



## Work Life Balance and Mental Health Being of Generation Z in the Digital Industry

Dewi Listiorini<sup>1</sup>, Feriandy<sup>2\*</sup>, Widya Ningsih<sup>3</sup>

Universitas Mitra Bangsa

**Corresponding Author:** Feriandy [feriandy.ferii@gmail.com](mailto:feriandy.ferii@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly shaped Generation Z's approach to work-life balance. This study aims to explore the challenges and implications of maintaining work-life balance and mental health-being among Generation Z employees in the digital industry. The research highlights the impact of flexible work arrangements, high work expectations, and constant connectivity on stress levels and job satisfaction. A qualitative approach was employed to gather insights from Generation Z workers, focusing on their experiences and coping mechanisms. Findings indicate that while flexible work environments offer advantages, they also blur the boundaries between work and personal life, contributing to burnout. Companies must adopt strategic human resource management policies to support employee health-being and foster a sustainable digital workforce

## INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving digital era, Generation Z is entering the workforce with different expectations compared to previous generations. They have grown up in a highly connected technological environment, have extensive access to information, and tend to prioritize work-life balance. This balance is no longer just a desire but has become an essential need for this generation. However, the dynamic nature of the digital industry, which often requires employees to stay constantly connected, presents significant challenges in achieving this balance. The imbalance between work demands and personal needs can negatively impact the mental health-being of Generation Z, ultimately affecting their productivity and loyalty to the company (Zirzis, 2024).

This phenomenon is a major concern in human resource management (HRM) since employee health-being is a key factor in creating a healthy and sustainable work environment. The digital industry has unique characteristics such as flexible working hours, results-oriented work culture, and technology-driven remote work. While this flexibility offers advantages, many Generation Z workers struggle to separate work from personal life, leading to work-related stress and burnout. Additionally, high work expectations and intense competition in this industry often increase mental pressure on young workers.

In the academic context, studies on work-life balance and mental health-being among Generation Z in the digital industry are still relatively limited. Most previous research has focused more on millennials or examined mental health-being in general without considering the unique characteristics of Generation Z, who are highly influenced by technology and new workplace values. Therefore, this study contributes by providing in-depth insights into how Generation Z navigates work-life balance within a dynamic digital ecosystem and how HRM strategies can be optimized to support their health-being.

One of the main reasons for this study is the rising levels of stress and anxiety among young workers, especially in the digital industry. Recent studies indicate that Generation Z is more vulnerable to mental health issues due to high work pressure and the lack of clear boundaries between work and personal life. They also tend to have high expectations for workplace flexibility and health-being support from their employers. However, many organizations still fail to fully understand or accommodate these needs, resulting in imbalances that negatively impact productivity and job satisfaction (Roza Aulina Hidayat, 2025).

This paper's main contributions lie in three key aspects. First, it captures a unique sample by focusing on Generation Z workers in the digital industry, a sector with work characteristics different from traditional industries. Second, it enriches existing theories on work-life balance and mental health-being by exploring specific factors that influence Generation Z in achieving this balance. Third, it provides practical insights for companies in developing HR policies and strategies that better align with the needs of young workers in the digital age.

In an era where mental health-being is increasingly gaining attention, it is crucial for organizations to focus not only on productivity but also on ensuring that their employees maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life. Generation Z, with their unique values and preferences, presents both challenges and opportunities for companies to create more flexible and sustainable work environments. Therefore, this study aims to identify concrete solutions that can be implemented in the digital industry to effectively support the mental health-being and work-life balance of Generation Z.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Generation Z

Generation Z refers to the generation that comes after millennials, born between the late 1995 and 2010, making them 13 to 27 years old in 2023. This generation is also known as the iGeneration or Net Generation due to their constant reliance on gadgets and the internet, which indirectly influences their personalities.

Gen Z is often called the post-millennial generation because they share many similarities with millennials. However, what sets them apart is their ability to multitask more efficiently, allowing them to engage in multiple activities simultaneously (Aprilita, 2024).

Generation Z has a different identity from previous generations, including Millennials who are the previous generation. They tend to prefer to work together in completing work, are flexible in facing challenges, and are motivated by achievement. In addition, this generation also enjoys exploring new methods in solving a problem.

Generation Z is often referred to as the digital generation because they rely heavily on technology in their development and growth. It is not surprising that many of them who are still students already have good technical skills. This generation develops along with the advancement of the internet and digital media. Each generation that usually appears in the range of 15 to 18 years has different characteristics from the previous generation and the next generation (Zirzis, 2024).

Some of the main characteristics of Generation Z include :

1. Have great ambitions to succeed, with a personality that tends to be positive and optimistic in achieving dreams.
2. Tend to be practical and like instant problem solving, so they don't want to spend a lot of time studying a problem.
3. Love freedom and have high self-confidence. They highly value freedom of opinion, creativity, and expression.
4. Likes details and has critical thinking. Easy access to information through technology makes them more careful in observing a problem or phenomenon.
5. Strong desire to gain recognition for the efforts, work, and competence that they have dedicated.
6. Very familiar with the digital world and information technology. They were born in an era of rapid technological development, so they are accustomed to using various digital devices in their daily lives.

Generation Z is a unique group with a mindset that is adaptive to change. Their excellence in mastering technology and information makes them a generation that is ready to face the challenges of the modern era.

### **Work-life Balance**

Work-life balance is a concept that emphasizes the ability to manage and harmonize professional responsibilities with personal life. It involves maintaining equilibrium between work commitments, family obligations, and other personal activities such as social engagements. Achieving this balance contributes to an individual's overall satisfaction and health-being.

According to Lumunon et al. (cited in Muliawati, 2020), work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to effectively allocate time and synchronize workplace responsibilities, family life, and personal interests. From the employees' perspective, work-life balance represents the ability to manage professional duties alongside family and personal responsibilities. To enhance job performance and work satisfaction, a supportive, comfortable, and efficient work environment is essential.

Johari et al. (cited in Respati, 2023) argue that work-life balance significantly benefits organizations, as it enhances employee motivation, productivity, and reduces stress levels. Utilizing boundary theory to assess the impact of work-life balance on performance, their study highlights the importance of maintaining balance to optimize employee effectiveness.

Similarly, Aruldoss et al. (cited in Respati, 2023) define work-life balance as an employee's capacity to balance work and personal life, ultimately leading to greater job satisfaction. Meanwhile, Tamunomiebi and Oyibo (cited in Respati, 2023) suggest that maintaining a balanced work-life dynamic fosters employees' organizational commitment, subsequently improving their job performance.

Based on these perspectives, work-life balance can be understood as an individual's ability to allocate time effectively between work and personal life, enabling them to fulfill multiple roles. Achieving this balance is essential for fostering personal satisfaction, ensuring individuals can carry out their responsibilities with focus and efficiency.

### **Mental Health**

Mental health is often associated with the absence of psychological disorders rather than the presence of positive mental functioning (Ryff, 1989). As a result, people tend to define mental health as merely the absence of illness rather than a state of health-being. Health-being itself is described as the extent to which an individual can function optimally (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Huppert (2009) defines mental health-being as a life that functions health, characterized by a combination of positive emotions and effective functioning. Individuals with high mental health-being experience happiness, competence, social support, and life satisfaction. Moreover, Huppert (2009) emphasizes that better physical health is also linked to mental health-being, mediated by brain activation patterns, neurochemical effects, and genetic factors.

Ryan & Deci (2001) outline two primary approaches to understanding mental health-being. The first focuses on happiness, defining health-being as the ability to achieve joy while minimizing distress. The second emphasizes holistic functionality, which includes cognitive health-being and physical health.

Research on mental health-being is essential as it helps individuals identify what is lacking in their lives, highlighting the positive value of mental health (Ryff, 1995). Ryff draws upon several psychological theories to define positive mental functioning. Rogers describes it as a "fully functioning person," Maslow refers to it as "self-actualization," Jung calls it "individuation," and Allport defines it through the concept of "maturity" (Ryff, 1989).

Ryff (1989) attempts to formulate the concept of mental health-being by integrating theories from clinical psychology, developmental psychology, and mental health studies. These include Maslow's self-actualization, Allport's maturity, Rogers' fully functioning person, and Jung's individuation. From developmental psychology, Ryff incorporates Erikson's psychosocial development theory, while also referencing Jahoda's criteria for positive mental health. Ryff ultimately concludes that individuals strive to maintain a positive self-perception despite recognizing their limitations.

### **Human Resource Management**

Human resource management (HRM) refers to a series of organizational activities aimed at attracting, developing, and retaining an effective workforce. Managers play a crucial role in guiding individuals within the organization to achieve its objectives, including ensuring that HRM operates efficiently and effectively. The primary goal of HRM is to maximize job satisfaction for employees while also contributing to the company's overall value, both in the short and long term.

To provide a clearer understanding of HRM, several expert definitions are outlined below. Marwansyah (2014) defines HRM as the strategic utilization of human resources within an organization through various functions such as human resource planning, recruitment and selection, employee development, career planning, compensation and benefits, occupational health and safety, and industrial relations.

Edy Sutrisno (2016) describes HRM as the process of planning, procuring, developing, maintaining, and utilizing human resources to achieve both individual and organizational goals. Meanwhile, Hasibuan (2016) defines HRM as the science and art of managing workforce relations and roles in an efficient and effective manner to help achieve the objectives of the company, employees, and society.

Kasmir (2016) states that HRM involves managing people through planning, recruitment, selection, training, development, compensation, career management, workplace safety, health, and industrial relations—up to termination—to support corporate goals and stakeholder welfare. Similarly, Bintoro and Daryanto (2017) explain that HRM is a discipline focused on organizing and optimizing workforce roles efficiently and effectively to maximize the shared goals of the company, employees, and society.

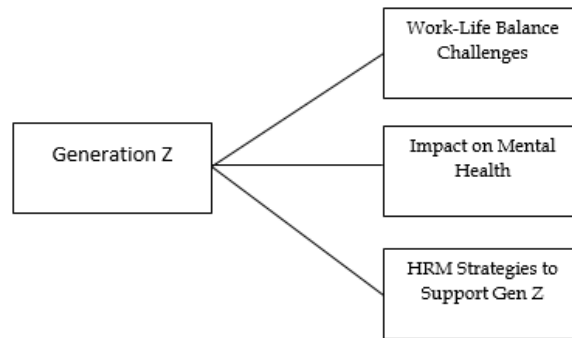


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method. Data is collected from academic journals, books, and research reports discussing Generation Z, work-life balance, mental health, and human resource management (HRM) strategies. Literature sources are selected based on relevance, credibility, and publication within the last ten years to ensure the information remains up-to-date.

### Population and Sample

Since this study is based on a literature review, the population consists of various studies and publications relevant to the topic. The sample includes journal articles, academic books, and research reports specifically addressing Generation Z in the workforce, work-life balance, and mental health.

### Data Analysis Tools

Data analysis is conducted using a thematic approach, where information from various sources is categorized into key themes. This analytical technique is used to identify patterns, compare findings, and synthesize key concepts related to work-life balance and HRM strategies for Generation Z.

## RESULT

This study was conducted by collecting and analyzing various literature related to Generation Z, work-life balance, and human resource management strategies implemented by various companies. The first step in this study was to select relevant sources with a focus on academic journals, books, and research reports published in the last ten years. From the results of the literature search, it was found that Generation Z has different expectations compared to previous generations in terms of work-life balance. Generation Z prioritizes work flexibility, mental health, and the opportunity to develop professionally without having to sacrifice their personal lives. Much literature shows that companies that implement flexible work policies, such as hybrid work systems and more flexible leave policies, tend to be more successful in retaining and increasing the productivity of employees from this generation. In addition, it was found that companies that provide mental health support, such as counseling services and employee healthness programs, are better able to maintain Generation Z's job satisfaction.

HRM strategies that are often mentioned in various studies are the implementation of technology in employee management, the development of more inclusive work policies, and the implementation of a more open and supportive work culture. Several companies have adopted a project-based work system that allows employees to work from any location with a more flexible schedule. In addition, there is an increase in the adoption of technologies such as artificial intelligence-based HR applications that allow employees to set their own work schedules and access various resources related to work health-being (Deva, 2024).

In addition to work flexibility, another aspect of concern is rewards and recognition for employee performance. Many studies have highlighted that Generation Z tends to be more motivated by non-financial rewards, such as learning opportunities, mentorship, and public recognition for their contributions. Therefore, HRM strategies that emphasize career development, access to digital-based training, and employee involvement in organizational decision-making are considered more effective in improving work-life balance for this generation.

## **DISCUSSION**

Managing Human Resources (HR) of Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, brings its own challenges for companies. This generation has different characteristics, values, and expectations compared to previous generations, such as Generation X and Millennials. These differences often make conventional HR management approaches less effective. (Kurniawan, 2024)

### **Challenges in Managing HR of Generation Z**

#### **1. Limited Soft Skills**

Generation Z is known to be very skilled in using technology and digital devices, but they often have difficulty in developing soft skills such as communication, teamwork, creative problem solving, and empathy. Because many of them grew up with digital interactions through social media or text messages, interpersonal skills that require face-to-face interaction may be underdeveloped.

#### **2. Challenges Faced**

- a. Lack of face-to-face communication skills. Many members of Generation Z are more comfortable communicating via text messages or digital applications, reducing their ability to communicate directly, both in formal and informal conversations in the workplace.
- b. Limitations in teamwork. Some members of Generation Z may have difficulty collaborating, especially when direct interaction is required, such as in conflict resolution or face-to-face brainstorming.

#### **3. Solutions that Can Be Implemented**

- a. Provide more in-depth training and development of soft skills, including communication, negotiation, and leadership skills.
- b. Hold workshops that focus on developing social skills and teamwork, and involve them in collaborative projects that require direct interaction.

## **Innovative Approaches to Managing Generation Z HR**

HR development for Generation Z requires a more innovative and flexible approach. According to Levenson (2018), companies need to develop technology-based training strategies, provide space for creativity, and support more open and transparent communication. In addition, Generation Z is more interested in companies that offer opportunities to collaborate, innovate, and develop themselves (Oktavia, 2024).

### **a. Use of Technology in Learning and Development**

Companies must utilize technology in training and developing Generation Z employees. E-learning-based training, mobile applications, and the use of online platforms such as webinars and video tutorials can provide flexible learning experiences according to their preferences. In addition, work flexibility programs, such as remote work options or flexible working hours, can increase their satisfaction and engagement. These policies also support their desired work-life balance, contributing to increased productivity.

### **b. Career Development and Social Engagement**

Generation Z is very interested in opportunities to develop their careers. Therefore, companies need to provide clear career paths and mentoring programs that focus on personal development. In addition, their engagement will be even higher if the company has a corporate social responsibility (CSR) program that is in line with their social values.

### **c. Open and Transparent Communication**

Generation Z highly values open and transparent communication in the workplace. They prefer a managerial style that emphasizes collaboration and participation over a rigid authority structure.

Therefore, companies need to create a communication culture that supports openness and teamwork to increase their engagement and productivity.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Conclusion**

Managing Generation Z HR requires a different approach from previous generations due to their different characteristics, values, and expectations. The main challenges faced include limited soft skills, preference for flexible work environments, and the need for open and transparent communication. Therefore, companies need to adopt more innovative strategies to increase the engagement and productivity of Generation Z in the workplace.

### **Recommendations**

1. Conduct face-to-face communication and teamwork training to strengthen interpersonal skills.
2. Use e-learning, webinars, and digital platforms for more flexible training that suits their learning styles.
3. Provide flexible work options and a work environment that supports a balance between personal and professional life.

### **FURTER STUDY**

This study has limitations in the scope of the sample and the methods used, so the results obtained cannot be generalized widely. In addition, specific cultural and industry aspects have not been explored in depth.

For further research, it is recommended:

1. Examine the differences in expectations and challenges in HR management between Generation Z and other generations.
2. Analyze how Generation Z characteristics influence various job sectors, such as the creative industry, manufacturing, or public services.
3. Examine the impact of technological developments on the work patterns and involvement of Generation Z in the professional environment.

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Hopefully this journal can provide benefits for the development of science and become a useful reference for further research.

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