

An exploration of work-life balance in generation Z who have just entered the workforce

Deasy Rinayanti Pelealu

Manajemen, Universitas Widya Dharma Pontianak, Pontianak, Indonesia

Abstract

Changing work patterns and increased awareness of mental health have driven attention to the issue of work-life balance (WLB), especially among Generation Z who are beginning to dominate the workforce. However, there is still a gap in understanding how this generation perceives and responds to the challenges of maintaining a balance between professional and personal life. This research aims to examine Generation Z's perceptions, challenges and adaptive strategies towards WLB through a systematic literature study approach. The method used involved searching scholarly articles from various accredited databases using relevant keywords, with selection based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. From the review of six key articles, it was found that Generation Z views WLB as a flexible integration of work and personal life, rather than a separation of time. They face challenges such as rigid conventional work culture, long working hours, digital pressures, and lack of mental health support. To overcome these, Generation Z employs strategies such as opting for flexible work, setting boundaries on work communication, and seeking out organizations that pay attention to employee well-being. These findings have important implications for organizations and policymakers in designing a more adaptive work system to support career sustainability and well-being of young people in the modern workforce.

Corresponding Author:

Deasy Rinayanti Pelealu,
Manajemen,
Universitas Widya Dharma Pontianak,
Jl. Hos Cokroaminoto No.445, Darat Sekip, Pontianak,
Kalimantan Barat, 78243, Indonesia.
dcdeasy.26@gmail.com

Article Info

Article history:

Received : Apr 16, 2025

Revised : May 23, 2025

Accepted : May 31, 2025

Keywords:

Adaptive strategies ;
Generation Z;
Work-life balance.

This is an open access article under
the [CC BY](#) license.



Introduction

The development of global workforce demographics shows a significant shift in the generational structure that dominates the world of work, one of which is the emergence of Generation Z as a new actor in the modern organizational ecosystem (Abbasi et al., 2024; Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022; Murvanidze, 2020). Generation Z, which includes individuals born from 1997 to 2012, is a group of digital-natives who grew up in the era of the internet, social media, and rapid technological advancements. Exposure to technology from an early age forms unique characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations, both in mindset, expectations, and work style. In the context of human resource management, the existence of Generation Z presents new challenges and opportunities for organizations, especially in creating a work environment that is adaptive and inclusive of their preferences. One of the crucial issues that arise in the work dynamics of this generation is the importance of work-life balance (WLB), which is an individual's ability to balance

roles and responsibilities between professional life and personal life. Unlike previous generations that emphasized job stability and financial rewards, Generation Z tends to prioritize flexibility, mental health, and the meaning of work as key indicators of quality of life. An imbalance between work and personal life not only impacts individual well-being, but also has the potential to reduce overall organizational performance and productivity. This condition becomes even more complex when Generation Z, who is relatively new to the formal workforce, is faced with a work system that is still oriented towards conventional values and bureaucratic structures (Christensen et al., 2018; Maioli, 2017). Therefore, understanding how Generation Z interprets work-life balance, the challenges they face, and the strategies they apply to achieve work-life balance is an important aspect in formulating sustainable organizational policies. In-depth research into this dimension is not only theoretically relevant in the development of human resource management science, but also practically in designing work systems that are more aligned with the values and needs of the new generation.

Work-life balance (WLB) in the context of Generation Z is operationally defined as a condition in which individuals are able to manage their time, energy, and roles proportionally between the demands of work and personal life, taking into account the need for flexibility, mental health, and the achievement of meaning in work. Generation Z views WLB not merely as a fair division of time between work and personal life, but rather as holistic well-being encompassing emotional, social, and existential aspects. Conceptually, this study refers to the generational theory proposed by Strauss and Howe (1991), which states that each generation has characteristics of values, attitudes, and behaviors shaped by the socio-historical conditions of their formative years. Additionally, the framework of Boundary Theory and Work-Family Enrichment Theory is employed, explaining how individuals establish, maintain, and manage boundaries between work and personal life domains, as well as how positive experiences in one domain can enrich the other. This theoretical approach enables a more contextual understanding of the dynamics of work-life balance within Generation Z, bridging cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects in shaping their adaptive strategies to address the challenges of the contemporary workplace.

Although the discourse on work-life balance has become an important topic in human resource management studies, most of the existing research still focuses on previous generations such as Millennials and Generation X, as well as on individuals with relatively established work experience. These studies are generally quantitatively oriented and have not delved deeply into the dynamics of Generation Z's unique perceptions and experiences of work-life balance issues. In fact, Generation Z's fundamentally different work characteristics and preferences, such as the need for flexibility, respect for mental health, and the search for meaning in work, pose their own complexities that have not been elaborated in the scientific literature, especially in the context of developing countries such as Indonesia. The lack of a holistic understanding of how Generation Z interprets work-life balance, what specific challenges they face in balancing the two spheres of life, and the approaches or strategies they use to manage the balance, represents a significant gap in the literature. This poses an obstacle for organizations in formulating work policies and designs that are relevant and responsive to the expectations of this generation. Thus, there is an urgent need to conduct exploratory studies that not only describe the phenomenon descriptively, but also provide a deeper conceptual understanding of the relationship between generational characteristics and work-life balance in the contemporary work landscape (Yanti et al., 2023).

This research specifically addresses the meaning, challenges, and strategies of work-life balance (WLB) from the perspective of Generation Z who are in the transition phase to the formal workforce in Indonesia (Bajrami, 2024; Marthalina et al., 2025). This focus was chosen given the limitations of previous studies that have not explicitly examined the relationship between the distinctive characteristics of Generation Z and efforts to achieve balance between professional and

personal life. Using an explorative approach based on a scientific literature review, this study aims to uncover Generation Z's cognitive and affective dynamics in perceiving WLB, as well as identify their behavioral responses to complex work pressures and social expectations in the modern work environment. As a suggestion for development, this study can serve as an initial foundation for further empirical and contextual studies, either through in-depth qualitative methods or quantitative approaches with relevant measurement scales. The findings in this study also open up opportunities to design human resource management policy models that are more adaptive to the needs of new generations, as well as to develop organizational interventions oriented towards the psychological well-being of young employees. Thus, the results of this study are expected to not only contribute to the development of theories related to cross-generational WLB, but also provide practical implications for organizations in building an inclusive, flexible, and sustainable work environment (Saraiva & Nogueiro, 2025; Vyas, 2022).

This research aims to examine in depth Generation Z's perceptions and experiences of the concept of work-life balance (WLB) in the context of the contemporary world of work in Indonesia (Bajrami, 2024; Rensiana et al., 2024; Tanoto & Tami, 2024). Specifically, this research aims to: (1) identify and explain how Generation Z interprets the balance between personal and professional life; (2) reveal the various challenges faced by Generation Z in their efforts to achieve WLB, whether structural, cultural, or psychosocial in nature; and (3) explore the adaptive strategies or approaches used by Generation Z in managing the balance between their work roles and personal life. Through a comprehensive understanding of these aspects, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions in the development of literature on generational WLB, as well as practical implications for the formulation of organizational policies that are more responsive to the values and preferences of younger generations in today's work environment (Gilley et al., 2015; Rashmi & Kataria, 2022; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019).

Although the issue of work-life balance (WLB) has been addressed in many previous studies, most of the available research has focused on previous generations of workers, such as Millennials and Generation X, and on employees with higher levels of work experience. In addition, the approaches used in these studies are generally quantitative and oriented towards statistical measurement, thus not capturing the subjective nuances and complexities of individual perceptions of WLB. Meanwhile, Generation Z, which is now beginning to dominate the labor market, has fundamentally different characteristics, values and work preferences, yet has not received much attention in academic studies, especially in the Indonesian context. Research on how Generation Z interprets, faces challenges, and formulates strategies in achieving WLB is still very limited, both in terms of number and depth of analysis. Therefore, there is an urgent need to fill this literature gap through an explorative approach that is able to thoroughly explore Generation Z's experiences and perspectives on WLB issues, in order to provide a more relevant and contextual empirical basis in the development of adaptive and inclusive human resource policies (Fridayani et al., 2022; Gentina, 2020).

This research offers novelty through an explorative approach that specifically examines Generation Z's perceptions, challenges and strategies in managing work-life balance (WLB) in the Indonesian social and cultural context. Different from previous studies that generally focus on more senior generations of workers or use a survey-based quantitative approach, this research makes a theoretical contribution by delving deeply into Generation Z's meaning construction and subjective experiences of WLB. Moreover, the main justification for this research lies in the urgency of adapting organizational policies to the demographic transformation in the work environment, where Generation Z is increasingly playing a major role in the workforce structure. A contextualized understanding of WLB dynamics from the perspective of Generation Z is crucial to support the development of more inclusive, responsive and sustainable human resource management practices.

The findings of this research are expected to not only enrich the academic literature, but also provide practical implications in the formulation of organizational strategies that are able to improve the retention, productivity, and well-being of young employees in the modern work era.

Method

3.1 Type of Research

This research is a systematic literature review that aims to examine in depth various previous scientific findings related to Generation Z's perceptions and experiences in undergoing work-life balance (WLB) (Rashmi & Kataria, 2022; Wong et al., 2023). This approach is used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study by identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant scientific evidence from the available literature (Tanoto & Tami, 2024).

3.2 Sources and Data Collection Techniques

The data sources in this study were obtained from scientific articles published in the time span of 2015 to 2024. Articles were collected through systematic searches in several leading academic databases, namely:

- Google Scholar
- Scopus
- Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
- ScienceDirect

The search strategy used a combination of keywords in Indonesian and English, including: "work-life balance", 'Generation Z', 'Gen Z employee', 'employee wellbeing', 'flexible working', 'work-life balance', and 'young employees'. The initial screening process involved examining abstracts to assess topic relevance, followed by a full review of articles that met the criteria.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

In order to select articles objectively and systematically, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were set as follows:

Inclusion criteria:

- Articles published in scientific journals that have gone through the peer-review process
- Year of publication between 2015-2024
- Focus of study on work-life balance among Generation Z or young workers
- Available in full text
- Written in Indonesian or English

Exclusion criteria:

- Articles that are opinion, editorial, or not the result of scientific research
- Studies that do not specifically address Generation Z in the context of work-life balance
- Duplicate or inaccessible articles in full

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis procedure was conducted through five main stages:

1. Reading and understanding the content of the article thoroughly
2. Performing a coding process on relevant data
3. Grouping the codes into key themes, such as perceptions of WLB, challenges faced, and Generation Z's adaptation strategies
4. Synthesizing findings to identify patterns and relationships between studies
5. Compile the results of the analysis in the form of narrative and thematic tables.

The results of the analysis are presented in the form of a literature summary table that contains core information from each study, to facilitate understanding of existing contributions and knowledge gaps.

3.5 Data validity

To ensure data validity and reliability, the literature selection process was systematic and clearly documented. The use of strict inclusion and exclusion criteria and transparent documentation of the analysis process were fundamental to ensuring accuracy, consistency and replicability in this review.

Result And Discussion

4.1 Summary of literature

Based on the results of a systematic search and selection of literature, a number of articles were obtained that met the inclusion criteria. These articles provide an overview of how Generation Z interprets work-life balance, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use.

Table 1. Key findings from some of the key articles analyzed

No	Author (Year)	Study Location	Research Focus	Main Findings
1	Nelson, Alden, et al (2025)	Indonesia	WLB in startup employees	Time flexibility increases job satisfaction and reduces stress
2	Ramadhan, Naufal Rafif (2024)	Indonesia	Gen Z's perception post-pandemic	Gen Z is more selective about jobs that interfere with personal time
3	Otieno, Joseph O (2019)	Global	Global survey of Gen Z & Millennials	70% of Gen Z feel stressed; WLB is the main reason for choosing a workplace
4	Mahardika, Arditya Afrizal (2022)	Indonesia	Gen Z work flexibility and WLB	Gen Z likes jobs that provide autonomy and time control
5	Lamane-Harim. at al. (2023)	India	Gen Z work expectations & mental health	Supportive environment and WLB important for job retention and motivation
6	Pratama, Hanisa Putri at. Al (2021)	Indonesia	WLB and job satisfaction in young employees	Younger employees tend to resist excessive overtime to maintain balance

4.2 Key Findings by Theme

From the analysis of the literature reviewed, three main themes emerged that answered the research problem formulation:

1. Perception of Work-Life Balance by Generation Z

Generation Z views work-life balance not as an absolute separation between work and personal life, but rather as a flexible and healthy integration. For them, the ideal job is one that enables productivity without sacrificing personal time, social space or mental health. Some studies suggest that Gen Z is more sensitive to burnout issues and more open to discussing work-life balance as part of employee rights.

2. Challenges in Achieving Work-Life Balance

Some of the challenges experienced by Generation Z, especially those who have just entered the workforce, include:

- Rigid work culture that demands physical presence in the office
- Inflexible long working hours
- Multitasking and high-speed work expectations from employers
- Lack of mental health support in the workplace

- This leaves many of them feeling depressed, demotivated, or quick to move on.

3. Strategies Used to Maintain Balance

Strategies that Generation Z uses to maintain WLB include:

- Choosing a job that provides a hybrid or remote work system
- Limiting work communication outside of working hours (setting boundaries)
- Emphasizing the importance of self-time and hobbies
- Seeking employment in organizations that pay attention to employee well-being
- Some studies also show that Gen Z tends to be more willing to refuse jobs or tasks that disrupt their life balance.

Discussion

The findings from this literature review reinforce the view that Generation Z's work values have shifted significantly compared to previous generations. For organizations and HR managers, understanding this perception is not only important to retain young employees, but also to build a more inclusive and sustainable work system. The results also show that policies that support flexibility and employee mental health have a direct impact on Generation Z's loyalty and job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with work-life balance theory and the results of global surveys such as Fleeton, Terence (Fleeton, 2024), while pointing to the need for adaptation in the context of organizations in Indonesia.

When compared to previous generations, such as Generation X or Millennials, the findings of this study indicate that Generation Z has a stronger tendency to prioritize work flexibility and mental health as key indicators in assessing the quality of work-life balance. This differs from Millennials, who tend to pursue balance through recognition of achievements and career advancement. Generation Z's perspective aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in enhancing intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being. Unlike the traditional approach to WLB, which emphasizes role segmentation between work and personal roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), Generation Z tends to adopt role integration, blurring the boundaries between professional and personal life while maintaining mental health and autonomy. This analysis reinforces that a one-size-fits-all organizational policy approach is no longer relevant; companies need to adopt adaptive and generation-based approaches to create an inclusive and sustainable work environment.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive synthesis of how Generation Z perceives, experiences, and manages work-life balance (WLB) in the context of modern work. Findings indicate that Generation Z does not view WLB as a rigid separation between work time and personal life, but rather as a dynamic integration that supports psychological well-being, autonomy, and personal growth. Despite their progressive outlook, this generation still faces various structural and cultural barriers, such as inflexible work systems, constant digital pressure, and limited support for mental health. Adaptive strategies developed, such as choosing flexible work systems, setting boundaries for work communication, and seeking organizations aligned with personal values, reflect a significant shift in work values while also responding to the mismatch of existing work systems. Based on these findings, organizations and policymakers need to proactively adjust their policies and practices to align with the evolving needs of the younger generation. Human resources (HR) departments need to design inclusive and flexible work environments, emphasizing mental health, autonomy, and a work culture that supports psychological safety. Additionally, labor regulations need to be updated to be more adaptive to generational dynamics and socio-technological changes affecting the

workplace. Further research is recommended through qualitative field approaches and cross-sector industry comparisons to deepen understanding of Generation Z's real-world experiences. With this collaborative and evidence-based approach, it is hoped that an ideal work-life balance for Generation Z can be achieved sustainably, while also enhancing workforce competitiveness in the digital age.

Reference

- Abbasi, M. A., Amran, A., & Sahar, N. e. (2024). Assessing the impact of corporate environmental irresponsibility on workplace deviant behavior of generation Z and millennials: a multigroup analysis. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, 40(1), 45–67.
- Bajrami, L. (2024). *Generation Z's Perspective on Work-Life Balance: Case of Kosovo*.
- Benítez-Márquez, M. D., Sánchez-Teba, E. M., Bermúdez-González, G., & Núñez-Rydman, E. S. (2022). Generation Z within the workforce and in the workplace: A bibliometric analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 736820.
- Christensen, S. S., Wilson, B. L., & Edelman, L. S. (2018). Can I relate? A review and guide for nurse managers in leading generations. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 26(6), 689–695.
- Fleeton, T. (2024). *Job Satisfaction among Generation Z and Millennials in the Mental Health Field*.
- Fridayani, J. A., Kusuma, S. E., & Yuniarto, A. Y. (2022). Building Link-Match of Gen Z and The World Of Work Through Contextual-Adaptive Facilitation. *Jurnal Bisnis Strategi*, 31(2), 117–129.
- Gentina, E. (2020). Generation Z in Asia: a research agenda. *The New Generation Z in Asia: Dynamics, Differences, Digitalisation*, 3–19.
- Gilley, A., Waddell, K., Hall, A., Jackson, S. A., & Gilley, J. W. (2015). Manager behavior, generation, and influence on work-life balance: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 20(1), 3.
- Lamane-Harim, J., Cegarra-Leiva, D., & Sánchez-Vidal, M. E. (2023). Work–life balance supportive culture: a way to retain employees in Spanish SMEs. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 34(10), 2074–2106.
- Mahardika, A. A., Ingarianti, T., & Zulfiana, U. (2022). Work-life balance pada karyawan generasi Z. *Collabryzk Journal for Scientific Studies*, 1(1), 1–16.
- Maioli, E. (2017). New Generations and Employment “An Exploratory Study about Tensions Between the Psycho-social Characteristics of the Generation Z and Expectations and Actions of Organizational Structures Related with Employment (CABA, 2016). *Journal of Business*, 2(1), 1–12.
- Marthalina, M., Joeliaty, J., Yunizar, Y., & Soemaryani, I. (2025). Work-life balance woman working in the government sector. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*.
- Murvanidze, E. (2020). *Understanding generation Z as a future workforce and its perception of the global trends in organizational design*. Master's thesis in international business administration, Tallinn University
- Nelson, A., Alvina, J., Tan Wan, I., & Rahmadhanti, J. (2025). Transformasi Hubungan Kerja di Era Kontemporer: Peningkatan Retensi Karyawan. *Jurnal Mirai Management*, 10(1), 204–216.
- Otieno, J. O., & Nyambegera, S. M. (2019). Millennials and generation Z employees are here: is your organization ready? *Journal of Language, Technology & Entrepreneurship in Africa*, 10(2), 68–85.
- Pratama, H. P., & Setiadi, I. K. (2021). Pengaruh Work Life Balance Terhadap Kepuasan Kerja Karyawan Milenial Perusahaan Startup Di Jakarta. *Business Management Analysis Journal (BMAJ)*, 4(2), 145–159.
- Ramadhan, N. R., & Rahmawati, S. (2024). Pengaruh Fleksibilitas Kerja Terhadap Kepuasan Kerja Karyawan Hybrid Working Generasi Z dan Milenial pada PT XYZ. *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Organisasi*, 15(3), 336–347.
- Rashmi, K., & Kataria, A. (2022). Work–life balance: a systematic literature review and bibliometric

- analysis. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 42(11/12), 1028–1065.
- Rensiana, S., Wulandari, J., & Roni, M. (2024). Analysis of Job Characteristics, Performance, and Work Life Balance in Generation Z Workers. *Indonesian Journal of Economics and Management*, 5(1), 39–49.
- Sánchez-Hernández, M. I., González-López, Ó. R., Buenadicha-Mateos, M., & Tato-Jiménez, J. L. (2019). Work-life balance in great companies and pending issues for engaging new generations at work. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(24), 5122.
- Saraiva, M., & Nogueiro, T. (2025). Perspectives and Realities of Disengagement Among Younger Generation Y and Z Workers in Contemporary Work Dynamics. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(4), 133.
- Tanoto, S. R., & Tami, E. G. (2024). Understanding Generation Z: Work-Life Balance and Job Embeddedness in Retention Dynamics. *Binus Business Review*, 15(3), 225–238.
- Vyas, L. (2022). “New normal” at work in a post-COVID world: work–life balance and labor markets. *Policy and Society*, 41(1), 155–167.
- Wong, K. P., Teh, P.-L., & Chan, A. H. S. (2023). Seeing the forest and the trees: a scoping review of empirical research on work-life balance. *Sustainability*, 15(4), 2875.
- Yanti, N. N. S. A., Lestari, F. P., Prasetya, W., Ratu, L. P., Irawan, P., Murti R, A., Anggraini, R. I., Subandi, Y., Puspitasari, M., & Indiyati, D. (2023). *Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia Internasional*. Penerbit Widina.