



## The concept of livelihood according to Wahbah az-Zuhaili in Tafsir al-Munir and its relevance in the context of the Sandwich Generation

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### Abstract

*Many people in contemporary society are “trapped” between two obligations that, in turn, trigger economic and psychological stress: supporting their nuclear family on the one hand, and supporting their unproductive parents on the other. This study examines the concept of sustenance according to Wahbah Az-Zuhali in Tafsir al-Munir, and its correlation with the social phenomenon of the sandwich generation. A thematic approach is used to explore the meaning of the verses about sustenance contained in Surah al-Baqarah: 215 and Surah An-Nisaa’: 34. Wahbah Az-Zuhali emphasizes that sustenance is a sharia obligation oriented towards justice and proportionality. This qualitative descriptive study focuses on Wahbah Az-Zuhali’s thoughts on who should provide sustenance and its correlation within the context of the Sandwich Generation. An inductive analysis of the Tafsir al-Munir literature illustrates that the concept of sustenance is highly relevant to the conditions of the Sandwich Generation, particularly in emphasizing the principles of social capability and responsibility. The command to sustenance needs to be understood flexibly and contextually to remain aligned with Qur’anic values and address the challenges of the times.*

**Keywords:** Livelihood, Al Munir’s Interpretation, Sandwich Generation

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustenance in the Quran occupies a fundamental position, given its role as the foundation for achieving balance and harmony in the household. Essentially, sustenance is not only understood as fulfilling material needs, but also contains profound spiritual and social dimensions. The obligation to provide sustenance, from an Islamic perspective, falls primarily on those who are able, particularly husbands, to support their wives and children. Sustenance is given with full sincerity. Sustenance not only brings blessings but also serves as a manifestation of obedience to Islamic law and a form of devotion to Allah Swt.<sup>1</sup>

The Qur’an emphasizes the position of men as leaders of the family (qawwām), which implies the responsibility for protection and provision of sustenance. Men’s physical and financial superiority logically underpins the obligation to provide sustenance, while also affirming the principle of justice in the distribution of roles. The Islamic values of filial piety (*birr al-wālidayn*) teach that the responsibility for sustenance extends beyond the immediate family to elderly parents. Sustenance conceptually



establishes intergenerational relationships that demand a balance between rights and obligations within the broader family structure.<sup>2</sup>

Wahbah az-Zuhaili in his *Tafsir al-Munir* states that the obligation to provide financial support is not restrictive, but rather encompasses various dependents, including parents and close relatives. *Surah al-Baqarah*: 215 emphasizes that almsgiving must come from good wealth (*thayyib*) and be given with sincere intentions, so that it has a positive impact on both the giver and the recipient. More than just a material obligation, providing financial support serves as an instrument for purifying the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) and strengthening social ties. Livelihood is not only an indicator of financial independence but also reflects the moral integrity and spiritual depth of a Muslim.

The sandwich generation is a contextual condition of contemporary society that brings new complexities to the implementation of the concept of livelihood. The sandwich generation faces a dual obligation: to provide for their own families and to provide for their parents who have entered their non-productive age. This dual situation is often experienced by the lower-middle class, who are vulnerable to economic pressures and difficulties in future planning. The concept of livelihood needs to be understood contextually to address the challenges of the times without neglecting the principles of justice, humanity, and Islamic values. This study explores the relevance of the concept of livelihood in the Qur'an, formulated by Wahbah az-Zuhaili in *Tafsir al-Munir*, to provide a proportional solution to the problems faced by the sandwich generation regarding the obligation to provide livelihood.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Wahbah az-Zuhaili

Wahbah bin Mustafa az-Zuhaili (1932–2015) was one of the leading contemporary ulama figures who had a significant influence on the development of Islamic scholarship, especially in the fields of fiqh and tafsir. az-Zuhaili was born in Deir Atiah Village, Syria, into a religious family environment with a strong Islamic tradition. az-Zuhaili's basic education was heavily influenced by his father, a hafiz of the Koran, who instilled the basics of Islamic knowledge from an early age. az-Zuhaili continued his education at a higher level in Damascus before moving to Egypt to study at al-Azhar University and Ain Shams University, Cairo. az-Zuhaili's brilliant academic achievements can be seen from his ability to achieve three bachelor's degrees in a period of five years, followed by the completion of master's and doctoral studies at Cairo University with summa cum laude honors.<sup>3</sup>

az-Zuhaili's academic career was marked by various strategic roles, ranging from lecturer, dean, to professor at the University of Damascus. az-Zuhaili was also active as a visiting lecturer at various leading universities worldwide and was involved in various international Islamic law and fatwa institutions. az-Zuhaili's reputation as a multidisciplinary thinker is reflected in the number of scholarly works he produced, covering the fields of tafsir, fiqh, and contemporary Islamic thought.<sup>4</sup>

### *Tafsir al-Munir*

*Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah wa al-Manhaj* is Wahbah az-Zuhaili's magnum opus which consists of 16 volumes and is recognized as one of the most comprehensive works of modern tafsir. *Tafsir al-Munir* was written using a systematic methodology, combining classical (*tafsir bi al-ma'tsur*) and contemporary (*tafsir bi al-*

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*ra'y*) approaches, and integrating discussions of faith, sharia and ethical values in a holistic manner. *Tafsir al-Munir* has the advantage of presenting an in-depth interpretation, but still easy to understand, by avoiding israiliyyat stories and less substantive polemics.

*Tafsir al-Munir* seeks to bridge the understanding of the Qur'anic text with the contemporary context, including the inclusion of scientific analysis relevant to modern issues. az-Zuhaili emphasizes the importance of interpretation oriented towards practical solutions. *Tafsir al-Munir* serves not only as an academic reference but also as an applicable guide for Muslims. The primary motivation for compiling *Tafsir al-Munir* was a strong desire to present an enlightening work (*munir*), capable of guiding readers in understanding the messages of the Qur'an as a whole in actualizing their daily lives. *Tafsir al-Munir* is not only a valuable scholarly legacy but also makes a real contribution to enriching the treasure trove of Qur'anic interpretation in the modern era.<sup>5</sup>

### ***The concept of sustenance according to Tafsir al-Munir***

*Tafsir al-Munir* identifies seven forms of sustenance in the Qur'an, one of which is in *QS An-Nisā'* (4): 34 which explains the principle of male leadership in the family.:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنَاطٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ ۚ فَإِنِ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

According to az-Zuhaili, the concept of *qiwamah* in *QS An-Nisā'* (4): 34 is based on two fundamental aspects. First, the advantages of male nature which include physical and mental superiority. Second, the obligation to provide maintenance is the main responsibility of men. The construction of leadership places men as protectors and guides (*mursyid*) in the family, while still recognizing women's financial rights proportionally.<sup>6</sup>

az-Zuhaili classified women into two main categories: first, al-salihat, women who are obedient and maintain the honor of their families (*hafizat lil ghayb*). Second, al-nushuz, women who show defiance. az-Zuhaili offered a gradual resolution mechanism for cases of nushuz, ranging from providing advice (*mau'izah*), temporary isolation (*hajr*), to limited educational measures (*darb ghayr mubarrih*).<sup>7</sup>

*Tafsir al-Munir* states that the verse about the reasons for nuzul was revealed in response to a woman's complaint to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) about experiencing physical violence from her husband due to his nuzul behavior. Initially, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) decided to implement *qisas* (retribution). The *qisas* policy was later revised after a revelation received through the Angel Gabriel, which emphasized the concept of *qiwamah*<sup>8</sup> This incident emphasizes the principle of a just husband-wife relationship. Male leadership (*qawwam*) must be balanced with fulfilling the responsibility of providing for and nurturing the family,<sup>9</sup> without neglecting women's basic rights, in order to maintain a balance between male leadership authority and the protection of women's rights in Islam. *Qiwamah* is not understood as a form of absolute domination, but rather as a trust accompanied by comprehensive responsibility, particularly in the family's economic aspects.<sup>10</sup>

### **METHODE**

Library research is highly relevant to the exploratory and in-depth study of the theme. *Tafsir al-Munir* by az-Zuhaili is the primary source, supplemented by secondary

sources of tafsir books, scientific journals, books, and articles that discuss the concept of livelihood and the phenomenon of the sandwich generation. The literature is analyzed critically using the thematic interpretation method (*tafsir maudhū'ī*) to obtain a complete understanding. *Tafsir maudhū'ī* examines a particular theme or topic in the Qur'an by compiling related verses from various surahs. The researcher identified verses about livelihood and analyzed az-Zuhaili's interpretation to find their relevance to the challenges of the sandwich generation. The study aims to present a systematic understanding of the responsibility of livelihood in Islam, as well as its relevance to modern socio-economic issues. *Tafsir maudhū'ī* guides the researcher's operational steps: Collecting relevant references; Selecting the term livelihood in the Qur'an; Searching for the root of the term in its wazan tsulatsi; Finding the basic meaning of the dictionary; Finding the basic words and meanings, and the meaning of the relationship between livelihood and its derivations in the Qur'an; Arranging verses from the term livelihood according to the order of the verses; Looking at the interpretation, and observing in depth what happens in the context of the verse, and; finding information about the verse carefully.<sup>11</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Apart from *QS an-Nisā'* (4): 34, livelihood is also explained in *QS al-Baqarah* (2): 233 which concerns breastfeeding mothers:

﴿وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُنِمَّ الرِّضَاعَةَ ۖ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَالِدِهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ ۚ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا اتَّيْتُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

*QS al-Baqarah* (2): 233 establishes fundamental principles regarding support obligations during the breastfeeding period. The verse clearly states: "Mothers should breastfeed their children for two full years for those who wish to complete breastfeeding. And it is the father's obligation to provide for their living and clothing in a virtuous manner...". According to az-Zuhaili in *Tafsir al-Munir*, the concept of livelihood in Islam is flexible and proportional, based on the ability (*wus'*) of the individual as confirmed in *QS at-Talāq* (65): 7 and *QS al-Baqarah* (2): 286.<sup>12</sup>

az-Zuhaili views livelihood responsibilities in the context of breastfeeding as covering three main aspects. First, the father's obligation to fulfill the basic needs (*al-rizq wa al-kiswah*) of the mother and child during the breastfeeding period. Second, the principle of *al-ma'rūf* emphasizes fulfilling living standards according to social appropriateness standards without exaggerating or reducing rights. Third, there is a strict prohibition on the practice of *mudharrah* (mutual harm) between mothers and fathers which guarantees the protection of the rights of both parties.<sup>13</sup>

az-Zuhaili outlines the differences of opinion among Islamic jurists regarding the scope of the obligation to provide maintenance. The Hanafi and Hanbali schools extend the responsibility to include mahram relatives, while the Maliki and Shafi'i schools limit it to the direct parent-child relationship. This difference demonstrates the varying interpretations of the concept of the obligation to provide maintenance within the Islamic family system.<sup>14</sup>

az-Zuhaili emphasized three main principles in the Islamic livelihood system. First, the principle of distributive justice, which ensures the proportional distribution of rights

and obligations. Second, the principle of social protection, which guarantees the rights of mothers and children during times of vulnerability. Third, the principle of flexibility, which adapts economic burdens to individual capacity. This analysis demonstrates that the concept of livelihood in Islam is not solely economic but also encompasses dimensions of social protection and respect for women's reproductive roles.<sup>15</sup>

*QS al-Baqarah (2): 267* explains that the *infaq* given must be the best *infaq*. This verse establishes a fundamental principle regarding the quality of the assets that are donated: "O you who believe, invest some of the results of your good efforts and part of what We bring out from the earth for you..." For az-Zuhaili, this verse establishes two main criteria for the assets that are donated: First, they must come from a halal source (*tayyibat*), and second, they must be assets of good quality and loved by the owner. This emphasis shows that the spiritual value of *infaq* cannot be separated from the quality of the material donated.<sup>16</sup>

az-Zuhaili expanded the scope of the meaning of *tayyibat* to include all forms of halal wealth, including agricultural products, livestock, trade and other forms of wealth. az-Zuhaili firmly rejects the practice of *infaq* with *khobits* (low quality) assets which include two categories: assets that are objectively worthless, and assets that are subjectively disliked by the owner. This prohibition aims to maintain the dignity of donation recipients as well as a form of respect for Allah SWT.<sup>17</sup>

az-Zuhaili cites several narrations explaining the context in which the verse of *asbab al-nuzul* was revealed. The narration of al-Barra' ibn 'Azib describes the practice of some Ansar people giving low-quality dates in *infaq*. Meanwhile, the narration of Jabir ibn Abdillah recounts an attempt to find the cheapest commodity for *zakat al-fitr*. Both narrations emphasize that this verse was revealed as a correction to the tendency to choose the worst assets for *infaq*.<sup>18</sup> This implies three main principles of *infaq* in Islam. First, the principle of quality (*tayyib*), which guarantees the material and spiritual value of *infaq*. Second, the principle of sincerity, which demands sincerity in choosing the best assets. Third, the principle of respect, which maintains the dignity of all parties involved. az-Zuhaili's analysis shows that Islam emphasizes the harmony between individual piety and social justice in the practice of *infaq*.<sup>19</sup>

According to Az Zuhaili, *QS al-Baqarah: 267* was revealed to rebuke the habit of some people who give *infaq* with poor or low quality assets. As narrated by al-Hakim, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and others. al-Bara' bin Azib explained that the Ansar often brought bad harvests of dates to give to *infaq*. Allah then revealed this verse to remind them to invest in the best of their wealth.<sup>20</sup> Another history from Sahl bin Hunaif narrated by Abu Dawud and An-Nasa'i confirms Allah's prohibition against this behavior through His words:

(لا تيمموا الخبيث منه تنفقون)

In another history conveyed by al-Hakim from Jabir, Rasulullah saw. ordered *zakat fitrah* in the form of one sha' of dates, but there were those who brought poor quality dates so this verse was emphasized again. Ibn Abbas also narrated, as mentioned by Ibnu Abi Hatim, that the friends bought cheap food to give to *infaq*, so that Allah reminded them of the importance of giving the best in *infaq* and alms. This verse emphasizes that donations received from Allah must come from assets that are halal, of good quality, and not unwanted items, as a form of sincerity and respect for the beneficiary.<sup>21</sup>

The next verse explains another concept of sustenance, namely providing sustenance according to one's ability. The Word of Allah Swt:

لِيُنْفِقَ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ وَمَنْ قَدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا (QS At-Talaq: 7).

According to az-Zuhaili, the obligation to provide maintenance is based on an individual's financial ability, particularly for a father or guardian of his child. This principle is based on *Surah al-Baqarah*: 286, which emphasizes that Allah does not burden His servants beyond their capabilities. Therefore, the responsibility for providing maintenance is adjusted to each individual's economic circumstances, without burdening the obligated party. This demonstrates that Islam prioritizes justice and openness in establishing law.<sup>22</sup>

In difficult economic situations, a person is only required to provide a living in accordance with the sustenance Allah has bestowed upon him. This approach reflects the flexibility of Islamic law in adapting legal requirements to the realities of life. This concept also aligns with the Islamic principle of *taysir* (convenience), where obligations are not absolute but rather consider the legal subject's ability. Thus, Islam provides a humane solution for those facing economic constraints.<sup>23</sup>

*QS. al-Insyirah*: 5-6 emphasizes that hardship will always be followed by ease, thus providing a basis for optimism for those facing financial trials. This verse serves not only as spiritual motivation but also as a reminder that Allah always provides a way out for His patient servants. This divine promise reinforces the belief that the obligation to provide for others is not meant to be burdensome, but rather a test and a means of drawing closer to Allah.<sup>24</sup>

Islamic law on livelihood integrates the demands of sharia with socioeconomic realities. This balanced approach demonstrates that Islam not only establishes obligations but also prioritizes justice and the welfare of the community. Therefore, the principle of livelihood in Islam is not only normative but also contextual, adapting to the capabilities and circumstances faced by each individual.

The following verse explains another concept of sustenance, namely about children providing for their parents:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ (Q.S Al Baqarah ayat 215)

az-Zuhaili views this verse as *muhkam* and not abrogated because it concerns voluntary almsgiving (*infaq*), which differs from obligatory zakat, the provisions of which are determined by consensus. This interpretation emphasizes Islam's priority on ensuring the fulfillment of basic needs through close kinship ties. Furthermore, *al-Munir* explains the hierarchy of alms recipients, starting with parents (father and mother), the immediate family, relatives, and extending to broader groups such as orphans and the poor. This approach reflects the balance between individual responsibility and social solidarity in Islam.<sup>25</sup>

Regarding the *sabab nuzul* verse, Ibnu Jarir At-Thabari, as quoted by az-Zuhaili in *Tafsir Al Munir*, narrated from Ibn Juraij, that the believers asked Rasulullah SAW: "Where should we channel our wealth?" So the verse came down: "They ask you, what do they earn from? Say: 'What do you earn from good wealth...'" (*al-Baqarah*: 215). Ibn Mundzir narrated from Abu Hayyan that Amr bin al-Jamuh asked the Prophet Muhammad SAW:

“What should we earn from our wealth, and to whom should we give it?” So this verse came down. This is reinforced by what Ibnu Abbas mentioned in the history of Abu Salih, that this verse was revealed regarding Amr bin al-Jamuh al-Ansari. He was an old man and had a lot of wealth. He said: “O Messenger of Allah, with what should I give alms, and to whom should I spend my wealth?” So this verse came down.<sup>26</sup>

Islam emphasizes flexibility in voluntary almsgiving while maintaining the principle of prioritization based on close relationships. The revelation of verses in response to questions from the Companions also emphasizes the dialogue between revelation and social reality. The implication is that the values of the Quran are not merely theoretical but can be implemented contextually, both within the family and the wider community, while maintaining the essence of the blessings and benefits of the wealth donated.

The next verse contains a command to do good or be devoted to both parents until they are both old:

﴿ وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِلِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِنَّمَا يُبَلِّغُنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَيْهِمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ﴾ (Q.S Al Isra' ayat 23)

az-Zuhaili emphasized that the command to be kind to parents in Islam is not only moral, but is also closely related to the concept of worship. Obedience to parents is seen as a form of gratitude for their role as intermediaries in human existence in the world. This emphasis shows how Islam positions respect for parents as an integral part of piety, while also reflecting the balance between God's rights and human rights in the structure of Islamic values.<sup>27</sup>

More specifically, az-Zuhaili explained that being kind to one's parents, especially as they enter old age, must be manifested in concrete behaviors such as avoiding harsh language, refraining from shouting, and always using polite and affectionate language. This view is not only normative but also contains psychological and social dimensions, where respect for the elderly is an indicator of a society's moral health. This principle aligns with the concept of *birrul walidain* (devotion to parents), which in Islam occupies second place after tawhid.<sup>28</sup>

This concept is reinforced by the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), narrated by Muslim, which expresses a severe warning to those who waste the opportunity to care for their parents in their old age. The Prophet's statement about the “woe” of those who fail to utilize their parents as a path to paradise emphasizes the centrality of parents' position in Islamic ethics. This hadith also serves as spiritual motivation, demonstrating that devotion to parents is not only socially valuable but also has profound eschatological dimensions.<sup>29</sup>

The next verse instructs children to show humility, love and deep respect for their parents, especially when they enter old age:

﴿ وَأَخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذَّلِيلِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا ۗ ﴾ (Q.S Al Isra' ayat 24)

According to az-Zuhaili, this verse emphasizes the obligation to be humble and gentle in interacting with parents. This obligation does not only involve outward obedience, but goes deeper into forming an inner attitude of respect. This shows that Islam requires child-parent relationships to be built on a foundation of sincere love, not just the fulfillment of formal obligations.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, az-Zuhaili explained that respect for parents must stem from a pure internal conscience, not from external pressures such as fear of social censure. This view underscores the importance of internalizing moral values in interactions with parents, with sincerity being a key element. This concept aligns with Islamic principles, which emphasize purity of intention in all forms of worship and social interaction.<sup>31</sup> All of this leads to the formation of a well-rounded Muslim character, where humility and gentleness toward parents reflect spiritual depth. Devotion to parents is not merely a normative obligation, but a manifestation of refined character and religious maturity. The child-parent relationship in Islam is built on a foundation of sincere affection and deep respect.

az-Zuhaili's interpretation of livelihood in Tafsir al-Munir emphasizes flexibility and fairness in the distribution of livelihood according to individual capabilities, particularly for a father or guardian in meeting the needs of children and wives. This principle is based on Quranic verses such as *Surah al-Baqarah: 286*, which emphasizes that Allah does not burden a person beyond his capacity. Livelihood must be provided according to the economic conditions and capabilities of each individual. az-Zuhaili also explains that livelihood is not limited to the nuclear family but can be extended to relatives, in accordance with the views of the adopted school of thought. Furthermore, the alms given by Islam must come from good wealth and be loved by the owner, reflecting respect and sincerity to Allah. The Islamic concept of livelihood also emphasizes the importance of humility and gentleness towards parents, as well as the need for attention and affection for them, especially in old age. Overall, the concept of livelihood according to az-Zuhaili emphasizes the balance between the obligation to provide a living, justice and respect for the family, by prioritizing gratitude and sincerity in providing a living.

### **Sandwich generation in contemporary society**

The *sandwich generation* is a social phenomenon that describes individuals being squeezed between dual responsibilities: meeting the needs of their nuclear family on the one hand, and caring for aging parents on the other. This situation is becoming increasingly apparent in modern societies experiencing shifts in family structure, increasing life expectancy, and complex economic pressures. This dual role places individuals in a dilemma that demands not only financial preparedness but also emotional stability and constantly tested physical capacity.

The sandwich generation in urban communities tends to be more common among those of productive age who are married and have children, but also still have parents who are economically or physically dependent on them. The demands of simultaneously supporting two generations make the sandwich generation highly vulnerable to increasing social pressures. This reality gives rise to various dynamics that impact the balance between family life and work productivity.

The sandwich generation has become a highly relevant topic in the study of family sociology and economics. A thorough understanding of this phenomenon is needed to develop intervention strategies that not only emphasize material aspects but also address psychological well-being and social relationships within the family. This effort is crucial for creating an environment that balances social responsibility and individual needs in an increasingly complex society.

### **Impact of the sandwich generation on mental health**

The dual pressures experienced by the sandwich generation often impact their mental health. Individuals in this position must ensure the needs of two different

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generations are met simultaneously, without neglecting their own needs. This tension can trigger chronic stress, excessive anxiety, and even the risk of depression if not managed wisely and in a structured manner. The heavy economic burden, particularly in terms of financing children's education and caring for the elderly, further increases the risk of mental disorders.<sup>32</sup>

Emotionally, individuals in the sandwich generation must manage to divide their attention, time, and affection between their own family and their parents. This situation leads to emotional exhaustion due to the constant demands from both sides. This imbalance often triggers symptoms of burnout, characterized by a loss of zest for life and an inability to enjoy daily activities. In the long term, this condition has the potential to deteriorate the quality of relationships between family members and create an emotional distance that is difficult to bridge.<sup>33</sup>

Mental health issues also impact their social lives. Limited time deprives individuals of opportunities for social interaction outside the family. As a result, feelings of isolation and loneliness emerge, which further exacerbate psychological distress. The lack of social support exacerbates the feeling of having no one to share the burden, making the burden of responsibility even heavier. This exacerbates stress and increases the risk of more serious mental disorders.<sup>34</sup>

The sandwich generation must have a support system in place, including family, community, and professional support, to mitigate psychological stress. Mental health-promoting activities, such as exercise, relaxation, and counseling, are strategic efforts to maintain psychological balance. Strong emotional support and the availability of spaces for sharing experiences are crucial resources for individuals in coping with the psychosocial stress presented by this phenomenon.<sup>35</sup>

### **Impact on work-life balance**

The imbalance between personal life and work responsibilities is a major challenge for the sandwich generation.<sup>36</sup> They must simultaneously juggle household responsibilities and the demands of the workplace. The responsibility of caring for aging parents and supporting children through their development often consumes time and energy that should be used for professional development. This tension disrupts productivity, reduces concentration, and adds to the workload.<sup>37</sup>

The most noticeable impact is decreased work performance due to physical and mental fatigue. Many individuals in this group find it difficult to complete tasks on time or lose motivation to achieve work goals. In the long term, this condition can affect superiors' evaluations and hinder opportunities for promotion or career development. This situation creates dissatisfaction and frustration, which erode work enthusiasm and individual self-confidence.<sup>38</sup> When focus is divided between work and family, individuals also face moral dilemmas and feelings of guilt. They feel unable to give their full attention to both areas simultaneously.<sup>39</sup> Failure to meet expectations, whether as a parent or as a worker, creates additional emotional pressure that often leads to prolonged stress. This imbalance makes daily life feel increasingly demanding and demanding.<sup>40</sup>

This imbalance makes daily life feel even more challenging. However, in some cases, these challenges can actually be important learning opportunities.<sup>41</sup> Individuals learn to prioritize, develop better time management skills, and build healthy communication with their partners and children. Workplace support, such as flexible work policies or special leave programs, can be helpful in alleviating stress. Furthermore,

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family involvement and mutual support are key factors in creating harmony between home and work responsibilities.<sup>42</sup>

Children in sandwich generation families are in an equally vulnerable position. When parents are divided between caring for their children and their parents, children's emotional needs are often neglected.<sup>43</sup> Lack of quality time with children can impact their personality development, particularly in emotional and social aspects. Children can feel underappreciated or neglected, which in the long term can foster insecurities.<sup>44</sup>

In some circumstances, children are even involved in home care for the elderly. While this experience can teach empathy and the value of responsibility, the burden placed on them at an early age risks disrupting a child's development.<sup>45</sup> The emotional pressure they feel can stem from the demands of helping their parents, adjusting to challenging family dynamics, or limited access to the necessities and entertainment of their peers. Economic constraints also mean that many children's needs, such as extracurricular activities or additional education, must be compromised.<sup>46</sup>

The emotional instability of exhausted parents also directly impacts children. Impatient communication patterns or a tense home environment can cause children to experience psychological distress. When children's needs are not met, they can grow up with low self-esteem or a tendency to withdraw from social settings. Persistent situations like this have the potential to disrupt a child's mental and spiritual development.<sup>47</sup>

It is important for families in this situation to establish open and empathetic communication.<sup>48</sup> Parents need to explain the family situation in a way that is proportionate to the child's age, so that they feel like they are part of the struggle, not an additional burden.<sup>49</sup> Supported by a caring and responsive environment, children will grow into resilient individuals, full of empathy, and with strong values of solidarity. Experiences in facing challenges from an early age can provide invaluable life skills for their future.<sup>50</sup>

### **Relevance of the concept of livelihood and its correlation with the sandwich generation phenomenon**

The relevance of the concept of livelihood and its correlation with the sandwich generation phenomenon has become an important topic in social and religious studies. The obligation to provide livelihood in Islam primarily falls on men as heads of families. However, in the Sandwich Generation phenomenon, the responsibility for providing livelihood extends beyond the wife and children to include caring for elderly parents. This presents new challenges in fulfilling the obligation to provide livelihood fairly and proportionally, in accordance with religious teachings and modern social conditions.

### **The relationship between the concept of livelihood and the sandwich generation**

The concept of livelihood in the Qur'an is an important teaching that shows Islam's concern for the welfare of individuals and families.<sup>51</sup> In Islam, maintenance encompasses the fulfillment of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities necessary for a decent life. The responsibility to provide for the family is explicitly stated as an obligation that must be fulfilled by individuals with dependents. In the family context, maintenance is primarily a husband's obligation to his wife and children. As head of the family, the husband is responsible for meeting his wife's needs during the marriage, including the daily necessities necessary for a decent life. This reflects the husband's

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leadership responsibility within the household, which is determined based on his abilities and role.<sup>52</sup>

The concept of sustenance is not limited to material needs but also encompasses spiritual and emotional aspects. Fulfillment of material needs must be carried out in a lawful manner and in accordance with Islamic law.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, a husband is also obligated to provide attention, affection, and guidance to his wife and children as part of his responsibility to provide for them. The concept of providing for them also encompasses responsibilities to the extended family, such as relatives in need. Islam teaches the importance of caring for and assisting relatives in need, including providing for them if they are unable to meet their own needs. This assistance is a form of social solidarity that is highly emphasized in Islam.

In the Islamic perspective, livelihood is not only an individual obligation, but also has a broad social dimension.<sup>54</sup> Islam views sustenance as not only intended to meet physical needs, but also to maintain human honor and dignity. Providing sustenance is part of a broader social responsibility to create a just and prosperous society. The importance of sustenance is also emphasized in the marital relationship. A husband's provision of sustenance is not merely an obligation but also a form of respect and protection for his wife. A wife who receives sustenance from her husband has the right to a decent standard of living, according to the husband's means.<sup>55</sup>

Providing a living means caring for women who are the breadwinners of the family, such as widows or single women. In such circumstances, the responsibility for providing for the family can be transferred to close relatives, such as brothers, or become the responsibility of the community through *zakat* (alms), *infaq* (donation), and *sadaqah* (charity). This demonstrates the flexibility of Islamic teachings in regulating the fulfillment of life's necessities.<sup>56</sup>

The sandwich generation faces unique challenges because they must fulfill the financial responsibilities of two generations simultaneously. In Islam, fulfilling the needs of parents is highly valued, including in terms of financial support.<sup>57</sup> This responsibility is seen as a form of devotion to parents, a fundamental principle of Islamic teachings. On the other hand, providing for one's own wife and children is also an absolute obligation, as they are completely dependent on their parents for their living expenses. The need to balance these two significant responsibilities often creates psychological and financial stress. In the Islamic context, this stress can be seen as a life test that teaches the values of patience, trust (relief), and sincerity. Islam encourages individuals to seek fair and proportionate solutions, such as sharing responsibilities with other family members, without neglecting any party. This relates to a child's obligation to provide for his parents, as Allah says in *Surah al-Baqarah* 2:215:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۗ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

This generation can learn from this principle to prioritize the needs of their children and parents. For example, urgent or basic needs should come first, while other needs can be met gradually according to ability. Furthermore, Islam teaches the importance of moderation in spending. Living frugally and avoiding waste is a value emphasized so that one can better manage one's finances. This principle is relevant for the sandwich generation, which often faces limited resources. By living frugally, they can more easily meet the needs of two generations who depend on them.

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Another correlation is social responsibility. Islam teaches that people should help each other, especially family members. Therefore, the sandwich generation phenomenon can be a call to build stronger family solidarity. Other family members, such as siblings, can be invited to share the responsibility of caring for parents, so that the burden doesn't fall solely on one individual. In Islam, respect for parents is highly valued.<sup>58</sup> Providing them with a living is one form of respect. In this way, the sandwich generation not only carries out worldly responsibilities but also fulfills spiritual obligations that bring blessings to their lives.

### **The essence of the role of the sandwich generation in supporting the family**

The sandwich generation plays a unique role within the family structure. They are responsible for supporting two generations: their children, who still need financial and emotional support, and their parents, who may no longer be able to independently meet their needs. The essence of this role is not only about material things, but also emotional, social, and human values. For the sandwich generation, providing for their family is a form of devotion born of love and responsibility. This role involves ensuring basic needs such as food, shelter, education, and healthcare. At the same time, they strive to provide comfort and a sense of security to all family members.<sup>59</sup> Children are not only ordered to obey their parents' orders outwardly, but must also show sincere inner respect for them, as stated in QS al-Isra': 24:

وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا<sup>٥٩</sup>

According to az-Zuhaili, this verse teaches the importance of humility and gentleness toward both parents. In the context of relationships between family members, the sandwich generation acts as a balance-keeper. They manage the dynamics between children who need attention to grow and develop and parents who often require intensive care or emotional support in their later years. The essence of this role includes serving as a bridge between the two generations. They maintain close family ties despite facing complex life challenges. The sandwich generation thus contributes to the sustainability of strong family values.<sup>60</sup>

Financially, the sandwich generation acts as the backbone of the family.<sup>61</sup> They work hard to ensure the needs of all family members are met, even if it requires personal sacrifices, such as postponing their own needs or dreams. However, their responsibilities extend beyond material needs. The sandwich generation also provides crucial emotional support for children and parents. They ensure their families feel loved, respected, and valued at every stage of life. In fulfilling this role, the sandwich generation often serves as role models for their children.<sup>62</sup> Children learn from their parents' struggles and sacrifices about the values of responsibility, hard work, and unconditional love for their family. Their role also includes the ability to manage conflict between family members.

When there are differences of opinion or conflicting needs, the sandwich generation acts as a mediator, trying to find a fair and balanced solution. The sandwich generation also faces the challenge of maintaining a balance between career and family life.<sup>63</sup> They need to manage their time wisely to fulfill work responsibilities while also devoting sufficient attention to their families. Amidst these demanding responsibilities, the sandwich generation has the opportunity to strengthen family solidarity. By working together to overcome challenges, family members can learn to support and appreciate one another.

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Additionally, this role gives them the opportunity to teach children about the importance of empathy and respect and devotion to parents.<sup>64</sup> Then treat parents with affection, especially when they are old and do not speak harshly to them, as Allah SWT says in *Surah al-Isra'*: 23:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا لِيَاءِهِ وَيَالِ الْوَالِدِينَ إِحْسَانًا ۗ إِنَّمَا يَنْبَلِغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَيْهِمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

These values will equip children for their future lives. This generation also plays a role as agents of change within the family. They bring influences from the modern world and integrate them with family traditions to create harmony between current needs and past values. In facing various responsibilities, the sandwich generation needs to develop sound management skills, such as managing finances, time, and emotions. This way, they can reduce existing pressures and carry out their roles more effectively. The essence of this role is essentially devotion to the family. Although often challenging, this role provides inner satisfaction and deep meaning in life. The sandwich generation finds joy in seeing their families live comfortably and happily.<sup>65</sup>

Ultimately, the sandwich generation, who successfully fulfill their roles, demonstrates true compassion. They work not only to provide for their family, but also to ensure that all family members feel valued and loved. Their efforts reflect a sincere commitment to their family.<sup>66</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In az-Zuhaili's view, as the head of the family, a man is obligated to provide for his family and act fairly in distributing it according to his individual ability, especially for a father or guardian in meeting the needs of his children and wife. The almsgiving mandated by Islam must come from good property and be loved by the owner. This reflects respect and sincerity towards Allah. The connection between the concept of sustenance and the sandwich generation is that a father bears the burden of sustenance for his family. However, as a child, he also has an obligation to provide for his parents and their future family. Tafsir al-Munir explains that a child's sustenance for his parents is muhkam (not subject to annulment). This means that he must provide for his parents to the best of his ability as a form of devotion to them. Those belonging to the sandwich generation must also provide for their parents. Sustenance includes the nuclear family, relatives, and wider groups such as orphans and the poor.

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