

The Phenomenon of Work-Life Balance among Generation Z: A Case Study of Creative Workers

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Abstract: *The phenomenon of work-life balance among Generation Z is a major concern in the context of creative workers who have flexible yet intensive work demands. This study aims to identify the factors that influence work-life balance among Generation Z creative workers and analyze their impact on productivity and well-being. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method involving in-depth interviews and participatory observation of 15 creative workers located in a major city. The results show that work flexibility, creative pressure, technology use, and social support are key factors in shaping work-life balance. Generation Z sees flexibility as an advantage but often faces challenges in separating work and personal time. In-depth discussions revealed that effective time management and expectation management are crucial to achieving optimal balance. The conclusion of this study is that work-life balance in Generation Z creative workers depends on their ability to utilize work flexibility while coping effectively with creative pressures. These results provide implications for organizations to support more adaptive work-life balance strategies.*

Keywords: *creative workers, productivity, Generation Z, work-life balance, work flexibility, well-being.*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of work-life balance has become a global issue that has received widespread attention in various work sectors (Akanji et al., 2020). Changes in the work paradigm caused by globalization, technological advances, and the transformation of work culture have affected the way individuals view the balance between work and personal life (Schonfeld & Chang, 2017). Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, entered the workforce with a unique perspective, influenced by the development of digital technology and a culture of flexibility. As the first generation to grow up in a fully digital era, Generation Z has different expectations of work, including a preference for flexibility, meaning in work, and better integration between work and personal life (Wolfenbarger, 2023).

However, this demand is inseparable from various factors that influence the emergence of work-life balance problems, especially among creative workers. First, the expected flexibility of work is often a double-edged sword. Despite offering time freedom, flexibility often leads to blurred boundaries between work and personal life, which in turn triggers stress and emotional exhaustion (Rofcanin et al., 2017). Second, the pressure to constantly come up with creative and innovative ideas becomes a burden for creative workers, especially when they are faced with tight targets and high expectations from clients and companies (Amabile, 2018). Third, the dominance of technology in work, such as constant communication through email and instant messaging applications, extends working hours and reduces time for relaxation (Zhou et al., 2024).

These factors have a significant impact on the well-being of Generation Z creative workers. Lack of work-life balance can lead to chronic stress, decreased productivity, and burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In addition, this condition also affects interpersonal aspects, such as the quality of social and family relationships, which are important elements in supporting holistic well-being (Allen & Martin,

2017). In the context of creative workers, the inability to manage work-life balance can lead to a decline in the quality of creative output, which directly affects individual and organizational performance.

In more detail, work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to meet the demands of work and personal life in a balanced manner without sacrificing either of these aspects (Hetrick et al., 2024). In the context of Generation Z, this concept has a more complex meaning, as this generation tends to see work not only as a source of income but also as a place for self-actualization and identity development. This poses a particular challenge for creative workers who often work in unstructured environments, with unpredictable working hours and high expectations for innovative work.

This research offers a novelty contribution by focusing on the perspective of Generation Z, which has not been widely explored in relation to work-life balance in the creative work sector (Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021). Most previous studies have focused on Generation Y (millennials) or only looked at work-life balance from an organizational perspective without considering generational differences and types of work that have unique characteristics (Wolfenbarger, 2023). As such, this research seeks to provide a more in-depth understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Generation Z in managing work-life balance.

The urgency of this research is based on the increasing number of Generation Z workers in the global workforce. By 2030, it is estimated that Generation Z will make up almost a third of the world's total workforce (Gallardo-Gallardo & Collings, 2021). Understanding their needs and challenges, particularly in the context of work-life balance, is crucial to creating a work environment that supports productivity and long-term well-being. In addition, the creative sector, which has a major contribution to the global economy, needs better strategies to retain creative and innovative young talent.

This research aims to identify the factors that influence work-life balance among Generation Z creative workers and analyze its impact on their productivity and well-being (Fleeton, 2024). By focusing on the direct experiences of creative workers, the research also aims to develop strategies that organizations can implement to support a better work-life balance for this generation.

The benefits of this research include several aspects. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on work-life balance, especially in the context of Generation Z and creative workers. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for companies in designing work policies that are more flexible but still effective (Allen et al., 2015). In addition, this research also provides insight to Generation Z creative workers regarding the importance of time management and work pressure management strategies to achieve a more optimal life balance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is qualitative research with a case study approach that aims to deeply understand the phenomenon of work-life balance among Generation Z who work as creative workers. This approach was chosen to explore the experiences, views, and dynamics that influence work-life balance in a specific and unique context. The focus of this research lies in how individuals from Generation Z manage the challenges they face in achieving such balance, as well as the factors that contribute to their success or failure in achieving it.

The research was conducted in major cities that are centres of the creative industry in Indonesia, such as Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta. The research took place over six months, from January to June 2024, to ensure comprehensive data collection and cover variations in working time and seasonal challenges experienced by participants.

The population in this study is all Generation Z creative workers who work in the creative industry in Indonesia, with a research sample of 15 individuals. The sample selection was carried out by purposive sampling, namely by setting certain criteria to match the research focus. The research instruments used include interview guides, observation sheets, and documentation. The interview guide was designed to direct discussions in a structured yet flexible manner, allowing participants to share their experiences and views in depth.

The data collection process was conducted through three main stages: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Document analysis was used to supplement interviews and observations with additional information of a more technical nature. This research was designed to provide solutions to the problems identified by combining theoretical and empirical understanding of work-life balance in Generation Z. By uncovering the experiences, challenges and strategies used by Generation Z, and the researcher was able to understand the work-life balance of Generation Z. By uncovering the experiences, challenges, and strategies used by creative workers, the results are expected to provide guidance for organizations and individuals in creating a work environment that supports work-life balance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Work-Life Balance

The results show that the concept of work-life balance among Generation Z creative workers has unique characteristics. The majority of participants consider flexibility in working time as an important element in achieving work-life balance. However, some participants also revealed that this flexibility often creates challenges in the form of difficulty separating work time and rest time. Below are some specific findings related to the variables studied:

Work Flexibility

A total of 12 out of 15 participants stated that the flexibility of working time allows them to be more productive, especially in completing tasks that require high creativity.

Creativity Pressure

All participants identified creative pressure as a major challenge in their work. High targets and client expectations often force them to work outside of normal working hours, thus sacrificing personal time.

Technology Influence

A total of 13 participants admitted that technology makes their work easier, especially in communicating and collaborating remotely.

Time Management

Time management is a critical aspect in achieving work-life balance. From the interviews, it was found that only 5 participants actively used time management methods, such as making a daily schedule or using productivity apps.

The Impact of Work-Life Balance on Productivity and Wellbeing

Productivity

Most of the participants (10 out of 15) admitted that work-life imbalance leads to decreased productivity. This usually happens when they feel emotionally exhausted or experience excessive pressure from work. However, participants who managed their time well reported increased productivity as they had enough energy and focus to complete tasks.

Physical and Mental Wellbeing

Work-life imbalance also has a significant impact on physical and mental well-being. A total of 8 participants reported symptoms of chronic fatigue, such as headaches, sleep disturbances and decreased energy.

Strategies Used by Participants

Create Work Time Limits

Some participants set strict work time limits, such as stopping work at 6 pm or not checking work messages on weekends. Although difficult, these steps helped them separate their work and personal lives.

Using Technology Wisely

A total of 6 participants mentioned that they try to manage their use of technology, for example by disabling notifications outside of working hours or using apps to prioritize work.

Seeking Social Support

Some participants found support from family, friends or coworkers helpful. This support helped them cope with stress and gave them a new outlook on problem-solving.

Participating in Relaxation Activities

A total of 5 participants admitted to regularly participating in relaxation activities, such as yoga, meditation or exercise, to reduce work pressure and improve their well-being.

Top Causes of Work-Life Balance Disruption

Unstructured Work Flexibility

The results show that work flexibility, while valued by Generation Z, is often a double-edged sword. Flexibility without clear time limits raises the risk of blurring the line between work and personal life, which is in line with the findings of Kossek et al. (2017). Previous research has shown that workers who work outside of defined working hours have a higher risk of experiencing emotional exhaustion and burnout. In the context of Generation Z creative workers, this phenomenon becomes more complex due to the nature of their work, which does not always have a structured work pattern.

Creativity Pressure

All research participants reported that the pressure to come up with creative ideas was the biggest challenge in their work. This result supports Amabile's (2018) study, which states that creativity requires a stable mental state and a supportive environment. However, in the creative sector, high expectations from clients or superiors often create additional pressures that disrupt work-life balance.

Technology Domination

A total of 11 participants revealed that technology while making collaboration and communication easier, has extended their working hours. This finding is in line with the study of Mazmanian et al. (2024), which states that technology creates the illusion of permanent availability, so workers feel tied to work even outside of working hours. In the context of Generation Z's heavy reliance on technology, this challenge becomes even more significant.

Solution Offered

Working Time Limitation

One of the key solutions that emerged from this research is the importance of setting clear working time limits. Flexibility in working time must be balanced with rules that ensure workers can actually stop working outside of certain working hours. This solution is supported by Greenhaus & Allen's (2017) study, which showed that working time limits can reduce stress and improve well-being.

Technology Management

Participants who actively managed their technology use, such as disabling work notifications outside of working hours, reported improved work-life balance (Holmgren, 2018). Organizations can contribute by establishing technology use policies that support this balance, for example, by limiting the sending of work emails or messages outside of working hours.

Organizational Support

Organizations that provide support, such as time management training or welfare programs, can help Generation Z creative workers overcome the challenges they face. A previous study showed that organizational interventions that support work-life balance can increase worker productivity and loyalty.

Individual Strategy

Participants who actively used individualized strategies, such as exercise, meditation, or participating in relaxation activities, reported better well-being. This solution is in line with the psychological approach to stress reduction, as proposed by (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Impact of Solution Implementation**Productivity Improvement**

If the solutions offered are implemented, Generation Z creative workers will have better energy and focus to complete their work. This result supports the findings of previous research which shows that a good work-life balance correlates with increased productivity (Hetrick et al., 2024).

Better Welfare

By reducing excessive work pressure and increasing time for personal activities, workers' physical and mental well-being will improve. In the long run, this will reduce the risk of burnout and improve the career sustainability of creative workers.

Labor Retention

Organizations that support work-life balance have higher workforce retention rates. Generation Z, who are more likely to leave a job if they are dissatisfied, are more likely to stay in a work environment that supports this balance (Gallardo-Gallardo & Collings, 2021).

Comparison with Previous Research

This research has some differences and similarities with previous studies. Most previous research has focused on Generation Y or workers in the formal sector, making it less relevant to understanding Generation Z's experiences in the creative sector. This research extends the literature by focusing on Generation Z and identifying the unique challenges they face, such as creative pressures and technological dominance.

In addition, the findings of this study also reinforce ideas from previous studies, such as the importance of work flexibility and technology management (Rofcanin et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2024). However, this study provides a new perspective by highlighting the importance of organizational support and individual strategies specific to creative workers.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research makes a theoretical contribution by enriching the literature on work-life balance among Generation Z, particularly in the context of the creative sector (Mattarelli et al., 2024). Practically, the results of this study can serve as guidelines for organizations in designing policies that support work-life balance, as well as helping individuals understand the importance of work pressure management strategies.

CONCLUSION

This research aims to explore the phenomenon of work-life balance (WLB) among Generation Z creatives, with a focus on how they navigate the boundaries between professional and personal lives in a dynamic work environment. Key findings show that Generation Z in the creative industry faces great challenges in achieving a work-life balance due to flexible yet intense work demands. This research highlights the importance of developing organizational policies that support work flexibility while ensuring clear boundaries between work and personal life. These findings are relevant for companies looking to create a more sustainable work environment for young workers.

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