

Work-Life Integration vs Work-Life Balance : Tracing Generation Z's Preferences and Perceptions of Flexible Work Patterns in a Creative Startup Environment

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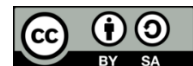
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ABSTRACT

In the work landscape in the modern world, it is increasingly digitized and the change in the work paradigm in the current digital era has given rise to new work patterns and the main approach to how Generation Z manages their professional and personal lives; Work-Life Balance and Work-Life Integration. This study aims to explore and examine the preferences and perceptions of Generation Z towards new work patterns, especially in the context of creative industry startups. By using qualitative methods and data obtained from interviews with Gen Z employees in several creative industry startup companies in Jakarta. From the results of the study, it was identified that the majority of Generation Z employees are more likely to choose Work-Life Integration preferences, which they consider to be more in line with lifestyle and lifestyle in this digital era. Such as the lifestyle of Generation Z in the use of technology that they can access and have and how they combine personal and professional activities. However, in practice, it is found that there is a need for clear and healthy boundaries so that this flexibility does not lead to work burnout, this study highlights how important the role of company management is in creating a balanced, supportive and adaptive work environment and policies that are supportive and adaptive to the needs of Gen Z which is certainly oriented towards the sustainability of young employee productivity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, significant technological advances have brought about fundamental changes in the dynamics and social values associated with the world of work. Digital transformation has changed the way individuals interact with work, triggering the birth of new expectations for flexibility and life balance (Gallup, 2022). The

dominance of Generation Z in the current workforce has fundamentally changed work culture. Various data shows that Generation Z has a high interest in working in the creative industry. Based on the 2022 Populix report, as many as 71% of Gen Z in Indonesia stated that they are interested in fields of work that allow self-expression and creativity, such as graphic design, digital content, music, film, and fashion. This is in line with the World

Economic Forum (Future of Jobs Report 2023) report which highlights the increasing demand for labor in the creative and digital sectors that are in high demand by Gen Z as digital natives. The LinkedIn Talent Trends 2023 report also notes that jobs such as content creators, UI/UX designers, and digital marketers are experiencing increased interest from Gen Z because they offer space for creativity and innovation. In Indonesia, data from Bekraf and BPS show that the field of visual communication, music, and animation design is dominated by young talents aged 20–30 years, which is the age group of Gen Z. In addition, a survey from Youthmanual and the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower also strengthens these findings, with the result that Gen Z tends to choose careers in the fields of art, media, and entertainment because of their passion, global career opportunities, as well as the development of digital technologies that support the industry. Overall, Gen Z's preference for the creative industries is driven by the need to express themselves, work flexibility, and the desire to work in a dynamic and meaningful environment.

Generation Z, who were born and raised in an all-digital environment, show different preferences and perceptions compared to previous generations (Twenge, 2017; McKinsey & Company, 2022). They not only pay attention to the flexibility of working hours, but also assess the importance of applying personal values in the world of work. In addition to material aspects, Generation Z strongly considers meaning, well-being, and opportunities to develop themselves in their careers (Deloitte, 2023).

These changes in dynamics have driven an evolution in the management of professional and personal lives. The concept of Work-Life Balance, which for decades has been the main paradigm in the world of work, is now starting to shift towards Work-Life Integration, along with the increasing dominance of Generation Z in the workplace (The American Psychological Association (APA), 2018). Work Life Balance emphasizes the strict separation between professional and personal life. On the contrary, WorkLife

Integration encourages harmony and flexibility between the two aspects.

Generation Z, as a digital-native generation, has a different approach to looking at the relationship between personal and work life. One of the industrial fields that is in great demand by Generation Z is the creative industry. The creative industry is currently growing rapidly as one of the main drivers of the global economy, including the design, media, advertising, performing arts, film, and digital content production sectors on social media (Rindu et al., 2024). The industry offers a dynamic and flexible work environment, with remote work patterns and non-rigid working hours, making it particularly attractive to generation Z.

For Generation Z, the creative industry is seen as a space to express one's identity, pursue passion, and gain intrinsic job satisfaction. McKinsey & Company (2022) shows that Generation Z highly values a workplace that provides autonomy, space for innovation, and the integration of personal values into their work. However, on the other hand, Generation Z also has high expectations for clarity in career direction, recognition of contributions, and access to professional competency development.

By offering an unconventional and dynamic work culture, the creative industry becomes a "natural laboratory" for understanding how Generation Z manages the integration between work and personal life. Understanding the work culture preferences of Generation Z is very important, considering its implications for talent management strategies, organizational culture development, and business sustainability in the future (Gallup, 2022; Deloitte, 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to explore the preferences and perceptions of Generation Z towards flexible work patterns, by comparing their tendencies towards Work-Life Balance and Work-Life Integration in the creative industry environment. This research is expected to contribute to the human resource management literature and offer new insights for industry players in designing

work policies that are more in line with the needs of today's generation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Work Life Balance

Work Life Balance can be interpreted as a condition where workers can separate and divide their time and attention in a balanced way between their professional and personal lives. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), Work Life Balance is defined as "the lack of conflict between work roles and family roles", so that a person can carry out both roles without experiencing excessive stress. In the concept of Work Life Balance, it emphasizes a clear boundary between professional life and personal life. This is done to maintain the mental and physical well-being of the individual individual.

The concept of Work Life Balance has been known since the 1970s-1980s along with the inclusion of the role of women in the world of work and the increasing awareness of the importance of mental health. Initially, the concept of Work Life Balance was emphasized for women who lived in dual roles as workers and also took care of their families (Lewis, 2003). However, as time goes by, this concept no longer emphasizes women but also men (across genders), especially with the rise of technology and globalization that have extended working hours and begun to blur the boundaries between professional and personal life.

In the 2000s, various types of Work Life Balance models emerged such as flexible working hours, remote working and results-based work orientation. The rapid development of technology also affects changes in the dynamics of work culture, making the Work Life Balance approach a complex new challenge (Kossek, 2016).

In the view of generation Z, this concept is no longer only understood as a separation of time between the professional world and personal time. But also, as a need to integrate personal meaning into work. According to Deloitte research (2023), generation Z is not only based on material things, but generation z also attaches

importance to flexible time, freedom to develop themselves, and good mental health. This is because Generation Z grew up and was born in the digital era and global crisis which resulted in the demands of a more humanist world of work which of course not only attaches importance to work results and wages but also pays attention to how the workers themselves, especially mental health and support their personal values (Twenge, 2017; McKinsey & Company, 2022).

Strategies to achieve this concept have also been developed that include various individual approaches as well as organizational policies. The strategy includes:

- a. Flexibility of working time
- b. Remote working policy
- c. Employee welfare programs
- d. Supportive leave policy

Meanwhile, from the individual side itself, the strategy includes:

- a. Establishing healthy work boundaries
- b. Effective time management
- c. Stress management and good mental health
- d. Improved self-management skills

Kossek, Baltes, and Matthews (2011) argue that the achievement of Work Life Balance depends on a combination of organizational policies and individual adaptation skills in managing work and personal life boundaries.

2.2 Work-Life Integration

Work-Life Integration is a concept that maintains a balance between professional and personal life by emphasizing harmonization between the two in a more flexible and integrated way. This concept emphasizes the combination of work activities with personal life activities in a sustainable way. So that it allows each individual to move more freely between personal life and life at work (Kossek et al., 2015).

It is different from Work Life Balance which emphasizes clear boundaries, especially professional time with personal time. The goal is to maintain a healthy balance by dividing a good allocation of time for work and personal life so that the two do not

interfere with each other (Greenhaus & Alle, 2011).

While work life integration focuses on combining professional and personal time in a dynamic way. Rather than separating the two-time, work life integration focuses more on merging the two aspects. This concept allows everyone to customize it to their individual needs.

Along with development, work life integration is starting to become popular among generation Z. Some of the factors that contribute to this work life integration trend are:

a. Technological Advancements

With technological advancements, an employee can do his work anywhere and anytime. This provides greater flexibility in combining work with their lives (Chung, 2018).

b. COVID-19 pandemics

After the pandemic that prompted a change in the way workers worked, it was changed to remote work or work from home, making the boundary between work and personal life blurred. This encourages more and more individuals to look for ways to integrate these two aspects (Chung, 2020).

With the flexibility provided by work life integration, it is considered to reduce stress, support mental well-being, and increase job satisfaction. Some studies show that people who can manage their work flow that they then fit into their personal lives tend to be more satisfied and freer from excessive fatigue (Bailyn, 2014). However, of course, there are 2 sides to everything. In practice, there is also a negative side if this flexibility is not managed properly, there is a high risk that individuals will find it difficult to get away from their work which of course can lead to fatigue and a decrease in the quality of personal life.

2.3 Preferences and Perceptions of Generation Z

Generation Z is known as the digital native generation or people who are familiar with technology and grow up in an environment filled with digital technology. Therefore, with the development of technology, generation Z who grow up with

technology tends to keep up with the times. In addition, they tend to value flexibility, personal values such as career sustainability, self-development to mental well-being. They also want meaningful engagement in the workplace, and have high expectations for speed and transparency in communicating between colleagues.

In the professional world, Generation Z tends to be more concerned with the meaning of work, balance between personal and work life, and flexibility compared to previous generations (Deloitte, 2023). They are also more interested in companies that have a vision and mission that is in line with their personal values.

In various studies that have been conducted, it shows that generation Z is more inclined towards the concept of work life integration work culture. For example, a Gallup survey (2022) revealed that 73% of Gen Z workers prefer jobs that can provide flexibility in managing their work time and location compared to jobs that require coming to the office every day with patented working hours.

Although Generation Z is known as a generation that wants flexibility and balance between personal and work life, it is not uncommon for Generation Z to face big challenges, especially in mental health. Based on a report from the American Psychological Association (APA) (2020), it shows that Generation Z experiences high levels of stress and also occupies the highest level compared to other generations. This is due to economic uncertainty and global crises. In addition, their high expectations for work also affect this level of stress.

2.4 Creative Industry Environment

The creative industry includes various fields such as music, film, digital media, architecture, and social media content technology. This creative industry focuses on creating value through the talent, innovation, expertise and creativity of individuals and groups (UNCTAD, 2010). The industry is considered a dynamic sector that has become a driver of economic growth, social innovation and the formation of modern cultural identity.

The work culture in this industry is characterized by a work culture that has high flexibility, collaborative culture, openness and fast work dynamics. Workers in this industry are often given autonomy in arranging their work schedules so that they can fully create new innovations and other new ideas (Caves, 2000). This work culture certainly attracts the attention of generation Z who likes a flexible and unconventional work culture so that generation Z in doing their work can accredit themselves.

3. METHODS

This research will use a qualitative approach with descriptive genetics. This approach aims to deeply understand how Generation Z's perception and preferences are towards a flexible work culture in the creative industry environment. This approach is expected to explore subjective meaning, experiential exploration and personal interpretation given by informants to the topic being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.1 Research Location and Context

This research will be conducted on employees (generation Z) who work in creative industry companies in Jakarta and South Tangerang engaged in digital media and art. This creative industry was chosen because it has the characteristics of a dynamic, non-conventional work culture such as remote working, free working hours and a non-hierarchical work environment.

The location of Jakarta and South Tangerang was chosen because of the large number of "contemporary" Generation Z in the area.

The concept of work culture and location is considered relevant to the values, expectations and lifestyles lived by Generation Z which prioritizes flexibility, life balance and the opportunity to express and develop themselves and careers (Schroth, 2019).

3.2 Data Collection Techniques

The main technique that will be used in data collection in this study is semi-structured interviews. Interviews are designed with questions so that respondents

can give broad and reflective answers. This interview model allows for the exploration of new topics that arise during this interview process.

In addition, in obtaining data, non-participatory observations of the work culture at the respondent's place of work will also be carried out as additional data. After that, a document analysis will be carried out regarding the company's internal policies related to the value points listed in the concept of work life balance and work life integration such as work flexibility and employee welfare.

Data will be collected through online interviews, such as private messages, and google forms. It depends on the condition and availability of the respondent.

3.3 Sources

The resource persons in this study are of course generation Z who will be selected through purposive sampling, which is the selection of resource persons based on certain criteria that have been set previously. The criteria are:

- a. Aged between 20-30 years old (Classified as Generation Z)
- b. Working in the creative industry sector
- c. Companies work in a flexible or hybrid work system
- d. Have worked for at least 3 months at the company

Purpose sampling was chosen so that the data collected would be more relevant to the purpose of this research. And the number of respondents to be used is between 8 to 10 people.

3.4 Research Instruments

The main instrument in this research is an interview designed based on theoretical studies on:

- a. The concept of work life balance and work life integration
- b. Generation Z's preferences and perceptions of the world of work
- c. Characteristics of flexible working patterns in the creative industry

This interview will cover some key topics such as flexible work experience, what challenges they often face and their solutions and expectations for future work patterns that

make them more productive. This interview instrument is expected to gain rich and contextual power.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data will be processed and analyzed using a mixed methods approach, which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed in a descriptive statistical manner to provide an overview of the perception and preferences of Generation Z towards the flexible work culture in the creative industry. Meanwhile, qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews will be analyzed using narrative descriptive analysis techniques, focusing on patterns of meaning that emerge from respondents' responses. The results of the two types of data will be integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied, so as to be able to describe both general trends and in-depth context related to the experiences and views of respondents.

Table of Percentage (%) of Generation Z's Perception of Work-Life Integration in the Creative Startup Environment

No	Aspects Assessed	Score				Total Values
		1	2	3	4	
1.	Feeling the flexibility of work allows combining work and personal time simultaneously.	10%	20%	30%	40%	100%
2.	Can manage work well even outside of conventional working hours.	10%	30%	30%	20%	100%
3.	Have difficulty separating personal and work affairs while working flexibly.	10%	35%	25%	25%	100%
4.	<i>Work-Life Integration</i> helps to increase creativity and work comfort.	10%	15%	30%	50%	100%
5	Feeling that productivity is maintained even though the work schedule is not strictly structured.	10%	20%	40%	30%	100%

Of the five indicators studied related to Generation Z's perception of Work-Life Integration, it was found that most respondents gave high scores (scores of 3 and

In this approach, it will focus on narrative descriptions of patterns of meaning that emerge from interview data with respondents. The data will be organized and presented in the form of a breakdown to showcase an in-depth understanding of Generation Z's perceptions and preferences towards flexible work culture in the creative industry.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher conducted qualitative descriptive data analysis by conducting interviews

with ten Generation Z informants. This diversity of backgrounds helps researchers gain broader and deeper information, which helps them gain a better understanding. Overall, the results of the interviews with the participants can be described as follows:

4), which indicates a positive tendency towards flexible work patterns that combine work and personal life aspects. In indicator 1, as many as 70% of respondents agreed and

strongly agreed that work flexibility allows them to combine work and personal activities. Similarly, in indicator 4, as many as 80% of respondents feel that Work-Life Integration helps increase creativity and work comfort. However, in indicator 3, around 50% of respondents have difficulty separating personal and work affairs when working flexibly. This shows that although most Generation Z feel that it benefits from the integration of life and work, the challenges in managing time constraints are still quite significant. This data can be an evaluation material for companies in designing a flexible work system that maintains the balance and work productivity of young employees.

Based on the results of interviews and percentage data from the five indicators, it can be seen that the majority of Generation Z positively welcomes the implementation of Work-Life Integration in the work environment of creative startups. They see work flexibility as an opportunity to be freer to manage their time, reduce pressure, and improve work comfort. One of the

respondents (AN, 24) said that, "I feel more productive because I can manage my own work time without the pressure of rigid office hours. But sometimes it's hard to quit your job because it feels like there's no limit." This is in line with indicators showing that 60% of respondents have difficulty separating work and personal time. Another respondent (DW, 23) added, "Work-Life Integration is suitable for creative people, because ideas can come at any time. But you still have to have control so you don't burnout." From this statement it can be seen that while this approach is considered effective for encouraging flexibility, self-regulation and time management remain key keys. Overall, these results show that Work-Life Integration-based work patterns are suitable for the characteristics of Generation Z who value freedom and flexibility. However, support systems such as time management training and clear work boundaries are needed to avoid the risk of burnout or blurring professional and personal boundaries.

Table of Percentage (%) of Generation Z's Perception of Work Life Balance in the Creative Startup Environment

No	Aspects Assessed	Score				Total Values
		1	2	3	4	
1.	It is more comfortable to work with a structured and clear work schedule.	5%	15%	40%	40%	100%
2.	Able to maintain work time limits and personal time well.	10%	20%	40%	30%	100%
3.	Tend to feel more focused when working during regular office hours.	15%	25%	35%	25%	100%
4.	<i>Work Life Balance</i> helps maintain mental and physical health.	5%	15%	30%	50%	100%
5	Difficulty adjusting to a work system that is too flexible.	20%	25%	30%	25%	100%

From the five indicators studied, it can be seen that the majority of Generation Z respondents show a strong preference for a work-life balance structure. In indicator 1, as many as 80% of respondents chose scores of 3 and 4, showing the comfort of working with a structured and clear schedule. The same can be seen in indicator 4, where 80% of

respondents agree that Work Life Balance helps maintain their mental and physical health. In indicator 2, 70% of respondents felt able to maintain the time limit between work and personal life. However, indicator 5 reveals that 55% of respondents have difficulty adjusting to an overly flexible work system. This data shows that while

Generation Z is known for its love of flexibility, most still value a clear work structure to maintain focus and balance in life.

Based on the results of the analysis of the five indicators in the table, it can be concluded that Generation Z in the creative startup environment still highly appreciates the concept of Work Life Balance, especially because it can help maintain mental health and separate personal time from work. Many respondents showed a preference for a structured work system, as stated by one respondent (RA, 24): "With clear working hours, I become more focused and don't think about working continuously outside of office hours." This is in line with the findings in indicators 1 and 2. Meanwhile, another respondent (MG, 23) said: "I am more productive when I work from the office because I can focus, whereas flexible work sometimes makes it more distracting." This statement reinforces indicator 3, where as many as 60% of respondents feel more focused on fixed working hours. However, there are still challenges related to uncontrolled flexibility. The respondent (HS, 25) revealed that, "The flexible work system sometimes makes me confused about when to start and stop working, even making me tired." This corroborates the results on indicator 5 that most Generation Z need clear boundaries so as not to feel burdened. Overall, these findings show that while flexibility is important, work structures and time constraints are still needed by Gen Z in order for them to work productively without sacrificing personal well-being.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that Generation Z in the creative startup environment has a strong tendency towards a preference for a clear work structure and work-life balance (Work Life Balance). Most respondents felt more comfortable and focused when working with a structured schedule, and stated that Work Life Balance helps maintain their mental and physical health. Although flexible work systems offer freedom, many respondents

admitted that they had difficulty adjusting, especially in maintaining time limits between work and personal life. This shows that while flexibility is important, a work structure is still needed so that Generation Z can work more focused, healthy, and productive. The emphasis on Work Life Balance provides benefits not only for individuals, but also for the productivity and sustainability of the company.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that companies pay attention to the work-life balance of Generation Z employees by establishing a structured but still adaptive work system. Companies should provide clarity regarding working hours, tasks, and performance expectations, thus helping employees to be more focused and not experience stress due to uncertainty. In addition, companies need to provide support in the form of time management training, workload restrictions, and mental wellness programs such as counseling or mindfulness. Open communication between employers and employees is also important so that flexible work policies remain clear and do not negatively impact productivity. With this strategy, companies can create a healthy work environment, support the needs of the younger generation, and maintain the sustainability and effectiveness of the work team in the long term.

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