

Work Engagement: Millennial Vs Gen Z in Terms of Work-Life Balance

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ABSTRACT: The topic of work engagement is becoming increasingly important in the context of generational change, especially between Millennials and Generation Z, which is characterized by shifting views on work-life balance. This study aims to determine the involvement of work-life balance on work engagement and explore the differences between the two generations. The method applied in this study is a quantitative approach, with data collection through questionnaires distributed to 65 employees from two generations in Surabaya. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to measure the relationship between work life balance and work engagement. The results showed that there is a significant difference in the level of work engagement between Millennials and Generation Z, which is related to the experience of work-life balance; Generation Z tends to place work-life balance as a greater priority compared to Millennials. The contribution of this research is that it can provide insights for managers and leaders in formulating human resource policies that are more effective in increasing work engagement among younger generations. This research suggests the need for a more adaptive approach in creating a work environment that supports work-life balance. This research highlights the importance of understanding generational differences in the context of work engagement and its impact on organizational performance.

KEYWORDS: Work engagement, work-life balance, Millennial Generation, Generation Z.

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement has become an important factor influencing organizational performance in the modern workplace. Engaged employees are not only more productive and committed, but also positively impact team dynamics and customer satisfaction (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022). However, a recent global survey shows that the proportion of highly engaged employees is still low, especially in developing countries like Indonesia (Sinha, 2021). The demographic changes in today's workforce are characterized by the dominance of two main generations: Millennials (1981-1996) and Generation Z (born after 1997). In Indonesia, the proportion of the workforce coming from these two generations has increased significantly.

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (2024) shows that more than 62.5% of the formal workforce in the service and industrial sectors in major cities come from the productive age group ranging from 25 to 59 years old, which generally consists of Millennials and Gen Z (BPS, 2024). The changing generational composition of the workforce poses new challenges for engagement strategies. Millennial and Generation Z employees, shaped by rapid technological advances and globalization, exhibit unique characteristics in work values, communication styles, and career expectations (Prasetya & Kartikawangi, 2021). Both generations are recognized to highly value flexibility and work-life balance, which is evident in their preference for work environments that allow for customization of work time and location. (Wijiati & Chasanah, 2024). This flexibility is not just a preference, but has become a necessity for employees to maintain productivity and job satisfaction (Prasetya & Kartikawangi, 2021; TIDHAR, 2022; Harris et al., 2020).

Based on research, millennials are more attracted to companies that provide flexible working hours and an environment that supports work-life balance (Prasetya & Kartikawangi, 2021; Chopra & Bhilare, 2020). On the other hand, Generation Z is described as a group that prioritizes effective communication, positive professional interactions, and room for self-development (Janssen & Carradini, 2021). Although this generation shows high potential in terms of work engagement, challenges remain. For example, high rates of turnover and disengagement among millennials indicate that there is still work to be done to ensure that the work environment matches employee expectations (Bantha et al., 2023).

The issue of work engagement, which includes the level of emotional, cognitive, and physical attachment of employees to their work, is becoming increasingly important given its direct correlation with employee productivity, loyalty, and retention rates (Abidin, 2021; Wood et al., 2020). In addition, work-life balance is now a top priority for the new generation of workers. Research by Rachmadini & Riyanto (2020) shows that Gen Z tends to value work-life balance as the main factor in determining job loyalty, while Millennials are more focused

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on career development. In addition, other research shows that employee engagement is not only influenced by the work environment, but also by the social relationships and support received in daily work (Bantha et al., 2023).

With increasing work-life balance conflicts between work and family, which can reduce work engagement, it is important for companies to implement strategies that support this balance, one of which is to provide flexible work patterns (Janssen & Carradini, 2021; Stephens, 2021). After the COVID-19 pandemic, the adoption of hybrid and flexible work models has accelerated globally. Surabaya, as a metropolitan city, shows an increasing trend in the adoption of remote working and flexible working hours. This calls for a deeper understanding of how each generation is adapting to this new work format. Research underscores that employee engagement in remote work environments is strongly influenced by perceptions of work-life balance, especially in Millennial groups Desiatco et al. 2024; Shirmohammadi & Beigi, 2022).

Nonetheless, there are shortcomings in the current research, indicating a significant gap in the literature. Most previous studies focus on Gen Z or Millennials separately without conducting a direct comparison between the two in the local work context in Indonesia. In addition, empirical studies exploring the role of work-life balance as a mediating or moderating variable in the relationship between generations and work engagement are limited. The need to develop organizational strategies that can accommodate the different values of the two generations is becoming increasingly important. Research by Elayan (2022) shows that digital learning and flexible management strategies have a different impact on Gen Z compared to Millennials. Therefore, exploring the comparison between the two generations within the same framework has the potential to provide meaningful theoretical contributions in the development of cross-generational motivation theory, as well as practical benefits for human resource managers in big cities such as Surabaya. This study aims to answer questions surrounding the influence of intergenerational work preferences on work engagement.

The contributions of this research include expanding the understanding of the impact of personal and organizational factors on cross-generational engagement in an urban Indonesian context. Meanwhile, it provides strategic recommendations for human resource managers in formulating appropriate policies to sustainably maintain the productivity and retention of a young workforce. This research is expected to provide an empirical basis for more adaptive and inclusive work practices that are able to respond to generational dynamics in today's workplace.

II. METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is a correlational and comparative study. Correlational tests are used to determine the relationship between one variable and another. Comparative test to determine the difference in work engagement between millennial generation and generation z. The purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of work-life balance on work engagement among Generation Z and millennial workers. The population of this research is employees who work in Surabaya. The research sample used G-power with an effect size of 0.4 which was obtained from previous research obtained a minimum size of 63 respondents, in the data collection process obtained 65 respondents.

Data collection was carried out through the distribution of questionnaires that met the criteria of being born between 1997 and 2012, aged between 18 and 26 years, having a minimum work experience of 6 months, and working at least 40 hours a week. The instrument used in this study is a work engagement scale made by research referring to the theory of Schaufeli et al (2002) which consists of three aspects namely vigor, dedication and absorption. then for the work life balance scale refers to Fisher's theory (2002) which consists of two aspects namely demands and resources. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression to test the effect of work-life balance on work engagement.

III. RESEARCH RESULTS

The research subjects consisted of employees working in various companies in Surabaya, totaling 65 people, with a composition of 41 men (63%) and 24 women (37%), aged between 13 and 45 years. The results of the work engagement category analysis showed that in the group of respondents born between 1980 and 1995, there were 2 people in the Very High category, 6 people in the High category, 12 people in the medium category, 4 people in the Low category, and no respondents in the Very Low category. Meanwhile, for the age group born between 1995 and 2010, the data showed that 1 person was in the Very High category, 9 people in the High category, 21 people in the medium category, 7 people in the Low category, and 3 people were in the very low category. Results can be seen in table 1.

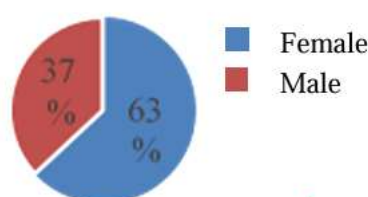


Figure 1. Graph of Subject Gender

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Figure 2. Graph of Subject Gender

Table 1. Work Engagement Categories

Categories					
Subject Age					
	ST	T	S	R	SR
1980-1995	2	6	12	4	-
1995-2010	1	9	21	7	3
Total	3	15	33	11	3
Total			65		

Based on the length of service category, respondents born between 1980 and 1995 showed the following distribution: 6 people have 1-2 years of work experience, 8 people have 3-5 years of work experience, 5 people work in the range of 6-10 years, and 6 other people have a work period of more than 10 years. Meanwhile, for the group of respondents born between 1995 and 2010, there were 28 people who worked in the 1-2 years category, 12 people with 3-5 years of work experience, and no respondents who worked for more than 6 years. The categories can be seen in table 2.

Table 2: Categories of Length of Service

Subject Age	Categories			
	1-2 Th	3-5 Th	6-10 Th	>10 Th
1980-1995	6	8	5	6
1995-2010	28	12	-	-
Total	34	20	5	6
Total			65	

Based on the results of the normality test of the work engagement variable using Shapiro-Wilk, the significance $p > 0.005$ is obtained. This shows that the research data on the variable has a normal distribution. The results of the normality test can be seen in table 3.

Tabel 3. Hasil Uji Normalitas

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk			Description
	Statistic	df	sig	
Work Engagement	0,978	65	0,331	Normal

The results of the linearity test of the relationship between work life balance variables and work engagement obtained a significance of 0.071 ($p > 0.05$). This means that there is a linear relationship between work life balance variables and work engagement. The test results are in table 4.

Table 4. Linearity test results

Y Variable	X Variable	N	F	Deviation From Linearity
Work Engagement	Work Life Balance	65	1.720	0,071

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The results of the homogeneity test using anova obtained a significance of 0.938 ($p > 0.05$). This means that the data distribution of the groups to be compared is homogeneous. The test results can be seen in table 5.

Table 5. Homogeneity Test Results

Leave Statistic	df	sig	Description
0,006	65	0,938	Homogen

The results of hypothesis testing after product moment correlation analysis obtained a value of $r_{xy} = -0.323$ with a significance of 0.009 ($p < 0.000$). This can be interpreted that there is a significant negative relationship between work life balance and work engagement. The test results can be seen in table 6.

Table 6. Correlation Test Results

Variable	Coefficient Correlation	Sig
<i>work life balance -work engagement.</i>	-0,323	0,009

The results of hypothesis testing conducted using the Independent Sample T Test show that the T value obtained is 1.740 with a significance level of 0.087 ($p > 0.05$). This shows that there is no significant difference in work engagement between millennials and generation Z. The results of the t test can be seen in table 7.

Table 7. T Test Analysis Results

Work engagement	T	p
	1.740	0,087

IV. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the analysis conducted, it shows that there is a significant negative relationship between work-life balance (WLB) and work engagement (WE) with a value of $r = -0.323$ and $p = 0.009$. This indicates that the more positive an individual's view of work-life balance, the lower the level of individual engagement at work. This finding contradicts much of the literature that views work-life balance as a key factor supporting positive engagement at work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Harris et al., 2020). In this case, high WLB scores may reflect that individual prioritize personal life over work demands, thus reducing motivation to engage emotionally and cognitively in work-related tasks. Research by Iddagoda et al. suggests that work-life balance has an important role in influencing employee engagement, but also emphasizes that this engagement is influenced by various factors including work environment and organizational support (Iddagoda et al., 2021).

The research rejects the notion that work-life balance always contributes to increased work engagement. According to the Job Demands-Resources Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), resources such as work-life balance should strengthen WE by providing energy and intrinsic motivation. However, this negative result can be understood through a generational perspective: Generation Z, which dominates the sample, seems to prefer a clear separation between personal and work life. As a result, individuals do not feel the need to be emotionally involved in work as long as personal needs are met (Tidhar, 2022). This difference in value orientation suggests that the level of work engagement is not only influenced by workplace resources, but also by personal values and career mindsets that differ across generations.

High WLB scores reflect that individual prioritize personal life over work demands, which results in less motivation to engage emotionally and cognitively in work tasks. Rahmayati illustrates this through a case study of a career woman who managed to balance work and personal life despite facing challenges (Rahmayati, 2021). In contrast, results from a study by Syuzairi et al. highlighted that job satisfaction is an important indicator in driving work engagement. If job satisfaction is not met, it may trigger intentions to leave the organization, signifying that WLB does not always serve as a guarantee for positive work engagement (Syuzairi et al., 2023). This exposes the complexity of the relationship between WLB and WE, especially when the job satisfaction factor emerges as a mediator between the two.

When compared comparatively, the results of the t-test analysis showed that there was no significant difference in the level of work engagement (WE) between Millennials and Generation Z, with a p value = 0.087. Although descriptively, Generation Z is more likely to be classified in the "moderate" to "low" category, this finding indicates that the differences in value characteristics between the two generations do not create statistically significant differences in WE level. This phenomenon is important to understand in the context of evolving generational dynamics, where individuals' values and priorities play a role in shaping their engagement at work. Although their levels of engagement did not show a notable difference, the behavior of employees from each generation can still be observed and researched further.

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This finding is in line with the results of a study by Bantha et al. (2023), which showed that despite differences in motivation and work styles between Millennials and Generation Z, engagement levels can remain similar if the needs of these generations are well met. Furthermore, research by Schaufeli et al. (2002) that looked at dimensions of WE, such as vigor, dedication, and absorption, also supports this argument, suggesting that despite different approaches to work, the quality of engagement can still be measured using consistent tools. Furthermore, research by Soria, (2023) also shows that organizational characteristics, including policies that address employee well-being and personal development opportunities, have a significant impact on WE. Although Generation Z tends to value work-life balance more, the implementation of policies that are responsive to needs such as flexibility in working time and access to self-development activities can contribute to increased engagement even though individuals are descriptively seen to have lower levels of engagement.

Thus, although the results of this study show no significant differences between Millennials and Generation Z in terms of WE, it is still important for organizations to understand the differences in characteristics and needs between the generations. Adjustments in management approaches and organizational policies can help create a work environment that supports higher engagement for both generations, thereby boosting productivity and minimizing the possibility of workforce turnover due to dissatisfaction.

The contribution of this study is significant as it provides local insights in Indonesia that directly compare two main generations in an urban context. In addition, the correlational cross-sectional method used confirms the importance of understanding subjective values in analyzing WE. The literature review also includes some classic theories on WE from Schaufeli et al. (2002), which has been consistently applied in the measurement tool. However, there are some limitations in this study. First, the relatively small sample size ($n=65$) and limited focus on the Surabaya area limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the majority of Generation Z respondents have less than three years of work experience, thus not fully reflecting a stable WE level. Third, other variables that could serve as moderators or mediators, such as job satisfaction or supportive leadership, were not analyzed in this model.

Therefore, future research is recommended to increase the sample size and diversity from different sectors and regions. Integrate mediation models (e.g. through work motivation or affective commitment) to delve deeper into the complex relationship between WLB and WE. Furthermore, adopting a longitudinal approach to study the dynamics of WE over time and individual career development. By recognizing that work-life balance is not the only factor determining engagement, organizations can design human resource policies that are more responsive to the expectations of the modern generation of workers.

V. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the relationship between work-life balance (WLB) and work engagement (WE), as well as compare the level of WE between Millennials and Generation Z. The results showed a significant negative relationship between WLB and WE ($r = -0.323$; $p = 0.009$). The analysis showed a significant negative relationship between WLB and WE ($r = -0.323$; $p = 0.009$). This means that the higher an individual's perception of work-life balance, the lower their level of engagement at work. This finding contradicts much of the previous literature and highlights Generation Z's tendency to prioritize separation between personal and professional life, thus affecting their degree of emotional and cognitive engagement.

Furthermore, the t-test results showed no significant difference in the level of WE between Millennials and Generation Z ($p = 0.087$), although descriptively Generation Z was more in the moderate to low engagement category. This suggests that generational differences do not necessarily lead to statistically significant differences in engagement, but remain relevant as a basis for consideration in designing organizational management strategies. Factors such as job satisfaction, organizational support, and flexible work policies also proved to be important components that influence WE across generations.

These findings introduce us to the issue of work engagement not simply as a time management problem, but as a reflection of generational values and expectations of the modern workplace. The view that work-life balance automatically increases work engagement needs to be revisited, especially in the context of younger generations who value autonomy, flexibility and personal meaning in work. Organizations need to avoid a uniform approach and start developing management strategies that are adaptive to diverse generational characteristics.

Academically, these results open up opportunities for further research on other psychosocial factors that act as mediators in the relationship between WLB and WE. Meanwhile, practically, organizations are advised to create a work environment that is more inclusive, flexible, and responsive to the needs of each generation. As individuals, we are also invited to reflect on whether our engagement in work is rooted in authentic motivations, or merely structural demands. Now is the time for collaboration between individuals and institutions to create a more sustainable and meaningful work culture.

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