

## The Sandwich Generation Phenomenon from the Perspective of Hadith: The Principle of al-Tawazun in Parent-Child Relations

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**Abstract:** The sandwich generation often faces an ethical dilemma between fulfilling filial responsibilities toward parents and meeting the needs of their own families. This study examines the sandwich generation phenomenon from the perspective of hadith by focusing on the roles of parents and children and the principle of *al-tawazun*, or balance, in regulating family responsibilities. Using library research and a hadith-based qualitative approach, the study draws on authoritative hadith collections, hadith commentaries, and contemporary literature on family responsibility and multigenerational care. The data were identified, classified, and analyzed through thematic content analysis to formulate normative patterns concerning maintenance, filial responsibility, financial capacity, and psychological burden. The study argues that the obligation of parents to provide maintenance for children has clear normative limits, particularly in relation to basic needs and protection, and must be adjusted to parents' financial capacity. Adult children who are able to work are not generally considered financially dependent on their parents, except under specific conditions of incapacity, such as illness or physical limitation. Conversely, children's responsibility toward parents must also be understood proportionately and should not be imposed beyond their objective capacity. The study proposes three analytical indicators for reading the sandwich generation phenomenon through *al-tawazun*: the priority of rights, the limits of financial capacity, and the limits of psychological burden.

**Keywords:** *Children, Parents, Sandwich Generation, Responsibility*

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### Introduction

Contemporary social, economic, and policy changes have created new pressures across different social groups, affecting individuals' emotional and moral conditions. These various pressures have indirectly encouraged shifts in family roles, in which other family members, particularly adult children, are increasingly expected to contribute to the fulfillment of family needs.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon is known as the sandwich generation, a condition in which an adult child becomes responsible for supporting personal needs, parents, and other family members. Although the term has existed since the 1980s, it has re-emerged in contemporary socio-economic contexts.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lalu Kesa Rahmatullah, Fauzan Zenrif, dan Supriyadi Supriyadi, "Analisis Kemandirian Keluarga Muda Terhadap Pemenuhan Ekonomi Keluarga Perspektif Hukum Perkawinan," *Al-Adl: Jurnal Hukum* 16, no. 1 (January, 2024): 19, <https://doi.org/10.31602/al-adl.v16i1.11022>.

<sup>2</sup> Supriatna et al., "Explaining Sandwich Generation Phenomena in the Modernity Dimension."

In this context, the sandwich generation phenomenon has become more pronounced alongside demographic shifts, particularly the growing elderly population and changing family structures, which place adult children in the position of supporting two generations at once. Modern economic instability, including rising living costs, limited social support, and inadequate family financial planning, further limits the capacity of adults in their productive years. This situation gives rise to the dual role of adult children as both financial providers and family caregivers.<sup>3</sup> This situation has direct implications for family structure and the distribution of roles within the household, particularly in carrying out responsibilities related to the fulfillment of basic needs. A hadith narrated by Abdullah ibn Umar describes the family as a structure in which the husband serves as the head or leader of the household and bears primary responsibility, while the wife also contributes to household management.<sup>4</sup>

Children, in turn, bear filial responsibilities toward their parents, particularly through care, respect, and devotion. This is reflected in the hadith narrated by Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As concerning a man who came to the Prophet Muhammad to pledge allegiance with the intention of migrating and participating in jihad. The Prophet did not permit him to do so and instead instructed him to return to his parents and serve them well. This hadith indicates that, in certain circumstances, devotion to parents occupies a highly significant position and may even take precedence over jihad, especially when parents still require attention, affection, and care from their children. It also affirms that seeking God's pleasure is not limited to major acts of worship such as jihad, but may also be realized through sincere service to one's parents.<sup>5</sup>

The sandwich generation phenomenon is often expressed through social media as a form of emotional release from the heavy responsibilities borne by children in meeting their own needs, their parents' needs, and the needs of other family members. At the same time, this role is also shaped by children's desire to ease the family burden so that their parents no longer have to struggle to meet household needs. This condition is generally triggered by various factors, such as elderly parents, retirement due to physically demanding work, family debt, and the presence of family members who still require educational support.<sup>6</sup>

Several previous studies have examined the growing sandwich generation phenomenon. The first is *Explaining Sandwich Generation Phenomena in the Modernity Dimension*. This study focuses on the sandwich generation within social and religious dimensions using questionnaires and interviews. However, its scope is limited to public awareness of the term sandwich generation and does not address theological foundations.<sup>7</sup> The second study, *Challenges of the Sandwich Generation: Stress and Coping Strategy of the Multigenerational Care*, focuses on the impacts and coping strategies of individuals who belong to the sandwich generation. Its limitation lies in its psychological and individual-oriented approach, as it does

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<sup>3</sup> Supriatna et al, "Explaining Sandwich Generation," 104.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn Isma'il Al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari* (Cairo: Al-Mathba'ah As-Salafiyah, 1403), 178.

<sup>5</sup> Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj Al-Naisaburi, *Shahih Muslim* (Riyadh: Dar Thaibah li Nasyri wa al-Tauzi', 2006), 1187.

<sup>6</sup> Shanty Sudarji, Hana Panggabean, dan Rustono Farady Marta, "Challenges of the Sandwich Generation: Stress and Coping Strategy of the Multigenerational Care," *Indigenous: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi* 7, no. 3 (2022): 267, <https://doi.org/10.23917/indigenous.v7i3.19433>.

<sup>7</sup> Supriatna et al, "Explaining Sandwich Generation," 102-4.

not establish normative boundaries from a religious perspective regarding the extent to which one is obligated to bear family responsibilities. The solutions offered are personal adaptations rather than an ethical framework grounded in Islamic values.<sup>8</sup>

The third study, *Sandwich Generation in Contemporary Indonesia: Determining Responsibility in Caring for Elderly Under Islamic Law and Positive Law*, is the closest to the present study because it refers to Islamic law. However, its approach is sociological and legal, rather than a thematic hadith analysis, or *maudhu'i*. Islamic law is used only as a general normative reference, without a deeper exploration of hadith texts and without formulating operational indicators that can be used to examine the sandwich generation phenomenon more concretely.<sup>9</sup> These studies share a general concern with the sandwich generation phenomenon, its causes, and the solutions offered. Yet none has specifically formulated the normative limits of parental and child responsibilities through thematic hadith analysis and translated them into an operational ethical framework. This study addresses that gap. By integrating the Prophet's hadith into the principle of *al-tawazun*, this study formulates three analytical indicators, namely the priority of rights, the limits of financial capacity, and the limits of psychological burden, as an ethical balance model for assessing the proportionality of sandwich generation responsibilities from an Islamic perspective.

Based on this background, the study formulates three research questions. First, what problems characterize the sandwich generation phenomenon in Indonesia? Second, how are the roles of parents and children understood from the perspective of hadith? Third, how can the principle of *al-tawazun*, or balance, be implemented in the context of the sandwich generation phenomenon? This study aims to analyze the problems of the sandwich generation phenomenon in Indonesia, examine the roles of parents and children from the perspective of hadith, particularly regarding maintenance rights, family responsibilities, and children's obligations to show devotion to parents, and formulate an operational ethical balance model based on the principle of *al-tawazun*.

## Method

This study is library-based research using an exploratory qualitative approach to provide an in-depth account of the sandwich generation phenomenon from the perspective of hadith and Islamic studies. This approach was selected because it allows flexibility in exploring meaning, understanding reality contextually, and interpreting social phenomena through the religious values and social constructions that surround them. The method does not focus solely on description, but also enables a critical examination of the relationship between hadith texts and contemporary social dynamics.

The data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from classical and modern Islamic literature, particularly authoritative hadith collections, hadith commentaries, and scholarly works related to the object of study. Secondary data were obtained from scholarly articles, academic journals, and previous studies relevant to the sandwich

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<sup>8</sup> Shanty Sudarji et al "Challenges of the Sandwich Generation," 264.

<sup>9</sup> Syufa'at, Syed Muhammad Saad Zaidi, dan Mutholaah, "Sandwich Generation in Contemporary Indonesia: Determining Responsibility in Caring for Elderly under Islamic Law and Positive Law," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 17, no. 2 (2023): 167, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v17i2.9371>.

generation phenomenon. All data were collected through documentation, which included literature tracing, source selection based on academic credibility, data grouping according to the focus of discussion, and systematic note-taking to support the analytical process.

Within the hadith approach, this study employed seven stages. First, hadith tracing was conducted using the keyword *anfaqta-hu 'ala ahlika* to identify narrations related to the obligation of providing maintenance in Islam. The phrase *haqqin haqqahu* was also used to identify the substance of matn related to determining priorities so that life may proceed in a balanced manner. Second, the main textual corpus was established. This classification referred to major hadith sources, including *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, and *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, with hadith selected according to the quality standards of sahih and hasan. Third, hadith selection was conducted through several forms of review, including *sanad* verification, which considered continuity, integrity, and precision of the transmitters, as well as matn analysis by examining the presence or absence of irregularity and hidden defects. Fourth, *takhrij* procedures and hadith grading were carried out. The assessment of hadith quality referred to the standards of *sahih* and *hasan* as established by classical hadith scholars.<sup>10</sup> Fifth, hadith commentaries were examined to verify and deepen contextual meaning. Sixth, the data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Seventh, thematic findings were drawn inductively from the results of the content analysis. Recurring normative patterns across the hadith corpus were grouped and formulated into analytical indicators. This process produced three main indicators as the operationalization of the principle of *al-tawazun*, namely the priority of rights, the limits of financial capacity, and the limits of psychological burden.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. The Problems of the Sandwich Generation

The term sandwich generation was introduced by Dorothy A. Miller, a professor at the University of Kentucky in the United States. Her study examined women around the age of 40 who were responsible for meeting the needs of both their own families and elderly parents.<sup>11</sup> The term “sandwich” draws on the image of two slices of bread: the upper layer represents parents, the lower layer represents other family members, and the filling pressed between them represents the individual who bears the needs of two generations while also supporting oneself. This condition is therefore called the sandwich generation.<sup>12</sup>

Several factors contribute to a person becoming part of the sandwich generation. The first is limited education and literacy in the field of economics. Economic education is often neglected, even though it is important to understand. Over time, economic conditions change, and everyday needs also shift.<sup>13</sup> In addition, reliance on a single job may expose individuals to risks such as wage reduction and mass layoffs, which can increase unemployment. Under these circumstances, the sandwich generation emerges to meet family needs in the absence of long-

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Syuhudi Ismail, *Metodologi Penelitian Hadis Nabi* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1992), 78.

<sup>11</sup> Syufa'at, Zaidi, dan Mutholaah, “Sandwich Generation in Contemporary”, 169.

<sup>12</sup> Siti Nurjanah et al., “Analisa Strategi Generasi Sandwich Dan Dampaknya Terhadap Gaya Hidup Chidfree,” *Bulletin of Community Engagement* 4, no. 3 (December, 2024): 70, <https://doi.org/10.51278/bce.v4i3.1447>.

<sup>13</sup> Indah Puji Rahayu dan Hastuti Rifayani, “Penerimaan Diri Pada Generasi Sandwich,” *Journal of Creative Student Research* 2, no. 2 (2024): 70, <https://doi.org/10.55606/jcsr-politama.v2i3.3966>.

term financial preparation.

The second factor is the high birth rate within families that is not balanced by adequate family conditions, including the fulfillment of basic needs, education, and health.<sup>14</sup> A deeply embedded social idea persists in some communities, namely that having many children brings more sustenance. This view suggests that the more children a family has, the more sustenance it will receive. If such thinking is not balanced with realistic considerations about survival in an increasingly complex era, it may generate future risks, including impaired child development, mental health problems, difficulty meeting basic needs, limited access to higher education, and the failure to secure child welfare.

The third factor is the growing elderly population, which is one of the drivers of the sandwich generation phenomenon. According to data issued by Statistics Indonesia, the number of elderly people is projected to continue increasing. In 2004, Indonesia ranked fourth among countries with an elderly population of approximately 7 percent, after China, India, and the United States. The latest statistical data in 2020 recorded that Indonesia's elderly population had reached 9.92 percent, or around 26 million people aged 60 years and above.<sup>15</sup> This increase is supported by improvements in education, health facilities, and welfare-supporting infrastructure, which have contributed to longer life expectancy and lower mortality. However, behind this demographic development are adult children living with elderly parents who often prefer that their parents no longer work because of declining productivity in old age. These children then assume responsibility for supporting their parents, other family members who were previously dependent on the parents, and themselves.

The fourth factor is increased mobility. Many workers seek better careers and therefore decide to leave their hometowns. This situation may create individuals who continue to bear responsibility for family needs from a distance. The fifth factor is the limitation of social security systems. Some countries provide pension systems and social security for older people, but these programs may not be sufficient to cover all their needs.<sup>16</sup> Other countries may lack such support altogether, causing children to become primary or secondary providers for their parents. This situation requires collaboration among local governments, central authorities, and communities to develop assistance programs equitably, particularly for the elderly, in order to support social welfare. The final factor is the persistence of social values that must be maintained. Traditional values concerning the obligation to care for parents are positive, but these social expectations may create emotional and financial pressure for younger generations who are expected to fulfill them.

In Indonesia, the sandwich generation phenomenon emerges from a combination of structural factors, such as economic conditions, demographic change, and social policy, and cultural factors, including family values and moral obligations toward parents. This situation places the productive generation in a position of bearing dual burdens, both for parents and for

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<sup>14</sup> Salamiah Sari Dewi, Amanah Surbakti, dan Atika Mentari Nataya Nasution, "Islamic Parenting in Sandwich Generation," *Psikis: Jurnal Psikologi Islami* 8, no. 2 (2022): 183, <https://doi.org/10.19109/psikis.v8i2.13865>.

<sup>15</sup> Nindya Riana Sari et al., *Statistik Penduduk Lanjut Usia* (Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020), vii.

<sup>16</sup> Hermawan et al., "Tantangan Dan Peluang Dalam Sistem Jaminan Sosial: Analisis Perbandingan Konsep Pembiayaan Dan Manajemen Jaminan Sosial Di Indonesia Dan Singapura."

the nuclear family. In Muslim communities, hadith becomes relevant because it provides a normative basis for the obligation to care for parents, while also affirming the principle of proportionality so that responsibility does not turn into injustice or excessive economic burden. The values contained in hadith may also function as moral guidance for strengthening financial literacy, family planning, and social solidarity amid the challenges faced by the sandwich generation.

Survey data reported by DataIndonesia.id involving 420 Generation Z respondents show that 73.38 percent of respondents felt guilty when they were unable to meet family needs, 40.29 percent experienced stress and burnout, and 13.67 percent felt easily fatigued to the point of illness. These three categories indicate that respondents experienced both physical and mental disturbances. Stress is one of the body's responses to continuous pressure, such as anxiety, overthinking, and neglect of personal health. If not properly managed, emotional pressure may affect the surrounding social environment. In addition, 66.19 percent of respondents were concerned about their own future, while 21.58 percent reported limitations in work and career development.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. The Roles of Parents and Children in the Family from the Perspective of Hadith

The family is an important structure that connects kinship among individuals. Terminologically, according to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, a family is a group of people living in one household who are dependents, relatives, or kin related by blood.<sup>18</sup> The birth of a child within a family represents a major trust for both parents, because they become the first link in the child's presence in the world. As the first educational institution, parents bear substantial responsibility for nurturing, caring for, protecting, and educating children. These four main components may be implemented by providing proper housing, nutritious food and drink, sufficient financial support, and a supportive educational environment. Therefore, the role of parents is central in fulfilling both material and non-material needs.<sup>19</sup>

Children are described as adornments of worldly life who have the right to protection and care with affection. In Islam, the existence of children occupies an important position, as they are regarded as successors of the *khalifah fi al-ard*, or stewards on earth. For this reason, Islam pays close attention to and regulates *tarbiyah al-awlad*, or child education. Because guidance and teaching are not simple tasks, children may become a source of reward for parents who direct them toward obedience and faith.<sup>20</sup> This is reflected in the Prophet's hadith, which states that guiding a child may carry a higher degree of virtue than giving charity.

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ سَمُرَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَأَنْ يُؤَدَّبَ الرَّجُلُ وَلَدَهُ خَيْرٌ لَهُ مِنْ أَنْ

<sup>17</sup> Nuryasman Mn dan Elizabeth Elizabeth, "Generasi Sandwich: Penyebab Stres Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Keputusan Keuangan," *Jurnal Ekonomi* 28, no. 1 (December, 2023): 22, <https://doi.org/10.24912/je.v28i1.1322>.

<sup>18</sup> Nur Hikmah Khairani, "Implementasi Kewajiban Anak Menafkahi Orang Tua Ditinjau Dari Hukum Islam (Studi Di Uptd Pelayanan Sosial Lansia Binjai Provinsi Sumatera Utara)" (Skripsi Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 2023), 15, <https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/33667/>.

<sup>19</sup> Tatta Herawati Daulae, "Kewajiban Orang Tua Terhadap Anak (Kajian Menurut Hadis)," *Jurnal Kajian Gender Dan Anak* 4, no. 2 (December, 2021): 97, <https://doi.org/10.24952/gender.v4i2.3338>.

<sup>20</sup> Thohirin, Muhid, dan Andris Nurita, "Peran Dan Tanggungjawab Orangtua Terhadap Pendidikan Anak Perspektif Hadits Nabi Riwayat Abu Dawud," *Jurnal Al-Qalam Jurnal Kajian Islam & Pendidikan* 15, no. 1 (2023): 42-43, <https://doi.org/10.47435/al-qalam.v15i1.1765>.

يَتَصَدَّقُ بِصَاعٍ<sup>21</sup>

Translation: From Jabir ibn Samurah, he said: The Messenger of Allah said, “For a man to teach discipline to his child is better for him than giving one sa‘ in charity.”

Parental care and teaching require a foundation oriented toward the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Since the family is the first institution, all forms of violence and other matters inappropriate for children must be avoided by parents.<sup>22</sup> To nurture an Islamic generation, character formation may be realized by providing good examples within the family environment. Strong moral education should also be accompanied by love, affection, and sufficient attention, all of which support parents’ success in guiding their children.

Islamic teachings provide a normative basis for the protection of children’s rights, so that they may obtain protection and proper growth within the family environment. These rights include a good identity, parental care, maintenance and later inheritance, education, freedom to express opinions, and the ability to make choices. All these rights constitute the moral obligations and responsibilities of parents, whose implementation has significant implications for the child’s future.<sup>23</sup> This responsibility is grounded in love and affection. Parents consciously bear the obligation to care for and guide children until a specified age. The fulfillment of family needs is closely related to economic capacity. This is connected to the father’s income and maintenance responsibilities as head of the family. This principle is reflected in Qur’an 2:233:

وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارُّ وَالِدَةُ الْوَالِدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَالِدِهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ... (٢٣٣)

Translation: The father is obliged to provide them with food and clothing in a proper manner. No soul is burdened beyond its capacity. A mother shall not be harmed because of her child, nor shall a father be harmed because of his child. The heir bears a similar responsibility.<sup>24</sup>

The Prophet’s statement regarding family maintenance is also found in *Sahih Muslim*:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: دِينَارٌ أَنْفَقْتَهُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَدِينَارٌ أَنْفَقْتَهُ فِي رَقَبَةٍ وَدِينَارٌ تَصَدَّقْتَ بِهِ عَلَى مِسْكِينٍ , وَدِينَارٌ أَنْفَقْتَهُ عَلَى أَهْلِكَ أَعْظَمُهَا أَجْرًا الَّذِي أَنْفَقْتَهُ عَلَى أَهْلِكَ<sup>25</sup>

Translation: From Abu Hurairah, he said: The Messenger of Allah said, “A dinar you spend in the path of Allah, a dinar you spend to free a slave, a dinar you give in charity to a poor person, and a dinar you spend on your family, the greatest in reward is the one you spend on your family.”

The term *nafaqat*, the plural of *nafaqah*, refers to everything spent or provided for family

<sup>21</sup> Muhammad ibn ‘Isa Al-Tirmidhi, *Al-Jami‘ Al-Kabir Li Al-Tirmizi* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma‘arif li al-Nasyri wa al-Tauzi‘, n.d.), 502.

<sup>22</sup> Moh Kamali dan Nawawi, “Pendidikan Keluarga Dalam Perspektif Islam,” *JISIP (Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan)* 7, no. 1 (2023): 418, <https://doi.org/10.58258/jisip.v7i1.4303>.

<sup>23</sup> Tarissa Eka Callysta Ramadhani, “Menjaga Keseimbangan Antara Kewajiban Orang Tua Dan Hak Anak Dalam Praktik Hukum Islam,” *Aisyah Journal of Intellectual Research in Islamic Studies* 1, no. 2 (Desember, 2023): 87, <https://doi.org/10.64834/bqfz7104>.

<sup>24</sup> Departemen Agama RI, *Al-Qur’an Dan Terjemahan* (Bandung: Cordoba Indonesia, 2016), 37.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Naisaburi, *Shahih Muslim*, 445.

needs. In Islamic legal usage, it denotes adequate and proper provision given by a person, including clothing, food, and housing. The fulfillment of secondary and tertiary needs is optional when the child genuinely needs such items and when they bring greater benefit than harm.<sup>26</sup>

In Islamic law, providing maintenance is part of the obligation of child care and is adjusted according to financial capacity. The objective is to ensure that children receive a proper standard of living from childhood until adulthood. Child care certainly requires substantial expense, and therefore the obligation to provide maintenance for children is assigned to the father as head of the family, through lawful means and in accordance with God's teachings.<sup>27</sup> The question of capacity in providing maintenance and God's assurance of relief for those striving to meet family needs are stated in Qur'an 65:7:

لِيُنْفِقَ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ وَمَن قَدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ لَا يُكْفِلُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا  
سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا ﴿٧﴾

Translation: Let the one who has abundance spend according to his abundance, and let the one whose provision is limited spend from what Allah has given him. Allah does not burden a soul except according to what He has given it. Allah will bring ease after hardship.<sup>28</sup>

As a reinforcement of the previous hadith, another narration recorded by Imam Muslim explains that maintenance for the family is mentioned first among other forms of spending, indicating that providing maintenance for the family is a priority.

عَنْ ثَوْبَانَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «أَفْضَلُ دِينَارٍ يُنْفِقُهُ الرَّجُلُ دِينَارًا يُنْفِقُهُ عَلَى عِيَالِهِ وَدِينَارًا يُنْفِقُهُ الرَّجُلُ عَلَى دَابَّتِهِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَدِينَارًا يُنْفِقُهُ عَلَى أَصْحَابِهِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ» قَالَ أَبُو قِلَابَةَ: "وَبَدَأَ بِالْعِيَالِ" ثُمَّ قَالَ أَبُو قِلَابَةَ: "وَأَيُّ رَجُلٍ أَعْظَمُ أَجْرًا مِنْ رَجُلٍ يُنْفِقُ عَلَى عِيَالٍ صَغَارٍ يَعْنِيهِمْ أَوْ يَنْفَعُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَيُعْنِيهِمْ"

Translation: From Thawban, he said: The Messenger of Allah said, "The best dinar a man spends is the dinar he spends on his dependents, the dinar he spends on his animal in the path of Allah, and the dinar he spends on his companions in the path of Allah." Abu Qilabah said, "He began with dependents." Then Abu Qilabah said, "What man has greater reward than a man who spends on young dependents, protects them, or through whom Allah benefits them and enriches them?"<sup>29</sup>

At the end of the hadith text, Abu Qilabah emphasizes that maintenance for the family is mentioned first. In this hadith, the Prophet places family maintenance among the obligations that must be fulfilled because of the marital relationship. Maintenance given because of kinship, charity, or maintaining family ties may be carried out after obligatory responsibilities have been fulfilled and is considered a recommended good deed.

<sup>26</sup> Wahbah Al-Zuhaili, *Tarjamah Fiqh Islam Wa Adillatuhu* terj. Abdul Hayyie al-Kattani (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2011), 194.

<sup>27</sup> Nyimas Lidya Pertiwi dan Cici Nur Sa'adah, "Hadhanah Dan Kewajiban Orang Tua Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam," *Syakhshiyah Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 2, no. 1 (2022): 55, <https://doi.org/10.32332/syakhshiyah.v2i1.4997>.

<sup>28</sup> Departemen Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahan*, 559.

<sup>29</sup> An-Naisa>bu>ri>, *S{ah}i>h} Muslim*, 444.

Three categories of children who must receive maintenance are mentioned in *Hasyiyah al-Bajuri*: children who are young and poor, children who are poor and weak, and children who are poor and not yet intellectually mature. Shaykh al-Bajuri adds that children who have obtained suitable employment are no longer entitled to maintenance. This is because one view categorizes children who are capable of working as financially independent, or *al-ghaniy*. An exception applies when a child who is capable of working is pursuing religious knowledge and is expected to attain virtue through that knowledge. If working would interfere with the pursuit of knowledge, then under such circumstances the child remains entitled to maintenance and should not be required to work.<sup>30</sup>

A mother plays an important role in fulfilling children's basic education, which affects the formation of traits, behavior, and patterns of thought in the future. Parental responsibility is not limited to material needs, but also includes the formation of noble character and the provision of adequate spiritual education and guidance, which are among the fundamental duties of every parent.<sup>31</sup> As the first educator, a mother provides instruction that forms the foundation of the child's character, while inherent genetic factors may also influence character development. In contrast, a father tends to play a vital role in meeting the family's financial needs. A proper understanding of each parent's role is important to ensure that family functions operate as they should.<sup>32</sup> Thus, appropriate family education contributes significantly to the formation of children's character. In addition to the fulfillment of basic needs as the responsibility of the head of the family, Islam provides guidance as an expression of children's devotion to parents. As figures who play an important role in a child's growth and development, parents deserve respect and kind treatment. One way for children to seek God's pleasure is by showing devotion to both parents. Filial devotion occupies a highly important position, as the command to be dutiful to parents is often paired with the command to worship Allah and not associate partners with Him.<sup>33</sup>

Every child has obligations and responsibilities toward parents. Devotion to parents may be expressed in various ways. First, children should maintain good relations with parents and avoid easily rejecting their wishes. In interaction, they should use polite speech without causing emotional hurt and remain humble even after achieving worldly success. Second, children should pray for parents who have passed away. Third, they should provide maintenance for parents in accordance with agreed-upon provisions. This is a proper form of reciprocity that parents deserve to receive from their children.<sup>34</sup> This is reflected in the hadith concerning the recommendation to give charity to family and close relatives:

عَنْ جَابِرٍ قَالَ: أَعْتَقَ رَجُلٌ مِنْ بَنِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنْ دُبَيْرٍ فَبَلَغَ ذَلِكَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

<sup>30</sup> Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Al-Bajuri, *Hasyiyah Al-Bajuri* (Jeddah: Dar Al-Minhaj, 2016), 639-40.

<sup>31</sup> Pebriani Lubis dan Andi Nova, "Hak Dan Kewajiban Orang Tua Terhadap Anaknya Dalam Hukum Keluarga Islami," *Interdisciplinary Explorations in Research Journal* 2, no. 3 (December, 2024): 1551, <https://doi.org/10.62976/ierj.v2i3.747>.

<sup>32</sup> Lubis dan Nova, "Hak Dan Kewajiban", 1553.

<sup>33</sup> Ahlmatul Khasanah, "Konsep Pendidikan Akhlak Dalam Berbakti Kepada Orang Tua Prespektif Al-Qur'an Surat Luqman Ayat 14," *Alphateach (Jurnal Profesi Kependidikan Dan Keguruan)* 2, no. 1 (2022): 6, <https://doi.org/10.32699/alphateach.v2i1.3371>.

<sup>34</sup> Muhammad Ahya, "Birr Al-Wālidain Perspektif Hadis: (Membaca Hadis Dalam Bingkai Al-Qur'an)" (Skripsi Universitas Islam Syarif Hidayatullah, 2018), 58-60.

فَقَالَ: «أَلَيْكَ مَالٌ غَيْرُهُ» فَقَالَ: لَا فَقَالَ: «مَنْ يَشْتَرِيهِ مِنِّي» فَأَشْتَرَاهُ نَعِيمٌ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْعَدَوِيُّ بِشَمَانِ مِائَةِ دِرْهَمٍ فَجَاءَ بِهَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَدَفَعَهَا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ: «أَبْدَأْ بِنَفْسِكَ فَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْهَا فَإِنْ فَضَلَ شَيْءٌ فَلِأَهْلِكَ فَإِنْ فَضَلَ عَنْ أَهْلِكَ شَيْءٌ فَلِذِي قَرَابَتِكَ فَإِنْ فَضَلَ عَنْ ذِي قَرَابَتِكَ شَيْءٌ فَهَكَذَا وَهَكَذَا» يَقُولُ: فَبَيْنَ يَدَيْكَ وَعَنْ يَمِينِكَ وَعَنْ شِمَالِكَ

Translation: From Jabir, he said: A man from Banu Uzrah intended to free a slave after his death. When this reached the Messenger of Allah, he said, “Do you have any property other than him?” The man replied, “No.” The Prophet said, “Who will buy him from me?” Nu‘aym ibn Abdullah al-Adawi bought him for eight hundred dirhams. The man then brought the money to the Messenger of Allah, who handed it back to him and said, “Begin with yourself and give charity to yourself. If anything remains, then give it to your family. If anything remains after your family, then give it to your relatives. If anything remains after your relatives, then give it here and there,” meaning to the poor in front of you, on your right, and on your left.<sup>35</sup>

Regarding children’s financial support for parents, this obligation applies when a child has reached maturity, has suitable employment, and is able to provide for oneself and one’s own family.<sup>36</sup> This financial capacity includes the fulfillment of one’s own basic needs and those of one’s spouse and children for a day and night. In *Kifayah al-Akhyar*, it is explained that if a child does not possess surplus wealth, then the child has no obligation to provide maintenance for both parents because of the child’s own financial constraint.<sup>37</sup>

This provision is generally applied to sons, while daughters are treated somewhat differently. The majority of jurists hold that daughters continue to receive maintenance from their parents until they marry. However, if a daughter considers herself capable of providing for herself, then the parents are no longer required to provide maintenance.<sup>38</sup> This position is reinforced by the Maliki school, which argues that children’s obligation to provide maintenance for parents is not fixed at a specific nominal amount. Rather, it depends on each child’s economic capacity and must not become burdensome to the point of leading to prohibited or criminal actions.<sup>39</sup> The obligation to provide maintenance for relatives may be carried out when three conditions are met. First, the relative receiving maintenance is in need, ill, elderly, or unable to work and earn wages. Second, the giver truly possesses sufficient wealth. Third, the giver belongs to the category of mahram relatives of the recipient. The amount of maintenance is limited to the fulfillment of basic needs. Such provision functions as a means of preventing hunger and prolonged poverty.<sup>40</sup>

### 3. The Principle of al-Tawazun, or Balanced Responsibility, in the Sandwich Generation

The principle of balance, or *al-tawazun*, derives from the word *al-wazn*, meaning

<sup>35</sup> Al-Naisaburi, *Shahih Muslim*, 446.

<sup>36</sup> M. Syaikhul Arif dan Mhd. Fakhurrahman Arif, “Nafkah Dan Problema Keluarga,” *Aainul Haq: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 2, no. 2 (2022): 57, <https://ejournal.anadwah.ac.id/index.php/ainulhaq/article/view/475>.

<sup>37</sup> Abu Bakr Muhammad Abdul Mu‘min, *Kifayah Al-Akhyar* (Damaskus: Dar Al-Khair, 1994), 438.

<sup>38</sup> Marwan, “Batas Usia Nafkah Anak Berdasarkan Maqasid Al-Syari‘Ah,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 13, no. 2 (2014): 240, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v13i2.74>.

<sup>39</sup> Fikry Maulana Maghribi, “Kewajiban Anak Menafkahi Orang Tua Perspektif Hukum Islam Dan Hukum Positif” (Skripsi Universitas Islam Negeri Prof. KH. Saifuddin Zuhri, 2018), 65.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn Qudamah, *Tarjamah Al-Mughni* (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2007), 601.

balance, and *al-mizan*, meaning a balancing instrument.<sup>41</sup> *Al-tawazun* may be defined as a moral and spiritual concept that emphasizes proportionality in thought, attitude, and action by considering all aspects of life in a balanced way, without excessive domination or neglect of any one side.<sup>42</sup> This concept proceeds from the view that life is a harmonious unity in which spiritual and material dimensions are interconnected, mutually supporting, and mutually meaningful.<sup>43</sup> In personal life, *al-tawazun* represents the effort to achieve an optimal balance among physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions. Thus, *al-tawazun* functions not only as an ethical principle, but also as a life orientation that directs individuals toward holistic well-being and comprehensive life satisfaction.<sup>44</sup>

The principle of *al-tawazun* is highly relevant to the sandwich generation phenomenon because individuals of productive age face dual responsibilities, namely providing for children while also supporting parents. This burden often generates economic and psychological pressure that may disrupt the balance between worldly responsibilities, personal needs, and spiritual obligations. Therefore, the principle of *al-tawazun* may be used as a framework for assessing whether the responsibilities being carried out remain within proportional limits or have exceeded an individual's capacity.

This principle is reflected in Salman al-Farisi's advice to Abu Darda' concerning the importance of setting priorities in life so that all responsibilities may proceed in balance, advice that was affirmed by the Prophet.<sup>45</sup> Fulfilling the rights of Allah as a servant, the rights of oneself, and the rights of one's family represents the moral message contained in this hadith. The Prophet reminded his community to position themselves proportionately. A person should not incline so heavily toward worldly affairs that obligations of worship are neglected, nor become so absorbed in worship that responsibilities toward oneself and one's family are ignored. For this reason, the Prophet opposed excessiveness and prohibited his followers from going beyond the limits taught by religion, especially in worship. Islam does not justify withdrawing from life and social relations, because Islam itself represents a middle path in matters of concept, creed, worship, and relations among human beings.<sup>46</sup>

This hadith may be operationalized, among other ways, through disciplined time management. Islamic teachings regard respect for time as part of moral and spiritual responsibility, because time is a trust for which one will be held accountable. For individuals positioned within the sandwich generation, time management becomes an important instrument for maintaining *al-tawazun*. Time management is therefore not merely a technical skill, but also a moral and spiritual obligation rooted in a religious understanding of time as a blessing that

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<sup>41</sup> Samsul Arifin, "The Implementation of At-Tawazun Counseling New Normal Era," *Konseling Religi: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Islam* 19, no. 1 (2021): 17, <https://doi.org/10.21043/kr.v12i1.8646>.

<sup>42</sup> Faisal Attamimi et al., *Studi Islam Moderat* (Bogor: Divdya Media Pustaka, 2025), 44.

<sup>43</sup> Mohammad Nu'man dan Junaedi, "The Ethic Of Spiritual And Material Balance (Tawāzun) In Classical Islam As A Solution To The Value Crisis Of Modern Education," *Jurnal Edusci* 3, no. 2 (2025): 168, <https://doi.org/10.62885/edusci.v3i2.953>.

<sup>44</sup> Maisarah Siregar dan Sulidar, "Wahbah Zuhaili's View of Tawazun Suroh Al-Jumu'ah Verses 9 -11 in Tafsir Al- Munir," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 8, no. 1 (2024): 4, <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v8i1.8009>.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari*, 50.

<sup>46</sup> Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Kalimat Fi Al-Wasatiyyah Al-Islamiyyah Wa Ma'alimuha* (Cairo: Dar al-Syuruq, 2011), 14-16.

must be used optimally.<sup>47</sup>

The principle of balanced rights affirmed in the preceding hadith becomes increasingly relevant when individuals face heavy economic responsibilities, as experienced by the sandwich generation. In this context, the Prophet's hadith concerning the obligation of maintenance according to one's capacity provides realistic limits so that economic responsibility does not turn into an excessive burden. The hadith on providing maintenance for the family according to ability shows that Islam establishes realistic boundaries in fulfilling economic responsibilities. Maintenance is obligatory, but it does not require fulfillment beyond an individual's capacity, thereby preventing excessive economic pressure.<sup>48</sup>

In the context of the sandwich generation, this hadith provides an important foundation: financial responsibility toward family members, including parents and children, is not demanded in a uniform amount, but according to each person's capacity. Thus, the burden of maintenance cannot be imposed beyond a person's economic ability. This principle of proportionality forms the basis of the financial capacity indicator within the *al-tawazun* framework, namely assessing whether the responsibility being carried out remains realistic or has turned into economic pressure that may produce imbalance. This principle is consistent with Qur'an 65:7, which instructs those with abundance to spend according to their means.<sup>49</sup> In addition to time management, financial management is also urgent in daily life, especially in the household. Islam provides guidance on proper wealth management through concepts such as zakat, charity, and gifts, which may help ease the financial burden of members of the sandwich generation.<sup>50</sup>

If the previous indicator emphasizes proportionality in the fulfillment of maintenance, the next concern is the importance of safeguarding oneself from excessive burden while carrying out responsibilities. As reflected in the Prophet's statement *inna al-din yusrun*, religion is ease. The Prophet explained the prohibition against making matters excessively difficult for oneself, because Islam is not intended to burden human beings. Its teachings correspond to human nature and capacity, whether in worship, social transactions, or life responsibilities. In this context, the hadith's emphasis on ease becomes relevant for assessing psychological limits in carrying out sandwich generation responsibilities.<sup>51</sup>

Normatively, Islamic law is built upon the principle of ease, or *raf' al-haraj*, meaning that religious obligations are established according to human capacity and are not intended to create physical or psychological harm.<sup>52</sup> This principle indicates that religion functions as an adaptive system for regulating life, not as a burden that exceeds human ability. From the perspective of modern psychology, prolonged pressure caused by unrealistic demands may

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<sup>47</sup> Muhammad Hizba Aulia dan Cucu Surahman, "Konsep Manajemen Waktu Dalam Tafsir Maudhu'i: Relevansi Terhadap Pendidikan Islam," *Kreatifitas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam* 14, no. 1 (2025): 20, <https://doi.org/10.46781/kreatifitas.v14i1.1552>.

<sup>48</sup> Sulaiman ibn Ahmad Al-Thabrani, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Taimiyyah, 1994), 292.

<sup>49</sup> Muhammad ibn Ahmad Al-Qurtubi, *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, 1964), 170.

<sup>50</sup> Fakhurrozi dan Hasan Hamzah Lubis, "The Qur'anic Perspective on Wealth and Its Management," *Jurnal Program Studi PGMI* 11, no. 4 (2024): 504.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari*, 16.

<sup>52</sup> Fahrudin Ali Sabri, "Konsep Raf' Al-Haraj Dalam Perspektif Ushul Fiqih," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 9, no. 1 (2014): 2, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-ihkam.v9i1.356>.

produce significant psychological consequences.<sup>53</sup> Such conditions may trigger burnout, depressive symptoms, prolonged guilt, and declining motivation. Accumulated long-term pressure may also lead individuals to withdraw from or abandon everyday routines. Thus, responsibility in Islam is proportional and takes into account the psychological limits of the individual.

Based on the preceding discussion, the principle of *al-tawazun* in this study is not understood merely as a moral value, but as a conceptual framework for examining the reality of the sandwich generation phenomenon. The hadith on the hierarchy of rights affirms that Allah, the self, and the family each possess rights that must be fulfilled proportionately. The hadith on maintenance according to capacity shows that economic responsibility in Islam has realistic limits adjusted to individual capacity. Meanwhile, the hadith emphasizing ease and prohibiting self-imposed hardship shows that Islamic teachings do not justify forms of responsibility that lead to physical or psychological harm.

On this basis, the principle of *al-tawazun* is translated into three analytical indicators. First, the priority of rights indicator is used to assess the balance in fulfilling the rights of Allah, the rights of the self, and the rights of the family in the life of individuals who belong to the sandwich generation. Second, the financial capacity limit indicator functions to assess whether maintenance obligations are carried out according to economic ability or have exceeded reasonable limits. Third, the psychological burden limit indicator is used to identify whether the responsibilities being carried out remain within the limits of mental resilience or instead create excessive pressure. These three indicators are used together to assess balance or imbalance in the responsibilities experienced within the sandwich generation phenomenon.

Through the analytical framework of *al-tawazun*, the sandwich generation phenomenon can be understood not merely as an individual problem, but as a dynamic of balanced responsibility that has economic and psychological limits. By operationalizing hadith into analytical indicators, this study offers a conceptual contribution by bridging normative Islamic values and the social realities faced by the sandwich generation in Indonesia.

## Conclusion

Based on the discussion, this study yields several key findings. First, from the perspective of hadith, parents' obligation to provide maintenance for children has clear limits and proportions, particularly in relation to the fulfillment of the basic needs of children who are not yet economically independent. Second, children's obligation to show devotion to parents is not materially absolute, but must be understood within the framework of the child's capacity and objective circumstances. Third, the principle of *al-tawazun* affirms the importance of balancing the fulfillment of the rights of Allah, the rights of the self, and the rights of the family in facing the responsibilities of the sandwich generation.

The implications of these findings suggest that a hadith-based approach grounded in the principle of *al-tawazun* may serve as a relevant ethical-religious foundation for responding to the dilemma of sandwich generation responsibilities, while also preventing excessive burdens that may generate economic and psychological pressure within the family. This study is limited

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<sup>53</sup> Sukaesi et al., "Manajemen Stres Dan Kesejahteraan Individu Dalam Perspektif Psikologi."

because it focuses on normative analysis based on hadith literature and does not yet involve empirical data. Future research is therefore encouraged to combine normative and empirical approaches in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how the principle of *al-tawazun* is implemented in the lived realities of the sandwich generation.

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