

# “INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE ON GENERATION Z EMPLOYEES: ITS INFLUENCE ON JOB SATISFACTION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT”

*Research Paper*

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## **“Abstract”**

*This study explores the impact of Work-Life Balance (WLB) on job satisfaction and employee engagement among Generation Z workers in Greece. It examines the factors influencing the work experience of this emerging generation which highly values flexibility and balance between professional and personal responsibilities. Based on quantitative research conducted through questionnaires, the results indicate that WLB positively affects job satisfaction, and job satisfaction is directly related to employee engagement. However, no direct connection between WLB and engagement was found, which is attributed to factors such as personal aspirations and workplace culture. The findings highlight the need for human resource (HR) policies to adapt to the needs of Generation Z, enhancing job satisfaction and employee engagement.*

*Keywords: Work-Life Balance, job satisfaction, employee engagement, Generation Z, organizational policies*

## **1 Introduction**

In today’s business reality, work-life balance has become vital for organizations seeking to retain talent, enhance employee well-being and improve efficiency (Bloom et al., 2013). This focus arises from significant changes in the workforce and social expectations, as technological advances and globalization have reshaped the demands of work, affecting employees’ personal time. Thus, the need for balance between the two spheres is more evident than ever (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

Generation Z (from now on referred as ‘Gen Z’), defined as people born between 1995 and 2010, enters the labor market with unique expectations that differ from previous generations. This generation is known for their digital fluency, as they have grown up with the internet and social media which makes them use technology and get used to a fast-paced, interconnected world (Schroth, 2019). Their upbringing in an era of rapid technological change, economic instability and evolving social norms has shaped their attitudes towards work and life. Gen Z places a high value on flexibility, autonomy, and meaningful work, often prioritizing these factors over traditional indicators of job satisfaction, such as salary and job security (Twenge, 2017).

Understanding how achieving work-life balance impacts Gen Z’s job satisfaction and performance is imperative for organizations aiming to harness the potential of this emerging workforce. Unlike previous generations, who may have viewed work-life balance as a desirable perk, Gen Z sees it as a fundamental expectation. Organizations that fail to recognize and adapt to these preferences through specific policies risk losing top talent (Leslie et al., 2021). Therefore, exploring the relationship between work-life

balance and the outcomes of Gen Z workers is not only timely but also critical for the future of work.

## **1.1 Background of the study**

The particularities of Gen Z raise legitimate questions about how work-life balance affects their engagement and job satisfaction. Despite the growing body of research on work-life balance, there is a notable gap in studies that specifically address how organizational policies affect Gen Z. Given their unique experiences and expectations, it is important to explore how work-life balance affects Gen Z workers (Roopavathi et al., 2021). This study is based on the recognition that effective efforts to achieve work-life balance can lead to significant organizational benefits such as enhanced job satisfaction and employee engagement and, consequently, improved organizational reputation (Adnan Bataineh, 2019). However, without a clear understanding of how these policies specifically affect Gen Z, organizations may struggle to implement strategies that effectively meet the needs of this new generation of employees. The focus of this study was Gen Z workers in Greece.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Literature related to Gen Z**

Gen Z is characterized by their digital native ancestry, unique attitudes toward work and life, and a strong focus on success (Katz et al., 2022). Racołta-Paina and Irini (2021) describe this generation as dynamic, creative, socially conscious and flexible. Despite these positive traits, Gen Z may face challenges in quickly adopting organizational culture and values compared to previous generations and may be considered inconsistent. In terms of labor requirements, as they mention, Gen Z employees are particularly demanding in terms of salary and highly flexible work schedules. Having grown up in an era of constant change and uncertainty, Gen Z employees do not pursue traditional linear evolution within a company like previous generations (Schroth, 2019). On the contrary, they prefer a dynamic working environment, flexible in terms of working hours, with an active sense of corporate and social responsibility (Francis and Hoefel, 2018).

### **2.2 Job satisfaction and job engagement**

There have been various attempts to define job satisfaction, without resulting in a clear definition. Job satisfaction is a complex phenomenon (Roodt et al., 2002). According to Locke (1976) what is paramount is first the nature of work, ie. whether it creates challenges, and then pay. Roodt et al. (2002) add to these factors verbal prompts and praise which enhance individual satisfaction. Research findings suggest that lack of job satisfaction often leads to higher levels of burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Tamini and Kord, 2011). Similarly, a variety of studies show that job satisfaction is a significant negative predictor of all subscales of burnout (eg. Piko, 2006).

The concept of work engagement, on the other hand, has been developed and examined by various researchers over the years. Rich et al. (2010) describe it as the investment of a person's complete self in their professional role, including the physical, cognitive and

emotional energies they commit to their work. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) define it as a state characterized by vitality, dedication and absorption in work. These definitions emphasize the holistic and dynamic nature of an individual's connection to work, differentiating it from other related concepts such as professional engagement and job satisfaction (Macey and Schneider, 2008).

Work engagement is influenced by many factors: personal, work-related and organizational. Personal factors include traits like emotional stability, extraversion and conscientiousness, as well as 'psychological capital', eg. self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, which contribute significantly to higher levels of job engagement (Inceoglu and Warr, 2011). Work-related factors such as social support, autonomy, feedback and opportunities for development, as well as work planning, play a critical role (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Furthermore, organizational factors such as transformational leadership and perceived organizational support are key to promoting work engagement (Pham-Thai et al., 2018). Finally, it is important to note that empirical research has highlighted the positive relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement (eg. Rachmadini and Riyanto (2020) and that work-life balance is an important predictor of job satisfaction (Anwar et al., 2013; Richert-Kaźmierska and Stankiewicz, 2016).

It is now clear that there is a need to examine the interrelations between work-life balance, work engagement and job satisfaction because they have a significant impact on employee performance (Žnidaršič and Marič, 2021). Understanding employee needs and adjusting policies accordingly can pay off in the long run benefits for both employees and employers; more specifically, implementing work-life balance policies can significantly improve employee satisfaction and engagement, leading to increased productivity and reduced staff turnover significantly improving employee satisfaction and engagement, leading to increased productivity and reducing staff turnover (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019).

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research design**

The research hypotheses that have emerged from the literature on the link between work-life balance and work performance are formulated as follows:

Main Hypothesis (H1): Work-life balance has a positive effect on the job satisfaction of Gen Z employees.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Work-life balance increases the work engagement of Gen Z employees.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The job satisfaction of Gen Z employees is positively related to their work engagement.

Zero Hypothesis (H0): Work-life balance has no effect on the job satisfaction or work engagement of Generation Z employees.

The survey was conducted electronically through Google Forms, using the convenience sampling method. This method was chosen because participants were selected based on their ease of access and willingness to participate. In addition, the electronic format offered participants flexibility to complete the questionnaire at a time and place that suited them, enhancing their attention and ensuring their anonymity. The link for the questionnaire was sent through various social platforms (LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.).

The questionnaire should ensure its internal validity and reliability, as stated by Saunders et al. (2012). This indicates that the answers should show correlation between the questions. Cronbach's alpha method is a widely used indicator for measuring consistency and internal validity (Mitchell and Jolley, 1996), with the lowest acceptable threshold being 0.7. To confirm validity, the questionnaire was based on scales from already published and valid surveys, where their reliability had already been confirmed through alpha Cronbach index values greater than 0.7.

The questionnaire used was meticulously designed to capture relevant information based on the aforementioned hypotheses. The sections were divided as follows: Section 1: Demographic Information; Section 2: Work-Life Balance; Section 3: Job Satisfaction; Section 4: Employee Engagement. The measuring instruments used for this research were: the UWES8 scale (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003) to measure work engagement, the Hayman scale (2005) to measure work-life balance and part (10 items) of the 36-item full scale - Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) (Spector, 1985) to measure job satisfaction. Then 4 more questions were tethered, which made it easier to draw conclusions about the policies that organizations have in place to maintain WLB and whether they are effective. Based on a five-response Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = rare, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always), respondents were asked to choose the best answer for each statement.

The questionnaires were initially checked for any errors or omissions that might affect the validity of the results. The data collected was then fully analyzed using JASP (Jeffreys' Amazing Statistics Program), a powerful statistical software suitable for hypothesis testing and data visualization (JASP, 2024). Before data entry, reliability analysis (alpha Cronbach), descriptive statistics and correlation calculation and t-test were used (Saunders et al., 2012). Descriptive statistics such as averages, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and the key variables related to work-life balance, employee engagement and satisfaction and performance results (Psiloutsikou, 2023).

### **3.2 Correlation analysis**

For the research purposes of this survey, three different questionnaires have been selected, as mentioned above, which are characterized by internal validity and reliability. The control of these parameters, established through the alpha index, values greater than 0.7 indicate a high index of reliability and validity.

The Cronbach alpha values for the three ready-made questionnaires selected to measure work-life balance, job satisfaction and work engagement are respectively: 0.925, 0.86 and 0.879. Thus, as all values for Cronbach alpha exceed 0.7, it appears that questionnaires are characterized by reliability and validity, therefore from them they can derive valid and reliable results (Saunders et al., 2002).

### 3.3 Ethical considerations

This research project was committed to upholding ethical standards in all aspects of data collection, analysis and dissemination. Before initiating any data collection or collaboration with participants, ethical approval was sought by the relevant committee, ensuring that research adheres to ethical guidelines and protects the rights and well-being of participants (Psiloutsikou, 2023). Specific requirements include obtaining informed consent from participants prior to participating in the questionnaire, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of responses and compliance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) requirements to protect participants' privacy and personal data.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Demographic characteristics

The survey sample consisted of  $N = 70$  participants. 44.3% of participants were in the 25-28 age category, while 37.1% belong to the 21-24 age group. The remaining 18.6% were in the 29-30 age category. The gender table shows that men make up 47.1% of the sample, while women made up 52.9%. 48.6% of participants were graduates, while 28.0% hold a master's degree and 6% were high school graduates. 2.0% were PhDs. The majority of the sample were graduates.

84.3% of participants worked in clerical positions, while 5.7% held managerial positions and 1.4% were senior management. 8.6% were in executive positions. The majority of the sample were employees, with a small representation of senior and executive executives. In terms of years of work in the current company, 40% of participants had 1-2 years in the company, while 31.4% worked less than a year. 18.6% have 3-4 years, and 10% had more than 5 years in the company.

In conclusion, demographics show that the sample consists mainly of young employees, aged 25-28 (late GenZ), with a high level of education and few years of work in the current company. The gender distribution was almost balanced, with the majority of participants working in clerical positions.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the participants.

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Men		
	Women		
Age	21-24	26.0	37.1
	25-28	31.0	44.3
	29-30	13.0	18.6
Educational Attainment	High School Leaving Certificate	6	8.6
	Degree	34	48.6
	Master	2	40.0
	Phd	2	2.9

	High School Leaving Certificate	6	8.6
Role in the Company	Employee	59	84.3
	Director	4	5.7
	Executive	1	1.4
	Other	6	8.6
	Employee	59	84.3
Years in the Company	Less than 1 year	22	31.4
	1-2 years	28	40.0
	3-4 years	13	18.6
	5 years or more	7	10.0

Table 1: Demographic data.

## 4.2 Hypothesis testing

Now we can answer the hypothesis put forward earlier on; however, due to lack of space, we cannot replicate the whole process of data analysis (eg. Pearson correlation analysis).

### 1. H1 (Work-life balance positively affects the job satisfaction of Gen Z employees)

The hypothesis was confirmed as the results of the t-test showed a statistically significant positive correlation between work-life balance policies and job satisfaction. This means that Gen Z workers who enjoy a better work-life balance are more satisfied with their jobs. This finding supports the need for effective work-life balance policies in order to enhance job satisfaction.

### 2. H2 (Work-life balance increases Gen Z employees' engagement with the company)

The hypothesis was rejected as the results showed no statistically significant correlation between work-life balance and professional engagement. This suggests that although work-life balance may enhance satisfaction, it is not enough on its own to increase employee engagement. This may mean that other factors, such as professional development opportunities or relationships with colleagues, play a more important role in engagement.

### 3. H3 (Professional satisfaction is positively related to the work engagement of Gen Z employees)

The hypothesis was confirmed, as the analysis showed a statistically significant correlation between job satisfaction and professional engagement. This means that employees who are more satisfied with their jobs are more likely to be more engaged. This finding is important for companies as it reinforces the need to prioritize employee satisfaction. in order to increase their engagement.

### 4. H0 (Work-life balance does not affect job satisfaction or work engagement)

The null hypothesis is partially rejected. Although it is proven that work-life balance affects job satisfaction, there is no clear correlation with employee engagement. This shows that the effect of work-life balance is limited to satisfaction and is not enough on its own to increase work engagement, confirming the complexity of professional engagement.

In conclusion, the results of the t-tests provide valuable findings for the research questions. In particular, they confirm that work-life balance policies have a significant impact on employee satisfaction, but do not directly affect engagement. Also, the strong positive correlation between satisfaction and work engagement emphasizes the importance of job satisfaction in enhancing employee engagement.

### **4.3 Interpretation of results**

The findings of this research highlight the important role that Work-Life Balance (WLB) plays in the impact of job satisfaction and engagement among Gen Z employees. This is consistent with studies by Anwar et al. (2013) and Kim et al. (2013), which also found that flexible working arrangements contribute positively to employee satisfaction.

Gen Z, known for their digital fluency and high expectations of work, seem to value flexibility and autonomy more than ever. The positive relationship between WLB and employee engagement confirms that implementing WLB policies not only leads to increased satisfaction, but also to a more engaged and productive workforce.

The main hypothesis (H1) stating that work-life balance has a positive effect on the job satisfaction of Gen Z workers turned out to be true. However, the second hypothesis (H2), which argued that Work-Life Balance increases the engagement of Gen Z workers, was rejected.

The rejection of H2 can be attributed to several factors. First, Gen Z can assess their engagement by criteria that are not unique to WLB, such as growth opportunities and career prospects. Research has shown that employees of this generation are looking for meaningful work that offers prospects for development and development (Schroth, 2019). If WLB policies do not come with opportunities for professional development, then employees may not feel engaged in their work, despite flexible arrangements.

In addition, the majority of respondents may face work-related stressors, such as workload or pressure to achieve goals, which may outweigh the positive effects of WLB policies. Previous research by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) has suggested that high demands on work can reduce engagement with work, regardless of the beneficial policies that may be implemented.

Still, cultural differences and individual expectations may play an important role. This study did not include local differences that may affect employees' perception of WLB policies and engagement. For example, in some cultures, commitment and engagement may be perceived as an obligation to the employer, while in others it may focus more on personal growth and well-being (Naidoo and Martins, 2014). Organizations that want to influence employee engagement should consider specific cultural considerations.

Although the direct statistical correlation between overall work-life balance and engagement is not strong enough to support H2, interesting patterns can be observed in the outcomes, particularly in the variables related to engagement. In particular, employees who felt supported by their employers on a personal level (e.g. through flexible hours or remote work) showed slightly higher levels of engagement, although this was not statistically significant for the whole sample.

This observation aligns with previous findings, such as those of Bakker and Demerouti (2007), suggesting that work resources, such as flexibility and autonomy, can reduce stress and burnout, indirectly enhancing engagement. Although H2 was rejected, these distinct relationships highlight the importance of specific policies aimed at enhancing autonomy and flexibility.

Therefore, while overall balance may not be the main predictor of engagement in Gen Z, individual elements of balance can foster higher levels of engagement when aligned with that generation's values and expectations. This indicates that organizations should adopt targeted policies that focus on autonomy and flexibility in order to enhance the engagement of Gen Z workers.

Furthermore, the hypothesis (H3) that job satisfaction is positively related to job engagement was confirmed by the survey findings. Employees who feel satisfied with their work are more likely to develop higher levels of engagement with work, which has positive effects on their productivity and the performance of organizations as a whole. Employee engagement is critical to the long-term success of organizations, as it reduces turnover and strengthens organizational culture.

An important finding of this research concerns the associations between WLB, job satisfaction and engagement. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderately positive association (0.413) between WLB and Satisfaction, which confirms that improving work-life balance can help increase job satisfaction. Despite the mediocre relationship, this finding suggests that WLB isn't the only factor influencing satisfaction, but it's certainly one of the most important.

In contrast, the association between WLB and Engagement was weaker (0.240), suggesting that work-life balance has less effect on employee engagement. This is probably because engagement depends on other factors, as mentioned above. Finally, the strong positive correlation (0.773) between job satisfaction and engagement confirms the deep relationship between these two factors. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to be engaged and demonstrate higher levels of engagement. These findings demonstrate the importance of satisfaction as a catalyst for enhancing engagement, highlighting the need for organizations to invest in human resource (HR) and organizational policies that promote both work-life balance and job satisfaction.

## **5 Conclusion**

This study analyzed the impact of WLB on Gen Z employees, with a particular focus on how it affects job satisfaction and engagement with their work and the organization. Gen Z is a unique generation of employees, with their own needs and expectations that



differ markedly from previous generations. The search for flexibility at work and the achievement of a balance between professional and personal obligations are key factors for the well-being of this generation, which is confirmed by the findings of this research.

The survey results clearly support the initial hypothesis (H1) that work-life balance positively affects the job satisfaction of Gen Z employees. Flexible work policies, such as teleworking, flexible working hours, and remote work, contribute significantly to improving job satisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that employees who manage to balance their work and personal obligations report greater job satisfaction and perform better. However, the hypothesis (H2), concerning the direct effect of work-life balance on work engagement, was not fully confirmed. The survey findings showed that while WLB is important for overall employee satisfaction, it does not appear to be directly linked to employee engagement. This may be due to other factors, such as opportunities for advancement within the organization, the quality of relationships with colleagues and leadership, and the personal goals of each employee. Job engagement seems to depend more on the sense of purpose and self-fulfillment offered by work, rather than solely on work-life balance.

Another important element emerging from this research is the need for long-term strategies to support work-life balance. Organizations that invest in policies that facilitate flexibility and employee support will be able to attract talent and maintain high levels of engagement and productivity. Gen Z, more than previous generations, attaches great importance to work flexibility and autonomy, and this is an important finding for organizations aiming to retain and develop their talent.

## **6 Future implications and recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations address both strategies that organizations can adopt and suggestions for future research.

Organizations should prioritize implementing flexible working arrangements, such as teleworking and flexible schedules, that meet the expectations and needs of Gen Z (Anwar et al., 2013). Flexibility in the workplace has the potential to significantly improve job satisfaction and enhance employee engagement (Amelia et al., 2023). In particular, initiatives that offer personalized settings and give employees greater control over their work obligations can improve WLB and reduce stress, allowing them to better manage both their professional and personal obligations (Chen et al., 2023). Moreover, organizations should cultivate a culture that promotes employee mental well-being. This may include access to wellness programs, mental health, and encouragement for time off or breaks. Research has shown that these initiatives can significantly improve employee mood and productivity (Adnan Bataineh, 2019).

In addition, this study highlights important areas for future research. First, further exploration is needed of how specific WLB initiatives, such as wellness programs, support groups, and psychological support provision, affect the engagement and satisfaction of Gen Z employees. Studying such targeted interventions will provide valuable insights into which strategies are most effective for increasing engagement and reducing burnout (Rachmadini and Riyanto, 2020). Another direction for future research concerns the differentiation of findings by sector and geographical area.

Workers' working conditions and expectations can vary considerably depending on the sector in which they work or their cultural environment (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

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