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Inevitable Necessity of Self-Care: A Phenomenological Exploration of Filipino Sandwich Generation

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Abstract. This research explored the concept of self-care of the Filipino sandwich generation. Amidst the challenges that come with the experiences of simultaneously providing care for two or more generations, this study focused on how the Filipino sandwich generation cares for themselves and whether or not being in this generation influences their concept of self-care. Employing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the study generated nine (9) themes which were Maintaining Physical Well-Being and Self-Care Practices; Balancing Responsibilities and Adaptation; Juggling Multiple Roles and Responsibilities; Building Social Engagement and Support Networks; Continuous Learning and Cognitive Stimulation; Nurturing Relationships with Family and Loved Ones; Spectrum of Emotional Expression; Fostering Familial Unity; and Interconnectedness of Self-Care and Care for Others. The study emphasized the importance of prioritizing self-care for care providers like the sandwich generation because no one could pour from an empty cup. Losing their health also meant losing their ability to take care of their loved ones. Thus, acknowledging the study's results, the researcher proposed the program/ workshop called SELF: Self-care Empowerment and Life-altering Skills for Filpino Sandwich Generation. This program highlights self-care strategies for the Filipino sandwich generation that aim to provide ways to manage the demands of simultaneous responsibilities and encourage prioritization of self-care among the Filipino sandwich generation. The program comprises not just a discussion on topics relative to this research's emergent themes, especially on self-care, but also includes activities for self-reflection and group interactions that benefit the intended participants of the said workshop.

Keywords: Filipino sandwich generation; Intergenerational solidarity; Self-care.

1.0 Introduction

"When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. Self-care isn't selfish. You cannot serve from an empty vessel." - Brownn

In this current world, no one will argue that selflessness is indeed an honorable character. Existing heroes, fictional or not, possess this attribute, and they are remembered for an instance when they did not put themselves first. It is viewed as a noble thing, and it is. However, because of how people value selflessness, taking care of oneself may sometimes start to look selfish. Meanwhile, selfishness may equal greediness and be viewed as disgraceful or diabolic. It is also noticeable how plenty of people choose to give themselves away for the sake of their loved ones. They value others more than themselves. Sometimes, it is forgotten that they also need to be at the receiving

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end of the care they give. After all, no matter how big of a heart they may have and are ready to give, they can never pour from an empty cup.

Self-care has been a worldwide concept since the 1950s. It was initially utilized in the medical field to help patients be involved in their care, as Project (2023) mentioned. Self-care is still a topic widely discussed today and acknowledged by different generations. For example, Generation Z, or Gen Z, is one of the most vocal about self-care. They were born from 1997 to 2012, and many are the primary social media users. They can make a trending topic through social media; many people can read about it online. The Corporate Wellness Magazine (2023) said that when it comes to the workplace, Gen Z puts high regard on prioritizing self-care, as they cater to the demands of their job. Making self-care a priority allows them to increase productivity, lower stress levels, improve mental health, and promote a positive work-life balance.

In the same way, the older generation, like the Millennials, or the generation born between 1981 and 1996, also have their concept of self-care. According to Nermoe (2022), health is the most important thing to millennials, next to family. Millennials actively pursue wellness daily. Compared to earlier generations, they are eating better and exercising more. They do not smoke as much. Instead of treating healthy eating as a diet with specific goals, nearly half saw it as a lifelong decision. Despite making less money than previous generations, millennials spend more on exercise and wellness and use apps and technology to stay healthy.

Similar to Gen Z, millennials also hold a high regard for work-life balance, according to Nermoe (2022). Because of that, they tend to jump from one job to another, a behavior often disliked by many. They want to be rewarded for their ideas and innovative thinking, and they emphasize education, higher purpose, and cooperation across organizational levels. The millennials also played a massive part in this study because the sandwich generation participants came from that generation. Though sandwich generation was a somewhat familiar topic, there was noticeably very little research published on this with Filipino participants despite how common sandwich generation is in the Philippines. Because Filipinos place the utmost value on close family ties, extended families have become customary, as De la Cruz (2022) and Ledesma (2023) mentioned. Notario (2023) also acknowledged the Filipino concept of "utang na loob," or the debt of gratitude. In Ledesma's (2023) article, it is mentioned that when it comes to familial ties, many became part of the sandwich generation because of the expectation that children should take care of their parents or elderly when they were older as a way of giving back for all the sacrifices they have made in raising them. In the Filipino culture, failing to do this is often viewed negatively. On the other hand, the Brighter Life Team (2023) emphasized the financial factors contributing to why many Filipinos become part of the sandwich generation.

This study explored the concept of self-care of the Filipino sandwich generation. Mental Health America (2023) said that one of the most common stressors of the sandwich generation was having little to no personal time. This consequently made it harder for them to prioritize self-care versus the other millennials who were not in the sandwich generation. Thus, as the participants of the study were generally known to be the people who spend so much time taking care of others, this research answered the question as to how they take care of themselves despite all their responsibilities as the sandwich generation.

Aside from that, Konstantinovsky (2021) recognized that self-care was vital for care providers like the sandwich generation because no one can pour from an empty cup. Losing their health also meant losing their ability to take care of their loved ones. Also, according to Kapil (2022), clinical validation supported that practicing self-care had the means to lessen or even eliminate anxiety and depression, as well as lower stress and increase happiness. It can aid in a person's ability to adjust to change, create solid relationships, and recover from setbacks and/or failures.

Moreover, this research explored the participants' means of caring for themselves, not just on the physical aspect of self-care but also on the mental, social, emotional, and spiritual facets. This study also discovered whether or not being in the sandwich generation influenced their way of taking care of themselves and highlighted the themes that emerged from their responses. Thus, comprehensive recommendations were provided for the individuals involved, especially for the Filipino families and the sandwich generation.

Seeing that the family-oriented nature of Filipinos was very commonly demonstrated in the local society, the struggles of the sandwich generation can be easily overlooked, especially regarding their self-care. Thus, aside from the previously mentioned objectives, this research also aimed to provide helpful information for Filipinos in the same situation, to let them know that they were not alone in their experiences and that there were ways to deal with life situations. Because they were also human beings who possessed the exact needs for love and care physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually, amidst their noble act for their loved ones, this study hoped to remind them that making sure they were cared for was as important.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A qualitative research design was utilized. Foley Library (2023) described this as research designed to comprehend people's views, experiences, behaviors, attitudes, and associations. It produced data that was not numerical. Instead, it examined reasons, viewpoints, and meaning. It tried to figure out the "why" and usually used historical records, discussions, interviews, observation, and so on, with a small sample size compared to quantitative research. A more specific qualitative approach used in this study was the phenomenological approach. This method aimed to understand and describe a phenomenon's universal essence, as defined by Ho and Limpaecher (2023). It paused the researchers' prior beliefs about the phenomenon to explore people's everyday experiences. Phenomenology research investigates lived events to learn more about how individuals interpret those experiences.

Furthermore, in gathering the necessary data regarding the self-care of the Filipino sandwich generation, the study's participants, this research employed a qualitative research design in the form of an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA). Ho et al. (2023) described this as qualitative research investigating how people interpret, perceive, or discuss their experiences. This method was deemed the most appropriate to use in achieving the purpose of this research, as it required specific characteristics for participants to qualify. Also, the data collected from them were about their experiences in particular aspects of their lives. The responses gathered through a semi-structured interview questionnaire underwent analysis through IPA to uncover the commonalities in the participants' responses. These were identified as the emerging themes leading to the essence of the Filipino sandwich generation's concept of self-care.

2.2 Research Locale

The province of Laguna was the chosen locale for this research, where the researcher was born and raised and is currently living and working. The study's aim in this province was fueled by the aspiration to help Filipino sandwich generation in the area through the information and results provided by the research. Also, as there are already very few studies on sandwich generation in the Philippines, they are even more lacking in specific areas, such as in a province like Laguna. Thus, there was no available information, as of the conduct of this research, about Laguna's data on sandwich-generation residents. The research's results and information hoped to be a way to start providing that non-existent data. Additionally, to complete this study within the limited time frame, the researcher was obliged to acquire qualified participants within easily reachable areas from where she was residing. Therefore, the province of Laguna was chosen as the research locale.

According to the PhilAltas (n.d.) Central Luzon was home to the Philippine province of Laguna, part of the CALABARZON region. The Municipality of Santa Cruz serves as its capital. The province was 1,928.23 square kilometers, or 744.49 square miles, in size on land. Three million three hundred eighty-two thousand one hundred ninety-three people were living there as of the 2020 Census. This comprised 20.88% of the CALABARZON region's total population, 5.44% of Luzon's total population, and 3.10% of the Philippines' total population. These numbers were used to calculate the population density, totaling 1,754 people per square kilometer or 4,543 people per square mile. Moreover, PhilAtlas (n.d.) indicated that the median age in the province was 25.98, which meant that one-half of Laguna's total population was younger than 26 years old. The other half was older than 26 years old. Furthermore, there was a youth dependency ratio of 42.8, while there was a ratio of 5.9 for old dependency and a total dependency ratio of 48.7.

2.3 Research Participants

Filipinos who belonged to the club sandwich generation residing in the Laguna province were the study's focus, as most of the sandwich generation consisted of middle-aged adults; according to Ochman (2022), this research aimed to select participants between the ages of 35 and 50. Also, it was by the age group of the club sandwich generation indicated in the different types of sandwich generation defined by Abaya (n.d., as cited in Hoyt, 2022), that is, 30s to 40s, and 50s to 60s. Moreover, participants should also care for their parents (aged 60 and above) while caring for their children (aged 18 and below). They can be residing in the same household or not.

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the Filipino sandwich generation selected for this study. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2022, the participants' identities were censored using pseudonyms such as "SG," which stands for sandwich generation, followed by their corresponding number sequence. "SG 1" was an example. The National Privacy Commission (2022) defined DPA as an act that seeks to uphold the freedom of information flow by encouraging creativity and advancement while safeguarding the fundamental human rights of privacy and communication.

Table 1. *Participants of the Study*

Participants	Gender	With spouse	Age	Residence	Years as Sandwich Generation	Age of Children	Age of Parents	Gender of Parents
SG 1	F	Y	45	Laguna	7 years	17	67	F
SG 2	F	Y	36	Laguna	12 years	12,10,7,4	66	F
SG 3	F	Y	42	Laguna	22 years	22,17,5	72, 70	M, F
SG 4	M	Y	35	Laguna	12 years	12	60,60	M, F
SG 5	M	Y	46	Laguna	6 years	23, 16	66,65	M, F
SG 6	F	Y	42	Laguna	18 years	18, 15, 6	74	F
SG 7	F	Y	35	Laguna	9 years	9	63,65	M, F
SG 8	F	Y	48	Laguna	23 years	23,16,11	78,73	M, F

2.4 Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this research was inspired by the principles conveyed in The Moral Theory and The Intergenerational Solidarity Theory. The semi-structured interview was conducted with the help of 10 guide questions validated by five (5) notable individuals deemed to have knowledge and expertise on the topic being discussed in this study. The validators were comprised of the institution's research director as well as a research data analyst. The remaining validators were comprised of registered psychologists and professors. Two (2) were from inside the institution, and one (1) was from an external. Additionally, Lawshe's (1975) content validation method was utilized to validate the study. Gilbert and Prion (2016, as cited in Tarcilo, 2022) explained that this method guarantees that an instrument assesses the domain it was designed to test.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

Before starting the actual collection of data and/or responses, it was assured that the participants fully understood the purpose of the procedure they were participating in and the kind of information they asked of them. This information was indicated in a letter to participants. An invitation for possible participants was shared online through the researcher's personal social media account on Facebook to reach out to qualified individuals willing to participate in the study. The invitation was made in the form of an online poster containing the set criteria, with a caption explaining the objectives of this research. Instructions on how they can join were also indicated in the post. The overall content and appearance of the invitation were checked and approved by the research adviser. The social media platform was chosen to get the attention of the researchers' Facebook contacts who possibly qualified with the criteria or might know someone who did. This method helped the invitation reach a wider audience and saved resources compared to doing it all face-to-face.

The individuals who reached out were verbally asked initial questions regarding the criteria and their actual situation with their families to ensure they were qualified and fit for the research. Written consent was also secured from the confirmed participants. Afterward, the research conducted face-to-face interviews at the participants' most convenient time and chosen venue. Materials such as a notebook, pen, and mobile phone were used as recording devices during the interview.

This research utilized a semi-structured questionnaire administered to the Filipino sandwich generation to gather the necessary data. According to George (2023), the semi-structured interview was a qualitative data collection technique that involved formulating interview questions within a pre-established theme framework. Nonetheless, the questions were not predetermined in terms of sequence or wording. The interview questions were generally open-ended, granting versatility. While it made it simple to compare responses amongst respondents, asking predetermined questions in a predetermined order might be restrictive. Less structure allows for comparisons between responders and can aid in identifying patterns. Each question discussed an idea with adherence to the central and corollary questions while staying aligned with the study's theoretical framework. Subject matter experts checked and validated the questionnaire regarding this study's primary focus and objective.

The interviews were audio recorded; some were video recorded, with the participants' confirmed consent, to document the conversation thoroughly without missing dialogues. This way, during the interview, it was easier to understand and discover the emerging themes more accurately than jotting down notes alone. This audio recording is only accessed by the researcher.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

In compliance with the guidelines in the Institutions Research Manual, this research acknowledged the ethical consideration of conducting research. It was assured that the participants fully understood the purpose of the procedure they were participating in, as well as the kind of information that was asked of them. The study's objectives were thoroughly explained to the respondents of the Filipino sandwich generation. Their real names were also not divulged, and nicknames were assigned to each. The participants also signed a document indicating their informed consent. Afterward, the collected information remained confidential to avoid breaching the Data Privacy Act (DPA) of 2022. The National Privacy Commission (2022) defines DPA as an act that seeks to uphold the freedom of information flow by encouraging creativity and advancement while safeguarding the fundamental human rights of privacy and communication.

It was considered that even researchers were human beings with personal beliefs and specific expectations for the study's results. However, the research needed to be objective in the presentation of the data gathered and the findings. Thus, to ensure that the study's conclusions were based on the participants' perspectives, the researcher employed reflexivity to identify personal prejudices and reduce their impact on the research process.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Taking into account the gathered qualitative information from the responses of Filipino sandwich generation who participated in this study, nine (9) themes emerged, namely: **Maintaining Physical Well-Being and Self-Care Practices; Balancing Responsibilities and Adaptation; Juggling Multiple Roles and Responsibilities; Building Social Engagement and Support Networks; Continuous Learning and Cognitive Stimulation; Nurturing Relationships with Family and Loved Ones; Spectrum of Emotional Expression; Fostering Familial Unity; and Interconnectedness of Self-Care and Care for Others.**

In the first theme, the Filipino sandwich generation conveyed their ways of caring for themselves even while managing the demands of their caregiving situation. Some have mentioned self-pampering, leisure shopping, exercising, social engagement, eating healthy, and sleeping on time, which are related to the different forms of self-care that involve the various aspects of an individual's overall health. Although the participants have provided diverse responses, mentioning activities they applied to keep themselves afloat, the most recurrent element was still the maintenance of a person's physical well-being, which included eating and sleeping on time, along with other self-care practices, as previously mentioned. Participant SG 1's response mentions, "*I take time at least once a week to have a spa massage to release the stress from work, everything, the environment. Then, sometimes, I go to the gym, and we have time with my officemates to relieve stress. So that is one way. Um, as much as possible, if I can go to bed earlier, sleep earlier, I do that to lessen my exhaustion*". Having this emergent theme served as proof that despite the busy schedules and the state of being a "sandwiched" caregiver, the participants were managing not to neglect themselves completely. However, they found time for self-care no matter how simple or grand; they did not let themselves be overlooked.

According to the literature, there were five self-care practices enumerated by Scott (2023), as follows: (1) physical self-care, which included a person's amount and quality of sleep and exercise, the kind of diet supply in the body, and how well a person attended to the rest of his/her physical needs; (2) social self-care, or dedicating time and energy in building relationships, emphasizing the importance of maintaining and fostering close relationships to one's well-being; (3) mental self-care, which included practicing activities that helps our minds stay sharp, like reading solving puzzles, and the likes. Practicing self-compassion or acceptance can also be a form of mental self-care; (4) spiritual self-care, which involves things that cultivate a greater sense of purpose, understanding, and/or connection to the world; and (5) emotional self-care, which encompasses activities that contribute in safely expressing, and recognizing one's feelings regularly.

On the other hand, the struggle of fractionating one's time for everyone, including oneself, was highlighted in the second theme. From the participants' responses, it was apparent how busy their daily routines were that they could hardly squeeze in an activity to have some actual self-care. Although their routine seemed very repetitive, there would still be some days when something unexpected might happen, and they had to adjust and/or adapt. Participant SG 7 even mentioned, "*I got used to my routine. In the morning, I take care of my child. Then, when my parents need me, I am also present. However, sometimes, I get tired. Of course, there are a few complaints. However, it is the love that prevails. That is how I feel. That is why I can also ensure that I do not neglect myself in all aspects, physical, emotional, and mental. I am fine.*" Hence, the theme emphasized how the Filipino sandwich generation had to balance their responsibilities and be creative about their self-care, which oftentimes was not happening in reality. There would be days when they could only give themselves the bare minimum or human necessities; however, they would still have a way to care for themselves and acknowledge that they had needs that had to be addressed.

According to Avalon Memory Care (2022), being in the Sandwich Generation can be stressful and may bring fatigue, despair, loneliness, and guilt. The Sandwich Generation might feel challenged in simultaneously taking responsibility for their children while managing their careers, other relationships, and personal time. On average, people who provide care for two generations, like their parents and their kids, lose 21 minutes of sleep every day and spend an extra 14 minutes doing errands and household chores. Maintaining such a demanding schedule requires setting aside time for self-care and wellness activities, yet many people neglect their health.

As for the third theme, it could be perceived that the sandwich generation already played many roles just by looking at the definition of the term. Examining the participant's responses, it was even more accentuated how hectic their lives could be in fulfilling these roles. The main challenges that arose were financial limitations and balancing simultaneous responsibilities, which resulted in a lack of time for oneself. This is apparent in the response of Participant SG 3, who said, "*The challenge is that .. like me. I am the only one that can attend to my mother. I do not have siblings that can help me. Sometimes, things can happen simultaneously, and it is difficult.*" Relatively, Participant SG 5 also mentioned his challenge when he said, "*I cannot buy things for myself because I prioritize the needs of my parents and my children.*" These challenges were also supported by related literature/studies, which proved that the problems were not first-time discoveries and might have been around for quite some time now. However, based on the responses, they still exist to this day and are experienced by the current sandwich generation, even Filipinos. The said challenges posed a massive factor in how the Filipino sandwich generation was able to provide care for themselves.

According to Mental Health America (2023), one of the most common stressors of the sandwich generation is having little to no personal time. As taking care of an aging parent while being a parent can be physically and emotionally taxing, it can be challenging to make time for anything else, including personal time. Both roles require a lot of emotion, effort, and coordination, so trying to manage both simultaneously can be particularly challenging. Aside from this, Ledesma (2023) also cited the economic conditions of most Filipino families. With poverty and inflation, many elderly people need financial support from their children, who are also adults and already have families of their own.

The fourth theme underlined the importance of having confidants for the Filipino sandwich generation. Their responses indicated the positive impact of receiving support from people outside the receivers of their care. Participant SG 5 pointed out how meeting with friends made him happy and helped him get his mind off his responsibilities at home. He responded, "*That is something that I cannot lose, the way I socialize with people despite*

having a responsibility to take care of. Although you cannot share your problems with them, since there is fun and happiness, sometimes it can ease the sadness." The same went for another participant who was the president of an organization. She said that it helped her mind ease off the duties at home, while it also did not hinder her from properly taking on her roles as the sandwich generation. Although some of them were not as outgoing as the others, all of them had some connection with people outside their families. They maintained a good relationship with these individuals, per their reports. The emergence of this theme emphasized the vital role of having social engagement as a form of self-care, even for the Filipino sandwich generation.

According to Moun (2024), social engagement is defined as an individual's activity level in their online and offline groups. Man was a social creature. Thus, he constantly tried to establish relationships with others. Furthermore, everyone wanted positive relationships with their loved ones to feel a sense of belonging. People who engage with others frequently receive emotional support from people. In general, it would be critical to minimize feelings of isolation in the larger society—all of these assist in reducing stress, anxiety, and sadness.

In addition, the fifth theme brought about the vital role of keeping the mind sharp. Despite how taxing it may sound, related studies and literature have supported how exercising the mind was also a form of self-care. Some participants did this by doing actual mind activities such as reading, while others interacted with other people and counted that as a way to keep the mind going. The mentioned activities may vary in form, but they all concern how the Filipino sandwich generation can care about this aspect. However, their other activities might not be as frequent and consistent. One participant even cited a situation where she made a mistake and turned that into a learning experience. Additionally, even leisure time and relaxation can be part of learning and keeping the mind sharp as per their responses. Participant SG 1 shared, "*I like to read. Novels and books. What I am after is the vocabulary which I need for work. Also, when I see a new word, I would google it and learn. Because, in a way, it helps when you learn something new from time to time."*

Furthermore, in the listed benefits of lifelong learning by Norwood (2023), it was said that continued learning was important in maintaining one's intellect fresh and brain healthy. This applied to people of varying ages, including the older and younger ones. Constant mental work can increase pleasure, minimize fear responses, and promote optimism. Although it was not a guaranteed protection against illnesses, the healthy habits it fostered can lead to a higher quality of life. Additionally, it went without saying that when someone starts to grasp something they did not before, they feel accomplished. This generally leads to an increase in overall self-confidence.

Relative to the sixth theme, it underscored the massive role of family and loved ones. There might be some irony that the Filipino sandwich generation may experience exhaustion due to the demands of caring for two generations. However, their relationship with them can also be their source of fulfillment and satisfaction. This process fell under spiritual self-care as it tapped into the concept of self-purpose. The emergence of this theme as a means of self-care demonstrated the considerable impact family can have on the lives of the Filipino sandwich generation, even in the concept of self-care. Most responses linked fulfillment to how they could provide for their family and loved ones. The participants mentioned that their sense of purpose can be felt when they are doing this caregiving and when they are doing it successfully. An example is the response from Participant SG 7, who said, "*When I see my parents happy, that is it. That is all. No matter how tired I am, then, when I see them happy, that is enough for me. I feel like I did something right*." She further said, "No matter how tired I am*, when I see them happy, that is enough for me. I feel like I did something right."*

Ledesma (2023) supported Filipinos' family-orientedness. In an article published in the Mindanao Journal, she mentioned that Filipinos have close family ties. Therefore, it was unsurprising to see Filipinos of multiple generations living in one household, having the strong urge to support parents and children even though some may not be able to afford it anymore.

The seventh theme involved emotions and how they could be expressed, especially to the family. The Filipino sandwich generation delivered contradicting responses on this topic, although one was more dominant. Only two participants mentioned being comfortable and open to expressing their emotions to their family, whether positive or negative. The rest of the participants chose not to show their negative emotions or their exhaustion to their families for most of the time and mentioned it being difficult to express. Most of them reasoned it was to avoid

being a burden and show consideration to the feelings of those around them, especially their families. The materialization of this theme reminded the researcher of the Filipino nature of being cheerful and jolly no matter the circumstances. Showing negative emotions was not exactly something most Filipinos were comfortable with; instead, it can be more familiar to "laugh it off." This behavior of concealing one's feelings was also evident in the responses that led to the emergence of this theme. Participant SG 3 said during the interview, "*Maybe to my eldest child. I can share my feelings because she is the older one among them. However, to my father and mother, I do not let them feel that I am struggling or that I am getting tired. I do not complain to them. I keep it to myself. I do not want them to stress about it. I also do not want them to feel what I feel.*"

Research by Jang et al. (2019) studied persons in their 50s to 70s who care for several family members, including children and elderly parents or relatives, were examined in connection to their emotional tiredness and the mediating effects of self-care. Results showed that care obligations among older sandwich generations substantially impact emotional weariness and that emotional exhaustion was mediated by self-care in their study. Thus, focusing on self-care may help caregivers over 50 avoid emotional exhaustion.

As for the eighth theme, the family-orientedness of the Filipinos played a part in its emergence. Aside from the culture, the participants' responses indicated that as an existent sandwich generation, the family gets to experience everything together and better understand each other across generations, resulting in a stronger bond and familial unity. Although there might be challenges along the way, the responses highlighted how it helped keep the family relationship tight and with solidarity. Participant SG 3 shared, "*It helps in a way. Our togetherness, there is no problem; we look at it positively because we are all together. As a family, we can help each other. We support each other. Also, my children are close to their grandparents. Because they all grew up in their presence.*" Apart from that, some of the responses also mentioned how the situation was an opportunity to impart values to the younger generation, as they witnessed how to love and care for parents and the older generation for the family. Participant SG 7 mentioned, "*It helps make the family's relationship more intact. Everyone can feel what each other is going through in the family. It tightens the relationship of the family when it is like this. It also has a positive impact on my child. Because he can see, "Ah, this is the kind of love you must have for your parents – a perfect example to my child. You will not be a burden. However, it will come naturally when you love them and respect your parents. It is not forced. You will do it of your own will. Like that. I think, for me, the solidarity is there.*" It posed a beautiful reminder for the researcher of Filipino values that should only be passed on to the next generations.

Delving into the ninth and last theme highlighted the very significance of self-care for the Filipino sandwich generation. The theme displayed how self-care indirectly influences how participants provide care for their families and loved ones. All participants' responses pointed to one direction: prioritizing self-care was important for a person's well-being. When asked about the importance of self-care, Participant SG 1 mentioned, "*Yes. Because when you neglect yourself, you will also be neglecting them. Moreover, as for me, as much as possible, I can do that's best for them. So, in order to fulfill that, I need to be in the best condition. That is when self-care comes in. I need time for myself.*" Similarly, Participant SG 8 put it this way, "*Yes. Because if you do not care for yourself, you will not have anything to give them. How can you say you love others if you cannot love yourself? Love yourself first before you give it to somebody else. That is why your love and care for yourself is important. When you put yourself first, it does not make you selfish. Because if I neglect myself, what help can I give?*" Being part of the sandwich generation, most have emphasized that taking care of the self is not selfish but also a form of caring for others. Because no one can pour from an empty cup; nobody can give what they do not have. Thus, caring for other people would be difficult, if not impossible, if the caregiver was not taking care of themselves. However, despite their expressing their thoughts on the importance of self-care, it was noticeable how, in their everyday lives, self-care was not as normalized as their routine.

Perimeter Healthcare (2021) cited that self-care motivated people to nurture an affirmative relationship with themselves to share warmth and positive sensations with other people. When providing enough effort and attention to one's well-being, it was not selfishness but being considerate of other people's needs. Because people cannot give what they do not have to themselves. In order to become the best version of themselves for the people around them, they are reviving themselves. The restored vitality and excitement that people radiate affect everyone around them.

4.0 Conclusion

The study emphasized the importance of prioritizing self-care for care providers like the sandwich generation because no one could pour from an empty cup. Losing their health also meant losing their ability to take care of their loved ones. To support that further, Perimeter Healthcare (2021) cited that self-care motivated people to nurture an affirmative relationship with themselves to share warmth and positive sensations with others. When providing enough effort and attention to one's well-being, it was not selfishness but being considerate of other people's needs. Because people cannot give what they do not have to themselves. In order to become the best version of themselves for the people around them, they are reviving themselves. The restored vitality and excitement that people radiate affect everyone around them. Thus, these findings inspired the creation of a proposed program called SELF: Self-care Empowerment, and Life-altering Skills for Filipino Sandwich Generation, which highlighted self-care strategies for the Filipino sandwich generation that aimed to provide ways to manage the demands of the simultaneous responsibilities as well as to encourage prioritization of self-care among the Filipino sandwich generation.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

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