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The Role of Work-Life Harmony on Job Satisfaction of Generation Z Employees in Banyumas

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to analyze the influence of work-life harmony on job satisfaction among Generation Z employees in Banyumas Regency. Generation Z, known as digital natives, exhibits unique characteristics in the workplace, such as a preference for flexible schedules, work-life balance, and work environments that support mental well-being.
Design/Methods/Approach: Using a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional design, the study involved 200 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Work-Life Harmony Questionnaire by Katrina Murphy Coaching and a job stress scale developed based on job satisfaction dimensions proposed by Luthans (2006). Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS.
Findings: The results indicate that work-life harmony has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.609$; $T = 12.887$; $p < 0.001$). These findings are supported by various theoretical frameworks, including the Conservation of Resources Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Person-Environment Fit Theory, which emphasize the importance of role harmony in maintaining psychological well-being. The study concludes that work-life harmony is a strategic factor in enhancing job satisfaction among Generation Z employees, especially in regions with collectivist cultural values such as Banyumas.
Originality/Value: While previous studies have predominantly focused on work-life balance, limited attention has been given to the concept of work-life harmony particularly in the context of Generation Z in Indonesia. This study offers a novel contribution by adopting the work-life harmony framework, which better reflects the integrative and value-driven preferences of digital natives. The use of PLS-SEM further strengthens its methodological value, providing relevant insights for the development of flexible and adaptive work policies.
Practical/Policy implication: The results offer valuable implications for organizations in designing flexible, adaptive, and employee-centered work policies that support the integration of professional and personal life roles.

Keywords: work-life harmony, job satisfaction, Generation Z, Banyumas, PLS-SEM
JEL Classification: I31, I39, I12

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Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) in the modern era faces increasingly complex challenges, particularly in managing generational diversity within the workforce. One of the dominant groups currently entering the labor market is Generation Z (Gen Z), referring to individuals born between 1995 and 2010. This generation is often referred to as "digital natives," as they have grown up in environments saturated with digital technology, social media, and rapid access to information (Bhalla et al., 2021). Gen Z exhibits distinct characteristics in terms of mindset, values, and expectations toward work, which are no longer solely centered on compensation, but also emphasize time flexibility, work-life balance, opportunities for self-actualization, and mental health support (Reformasianto & Faizah, 2024).

These unique attributes are not always accommodated by conventional work systems in many organizations, including in semi-urban regions such as Banyumas Regency, which is currently experiencing growth in the digital, information technology, and creative industries. Many companies have yet to implement HRM strategies that align with the needs of the younger workforce. High job demands, tight targets, constant communication via digital devices, and the lack of clear boundaries between work and personal time can contribute to psychological strain, often referred to as job stress.

In this context, the concept of work-life harmony has emerged as a development of the earlier work-life balance approach. While work-life balance emphasizes an equal distribution of time between work and personal life, work-life harmony promotes a more flexible and integrative approach, where professional and personal domains coexist synergistically rather than being strictly separated (Kelliher et al., 2019). For Gen Z, who are accustomed to multitasking and high mobility, this approach is perceived as more suitable, as it enables them to adaptively manage both professional and personal responsibilities.

Despite strong theoretical foundations, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the effect of work-life harmony on job stress, particularly among Generation Z in semi-urban regions like Banyumas. The 2023 report by Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) noted a rise in digital employment and tech-focused MSMEs. However, a 2024 survey revealed that 65 percent of Gen Z workers in Indonesia are dissatisfied due to limited flexibility, high workloads, and insufficient support for mental health.

If left unaddressed, this phenomenon may negatively affect employee well-being. Gen Z workers experiencing job stress are at risk of burnout, decreased organizational commitment, and increased turnover intention (Kashfitanto & Febriansyah, 2023). Amid increasingly fierce business competition, the mental and emotional well-being of young employees becomes a crucial factor in ensuring organizational sustainability.

Therefore, it is essential for organizations to identify factors that can enhance job satisfaction among this generation, one of which is the implementation of work-life harmony. In addition to approaches that promote personal and professional balance, various managerial factors have also been proven to influence job satisfaction. Research by Oktaviani et al. (2022) demonstrated that leadership, work discipline, and motivation have a positive and significant impact on employee satisfaction. This highlights the importance of cultivating a work environment that supports not only the balance between professional and personal roles but also a structurally and psychologically healthy organizational climate.

Although it is theoretically compelling, the relationship between work-life harmony and job satisfaction among Generation Z employees in semi-urban areas such as Banyumas has not been extensively studied. This research seeks to examine how work-life harmony affects job satisfaction among Gen Z workers in Banyumas Regency. The results are expected to provide organizations with a deeper insight into the need for designing work environments that support

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a balance between professional responsibilities and personal well-being, especially for a generation that tends to be more responsive to imbalance.
This research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of HR policies that are adaptive, human-centered, and oriented toward employee well-being. Furthermore, it may serve as a valuable reference for policymakers in the labor sector to acknowledge the significance of designing youth-friendly workplaces as part of a broader strategy to create a healthy, productive, and sustainable work environment.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

1. Work-Life Harmony

Work-Life Harmony (WLH) is an alternative concept to Work-Life Balance (WLB) that has emerged in the field of human resource management studies. Unlike WLB, which emphasizes a clear separation and balance between work time and personal life, WLH focuses more on the harmonious integration of these two domains. McMillan et al. (2011) define WLH as "an individually pleasing, congruent arrangement of work and life roles that is interwoven into a single narrative of life." This definition confirms that WLH emphasizes the arrangement of work and personal life roles that blend and support each other subjectively according to the individual's life narrative. Correspondingly, Calvin Ong & Jeyaraj (2014) state that WLH involves an integrative approach, where work and personal life are not seen as two competing entities, but rather complementary and enriching.
The concept of Work-Life Harmony (WLH) encompasses several key characteristics that distinguish it from Work-Life Balance (WLB). First, work-life harmony emphasizes the flexible integration of roles, enabling individuals to adjust their work and personal responsibilities in response to situational needs. Second, WLH contributes to the reduction of cognitive dissonance, defined as the internal conflict arising from incompatibilities between work and personal role expectations. A study by Hill & Carroll (2023) indicates that individuals who adopt a WLH orientation report lower levels of dissonance compared to those who rigidly pursue WLB. Third, WLH facilitates resource enrichment, wherein experiences, skills, and positive attitudes gained in one domain enhance functioning in the other. For example, time management skills developed in the workplace may improve one's ability to manage household responsibilities effectively.
Furthermore, Work-Life Harmony (WLH) is influenced by individual values and personal preferences. Unlike Work-Life Balance (WLB), which is often associated with an equal distribution of time (e.g., a 50:50 split), WLH is inherently contextual and subjective. Harmony can be achieved even when one domain dominates in terms of time allocation, as long as it aligns with the individual's core values. Furthermore, WLH has been shown to positively impact creative performance. Murphy & Manocha (2024) found that employees experiencing WLH reported higher levels of creative self-efficacy compared to those adhering to a WLB framework. This suggests that a harmonious integration of work and personal life can foster psychological conditions conducive to innovation and creativity in the workplace.
Work-Life Harmony (WLH) generates beneficial outcomes at both the individual and organizational levels. For individuals, WLH contributes to the reduction of stress and role conflict, while enhancing life satisfaction and psychological well-being (McMillan et al., 2011). At the organizational level, the implementation of WLH principles has been associated with increased employee creativity and innovation, as well as reduced absenteeism and turnover rates. These outcomes are largely attributed to the cultivation of a more supportive and psychologically comfortable work environment.
The implications of the Work-Life Harmony (WLH) concept can be categorized into theoretical and practical domains. Theoretically, there is a need for the development of valid and reliable instruments to accurately measure WLH and distinguish it from Work-Life Balance (WLB).

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Further research is also warranted to explore how organizational culture influences the adoption and effectiveness of WLH within workplace settings. On a practical level, organizations may implement WLH-based interventions such as flexible work policies, stress management training that facilitates role integration, and employee development programs that holistically address both personal and professional needs.

Overall, Work-Life Harmony (WLH) presents a more holistic and realistic framework for understanding the interplay between work and personal life. By emphasizing flexibility, integration, and alignment with individual values as its core pillars, WLH fosters work environments that are not only productive but also psychologically sustainable. As such, this approach warrants serious consideration as a strategic alternative in the formulation of human resource management policies within the context of the modern workplace.

2. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to an individual's positive evaluation of their job, reflecting the extent to which their needs and expectations are fulfilled (Amin et al., 2021), Judge et al. (2017) describe job satisfaction as a general attitude resulting from one's assessment of work experiences, encompassing both intrinsic aspects such as achievement and extrinsic aspects such as salary and social relationships in the workplace. Kauppila (2024) further suggests that job satisfaction is influenced by employees' perceptions of leadership behavior, whereby satisfaction itself can act as a lens shaping how employees interpret their work environment. From a more contemporary perspective, Paudel, et al., (2024) define job satisfaction as the degree of employee happiness that affects productivity and retention, emphasizing the importance of work-life equilibrium as a key factor contributing to overall satisfaction.

Factors influencing job satisfaction can stem from both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. Intrinsic factors include elements such as job challenge, autonomy, recognition of contributions, and opportunities for career development (Luthans, 2006). Conversely, extrinsic factors encompass financial compensation, physical working conditions, organizational policies, and social support within the workplace (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). According to Kauppila (2024), employees' perceptions of leadership support and alignment with performance expectations significantly affect their level of satisfaction; in some cases, job satisfaction itself shapes how employees interpret supervisory behavior. Furthermore, Paudel, et al., (2024) highlight that maintaining a balance between personal life and work is a critical element in sustaining job satisfaction. Policies that encourage time flexibility, family support, and a psychologically secure work environment have a positive influence on job satisfaction. In contrast, role conflict and excessive work demands tend to reduce satisfaction, especially when organizational support systems are inadequate to help employees cope with these challenges.

In assessing job satisfaction, multiple interrelated components are involved. Spector (2019) outlines nine major facets: compensation, opportunities for advancement, supervisory relationships, additional benefits, internal motivation, physical work conditions, peer relationships, the nature of assigned tasks, and the quality of workplace communication. Furthermore, Kauppila (2024) highlights the importance of employees' perceptions of their leaders, particularly in terms of the support they provide and the clarity of expectations. These perceptions are considered a vital factor that may influence how job satisfaction translates into actual work performance. Paudel, et al., (2024) categorize job satisfaction into three broad domains: satisfaction with job content (e.g., challenge and meaning), satisfaction with the work environment (including interpersonal relationships), and satisfaction with organizational policies (such as time flexibility and compensation systems). This multidimensional approach aligns with both Spillover Theory and Work/Family Border Theory, which posit that work and personal life experiences interactively shape overall individual well-being and satisfaction.

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3. Z Generation

Generation Z (born approximately between 1995 and 2010) is often referred to as digital natives due to their early and continuous exposure to digital technologies and social media Seemiller & Grace (2016). In the workplace, they exhibit distinct characteristics compared to previous generations, particularly in terms of values, expectations, and the need for life balance. Psychologically, they seek meaningful and flexible work that supports freedom of expression and mental well-being (Schroth, 2019). They tend to reject rigid organizational structures and prefer environments that offer immediate feedback and opportunities for personal development.

Their intensive digital background and exposure to global issues contribute to a strong appreciation for efficiency, speed, and work-life balance (Twenge, 2017). Generation Z is more inclined to pursue jobs that align with their lifestyle and personal values, and they are likely to change jobs if these conditions are not met. Consequently, organizations must adopt flexible work systems that address the emotional and psychological needs of this generation in order to enhance job satisfaction, reduce stress levels, and sustain long-term employee engagement.

Based on the literature review above, the hypothesis of this research is formulated as follows:
H0: Work life harmony has no affect on job satisfaction in generation z employees
H1: Work life harmony affects job satisfaction in generation z employees

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between work-life harmony and job stress among Generation Z employees in Banyumas Regency. A cross-sectional study design was used, wherein data were collected at a single point in time. This design was chosen for its efficiency in terms of time and resources and its ability to statistically describe relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The population of this study consisted of all Generation Z employees (born between 1997 and 2012) working in the formal sector within the Banyumas region. Referring to the guidelines outlined by Feinstein (2001), a minimum of 200 respondents is considered adequate for regression analysis in quantitative research and is deemed sufficient to support generalization of the results. The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, based on the following criteria: individuals aged 18–28 years, employed in the formal sector, and residing or working in Banyumas.

The independent variable in this study was work-life harmony, measured using the Work-Life Harmony Questionnaire developed by Katrina Murphy Coaching (2025). This questionnaire consists of 20 items representing five key dimensions: Relationships & Presence, Fulfillment & Alignment, Time Management & Boundaries, Energy & Well-being, and Control & Freedom. Respondents were asked to rate each statement using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The total score reflects the level of work-life harmony and is categorized into four levels: At Risk, Strained, Sustainable, and Thriving.

The dependent variable in this study was job stress, measured using a job stress scale developed by the researcher based on Luthans (2006) framework. This scale incorporates five key aspects of job satisfaction as indicators of imbalance and work pressure: satisfaction with the job itself, salary, promotion opportunities, relationship with supervisors, and relationship with coworkers. The items were formulated as statements reflecting experiences of stress or pressure in these domains. A 4-point Likert scale was used to encourage decisive responses, following the recommendations of Allen & Seaman (2007): 1 (disagree), 2 (somewhat disagree), 3 (agree), and 4 (strongly agree).

Data collection was conducted online via Google Forms, distributed through company HR departments, alumni networks, and professional communities in Banyumas. A total of 216 Gen Z

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employees participated in the study. Data analysis was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved descriptive analysis to outline the respondents' profiles and the distribution of variable scores. The second stage utilized inferential analysis through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), using the latest version of the SmartPLS software. This technique was selected for its capacity to simultaneously analyze causal relationships between latent variables and their indicators, and for its effectiveness in handling non-normally distributed data and moderately sized samples.

Result and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that work-life harmony has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction among Generation Z employees in Banyumas Regency. The results of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis show a path coefficient of β = 0.609, with a T-statistic of 12.887 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating statistical significance at the 99% confidence level. This suggests that the higher the perceived harmony between work and personal life, the greater the level of job satisfaction experienced by employees.

Relationship Between Variables	Path Coefficient (β)	T-Statistik	P-Value	Description
Work-Life Harmony → Job Satisfaction	0.609	12.887	0.000	Significant, Strong Positive Effect

The β value of 0.609 indicates a strong effect of work-life harmony on job satisfaction, as it is considerably distant from zero. The T-statistic of 12.887 greatly exceeds the critical value of 1.96 (at α = 0.05), and the p-value of 0.000 confirms that the relationship is statistically significant. These results offer strong empirical support for both theoretical interpretation and practical application.

Theoretically, these findings are consistent with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory by Hobfoll (2011), which posits that individuals experience psychological well-being when they are able to preserve and protect valuable resources such as energy, time, and attention. Work-life harmony serves as a protective mechanism that helps individuals manage and restore these resources efficiently. This study also aligns with the development of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model by Bakker & Demerouti (2017), in which work-life harmony functions as an essential personal resource to counter job demands and enhance intrinsic motivation, thereby increasing job satisfaction.

The unique characteristics of Generation Z as digital natives explain why a harmonious approach to work and personal life is more effective than traditional time-based work-life balance. This generation has grown up in digitally connected environments and has high expectations for flexible working arrangements, role clarity, and opportunities for self-actualization (Twenge 2017). Research by Chen & Fulmer (2018) found that Gen Z is twice as responsive to flexible work policies compared to previous generations, underscoring the importance of creating personalized and integrative work systems.

In the context of Banyumas Regency, the prevailing collectivist culture, which prioritizes values such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), kinship, and social harmony (Winasih, 2022), offers a strong cultural basis for the effective implementation of work-life harmony. In contrast to individualistic cultures that tend to separate work and personal domains, collectivist communities such as Banyumas support a more integrated and flexible approach to roles, thereby enhancing both social connectedness and job satisfaction.

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From a practical standpoint, organizations operating in Banyumas can utilize these cultural strengths by developing team-oriented work initiatives. By incorporating collectivist principles such as mutual assistance and shared responsibility, companies can improve employee satisfaction and promote a sense of belonging in the workplace. Triandis (2018) observed that organizations which emphasize collective values including trust and collaboration tend to achieve productivity levels that are up to 25 percent higher than those that focus primarily on individual performance. These findings are consistent with Prayitno et al. (2024), who observed that collectivist societies like Indonesia are more responsive to work policies that promote communal engagement.

This study is also supported by several well-established psychological and management theories. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci & Ryan (2000), job satisfaction increases when three basic psychological needs are fulfilled: (1) autonomy (freedom to make work-related choices), (2) relatedness (meaningful social connections), and (3) competence (mastery of skills). Flexibility offered through work-life harmony facilitates the fulfillment of these needs via autonomous scheduling, team-based collaboration, and opportunities for self-development (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In addition, Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) posits that employees are motivated when they perceive organizational policies (such as flexible work arrangements) as fair. This is consistent with Rama (2025) findings, which demonstrate that organizational justice plays a significant role in fostering discretionary work behavior, as well as enhancing job satisfaction and employee commitment.

Furthermore, Affective Events Theory (AET), introduced by Weiss & Cropanzano (1996), suggests that daily workplace experiences which support the balance between work and personal responsibilities, such as the timely approval of leave or the reduction of prolonged working hours, can evoke positive emotional responses that lead to greater job satisfaction. This theory complements Spillover Theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), which suggests that positive experiences in personal life can carry over into the work domain and vice versa. Work-life harmony facilitates such positive spillovers, fostering emotional stability and work engagement.

Lastly, Person-Environment Fit Theory (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) underscores the importance of alignment between employees' personal values (e.g., flexibility, openness, and role integration) and the organizational work system. When this alignment is achieved, job satisfaction increases significantly and sustainably.

Overall, this study not only reinforces previous empirical findings but also expands the theoretical foundation regarding the importance of work-life harmony in fostering job satisfaction, particularly for younger generations in collectivist cultural settings. Organizations that effectively incorporate the principles of work-life harmony into their management practices and policies have the potential to foster work environments that are healthier, more adaptable, and more productive. At the same time, such organizations are more likely to be perceived as desirable places to work by younger generations who are increasingly selective in their employment choices.

Conclusion

This study concludes that work-life harmony has a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction among Generation Z employees in Banyumas Regency. The statistical analysis indicates that the higher the perceived harmony between work and personal life, the greater the level of job satisfaction experienced by employees. These findings emphasize the importance of an integrative approach to managing work and personal life roles, particularly for younger generations who hold high expectations for flexibility, mental well-being, and meaningful work.

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From a theoretical perspective, this research reinforces the relevance of several psychological and organizational theories, such as the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Spillover Theory, and Person-Environment Fit Theory in explaining the mechanisms through which work-life harmony enhances job satisfaction. Moreover, the collectivist cultural values embedded in the Banyumas community have been shown to support the implementation of work-life harmony, highlighting the significance of local cultural context in shaping effective work policy design.
From a practical perspective, this study recommends that organizations, especially those located in semi-urban areas such as Banyumas, design work systems that prioritize flexibility, a people oriented approach, and responsiveness to the expectations of younger employees. Implementing policies such as adjustable working hours, programs that support employee well-being, and leadership that fosters a supportive environment can be effective in improving job satisfaction and retaining Generation Z workers.
In conclusion, work-life harmony should not be viewed merely as an individual need, but as a strategic factor in creating healthy, productive, and sustainable work environments in the modern employment landscape.

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