These individuals often find themselves caught between two responsibilities, hence the term "sandwiched " (DeRigne & Ferrante, 2012). This caregiving role can be particularly challenging for those who belong to the Millennials or Gen Y (1980 to 2000) or other generations, as they experience a unique set of pressures and challenges (Aji & Harani, 2023). Noor & Isa (2020) argues that the main challenges individuals face in SG include financial concerns, emotional instability, uncertainty about the future, stress, and difficulty in saving and managing time. The inclusion criteria for conducting research on the

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Sandwich Generation across various studies can differ based on demographics. These studies have identified several inclusion criteria to define the characteristics of individuals belonging to the Sandwich Generation.

Age: Some studies have specified that individuals between the ages of 30-55 years old are included in the research (Sudarji et al., 2022; Yuniari & Saskara, 2023), while others have used the term "mid-life" to define the age range (Terkoğlu & Memiş, 2022; Noor & Isa, 2020; Hammer & Neal, 2008). Some studies have focused on working mothers with at least one child under 18 (Noor & Isa, 2020), while others have included individuals aged 35-54 (Yuniari & Saskara, 2023) or provided data in a study where the average age was 37.8 (Chassin et al., 2010).

Family Structure: Numerous studies have focused on working women with children requiring care (Sudarji et al., 2022) or mothers caring for a parent/in-law who lives with them (Noor & Isa, 2020). Others have included individuals who are married or living together for at least one year and have children under 18 living in the household (Hammer & Neal, 2008; Pines et al., 2011).

Caregiving Responsibilities: Some studies have included individuals providing care for a parent/stepparent/parent-in-law for a minimum of three hours per week (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2001; Hammer & Neal, 2008) or caring for the elderly (Terkoğlu & Memiş, 2022). Others have focused on individuals caring for a parent/in-law or providing at least three hours of care per week to an ageing parent (living or not living with them) (Noor & Isa, 2020; Hammer & Neal, 2008). Some studies have provided data on caregiving to children, parents/in-laws (Chassin et al., 2010).

Employment: Some other studies have focused on working women (Sudarji et al., 2022), while others have included individuals in which both partners are employed (one working at least 35 hours/week, the other at least 20 hours/week) (Hammer & Neal, 2008; Pines et al., 2011).

Additional criteria have also been used in certain studies, such as gross annual household income of \$40,000 or greater (Hammer & Neal, 2008). It's worth noting that not all studies explicitly use the term "sandwich generation," but they focus on individuals who are caring for both children and ageing parents.

Implications of Dual Caregiving Responsibilities

Psychological Impact: According to Hammer and Neal (2008), dual-earner couples who belong to the sandwich generation are at a higher risk of depression. Caregivers of older dependents also experience anxiety and stress (Del Pino Casado et al., 2014). However, several researchers have also found the benefits of being part of SG (Schaufeli & Taris (2013). such as emotional support, financial help, help with childcare and help with household tasks. Even though Emotional support from ageing parents is a great help that caregivers receive, many seem to neglect the emotional support and focus on tangible tasks. Even some may find material support helpful while others experience discomfort guilt, frustration, or annoyance (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2001).

Physical Health Impact: A research study conducted by Chassin et al. (2010) explain the correlation between being a part of the sandwich generation and health-related behaviours. The study revealed that multigenerational caregivers, as compared to other caregivers and non-caregivers,

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were less likely to check food labels and choose foods based on health values. They were also less likely to use seat belts while driving and exercise regularly. Furthermore, the study indicated that they smoked marginally more cigarettes per day than other groups. People in Sandwich Generation seem to be more concerned about taking care of their dependents than themselves (Broadly, 2019, as cited in Noor & Isa, 2020).

Financial Impact: When the couple in Sandwich Generation had to take care of parents with chronic illnesses alongside 3 to 4 children, it resulted in little opportunity to save and create financial stress (Noor & Isa, 2020) and it finally led to the work-family conflict. Moreover, both the couple arrived at work late and left early because of caregiving. However, women show greater levels of absenteeism compared to husbands due to their childcare or parent-care responsibilities (Hammer & Neal, 2008).

While the existing literature on sandwich generation addresses several gaps in the context, such as the psychological, physical, and financial impacts of the caregiving roles affected by the Sandwich Generation (Hammer & Neal, 2008; Del Pino Casado et al., 2014; Noor & Isa, 2020) As well as the general stress and anxiety, depression, and health-related behaviours (Chassin et al., 2010). There is a lack of specific focus on how the job demands differ across various work environments and sectors. Research is needed to explore these complex phenomena of sandwich generation employees within different industries and roles, providing insights into the work-specific challenges they must face in everyday life.

Support Systems and Coping Mechanisms

Research conducted around the globe has identified several ways to support the Sandwich Generation, one of the primary ways to support is through employer-sponsored programs. These programs can make a significant difference by offering flexible work schedules, remote work options, and elder care leave, which can help employees manage their caregiving duties without sacrificing their jobs (Hammer & Neal, 2008). Furthermore, they stressed that companies that prioritize a supportive work environment can benefit from improved employee retention and morale.

Government assistance can also play a crucial role in supporting the Sandwich Generation (Terkoğlu & Memiş, 2022). Financial aid can help families with the rising costs of elder care while providing access to caregiver support services like respite care or adult day care programs can alleviate some of the daily pressures (Noor & Isa, 2020). Studies from countries like Indonesia highlight how government policies and programs specifically designed for the Sandwich Generation can be immensely helpful (Sudarji et al., 2022).

Moreover, researchers highlight that the Sandwich Generation must also prioritize self-care. Developing coping mechanisms for stress management and time management, (Sudarji et al., 2022). According to the coping theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), there are two types of coping strategies: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Sudarji et al. (2022) found that participating in SG relies more on emotion-focused coping strategies, which aim to manage emotional responses to stress rather than solving the root cause. Examples of such strategies include leaving the room during an argument, trying not to think about problems, viewing caregiving as a religious obligation, and talking to

(Online)

friends, family, or a spouse for emotional comfort and understanding.

Further, studies have shown that members of the Sandwich Generation are less likely to engage in healthy behaviours like exercise and proper diet due to time constraints and stress (Chassin et al., 2010).

Accordingly, some coping mechanisms and suggestions for support systems have also been provided by the research, such as employer-sponsored SG programs, government assistance, and family support networks (Hammer & Neal, 2008; Terkoğlu & Memiş, 2022; Sudarji et al., 2022). However, there is doubt about the applicability of these studies in a country like Sri Lanka as it is highly a family-centred developing country.

There is a need to thoroughly analyze the various demand and resources used by sandwich workers in Sri Lanka to manage their work-life balance. Additionally, it is important to understand how cultural, economic, and geographical factors influence the effectiveness of these resources in various contexts like Sri Lanka.

Applying the JD-R Model to the Sandwich Generation Employees

When considering the application of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework, there is a significant gap that has been identified in Sandwich Generation employees. The JD-R model is a well-known framework in organizational settings that explains the effect of different job features on employee well-being and performance (Van den Broeck et al., 2010; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Every job possesses unique risk factors that fall into two categories: job demands and job resources. Job demands are elements of employment that require continuous physical and mental forces, such as

workload, work ambiguity, emotional stress, or time constraints, and consequently incur certain physiological and psychological costs (Kozak et al., 2023;

Lesener et al., 2020). Conversely, job resources include the physical, psychological, social, or organizational components of a job that alleviate job demands, enable goal accomplishment, or promote personal growth and development (Van Woerkom et al., 2021; Kozak et al., 2023; Adil & Baig (2018)..

Numerous authors stated that when job demands surpass available resources, employees may experience stress, burnout, turnover, and reduced job satisfaction and job performance in multiple contexts. However, sufficient resources can alleviate the impact of heightened expectations, fostering engagement and resilience (Schaufeli and Taris (2013; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Rattrie & Kittler, 2014). Hence, the JD-R model provides a relevant framework for examining how Sandwich Generation employees, who manage childcare and eldercare responsibilities, confront the unique obstacles they encounter and the resources, both personal and organizational that they employ to sustain their well-being.

However, numerous theories, such as role strain theory, work family conflict theory, and conservation of resources theory, contributed to examine the experiences of Sandwich Generation employees, the JD-R model offers a significant and comprehensive structure for analysing their circumstances. Unlike narrower frameworks that emphasize only the negative aspects of competing roles (e.g., stress, depletion, or conflict), the JD-R model simultaneously captures both sides of the experience such as job demands arising from dual caregiving responsibilities, and the resources of

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personal, familial, organisational, and societal, that can mitigate these pressures.

This dual-focus approach is essential, as research shows that sandwich-generation employees do not simply experience strain but also actively mobilise resources to cope, adapt, and remain productive (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Van Woerkom et al., 2021)

Contextual Review on Sandwich Generation Employees

The countries that are investigating this phenomenon of SG include a diverse range of regions across the globe. Notably, Israel is engaged in this research (Pines et al., 2011), alongside Flanders (Timmers & Lengeler, 2022), which is a region in Belgium known for its unique cultural and social dynamics. Indonesia, particularly Bali (Yuniari & Saskara, 2023), also plays a significant role in this study context. Malaysia contributes to the understanding of this phenomenon through its multicultural perspectives (Noor & Isa, 2020). In the United States, various studies are conducted (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2001; DeRigne & Ferrante, 2012; Hammer & Neal, 2008), with some originating from specific communities in the Midwest that focus on localised experiences and outcomes. Additionally, Turkey brings distinct viewpoints on Sandwich Generation employees (Terkoğlu & Memiş, 2022). Canada (Steiner & Fletcher, 2017) and Korea (Jang et al., 2019) are also participants in this research area, each providing their own insights on SG which shaped by their respective societal contexts.

It is noteworthy that Sri Lanka is absent from this comparative analysis, as there seems to be a lack of available literature on the topic within that region highlighting the area for further exploration and potential research opportunities.

Methods

This study employed Saunders et al. (2016)'s research onion model to construct the methodology. This qualitative research was conducted as exploratory research under the social constructivist paradigm due to exploring the job demands and resources of sandwich generation employees in Sri Lanka. Therefore, as the study was conducted in relation to the sandwich generation female employees, this study fits to phenomenological research (Finlay, 2011). Consequently, based on the experiences of the sandwich generation employees, the researcher builds knowledge to understand the nature of the role of the women under the category of sandwich generation employees. Exploring how female employees in the Sri Lankan Sandwich Generation balance their work responsibilities with their caregiving duties and personal well-being is complicated because it involves human feelings, emotions and relationships (Lesener et al., 2020), which can't be fully understood through surveys alone. Therefore, due to the immeasurable nature of the data related to the phenomenon, it was conducted as a qualitative study.

The target population for this study comprises Sri Lankan employees who fulfill the criteria of the Sandwich Generation. These individuals are characterized by their dual caregiving responsibilities: providing support to both dependent children and aging parents or other elderly relatives. The study encompasses participants from diverse occupational backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the job demands faced and resources used by Sandwich Generation employees in Sri Lanka. The research utilized a purposive sampling technique. We applied strict inclusion criteria due to the small sample

size. These criteria include being employed in any industry, having one or more children under the age of 23 (the median age of marriage according to the Department of Census and Statistics), having parents or in-laws living in the same household, and being a woman. Studies consistently show that women are more likely to take on caregiving roles than men (Barzallo et al., 2024). Therefore, this study selected female participants who met the inclusion criteria.

Accordingly, the study conducted in-depth interviews with fourteen employees who belong to the sandwich generation (refer to Table 1 for the sample profile). The sample size of fourteen was selected because data saturation was reached at this point, no new themes, insights, or patterns emerged from subsequent interviews, indicating that the data collected were sufficient to answer the research questions.

These interviews took place face-to-face and over the telephone, and they typically lasted about an hour. It ensures that authors obtained explicit consent from participants and guarantee strict confidentiality.

The study employed thematic analysis as its analytical technique. The interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed, eliminating extraneous information as necessary. Initial codes were identified from the transcripts and subsequently refined into themes to offer a comprehensive understanding of the collected substance. The validity of research is contingent upon its trustworthiness, which Guba and Lincoln assert may be assessed through various criteria, including credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Table 01: Sample Profile of the Participants

Participant ID	Age	Job Role	Care Recipients
01	38	Machine Operator	3 sons & mother
02	47	Plantation Worker	2 daughters, mother & mentally ill sister
03	38	HR Officer	2 sons & mother-in-law
04	40	Supervisor	2 daughters, son & mother-in-law
05	45	Library Assistant	4 children, mother & father
06	52	Sub-Postmaster	2 children, mother, & daughter's family
07	39	Machine Operator	2 sons & mother
08	47	Cleaner	2 children, mother-in-law and father
09	45	Housemaid	3 sons, daughter & father
10	49	Government officer	2 children, mother & father
11	39	Quality checker	2 children & mother-in-law
12	36	Shop assistant	Son, daughter & father-in-law
13	36	Teacher	Mother & mother-in-law With 2 daughters
14	48	Shop assistant	3children & mother

Source: Interview data 2024/2025

Findings and Discussion

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to address the primary research question: What are the job demands and resources experienced by Sandwich Generation workers at work as a result of their caregiving roles? From the interview data, primary codes, categories, and overall themes were identified and presented in Table 02 and Table 03. Below are the following sections, elaborating each of the themes explained in an exhaustive manner, depicting an understanding of how these resources and demands impact the health and work-life balance of Sandwich Generation employees.

Job Demand

Based on the interview with Sandwich Generation employees, three main themes are identified related to job demand: (1) emotional demands, (2) caregiving demands, and (3) work demands. According to the above derived theme nine categories are identified. They correspond to guilt and emotional stress, mental exhaustion, interpersonal strain, leave struggles, Work-Life imbalance, career limitations, job pressure, physical and logistical issues and performance and commitment Pressure. Accordingly, the derived codes of the interview’s interpretations are as follows:

Table 02: Job demands are faced by Sandwich Generation employees at work due to their caregiving responsibilities

Codes	Category	Themes
Guilt about missing work, Anxiety after confinement, Fear of inadequacy, Feeling high Job necessity	1.1 Guilt and Emotional Stress	1. Emotional Demands
Absent-mindedness due to workload, Emotional pressure from noise, Difficulty with children's noise, Reduced focus Seeking isolation	1.2 Mental Exhaustion	
Regret not being home at work, Stress spillover towards subordinate	1.3 Interpersonal Strain	

Difficulty taking leaves in emergency, Need to use leave for emergencies, Medical leave impact on salary, Reduce salary due to leave, Occasional leave for caregiving, Parent's care leave, Additional health issues, Clinic Visits leaves, Leaves for School Meetings, Leaves for mother's needs, Adjusting work hours for caregiving duties	2.1 Leave struggles	2. Caregiving Demands
work-family conflict, Work after working hours, Struggle with home problems at work and vice versa, The negative impact of work relationship, Balancing work and home problems, Supporting dependent family members, Family attention, Choosing to stay home, Childcare challenges, Desire to stay home	2.2 Work-Life Imbalance	
Financial constraints on education Lack of time for career development Lack of Job Opportunities Missed career advanced after child's birth Consideration of Early Retirement Delayed educational decision leads to career development Give up on learning opportunities. Prioritising proximity to home. Concerns about costs and workload than career advancement	2.3 Career Limitations	

High sense work obligations, High supervision for subordinates, Long work hours, Restricted phone use, Lack of employer support, Company Policies, Staff shortage	3.1 Job Pressure	3. Work Demands
Absent of helper, Physical labour requirement Restrictions on delegating tasks. Logistical barriers	3.2 Physical and Logistical issues	
Work commitment, High expectations for job performance, Need to meet professional responsibilities despite being sandwiched.	3.3 Performance and Commitment Pressure	

Source: Interview data 2024/2025

1.Emotional Demands

Guilt and Emotional Stress: Guilt and Emotional Stress can be seen among these participants in various ways. The emotional and mental strain of balancing work and caregiving responsibilities is worsened when asking excuses. Employees often feel guilty for not being able to fulfil their work duties, which can lead to increased stress and anxiety (Del Pino Casado, Pérez-Cruz, & Frías-Osuna, 2014).

“Sometimes, I feel guilty about asking for different excuses when the workload is high. So, I tend not to participate in some events and funerals some sometimes do not go to parent meetings as well. Suppose it is something that can't be ignored. I go at night.”

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"I don't know how and where this has come from, I had been feeling such a fear after my last confinement. It is not that someone beat me up or anything. The thought came into my mind that I would not be able to raise my children, or I would not be able to take good care of them. Then at some point, I thought about leaving the job."

The participant experiences significant fear and anxiety about their ability to raise and care for their children. The thought of not being able to take good care of their children creates an emotional burden. The participant has considered leaving their job due to the emotional stress.

Mental Exhaustion: Participants show symptoms of mental exhaustion and interpersonal strain as well. Many employees struggle to manage the emotions that come with caregiving and work (Duarte, Berthelsen, & Owen, 2020). Interviews show that workers often feel pressure to hide their true feelings. They may feel the need to act cheerful even when they are upset.

"Sometimes I come to work when my children are sick at home. I think here also I have workers (like children) to take care of so I came otherwise I can't balance it at work."

"This happened to me actually, because of these sounds and pressure inside the factory. I was exhausted. I tried to be alone. Like it's hard for me when children are also playing and giggling when I come home. It bothers me and want to be isolated from everything."

The sounds and pressure inside the factory contribute to emotional exhaustion. The constant noise and demands of the work environment can amplify feelings of fatigue and stress (Kaplan et al., 2024). To cope with the overwhelming emotional and

sensory input, she feels the need to be alone, seeking moments of solitude to manage the stress.

Interpersonal Strain: Also, identified that this crowd feels a deep sense of guilt and responsibility over their work and family. It indicates this incident of not participating in the annual trip, because of her feelings of missing the family as well as her inability to bring children to such events. However, not going to the event also makes her guilty because she is unable to fulfil her duty as a supervisor.

"This month our company annual trip was there so it is better If I participate but I feel like I recently missed my family and chose to stay. They don't allow to bring children as well that's why.... However, letter I feel that since I am a supervisor. I have a responsibility to participate in the annual trip as well."

2.Caregiving Demand

Leave struggles: Most of the participants mentioned taking leaves for their caregiving responsibilities, such as attending to a sick child or an elderly parent.

"I can't go to work twice a month. Because I have to accompany my sister to the clinic. As well as when I have parent meetings in my daughter's school, I have to participate in it as well."

"Sometimes my mother says she wants to see my sisters. In that case, I take a leave and accompany her as well. She cannot go alone."

Taking leaves impacts participants in many ways. As one participant says, since her supervisor knows that she does not take leave unless it is important, indicates that she cares about the perception of her supervisor of her taking the leave.

(Online)

"Yes, recently my mother had surgery, and I took 2 days' leave. If it is mandatory I use leaves. Sir also do not say anything since he knows I do not take leaves if it is not mandatory."

Managing workload during and after taking leaves is another significant challenge. Upon returning to work, employees often face a backlog of tasks that need immediate attention. This can lead to increased stress and a sense of being overwhelmed.

"I have one day when my son fell and broke his arm I remember using my leave. So, I postponed the making cash sheet and come home."

The financial impact of taking leave is another problem, I have encountered during interviews. One participant is dissatisfied with the received salary after taking the leave. She is worried about the reduction of salary and cut of the bonus as caregiving required earnings.

"Taking leave is extremely hard for us even if we have a leave balance. I was recently in the hospital cause my son got sick and was given medical for a week, but they didn't look at anything and cut my attendance bonus and my salary for one week."

We have found that, when individuals experience conflicts in their personal lives, it spills over into their emotions and behaviours at work.

"Think if I came here after a fight with my mother-in-law or husband, that kind of thing happens inside the family right, but I have to forget all things otherwise I can't do this job. But sometimes I have that impact from the house. That feeling tends to make me angry."

Work-Life Imbalance: Also, the imbalance of work and life appears to have negatively affected their personal life as well

(Schaufeli & Taris, 2013; Urban et al., 2025). They answer work-related calls after working hours showing a reduction of their quality of personal time. These calls significantly blur the boundaries between personal and professional life as Sandwich Generation employees, as mentioned,

"I get calls from workers after I go home. But I always tell them not to call me because when I am at home, I am in a separate environment. I cannot handle it but sometimes they tend to talk about their personal problem as well. It is kind of hard for me."

"Since I am working with the money and all it is hard to assign someone for me as well. Even if I assign someone in my absence, I have to continuously check with her about the work progress and definitely call her. Even the assistant also called me. I answer the call because I see It as my responsibility even on my day off."

Also, the sense of responsibility and accountability towards their job of SG employees, make it difficult to ignore work calls, even during off-hours. This continuous engagement with work and the need to check in on work progress or address issues even during personal time prevents this participant from fully disconnecting from her job. However the employees continued to attend their jobs because of the financial supplement that they received via doing the job.

Career Limitations: Work performance and career development go hand in hand (Heliyon, 2024). If the performance is good, you can come up on the career ladder, but some SG employees often find it hard to pursue their education or professional development goals due to caregiving responsibilities (Fast et al., 2013). As many said, the cost of caregiving makes it hard to invest in education, which is vital to career

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development. Even if they manage to save some amount of money, the expenses related to transportation and other caregiving needs can quickly deplete these funds.

“Most of the time my salary goes for bus fare and family expenses. I have to travel almost 3 hours to the office. This is really a tiring journey.”

Also, some of them find it hard to find the time with their current workload to focus on their careers. Hence, they seem to pause it and move on with life.

“Sometimes think about it, because I couldn't be able to save to do any diploma or degree because of money problems. Also, I have not had time for that. It is true that if my life were not this much complicated, I could be able to engage in higher study and think about career development.”

“Yes, there is a chance for me to go to the next position if I get a diploma. But when I had my fourth child and the workload came with that, I gave up and thought this way was better”.

3.Work Demand

Job Pressure: Work demands refer to the pressures and requirements imposed by the work and responsibilities that employees must meet in their job roles. These job demands can impact employees' well-being and job performance, if they are not balanced with adequate resources (Schaufeli & Taris, 2013). While all employees face these job demands at work, the burden can become greater for certain groups, particularly those who have a dual caregiving role.

“We can't use phones, inside the factory when we are sawing, even if a child at home gets sick. You have no way of knowing to write away. It comes through HR.”

The inability to use phones inside the factory, especially during critical tasks like sewing, means employees cannot immediately be informed about urgent family matters, such as a child's illness. This restriction adds to the stress and anxiety of not being reachable when needed.

Physical and Logistical issues: Balancing these extra tasks with regular duties makes it challenging to manage time effectively. Moreover, these additional tasks require physical labour, which can be exhausting, especially after managing caregiving responsibilities at home.

“Today the helper was also absent. If he comes, he does the cleaning and puts newspapers, books, and all in relevant places and cupboards. So, by having to do all the other work including the job, it's hard for me to finish my work. as well as it requires physical labour”.

“Since I am working with the money and all it's hard to assign someone for me as well. Even if I assign, I have to continuously check with her about the work progress and definitely call her. Even the assistant also calls me. I answer the calls because I see It as my responsibility.”

Working with money requires a high level of responsibility and accuracy. This responsibility cannot easily be delegated, adding to the stress and pressure on the employee.

Performance and Commitment Pressure: Even when tasks are delegated, the need for continuous oversight and frequent checks on the work progress means the employee is constantly involved and unable to fully offload any responsibility even on her day off.

“Even I am stuck with so many problems in the house. I have to complete my work duty. For example, people hope if it is a

(Online)

registered post letter, it will be received on the other side the same day. If I can't make it. I have failed at my job. So, I think it is a challenge."

This high-performance expectation adds to the work demands, as any failure to meet this standard is seen as a failure in job performance. Being stuck with numerous problems at home while having to meet work duties creates a conflict.

The inability to take leave when urgently needed, especially in a family emergency, highlights the inflexibility of the company's leave policies. Also, the participant had to stay at work until 4.30 PM despite the urgent need to care for their injured mother, and finally, she decided to change jobs.

"Actually, I am really tired now, being running here and there to work and home. I am thinking of retiring at 50."

The statement highlights a significant level of exhaustion from juggling work and home responsibilities. The consideration of retiring early at 50 indicates a potential intention to leave the workforce sooner than planned.

Job Resources

Based on the interview conducted with Sandwich Generation employees, identified main three types of resources that they used to manage their dual caregiving and (1) organizational resources, (2) internal resources, and (3) external resources. Based on the derived codes of the interview's interpretations are as follows:

Table 03. Resources used by Sandwich Generation employees to manage their dual caregiving and work roles.

Codes	category	Themes
Provision of books for children,	1. - B	(1)

Provide other benefits, Provide Training		
Proactive work management Does not procrastinate Manage the pressure Find Positive attitude Talking to others Repayment commitment Organizing shopping data Salary management Find self-esteem Find resilience Household expenses Time management	2.1 Personal	(2) Internal resources
Talking to others Delegating household responsibilities Balance through experience Separate work from home Checking on Family During Breaks Seeking relief at the temple	2.2 Behavioural	
Childcare support from Mother Mother's Household contribution Parents meeting attendance Help from son Help from sisters Society ennoblement Transport help from friends neighbours Assistant Financial support from friends	3.1 Family 3.2 Community	(3) External resources

Source: Interview data 2024/ 2025

1.Organizational Resources



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As a working caregiver, SG employees seem to use workplace support systems for managing a big family while juggling work. One of the valuable benefits provided by employers is giving a set of books for employees' children which directly reduces employees' childcare costs.

"In January when the new term starts, we are provided a set of books for children. It is a great help since books are really expensive. If I have to buy it for two children, It will cost at least ten thousand rupees."

Also, some employee acknowledges that bringing their child on company transportation is unofficial, it demonstrates how SG employees may find ways to leverage existing resources to meet their childcare needs.

"I used to bring my younger son in company transportation to school since no one knew about it, that doesn't cause a problem."

Another employee expressed the importance of training sessions to her life in managing tasks. she mentioned that the session provides helpful tips or strategies. Even if the training is not directly caregiving-related, it still refers employees with skills that help with positive thinking and stress reduction.

"Most of the time we cannot expect that kind of offers from government jobs. However, there was talk that we were given help to do the diploma for career advancement. But nothing happened."

Some Sandwich Generation employees benefit from job resources to manage their caregiving and work responsibilities. However, some employees stated that workplace support is limited.

"But we have training sessions. By that, they sometimes address social issues and

manage life as well. Those things I put into my head and used to change my attitude in a positive way."

Even though some employees from the private sector seem to receive several benefits from their employees, government employees seem to be disappointed about their benefits as participant stated,

"Most of the time we cannot expect that kind of offers from government jobs. However, there was talk that we were given help to do the diploma for career advancement. But nothing happened."

2.Internal Resources

We have identified through the interviews; SG employees use their personal skills and techniques to achieve work-life balance goals while not compromising any of the sides. The internal resources that SG workers use fall under two categories. Personal and behavioural strategies.

Personal: They have gained some Personal strategies based on their personal characteristics and the experiences that they have gained throughout life. Also, they used techniques and methods individuals use to change or manage their behaviours to improve the well-being of the family.

Some SG employees are inspired by their personal characteristics, such as self-strength and resilience, to cope with the challenges of caregiving and work. Participants mentioned past achievements, such as sports participation, as sources of self-confidence.

"I have this self-strength; I have done so many sports in school as well. Maybe that makes me strong."

Some employees demonstrate resilience by persevering through difficult situations and avoiding giving up. The individual has

(Online)

adjusted to their difficult situation, displaying a strong level of resilience.

"I am not coming from a wealthy family. We have suffered ever since. If someone was in my shoes, she might have given up on so many things. But I am not I have used to it."

Behavioural: Several SG employees adopt proactive work management strategies to balance their workload with caregiving responsibilities. This includes planning ahead, delegating tasks, and prioritizing work assignments. The participant thinks ahead and completes tasks promptly to ensure they can take leave when necessary. This proactive approach helps them manage unexpected caregiving responsibilities without compromising their work commitments.

"Sometimes I get calls from home, Mother got sick, brought to the hospital, and now she is hospitalized I really felt it. If I say no, it's a lie. But I always think about step-ahead and quickly finishing the work assigned to the relevant day so I can take a day off and come home, even I can take a leave the next day if I have completed most of the task."

SG employees often delegate household responsibilities among family members to lighten their workload and ensure that everyone contributes to the family's well-being.

"We most of the time divide our tasks among the family members. If cannot take alms and go to the temple in the morning because I go to work, I tell my son to go instead".

"Sometimes I bring groceries or else I tell my mother to bring them."

"When we are cooking my husband helps me with the small tasks, if he is at home".

Participants provided instructions to family members, particularly ageing parents, on

how to manage household tasks during their absence. This proactive approach helped alleviate their worries and ensured that their dependents were cared for.

"Since I have a mother also, I give instructions to her on how to handle the house so I can manage the fear and pressure that comes from it."

Management of finance is necessary multigenerational families it is critical to cover many aspects of caregiving. Financial resources are equally important for providing comprehensive care such as medical expenses, daily living expenses, transportation, or home modifications. Effective caregiving often involves a combination of both financial and non-financial resources to ensure the well-being of the care recipient.

"I get my salary on the 10th of each month. My husband gets it on the 20th of each month. I manage my salary until it reaches the 20th and then we use my husband's salary for the rest of the month."

"When it comes to finances, my husband is the one who spends on my children's class fees and household expenses. He is the one who carries out more weight"

The participant demonstrates a balancing approach to managing her dual roles by effectively separating her responsibilities.

"When I am at work I completely forget about the house. That's how I balance. Sometimes, I have thought around my head if my son had come home from school. So, I take a call at lunchtime and relax my mind. If a worker going to talk about her problem, I can't say no I can't handle it now, I am also in the middle of a crisis, Come again at teatime or lunchtime. If I say that, maybe that person will not come to work again."

"When I come home, I forget about the work, because taking care of my family is

(Online)

also my responsibility as a housewife. After 5 o'clock my head is filled with children's homework. I think, now I balance it through experience."

The participant stated that the experience that she gained from working for several years helps her to balance responsibilities effectively. She prioritizes tasks based on their importance and urgency, ensuring that both work and family obligations are met.

The mental health of a person affects the overall well-being of that person as well as the people around them. Especially for a caregiver, the better the mental health the better the quality of care received to their loved one.

Occasionally expressing frustration sometimes can be helpful, though it has two sides, such as yelling at her husband about finding a job, and the participant releasing bottled-up emotions.

"Sometimes, I yell at my husband, like, 'Why are you not finding a job?'"

Choosing solitude over confrontation allows the participants to reflect and find calm. Because they recognise that yelling does not solve problems, and seems to opt the silence and alone time to process the feelings and recharge.

"Sometimes, I choose to stay silent because yelling does not resolve problems. Sometimes, I feel like I want to be alone."

One of the best ways of finding mental peace can be spiritual engagement and participants seem to find it helpful as well.

"Finding balance is hard sometimes. However, I go to the temple to worship the Bodhi tree and engage in religious activities."

"Sundays, I go to the temple and get a break and relief. That relief I gain from

performing rituals can make me survive through the week."

The participants find significant emotional and mental relief through regular visits to the temple on Sundays. These visits offer a much-needed break from daily stress and prepare them for the upcoming week.

3.External resources

As for the open codes created based on the interviews conducted using SG employees, they often rely on a variety of external resources to manage their dual roles as well. These resources can be broadly categorised into family support and community support. Each category plays a crucial role in helping these individuals balance their demanding responsibilities.

Family support: Most of the participants state the support they receive from the family to maintain their work-life balance as well as their day-to-day responsibilities.

"My elder son is waiting to go to campus, and he is doing a job right now so he can manage his expenses for his earnings. That is actually a relief."

This elder son's ability to manage his expenses by working while waiting to go to campus provides significant financial relief to the participant.

Further, the participants highlight the help they received from their mothers in managing household tasks and childcare. By preparing meals, engaging in household tasks, and taking care of the children, the mothers appear to significantly reduce the participant's workload.

"My mother works more than me when it comes to household work. Usually, my mother helps me prepare food, and when I wake up at four in the morning, Mother has already started cooking. Also, she prepared

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dinner when I came home from work in the evening.”

“My Mother is the one who Take care of my sones when I go to work. I leave home around 6.30 and come around 7. P.m.so I am not at the house all day. Mother brings my youngest son home after school and takes care of three of them during the day.”

Even though participants cannot expect the same support from in-laws as from their mothers, they also contribute significantly by looking after the children and helping with meal preparation

“Actually, when think about it, because of my mother-in-law I come to work otherwise I don't think I have money for a caregiver.”

"I can say that my mother-in-law looks after my children, it's the only thing I hope from her as well.”

“My mother-in-law takes care of my children, When I go for the morning shift, I have no time to completely prepare breakfast, I just cut some vegetables and run to work, rest of the meal is prepared by my mother-in-law. When I came home after work sometimes, she helped but I did not expect her help to prepare dinner.”

Community support: Some SG employees try to be part Village Development Society which provides the participants with a reliable support network in times of need. This community involvement offers both monetary and non-monetary support, ensuring that the participant has access to assistance during challenging times such as funerals

“We enrolled on the Village Service Society we have to pay a small amount of money once a month if something unexpected happens we can hope for their financial support it's a kind of investment.”

“I have enrolled in mortuary society. I can rely on them.”

neighbours' assistance step in to care for the children when needed is another external resource that comes across through discussion. This community support eliminates the need for daycare, saving money and providing a trusted environment for the children. Even the participant can rely on her neighbours, knowing that her children are in safe hands.

“When my mother visits my sisters, my neighbour is the one who takes care of my children, so I didn't feel the need for daycare and that also saved my money.”

“Other than that, my niece sometimes helps me with transport in the morning to bring my son to school.”

“In case I am not available, my sister will come and take care of them if they get sick. Also, my neighbour prepares meals and gives t to my children to take for lunch at school. Also, my husband helps me with taking children home after school, when he is at home.”

“Father of my son's friend gave transport to my son if any of us were not at the house. They do it as a help. I receive that kind of help from neighbours and friends.”

Participant also shows sign of borrowing money through friends. When it is essential for the well-being of the family. That is the financial support that they receive from the community to avoid financial strains that come from the feeling of not having money even doing a job.

“There are times I have borrowed some money from friends, but we try our best to manage money throughout the month.”

“Also, there are times I have borrowed some money from friends, but we try our best to manage money throughout the

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month. But sometimes there are special occasions come up like birthdays or weddings of close family members which we cannot ignore, so we go for borrowing options because after all these regular expenses, what we have left, is not enough to spend on those special occasions.”

The job demands Faced by the Sandwich Generation employees at work due to their caregiving responsibilities.

One of the aims of current research is to explore the job demands faced by the Sandwich Generation employees at work due to their caregiving responsibilities. Participants reported high psychological demands such as emotional demands, caregiving demands, and work demands. Additionally, three categories of emotional demands have been identified: guilt and emotional stress, mental exhaustion, and interpersonal strain. Three categories of caregiving demands have been identified: leave struggles, Work-Life imbalance, and Career-limitations. Three categories of work demand are job pressure, physical and logistical issues, and performance and commitment Pressure.

One of the new findings from this group highlights the significant impact of caregiving demands on employees. These demands create obstacles for individuals striving to achieve personal growth and professional development. Employees often find themselves taking frequent leave from work to fulfil their caregiving responsibilities, which affects not only their physical presence at work but also their overall focus on work. As a result, their ability to pursue opportunities for advancement and skill development is hindered, leading to a cycle where caregiving obligations take precedence over their career aspirations. Crawford et al. (2010) note two categories of job demands:

“challenges” and “hindrances. Both challenges and hindrances create demands on employees, but they have different effects. Challenges can foster growth and motivation, while hindrances can lead to stress and hinder progress (Van Den Broeck et al., 2010). Since the above-identified job demands cause negative emotions and interfere with employees’ work goal achievement and well-being it can be concluded that SG employees faced job hindrances.

The analysis highlights the significant work-life imbalances often faced by this demographic within various organisations. The JD-R model recognizes that job demands are not limited to the tasks and responsibilities within the workplace but also include the broader impact of these job demands on employees' lives. Work-life imbalance, as a job demand, requires employees to exert additional effort to manage both work and personal responsibilities. Many individuals in this group encounter conflicts between their personal and professional lives. Despite their efforts to balance these seemingly opposing aspects of their lives—work and family—achieving a sense of harmony between the two remains subtle.

Several significant findings regarding the emotional demands faced by employees highlight the burden they endure. For instance, many employees report feeling immense pressure to conceal their true feelings, often compelled to maintain a cheerful exterior even when grappling with personal sadness or frustration. This masking of emotions can create a heavy emotional toll, particularly when concerns about a child's safety at work or distractions stemming from an elderly parent's health arise. Such worries can lead to mistakes and warnings, as employees struggle to balance their caregiving responsibilities with their professional duties. The environment

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within a factory setting adds another layer of complexity to these emotional challenges. The loudness of noise and the relentless pressure present in such workplaces contribute significantly to emotional exhaustion, making it increasingly difficult to recharge, even in the sanctuary of their homes.

Caregivers, in particular, grapple with a profound sense of guilt and heightened responsibility regarding both their familial and professional obligations. Many express feelings of remorse for missing work events or commitments due to family issues. The relentless pressure to juggle multiple tasks simultaneously can be overwhelming, directly impacting an employee's ability to concentrate effectively. To address these overwhelming emotional demands, many employees find themselves yearning for solitude. However, achieving this much-needed peace can prove to be a formidable challenge, both within the fast-paced work environment and at home, ultimately worsening the emotional toll they experience. As Sudarji et al., (2022) mentioned Emotional stress includes factors such as Feeling guilty about needing to attend to children's needs while working, Cognitive stress includes forgetfulness and distraction also common to these findings. (Sudarji et al., 2022)

The job resources used by sandwich workers to manage their dual caregiving and work roles effectively

The current research aims to understand the resources used by sandwich workers to manage their dual caregiving and work roles effectively. This study findings reveals that three kinds of resources that sandwich workers use. These are job resources, internal resources, and external resources. Job resource reveals that SG employees find solutions for their demands

through the job while internal resources disclose, that they find answers through their personal and behavioural characteristics and external resources explain finding solutions using family and community.

Findings uncover that SG employees use internal and external resources to reduce demands they face at work rather than using job resources, due to a lack of support from the job. However, the employees continued to attend their jobs because of the financial supplement that they received via doing the job.

Noor & Isa (2020) also talked about the financial burden SG couples face when they have to care for parents with chronic illnesses alongside 3 to 4 children. However, Sri Lankan SG employees seem to carry financial burdens even without the patient in their household.

Also, we found that one participant used job resources, such as company transportation, to bring her child to school without the knowledge of the employer, highlighting the need for a support system for employees.

External resources expose an interesting finding regarding the interdependency of sandwich-generation family members. Traditional caregiving roles often suggest that caregivers are primarily responsible for taking care of their dependents, though the reality within families, those who are part of Sandwich Generation employees, seem to have more complex and interdependent relationships. Caregivers interact differently with their sons and mothers. This is especially noticeable in sandwich generation dynamics.

However, several researchers who talked about the benefits of being part of SG (Scharlach, 1994; Walker & Allen, 1991) identify this support that they receive,

(Online)

including childcare and help with household tasks.

JD-R model and sandwich generation

The findings of this study highlight the significant job demands faced by Sandwich Generation employees at work, which align with the job demands outlined in the JD-R model.

The original framework and some studies focus on emotional demands from client or colleague interactions (Duarte et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 2024). On the contrary, the current findings highlight the emotional demands of balancing caregiving responsibilities and work. However, both the current findings and the JD-R framework emphasise emotional exhaustion as a significant outcome of high job demands (Urban et al., 2025). The feeling of guilt and responsibility is consistent with findings in other studies and the JD-R framework, highlighting the emotional burden associated with caregiving and job responsibilities (Demerouti et al., 2001; Duarte et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 2024)

Both the above findings and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, highlight how high workload affects employee well-being. Studies show that being exposed to high job demands for a long time can lead to burnout and lower job satisfaction (Claes et al., 2023; Demerouti et al., 2001). When employees face too much work without enough support or resources, they may feel emotionally exhausted, cynical, and less effective in their jobs (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Some employees may also start to pull away from their work when under constant pressure and less support. This can show up as a lack of engagement in their tasks or

thoughts about retiring early. These signs of disengagement point to the long-term effects of not having enough resources. When employees feel overwhelmed and lack support, it can hurt their connection to the job. Over time, this leads to higher turnover and a negative impact on the workplace (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Utilizing the JD-R model in this study sheds light on how employees in the Sandwich Generation face job demands while trying to balance available resources. It offers a clear framework for understanding the complex demands these employees face while managing their work responsibilities. Additionally, organizations can manage workplace diversity by focusing not only on productivity, profitability, and quality but also on indicators such as employee happiness, well-being, and wellness. Ultimately, the way an organization treats its employees significantly impacts its bottom line. Thus, the JD-R model provides valuable insights into these dynamics.

Conclusion

Organizational diversity plays a critical role in shaping work environments, particularly in the context of employees who are part of the Sandwich generation. These employees juggle dual caregiving responsibilities for both their children and elderly parents while managing professional duties. Understanding this group's unique demands is crucial due to the growing prevalence of the Sandwich generation in diverse workplaces.

This research explores the significant work demands faced by Sandwich Generation employees and the resources that they use to achieve well-being. Previously, much of the research has focused on emotional demands from interactions with clients or colleagues. In contrast, the current findings

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bring attention to the emotional burdens associated with balancing caregiving with work obligations. Key findings from fourteen semi-structured interviews reveal high psychological demands, including emotional stress, caregiving demands, and work demands. One of the new findings highlighted the caregiving demands. It emphasizes caregiving responsibilities significantly hinder employees' ability to achieve personal and professional growth. The findings also show a lack of job resources, like support from employers, forcing these employees to depend more on their personal and external resources

Sandwich Generation employees. This can significantly reduce stress and improve the well-being of these employees while reducing turnover intentions.

The implications of this study of Sandwich Generation employees offer actionable insights for various stakeholders. The Employees in SG consideration of retiring early at 50 indicates a potential intention to leave the workforce sooner than planned. This turnover can be costly for the organization in terms of losing experienced employees and the need for recruitment and training of new staff. Such findings highlight the need to accept organisation diversity and the necessity of creating flexible work policies and support programs that accommodate the dual caregiving and work responsibilities of

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