




Social Media, Psychosocial Factors, and Gender Identity Formation in the Sandwich Generation: Implications for Gender Equality and Sustainable Development in Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

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gender identity, social media, sandwich generation, gender equality, sustainable development, SDG 5, social support

This study examines how psychosocial and environmental factors shape gender identity within the sandwich generation in Indonesia, with particular attention to the mediating role of social media. Positioned within the broader agenda of gender equality under Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), the research addresses a demographic group that simultaneously carries intergenerational responsibilities while navigating evolving social norms. A survey was conducted among 437 individuals aged 30–45 in Jakarta and Surabaya. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed to analyse the relationships among self-esteem, social anxiety, peer influence, social support, and social media use in shaping gender identity. The results indicate that peer influence is the strongest predictor, followed by social media engagement, self-esteem, and perceived social support. Social media plays a significant mediating role, reinforcing both positive identity formation and exposure to normative pressures. The findings highlight that gender identity formation in this group cannot be understood solely as an individual psychological process, but rather as a socially embedded phenomenon shaped by digital interaction and relational contexts. From a sustainable development perspective, the results suggest that policy interventions aimed at gender equality should extend beyond traditional institutional approaches to include digital environments and community-based support systems. By situating gender identity within a sustainability framework, this study contributes to a more integrated understanding of how social, technological, and interpersonal dynamics interact in shaping inclusive and resilient societies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian government continues to strive for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5, which aims to promote gender equality, becoming increasingly challenging due to the high level of social stereotypes and cultural factors that are still strong in Indonesia. Issues concerning women and girls are the main theme of current gender equality campaigns, often without holistically addressing individual and societal perceptions of gender. Consequently, increasing awareness of gender diversity and the emergence of human rights campaigns continue to shape how gender identity is viewed. Building a strong sense of self and addressing gender-based inequalities are important aspects of personal development [1], especially when concerns about social judgment continue to exist, especially among the younger generation. The biggest challenge in meeting gender equality goals in Indonesia and many other developing countries is the unique culture and society, especially the sandwich generation. The generation

that is part of individuals in their 30s and 40s has 2 generations of responsibilities, namely their parents and their own children. The sandwich generation has increased social pressures and responsibilities compared to other generations; these pressures often have a significant impact on gender identity and roles. Traditional gender roles in Indonesia are still very strong, where women in the sandwich generation are forced to balance professional responsibilities, maintain family continuity, and social demands from society, which can influence the way they view and express their gender identity.

The topic of adolescent psychosocial has one of the core discussions regarding the issue of gender identity; this issue becomes increasingly complicated for the sandwich generation, who have more roles and greater responsibilities at the same time. The need to adjust to societal expectations and social demands, accompanied by a more progressive awareness and understanding of gender equality, creates tension that affects psychological well-being. This phenomenon not only concerns their own gender and social

identity but also the development of their children's gender identity and the expectations of their parents. According to Erikson [2], psychological well-being must prioritize the formation of personal identity as a whole. A clear sense of identity can overcome social confusion, isolation, and the increased risk of psychosocial problems, including antisocial behavior, gender-based violence, depression, substance abuse, and suicidal tendencies. This problem is very prominent in the sandwich generation, especially in Indonesia, where people are trapped between traditional norms and modern pressures, which have the potential to hinder their cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Previous studies have discussed the relationship of these psychosocial issues with various factors, such as self-perception, self-confidence, social media engagement, social anxiety, peer influence, and self-awareness [3, 4]. High and conservative family and societal demands are often present in Indonesia, and these psychosocial factors play an important role in shaping the sandwich generation in how they view and express their gender identity. Gender identity is often used interchangeably with terms, such as sexual orientation, gender role, gender schemas, and gender preference. It is broadly defined as a person's deep sense of identifying as male, female, or another gender (e.g., genderqueer, non-binary), regardless of their assigned sex at birth or primary and secondary sex characteristics [5]. Bauer [6] also described gender identity as an individual's self-perception of being male, female, or another gender, without necessarily linking it to their biological sex. Wood and Eagly [7] defined gender identity as a complex set of beliefs and motivations that shape a person's sense of belonging and alignment with a particular gender group. In line with Wood and Eagly's [7] definition, this study conceptualizes gender identity rather than sexual orientation, but as a psychological and social construct that reflects one's thoughts and feelings about their gender category and a fundamental sense of acceptance and belonging to that gender [4, 8, 9]. That is, an individual's preferences for and engagement in multiple socially informed tasks in relation to a preferred gender group.

Self-esteem is commonly understood as an individual's perception of their own worth and value, which can vary from low to high [10]. Self-esteem is the perception that an individual forms regarding their own value, influenced by emotions such as success, disappointment, satisfaction, embarrassment, and beliefs regarding their role or performance in various life situations. The assessment of self-esteem can create either a positive or a negative psychological climate. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) [10] is frequently used to gauge self-esteem, primarily capturing an individual's overall feelings of self-acceptance [10]. Over the past 40 years, self-esteem has garnered significant attention in social and psychological research. It is generally associated with positive attitudes and beneficial outcomes, while low self-esteem is often linked to personal, emotional, and social difficulties [11]. Westaway et al. [12] discovered a correlation between high self-esteem and intellectual abilities, physical appearance, and social competence. Most studies examining the link between self-esteem and gender identity have concentrated on comparing the self-esteem levels of males and females, often categorizing them as either high or low, with females generally reporting lower self-esteem than males [13-15]. However, Bhattacharya and Shukla [16] found a reversal of this trend, with females exhibiting higher self-esteem than males. Despite its importance, the relationship between self-

esteem and gender identity remains understudied, especially concerning emotional connections, acceptance, and sense of belonging to a preferred gender group. However, a study by van den Brink et al. [17] revealed that individuals who accept their gender identity tend to have higher self-esteem.

Social anxiety is another psychological factor that can influence youth's gender identity. SA is defined as a persistent fear of being negatively evaluated in social situations due to one's behavior. It is also characterized by a fear of social situations, driven by the fear of rejection and humiliation [18]. Social discrimination is considered to be one of the mechanisms through which individuals experience social anxiety, often leading to discomfort in social settings. Research examining the relationship between social anxiety and gender identity is limited, though a few pertinent studies have found a significant association between social anxiety and gender differences, with females more likely to exhibit social anxiety symptoms (SAS) than males. Individuals with social anxiety have lower levels of psychosocial functioning [19]. Highly socially anxious women perceive their gender identity as less feminine and more masculine, predominantly in social tasks. Another study noted that gender role identification has a significant effect on social anxiety [20].

In this study, peer influence was considered another social factor that can shape the gender identity of young people. The role of peer influence in adolescent and youth socialization and identity formation has been well documented in research endeavors, often with negative consequences [21, 22]. Peer influence occurs when an individual is affected by peers of a similar age. Another scholarly perspective on peer influence is that it serves as a prominent source of socialization [21], with peers acting as social influencers seeking social and group approval according to Normative Social Theory [23]. Previous studies have established the significant impact of peer influence on various outcomes and endogenous variables. For example, Stevenson [24] found a strong correlation between peer influence and likelihood of committing another crime. Rambaran et al. [25] revealed that peer influence can increase the risk of truancy among secondary school students. Other studies indicate the importance of peer influence in relation to social media and gender identity [22, 26, 27]. Similarly, Halimi et al. [28] revealed that peer influence is linked with gender acceptance. In other words, young individuals feel accepted by their peers when the gender norms of masculinity and femininity align. Thus, peer influence is a crucial factor that affects gender identity.

Social support has consistently been associated with several positive constructs, including psychological well-being, resilience, high self-esteem, motivation, and quality of life [29, 30]. It is described as both tangible and intangible resources perceived as accessible and available to an individual from significant others, friends, or family [31, 32]. Akosile et al. [33] conceptualized social support as a vital resource that enables individuals to mitigate stress and enhance their overall well-being, encompassing physical, emotional, and psychological aspects [34]. Social support plays a pivotal role in shaping gender identity by providing essential resources for emotional, physical, mental and social functioning. It is typically classified into four categories: appraisal, emotional, informational, and instrumental [35], all of which contribute to the development of gender identity. Difficulty in identifying oneself, especially gender identity and social rejection, are often caused by weak social support [36]. There is a relationship between social support and gender identity, which

findings explain that both can improve psychological well-being [36]. Currently, research on these two relationships is still very limited, especially in generational studies. This study found a strong relationship between social support and mental health [37, 38].

This study is based on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) which is adopted as the main theory. This selection is based on the fact that SCT can explain the complexity experienced by the sandwich generation from a social, psychological, and technological perspective, especially in forming gender identity. SCT can explain the process by which individuals determine gender identity based on a broad network of social influences such as social media, family dynamics, peers, and other social systems [3]. SCT is primarily able to present a view of observational learning. This theory allows people to get prepared for risky situations without engaging into them by way of learning from the modelling influences. The overall function of SCT fits the complex roles of the sandwich generation.

SCT considers that social change occurs through self-development and gender relation shaping within an interrelated system. Currently, the sandwich generation is not simply a receiver of societal and psychological impacts but rather a contributor in the transformation of their own gender identity and societal change. Their unique position in life, often between the demands of a conservative society and a sense of modernity, allows them to influence the perception of gender roles in both their children and parents. This study is based on the important factors mentioned above, namely self-esteem, social support, peer influence, social anxiety, and social media use, which can shape the gender identity of the sandwich generation. In this phenomenon, self-esteem can be influenced by their ability to meet the demands of their various roles, while social support can come from their own peer networks and extended families. Peer influence remains relevant, because they interact with peers who face similar responsibilities and challenges. Social media provides an additional layer, offering a platform for connection and self-expression but also presents the potential for pressure to conform.

The main reason behind this research is to answer the broader efforts in achieving gender equality, especially fulfilling SDG 5 in Indonesia, with a focus on the sandwich generation. The main purpose of this research is to fill the research gap because the lack of this issue discussed in certain generations, especially in Indonesia, will fill the gap in understanding the dynamics of this phenomenon because failure to address it can hinder progress towards gender equality and contribute to increasing gender-based challenges. The sandwich generation, which cannot be separated from the current digital world that shifts its behavior, especially in expressing itself, can be a challenge in itself in this issue. Social media can be an important factor in achieving the goals of the sandwich generation's psychological well-being and can provide space for strengthening and exploring gender roles. However, the pressure to manage multiple responsibilities can lead to challenges such as social role confusion, isolation, and stress, which emphasizes the importance of understanding how this generation forms and expresses their gender identity.

1.1 Research model

This research model formulates personal factors consisting of self-esteem and social anxiety, and environmental factors

consisting of peer influence and social support. Social media is a novelty that can fill the research gap as a mediator of the overall influence of the construct on gender identity (see Figure 1).

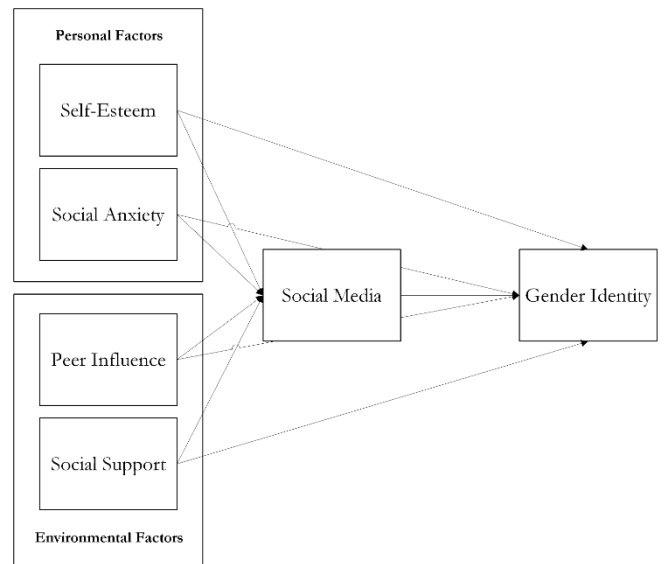


Figure 1. Research model

The complexity of the proposed model clarifies the direct and indirect roles of personal and environmental factors in gender identity. Social media as a mediator offers opportunities for self-expression while also having the potential to reinforce existing gender stereotypes, highlighting its dual role in the process of gender identity formation in the sandwich generation.

2. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was used in this study by collecting data from sandwich generations in Indonesia. A predictive analysis design was used using structural equation modelling (SEM) for the relationship in this research model. SEM was chosen because it uses many constructs and items, making the model complex.

2.1 Population and sample

This study had a population consisting of respondents in Indonesia who were included in the sandwich generation. This generation is generally in their 30s to 40s, has worked, married, has children, and has parents who they need to care for their well-being. The research sample was taken from two major cities in Indonesia: Jakarta and Surabaya. These cities were chosen because they have diverse socioeconomic environments. This study used simple random sampling to ensure that each individual in the population had an equal chance of being selected. The sample size was determined using G*Power software to ensure adequate statistical power for SEM. In total, 437 individuals from the sandwich generation were randomly selected. The gender distribution was 27.1% male, 69.4% female, 2.9% non-binary/other, and 0.6% unspecified. The higher proportion of women is in line with societal observations that women often take on more caregiving roles in this generation, which has the potential to affect their gender identity and psychological well-being.

2.2 Instruments

The instrument used in this study was tested to understand various psychosocial perceptions related to gender identity in

the sandwich generation in Indonesia. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: Part A, which collected demographic details such as age, gender, and employment status, and Part B, which focused on psychosocial factors (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of instruments used

Instrument	Construct Measured	Source	No. of Items	Scale	Example Items/Dimensions
Multidimensional Gender Identity Scale (MGIS)	Gender Identity (4 Dimensions: Gender Typicality, Gender Contentedness, Felt Pressure for Gender Conformity, Intergroup Bias)	[39]	30	5-point Likert (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	“I feel like I belong to my gender group.”
Technology Use Questionnaire (TUQ)	Social Media Usage Frequency	[40]	Varies by platform	5-point Likert (Never – Almost Constantly)	“How often do you use Instagram?”
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)	Self-Esteem	[10]	5 (from original 10)	4-point Likert (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	“I feel that I have a number of good qualities.”
Peer Influence Scale	Perceived Peer Pressure	[41]	8	5-point Likert (Never – Almost Always)	“My friends pressure me to do certain things.”
Social Anxiety Symptoms (SAS) Scale	Social Anxiety	[42]	18	5-point Likert (Not at All – Extremely)	“I worry about being embarrassed in front of others.”
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	Perceived Social Support (from Family, Friends, Significant Others)	[32]	12	7-point Likert (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	“I have a special person who is a source of comfort.”

Gender identity was measured using the Multidimensional Gender Identity Scale (MGIS) by Egan and Perry [39], which provides a comprehensive evaluation of gender identity through four dimensions: Gender Typicality, Gender Contentedness, Felt Pressure for Gender Conformity, and Intergroup Bias. Social media usage was measured using the Technology Use Questionnaire (TUQ) used to assess respondents' use of social media. Self-esteem was measured using the RSES, one of the most widely used self-esteem measurement tools. The peer influence construct was measured using the Peer Influence Scale adapted from Santor et al. [41], which measures the extent to which participants felt pressured by their peers to conform to certain behaviors. Social Anxiety was measured using the SAS scale by La Greca and Lopez [42]. This instrument captures the intensity of the social anxiety experienced by respondents. Social support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) which evaluates the level of

emotional, physical, and social support received by respondents from family, friends, and other important people.

2.3 Ethical considerations

This study adhered to the Declaration of Helsinki and complied with the ethical guidelines for individuals, samples, and data collection involved in each research procedure. Prior to administering the questionnaire, the researchers instructed the respondents to carefully review the written informed consent, elucidate the purpose of the study, and explain that the data would be utilized solely for research purposes and that all participant information would remain confidential. All respondents were duly informed and voluntarily participated in the questionnaire.

2.4 Data analysis

Table 2. SEM model fit indices and thresholds

Fit Index	Description	Acceptable Threshold	Source	Interpretation
Chi-square (χ^2)	A measure of model fit, comparing the observed data to the expected model output	$\chi^2/df < 3.0$	[43]	Lower values indicate a better fit, but sensitive to sample size
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	Compares the fit of the proposed model to an independent model	≥ 0.90	[44]	Values closer to 1 indicate a better fit
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	Compares model complexity with goodness of fit	≥ 0.90	[45]	Values closer to 1 indicate a better fit, penalizes model complexity
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	Indicates how well the model reproduces the data	≥ 0.90	[46]	Higher values suggest a better fit
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI)	Adjusts the GFI based on the degrees of freedom	≥ 0.90	[46]	Similar to GFI but adjusted for model complexity
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	Estimates the model's approximation error per degree of freedom	≤ 0.08	[47]	Values ≤ 0.05 indicate a close fit, ≤ 0.08 is reasonable

This study uses descriptive and inferential statistics, particularly SEM. Regression analysis was also performed to estimate the direct relationship between variables, and IBM AMOS 26.0 was used for correlation analysis. SEM is often used in social sciences to evaluate models that have many constructs and items, such as the model of this study. This method can also measure the fit index, which provides an overview of how well the model is viewed from processed data. These indices include Chi-square (χ^2), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

Table 2 summarizes the key fit indices used to assess the adequacy of the SEM model. Each index serves a specific purpose of evaluating how well the proposed model fits the observed data. Using a combination of these SEM fit indices provides a thorough assessment of how well the model fits data. In this study, indices such as CFI, TLI, and GFI suggest the adequacy of the model, whereas RMSEA offers additional insight into the model's error approximation. Together, these indices help to confirm whether the proposed model provides a meaningful representation of the relationships between the variables under investigation.

3. RESULT

3.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 3 provides an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of sandwich generation in two major cities:

Table 3. Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	118	27.1%
	Female	303	69.4%
	Non-binary	13	2.9%
	Not specified	3	0.6%
Age	30-35 years	95	21.7%
	36-40 years	262	60.0%
	41-45 years	80	18.3%
Employment Status	Full-time employed	197	45.1%
	Part-time employed	102	23.3%
	Self-employed	68	15.6%
	Unemployed/Household caregiver	70	16.0%

3.2 Model fit evaluation

Table 4 shows the fit model adjusted for the data used in this study. The GFI is very important in determining the suitability of a model, especially in studies on complex models such as those in this study.

The χ^2/df result of 17,260 showed a value higher than the maximum expected limit value (≤ 0.05), indicating a poor fit of the model. In addition, a Significance Probability (p-value) of 0.000, which is smaller than the expected limit ($p > 0.05$), also indicates an inadequate fit. However, several other indices showed positive results. The GFI and Normed Fit Index (NFI), each with a value of 0.995, as well as the CFI with the same value, were all above the cutoff value of 0.90. This indicated a good model fit according to these indices. In addition, the TLI also shows adequate results, with a value of 0.925, which is higher than the minimum required limit (≥ 0.90). However, the RMSEA is 0.120, which is higher than the recommended limit

Jakarta and Surabaya. The data below explains key categories, such as gender, age, and employment status.

Most participants were female, accounting for 303 respondents (69.4%), whereas 118 were male (27.1%). A smaller proportion, 13 participants (2.9%), identified as non-binary, and 3 respondents (0.6%) did not specify their gender. This gender distribution reflects the typical composition of the sandwich generation in Indonesia, where women often take on more caregiving roles and balance responsibilities at home and in their careers. The underrepresentation of non-binary individuals and those who did not specify their gender may reflect broader societal norms in Indonesia, where traditional gender roles are more commonly accepted and gender diversity is less openly discussed. Analysis of the age distribution revealed that the largest group of participants fell within the 36-40 years age bracket, comprising 262 respondents (60%). This age range is characteristic of the sandwich generation, where individuals are likely to manage multiple responsibilities, such as caring for aging parents and raising children. The sample also included participants aged 30-35 years range (95 respondents, 21.7%) and those aged 41-45 years (80 respondents, 18.3%). This spread illustrates the diversity within the sandwich generation, capturing different stages of life in which the balance of caregiving duties may vary. A significant portion of the sample was employed full-time with 197 participants (45.1%), indicating that many were juggling professional commitments alongside caregiving roles. This is followed by those who are part-time employed (102 respondents, 23.3%) and self-employed (68 respondents, 15.6%), suggesting a mix of employment situations.

($\leq 0.08 - 0.10$), indicating that this model has a poor fit in this regard.

Table 4. Measurement model fit

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut-off Value	Results Obtained	Interpretation
χ^2/df	≤ 0.05	17.260	Poor Fit
Significance Probability (p-value)	$p > 0.05$	0.000	Poor Fit
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	≥ 0.90	0.995	Good Fit
Root Mean Square Error of Approx. (RMSEA)	$\leq 0.08 - 0.10$	0.120	Poor Fit
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	≥ 0.90	0.995	Good Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.925	Good Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.995	Good Fit

3.3 Regression and coefficients analysis

The regression results in Table 5 provide a clear understanding of the impact of various psychosocial factors on social support use and gender identity. The coefficients indicate the strength and significance of these relationships, which are critical for drawing meaningful conclusions regarding the influence of self-esteem, peer influence, social anxiety, and social support on gender identity.

Table 5 presents the predictive capabilities of psychosocial factors. The model indicated that self-esteem had a statistically significant but minimal impact on social media use ($\beta = 0.053$, $p < 0.001$). By contrast, peer influence had a substantial and significant effect on social media ($\beta = 0.556$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, social anxiety ($\beta = 0.155$, $p < 0.001$) and social support ($\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.001$) were significant predictors of social media use. Similarly, social media ($\beta = 0.179$, $p < 0.001$) and peer influence significantly predicted gender identity. ($\beta = 0.227$, $p < 0.001$), self-esteem ($\beta = 0.177$, $p < 0.001$), and

social support ($\beta = 0.104$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the table illustrates the collective contribution of all the factors to both social media use and gender identity. It was estimated that the predictors of social media accounted for 70.5 percent of the variance ($R^2 = .705$), while gender identity accounted for 27.9 percent ($R^2 = .279$). In other words, the factors outside the model explained 29.5 percent of the variation in social media use and 72.1 percent of the variation in gender identity. Figure 1 depicts the predictive relationship between psychosocial factors and gender identity, mediated by social media use. All psychosocial factors showed positive and statistically significant correlations with social media use. Peer influence had the strongest correlation ($r = .56$; $p < 0.05$), followed by social support ($r = .24$; $p < 0.05$), social anxiety ($r = .14$; $p < 0.05$), and self-esteem ($r = .05$; $p < 0.05$). However, when considering the moderating role of social media in predicting gender identity, a positive and significant relationship accounted for 18 percent. This suggests that youths' gender identity depends on their use of social media.

Table 5. Standardized regression weights

Variables	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-Value	Standardized Coefficient (β)	R ²
Social media <--- Self-esteem	0.029	0.012	2.441	0.015	0.053	
Social media <--- Peer influence	0.613	0.025	24.829	< 0.001	0.556	
Social media <--- Social anxiety	0.124	0.015	8.527	< 0.001	0.155	
Social media <--- Social support	0.240	0.021	11.167	< 0.001	0.240	0.705
Gender identity <--- Social media	0.381	0.091	4.195	< 0.001	0.179	
Gender identity <--- Peer influence	0.532	0.097	5.507	< 0.001	0.227	
Gender identity <--- Self-esteem	0.206	0.038	5.468	< 0.001	0.177	
Gender identity <--- Social support	0.219	0.071	3.087	0.002	0.104	0.348

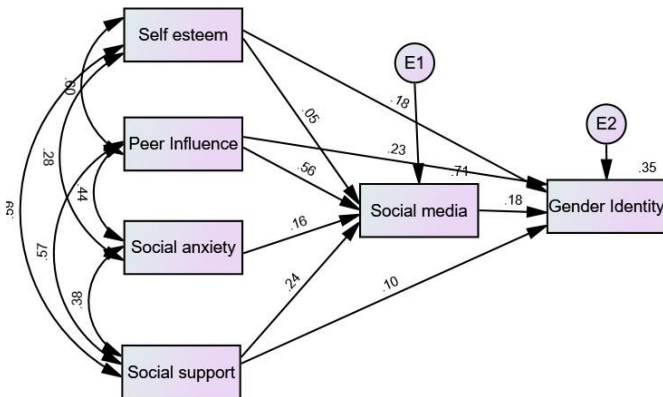


Figure 2. AMOS output

The model (see Figure 2) explains 70.5% of the variance in social support use and 27.9% of the variance in gender identity, which suggests that other external factors not included in the model might contribute to the development of gender identity among Indonesian youths. These could include cultural norms, family values, or religious influences, which are particularly relevant in the Indonesian context. This comprehensive analysis offers a clear view of the relationships between key variables, underscoring the importance of both social support and psychosocial factors in shaping gender identity.

4. DISCUSSION

This finding supports SCT, which explains that peer influence is one of the important factors in the formation of gender identity. SCT highlights the role of individuals that are

influenced by their social environment. The complexity of influence is always experienced by the sandwich generation. This is because peers have responsibilities and social pressures that are similar. As well, in other aspects they are also the influencers in their families, they become role models for their children, and as responsible for their parents. This two-way influence makes peer relationships important in the formation of gender identity. In Indonesian culture, which emphasizes the values of collectivism and social harmony, the desire to be accepted by and to be validated by peer groups becomes more and more important. This is supported by previous studies which also highlight the importance of peer relationships in the formation of gender identity [21, 22].

Social media usage and self-esteem are equal in predicting gender identity. It could be inferred that the role of social networking sites is to surround the sandwich generation as a medium for self-expression. The existence of social media can be seen to channel as a channel for the sandwich generation to express their gender identity, which is not necessarily limited by still conservative family members. This is also supported by the research of Flores and Antunes [48]. Most of the Indonesian people who still adhere to the conservative gender orders makes it unable to use social media to express their gender identity for the sandwich generation.

The sandwich generation perceives self-esteem to be one of their important “stuffs” regarded to their effective multitasking/role balancing. The self-esteem of the members of the sandwich generation could be influenced by the conservative societal expectations related to their generation. Women of the sandwich generation in Indonesia become promptly affected by the current phenomenon, as many of them feel urged to comply with their social obligations besides managing their careers and caring for their parents. Self-

esteem is also able to influence gender identity, as the results prove that the higher the self-esteem, the more positive/confidant tendency of own gender recognition.

This is consistent with the results of previous research studies, as McKay et al. [13] and Lim [14] reported the variability of self-esteem depending on the gender. Social support has a direct effect on gender identity, which also enforces the significance of the above-mentioned construct in the sandwich generation. The dialogue of the representatives of the sandwich generation with others may vary, as the representatives have social support from different origins, e.g., relatives, friends, and social media. According to Kaptan et al. [36], social support vastly influences the difficulties connected with the expression of gender identity characteristics. The sandwich generation currently lives “multi-roles”; thus, social media serves as a powerful instrument for facilitating self-expression of human beings. The phenomenon of social media presence has its benefits and drawbacks, as, on the one hand, the influence of social media can work for the reinforcement of peer influence, self-esteem, and social anxiety geared to gender identity. However, on the other hand, creating safe, gender-friendly, and supportive communities/ online spaces can enhance the empowerment of SDG 5 achievement, gender equality.

5. CONCLUSION

This study established that key variables that determine positive gender identity include self-esteem, social anxiety, social support, peer influence and use of social media. This generation is in a unique position as they have to balance demands to fulfil family responsibilities with those of looking out for personal professional and social refine responsibilities. It is evident that interventions that guarantee gender equality must take specific aim at this psychosocial variable. For example, it has become apparent that this intervention must also be grounded on the social media as aspect of their need for improvement in the light of maintaining positive gender identity and psychological satisfaction. This generation view social media as their territory where they can express their gender identity responsibly and positively. Efforts to achieve SDG 5 must include strategies that engage sandwich generation by increasing self-esteem, encouraging peer support, and creating a social media environment that supports positive identity formation. The government in Indonesia and policymakers can consider the determinants of gender identity in the sandwich generation because it will impact the two generations, both above and below, so that the achievement of psychological well-being of the sandwich generation can improve positive emotions and mental health for many generations in Indonesia.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Nurcholis Sunuyeko: Conceptualization, data analysis, original draft preparation.

Muhammad Eid Balbaa: Methodology, statistical analysis, manuscript review.

Indry Aristianto Pradipta: Literature review, instrument development, result interpretation.

Aulia Luqman Aziz: Study design, demographic analysis, manuscript editing.

Petra Heidler: Global context contribution, discussion, implications writing.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This study adhered to the Declaration of Helsinki and complied with the ethical guidelines for individuals, samples, and data collection involved in each research procedure.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Prior to administering the questionnaire, the researchers instructed the respondents to carefully review the written informed consent, elucidate the purpose of the study, and explain that the data would be utilized solely for research purposes and that all participant information would remain confidential.

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