



Work–Life Balance and Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness among Generation Z: A Sequential Mediation Model of Recruitment Experience and Job Search Self-Efficacy

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Abstract:

Digital recruitment has changed how Generation Z evaluates prospective employers, shifting attention from job availability toward platform-based experiences, process transparency, and alignment with work values. This study examines the effect of work–life balance on perceived digital recruitment effectiveness through digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 301 Generation Z job portal users in Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4.0. The results show that work–life balance does not directly affect perceived digital recruitment effectiveness ($\beta = -0.062$; $p = 0.101$). In contrast, digital recruitment experience ($\beta = 0.678$; $p < 0.001$) and job search self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.382$; $p < 0.001$) have positive and significant effects. The indirect effect through digital recruitment experience is also significant ($\beta = 0.607$; $p < 0.001$), as is the sequential mediation through digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.206$; $p < 0.001$). Organizations and job portal providers should clarify vacancy and selection information, accelerate HR responses, provide transparent application-status updates, and minimize technical barriers. This study provides practical implications for organizations seeking to optimize digital recruitment strategies by enhancing candidate experiences, transparency, and confidence throughout the recruitment process.

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization has transformed talent acquisition into a platform-based and data-driven process that records, evaluates, and manages candidate interactions (Asfahani, 2024; Kim et al., 2025). In Indonesia, internet penetration reached 79.5% in 2024, with Generation Z representing the largest user group at 34.40% (APJII, 2024). Digital job platforms expand vacancy access and candidate pools, but their effectiveness remains constrained by outdated data, repeated manual entry, unequal digital access, and limited

digital literacy (Bachtiar et al., 2024; Souto-Otero & Brown, 2024). Generation Z also considers work–life balance, flexibility, supportive relationships, and job-search confidence when evaluating employment opportunities (Ahamad et al., 2023). Therefore, digital recruitment effectiveness depends on the integration of organizational values, candidate experience, technological accessibility, and job search self-efficacy.

Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya provide a relevant setting for examining digital recruitment because each city has a large and active urban labor market. In August 2024, Jakarta recorded a labor force of 5.44 million people, including 5.11 million employed persons, with a labor force participation rate of 65.10% and an open unemployment rate of 6.21% (BPS-Statistics DKI Jakarta, 2024). Bandung recorded a labor force of 1.35 million people and 1.25 million employed persons, while its labor force participation rate reached 67.93% (BPS-Statistics Bandung Municipality, 2024). Surabaya recorded a labor force of 1.62 million people, a labor force participation rate of 70.49%, and an open unemployment rate of 4.91% (BPS-Statistics Surabaya Municipality, 2024). These indicators confirm that the three cities represent substantial and dynamic labor markets in which employers and Generation Z candidates increasingly interact through digital recruitment channels.

Recent online vacancy data identify Greater Jakarta as the leading location for job openings in Indonesia. At the same time, Surabaya ranks fourth, and Bandung follows among the most active locations, confirming that these cities provide substantial and differentiated pools of employers and job seekers (Wibowo, 2025). Research on high-growth startups in Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya further shows that employers compete for talent through flexible work arrangements, employee well-being, and adaptive HR practices, making work–life balance a salient employment signal in these metropolitan labor markets (Mulyadi et al., 2025). A study involving university students in the same cities demonstrates that digital literacy strengthens self-efficacy, suggesting that the ability to navigate digital environments influences young people’s readiness to engage with technology-mediated career opportunities (Ratnaningtyas et al., 2025). Comparative evidence across Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya also shows that self-efficacy mechanisms remain broadly consistent but can vary by location, supporting examination of candidate perceptions across metropolitan labor markets with different competitive pressures (Soelaiman et al., 2026). However, prior studies have examined vacancy distribution, flexible work practices, digital literacy, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy separately, leaving unexplained how work–life balance shapes perceived digital recruitment effectiveness through digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy among Generation Z job portal users in these three cities.

Recent studies explain Generation Z recruitment decisions through organizational values, candidate perceptions, and psychological mechanisms rather than through recruitment-system efficiency alone. Kontos et al. (2025) show that perceived organizational autonomy support strengthens Generation Z job seekers’ employment-pursuit intentions through employer brand identification, indicating that work-related values become influential when candidates interpret them as personally meaningful. Rani & Suneja (2026) find that Generation Z expects technology-driven workplaces to combine digitalized development opportunities with work–life balance and employee well-being. Malin et al. (2025) demonstrate that explanations in AI-based personnel selection improve applicants’ perceptions of outcome fairness, process fairness, interpersonal treatment, and recommendation intentions. Zheng et al. (2025) identify job search self-

efficacy as a critical psychological resource that supports preparation, persistence, coping, and success throughout the job-search process.

Kontos et al. (2025) explain how organizational autonomy support shapes Generation Z's employment-pursuit intentions through employer-brand identification, but they do not examine digital recruitment experience or perceived recruitment effectiveness. Rani & Suneja (2026) identify work-life balance and employee well-being as major expectations toward technology-driven workplaces. However, they do not test how organizations translate these values into candidate experiences during digital hiring. Malin et al. (2025) show that explanations in AI-based personnel selection improve applicants' fairness perceptions and recommendation intentions. However, their model does not integrate job search self-efficacy as a psychological mechanism. Zheng et al. (2025) establish job search self-efficacy as an important resource for preparation, persistence, coping, and job-search success. However, they do not connect it with work-life balance or digital recruitment experience.

This study positions digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy as mediating mechanisms linking work-life balance to perceived digital recruitment effectiveness among Generation Z candidates. This approach extends digital recruitment research by showing that recruitment effectiveness depends not only on technological capabilities, but also on the alignment of work values, the quality of selection experiences, and candidates' confidence in performing job-search activities (Saks et al., 2015). The study is particularly relevant because Generation Z evaluates organizations through information clarity, process efficiency, organizational treatment, work flexibility, and value alignment throughout the digital recruitment process (Lassleben & Hofmann, 2023). Work-life balance therefore becomes meaningful only when it is translated into a positive, transparent, responsive, and accessible recruitment experience. Accordingly, digital recruitment should be understood as an experiential and psychological process rather than merely an online application channel.

This study aims to examine the influence of work-life balance on perceived digital recruitment effectiveness among Generation Z job portal users in Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya. Specifically, it tests the mediating roles of digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy, including their sequential mediation pathway.

Work-life balance serves as an organizational value signal that can shape Generation Z candidates' perceptions of employer credibility, support, and digital recruitment effectiveness (Ahamad et al., 2023). Digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy further influence recruitment evaluations through information transparency, platform accessibility, process efficiency, responsiveness, and candidates' confidence in navigating selection stages (Zheng et al., 2025). Accordingly, this study proposes positive direct effects of work-life balance on perceived digital recruitment effectiveness, job search self-efficacy, and digital recruitment experience (H1, H4, and H6), as well as positive effects of digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy on perceived digital recruitment effectiveness and of digital recruitment experience on job search self-efficacy (H2, H3, and H5).

Digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy may transmit the effect of work-life balance on perceived digital recruitment effectiveness by converting organizational value signals into clear, responsive, fair, and accessible recruitment experiences. These experiences can strengthen candidates' confidence, persistence, and ability to navigate selection procedures, creating a sequential pathway from work-life

balance to recruitment evaluation. Accordingly, this study proposes sequential mediation through digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy (H7), individual mediation through digital recruitment experience (H8) and job search self-efficacy (H9), mediation of work–life balance on job search self-efficacy through digital recruitment experience (H10), and mediation of digital recruitment experience on perceived digital recruitment effectiveness through job search self-efficacy (H11).

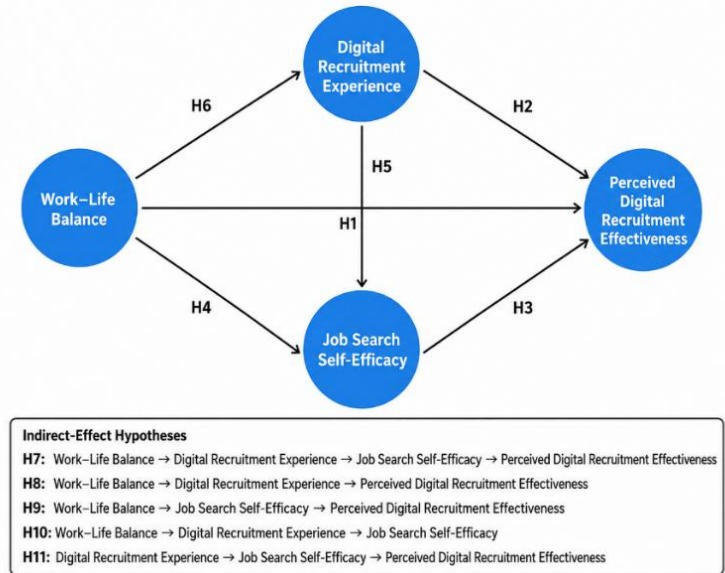


Figure 1. Research Framework and Hypothesized Relationships

Figure 1 presents the proposed research framework linking work–life balance, digital recruitment experience, job search self-efficacy, and perceived digital recruitment effectiveness. The model specifies six direct relationships, namely the effects of work–life balance on perceived digital recruitment effectiveness, digital recruitment experience, and job search self-efficacy; the effects of digital recruitment experience on job search self-efficacy and perceived digital recruitment effectiveness; and the effect of job search self-efficacy on perceived digital recruitment effectiveness (H1–H6). The framework also incorporates five indirect relationships that position digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy as parallel and sequential mediators (H7–H11). Overall, the model proposes that work–life balance may shape perceived digital recruitment effectiveness not only directly but also through the quality of candidates’ digital recruitment experiences and their confidence in navigating the job-search process.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the associative and predictive relationships among work–life balance, digital recruitment experience, job search self-efficacy, and perceived digital recruitment effectiveness. Data were collected at a single point in time, with work–life balance positioned as the exogenous construct, digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy as mediators, and perceived digital recruitment effectiveness as the endogenous construct (Saunders et al., 2023). The population comprised Generation Z job seekers who had used JobStreet, LinkedIn, Jobs.id, or comparable platforms in Jakarta, Bandung, or Surabaya. Purposive sampling was applied because no comprehensive sampling frame was available, and eligible respondents were required to belong to Generation Z, have job-

portal experience, reside in one of the selected cities, and complete the questionnaire. Of the 350 responses collected, 301 valid questionnaires were retained, providing an adequate sample for PLS-SEM based on model complexity and statistical-power considerations (Hair et al., 2022).

The questionnaire was developed by adapting established measurement dimensions and contextualizing the indicators to Generation Z's digital recruitment experiences. Work–life balance indicators were adapted from Tanwar & Prasad (2017), while job search self-efficacy indicators were based on Saks et al. (2015). Digital recruitment experience and perceived digital recruitment effectiveness indicators were developed by synthesizing concepts from the e-recruitment, applicant-experience, and digital-selection literature. The adaptation process involved reviewing construct definitions, mapping indicators to their dimensions, and adjusting item wording to reflect online application procedures, recruitment communication, platform accessibility, and candidate evaluations. Table 1 presents the measurement sources, dimensions, number of items, and adaptation procedures used in developing the questionnaire.

Table 1. Questionnaire Development and Measurement Sources

Construct	Dimensions	Number of Items	Measurement Source	Adaptation and Development Process
Work–Life Balance	Healthy work atmosphere; training and development; work–life balance; ethics and corporate social responsibility; compensation and benefits	15	Tanwar & Prasad (2017)	The researchers adapted the indicators to capture candidates' perceptions of organizational flexibility, employee well-being, development opportunities, ethical treatment, and employment benefits communicated during recruitment.
Digital Recruitment Experience	Informational transparency; process efficiency and simplicity; fairness and respectful treatment; emotional impression and organizational attractiveness	12	Developed from the digital recruitment and applicant-experience literature reviewed in this study	The researchers contextualized the indicators to assess vacancy-information clarity, recruitment-stage transparency, platform usability, HR responsiveness, procedural fairness, and candidates' overall impressions of the organization.
Job Search Self-Efficacy	Job-search preparation; application and interview confidence; persistence and self-regulation; coping and problem-solving	12	Saks et al. (2015)	The researchers adapted the indicators to measure candidates' confidence in identifying suitable vacancies, preparing applications, completing selection stages, maintaining persistence, and resolving recruitment-related difficulties.
Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	Digital process efficiency; system usability and accessibility; recruitment-information transparency; perceived selection quality and credibility	12	Developed from the e-recruitment effectiveness literature reviewed in this study	The researchers developed the indicators to assess process speed, reduced waiting time, platform accessibility, information completeness, candidate–position matching, and the credibility of digital selection processes.

Source: Developed by the authors based on the measurement literature, 2026.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and construct response patterns, followed by PLS-SEM analysis using SmartPLS 4.0 to examine the reflective constructs and parallel and sequential mediation pathways (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). The measurement model was assessed through outer loadings, AVE, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and HTMT. In contrast, the structural model was evaluated using VIF, path coefficients, R^2 , Q^2 predict, predictive-error measures, CVPAT, and SRMR. Bootstrapping was used to test direct and specific indirect effects based on $t > 1.96$ and $p < 0.05$, with indirect-only mediation identified when the indirect effect was significant. However, the corresponding direct effect was not significant (Hair et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to summarize respondents' perceptions of work-life balance, digital recruitment experience, job search self-efficacy, and perceived digital recruitment effectiveness based on questionnaire scores. The overall response tendencies for each variable are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Work-Life Balance Index among Generation Z Using Job Portals Work Life Balance Variables

Work Life Balance Variables		
Dimensions	Indicators	Average
Healthy Work Atmosphere	1. The organization is perceived to provide a comfortable work environment that supports employee productivity.	3.23
	2. The organization demonstrates an open, communicative, and collaborative work culture.	3.24
	3. The organization is perceived to create a socially and psychologically healthy work atmosphere.	3.22
Training and Development	1. The organization provides opportunities for employee training and competency development.	3.26
	2. The organization supports the enhancement of professional and digital skills.	3.24
	3. The organization offers a clear and sustainable career development pathway.	3.25
Work Life Balance	1. The organization offers work flexibility, such as hybrid working, remote working, or adaptive working time arrangements.	3.24
	2. The organization pays attention to the balance between job demands and employees' personal lives.	3.23
	3. The organization provides support for employee well-being, physical health, and mental health.	2.32
Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility	1. The organization is perceived to have a strong commitment to work ethics and organizational integrity.	3.20
	2. The organization treats employees and job candidates fairly and responsibly.	3.19
	3. The organization has a reputation as a workplace that is concerned with social responsibility and sustainability.	3.16
Compensation and Benefits	1. The organization offers competitive compensation that is aligned with employee contributions.	3.20
	2. The organization provides attractive employee benefits and work-related incentives.	3.20
	3. The organization provides financial security through a fair and transparent reward system.	3.23
Total		3.16

As shown in Table 2, the work–life balance construct recorded an overall mean of 3.16, indicating a moderately positive assessment among Generation Z respondents. The highest score appeared in the training and competency development indicator (M = 3.26), whereas organizational support for employee well-being, physical health, and mental health received the lowest score (M = 2.32). This pattern suggests that respondents perceived stronger organizational support for professional development than for tangible well-being initiatives, highlighting employee well-being as the main area requiring improvement.

Table 3. Digital Recruitment Experience Index among Generation Z Using Job Portals

Digital Recruitment Experience Variables		
Dimensions	Indicators	Average
Informational Transparency	1. The recruitment information regarding salary, benefits, and job descriptions is presented clearly.	3.11
	2. The recruitment stages and selection criteria are communicated transparently to candidates.	3.17
	3. Candidates receive regular updates regarding the status of their job applications.	3.17
Process Efficiency and Simplicity	1. The digital recruitment platform is easy for candidates to use.	3.24
	2. The recruitment process and HR responses are perceived to be timely.	3.26
	3. Candidates experience minimal technical obstacles during the online application process.	3.24
Fairness and Respectful Treatment	1. The assessment process is perceived to be consistent across candidates.	3.19
	2. Candidates are given equal opportunities to present their competencies during the selection process.	3.17
	3. HR communication is polite, professional, and respectful of candidates' time.	3.20
Emotional Impression and Organizational Attractiveness	1. Candidates feel satisfied with their overall job application experience.	3.20
	2. The recruitment experience increases candidates' interest in joining the organization.	3.21
	3. Candidates are willing to recommend the organization to others based on their recruitment experience.	3.19
Total		3.20

As presented in Table 3, digital recruitment experience recorded an overall mean of 3.20, indicating a moderately positive assessment among Generation Z respondents. The highest score appeared in the timeliness of recruitment processes and HR responses (M = 3.26), whereas clarity regarding salary, benefits, and job descriptions received the lowest score (M = 3.11). This pattern shows that process efficiency represents the main strength of digital recruitment, while transparency of employment information remains the key area requiring improvement.

Table 4. Job Search Self-Efficacy Index among Generation Z Using Job Portals

Job Search Self-Efficacy Variables		
Dimensions	Indicators	Average
Job Search Preparation	1. Candidates are able to identify job opportunities that align with their competencies and career interests.	3.24
	2. Candidates are able to prepare application documents and professional profiles systematically.	3.18
	3. Candidates have clear plans and strategies for organizing their job search activities.	2.33

Application and Interview Confidence	1. Candidates are confident in creating a positive impression during interviews or job selection processes.	3.20
	2. Candidates are able to communicate their answers or ideas confidently during interviews.	2.34
	3. Candidates feel confident in facing various forms of assessment, both online and offline.	3.26
Persistence and Self-Regulation	1. Candidates are able to maintain motivation when facing rejection or failure in the job search process.	3.23
	2. Candidates remain persistent in continuing their job search efforts despite facing obstacles.	3.24
	3. Candidates are able to manage their time and energy consistently during job search activities.	3.27
Coping and Problem-Solving	1. Candidates are able to find solutions when facing technical or administrative difficulties in the recruitment process.	3.23
	2. Candidates are prepared to adapt to changes in selection systems, both digital and face-to-face.	3.26
	3. Candidates have psychological resilience to maintain a positive attitude throughout the job search process.	3.23
Total		3.08

As shown in Table 4, job search self-efficacy recorded an overall mean of 3.08, indicating a moderate level of confidence among Generation Z respondents. The highest score appeared in the ability to manage time and energy consistently during job-search activities ($M = 3.27$), whereas clarity in planning and organizing job-search strategies received the lowest score ($M = 2.33$). This pattern suggests that respondents demonstrate relatively strong persistence and self-regulation, but still require greater support in developing structured job-search strategies and interview communication confidence.

Table 5. Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness Index among Generation Z Using Job Portals

Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness Variables		
Dimensions	Indicators	Average
Digital Process Efficiency	1. Digital recruitment processes accelerate the stages of job searching and job application submission.	3.15
	2. Digital recruitment systems reduce candidates' waiting time during the selection process.	3.12
	3. Digital recruitment platforms make the job application process more concise and efficient.	3.21
System Usability and Accessibility	1. Digital recruitment platforms are easy for candidates to use.	3.13
	2. The features of digital recruitment platforms are easy to understand and do not confuse candidates.	3.20
	3. Candidates can access information and participate in digital recruitment processes without significant technical barriers.	2.31
Recruitment Information Transparency	1. Information regarding job requirements, selection stages, and assessment criteria is presented clearly.	3.19
	2. Application status can be monitored transparently through digital recruitment systems or platforms.	3.19
	3. Candidates receive sufficient information to understand the selection process from beginning to end.	2.34
Perceived Selection Quality and Credibility	1. Digital recruitment systems help organizations select candidates more accurately.	3.16
	2. Digital recruitment processes are perceived to match candidates with suitable job positions.	3.19
	3. Candidates perceive digital recruitment as a professional, credible, and trustworthy process.	3.19
Total		3.03

As presented in Table 5, perceived digital recruitment effectiveness recorded an overall mean of 3.03, representing the lowest average among the four constructs. The highest score appeared in the ability of digital platforms to make job applications more concise and efficient ($M = 3.21$), whereas accessibility without significant technical barriers received the lowest score ($M = 2.31$). This pattern indicates that respondents recognized the efficiency of digital recruitment, but continued to experience limitations in technical accessibility and the completeness of selection-related information.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed through convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability to ensure that all indicators adequately represented their respective latent constructs. Convergent validity was evaluated using outer loadings and AVE, discriminant validity through HTMT, and reliability through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. These assessments confirm the adequacy of the measurement model before proceeding to structural model evaluation.

Table 6. Convergent Validity Value

Work Life Balance			Digital Recruitment Experience			Job Search Self-Efficacy			Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness		
Indicators code	Loading Factor	Status	Indicators code	Loading Factor	Status	Indicators code	Loading Factor	Status	Indicators code	Loading Factor	Status
HWA1	0.855	Valid	IT1	0.879	Valid	JSP1	0.765	Valid	DPE1	0.877	Valid
HWA2	0.777	Valid	IT2	0.714	Valid	JSP2	0.755	Valid	DPE2	0.701	Valid
HWA3	0.745	Valid	IT3	0.769	Valid	JSP3	0.749	Valid	DPE3	0.776	Valid
TAD1	0.760	Valid	PES1	0.802	Valid	AIC1	0.729	Valid	SUA1	0.777	Valid
TAD2	0.887	Valid	PES2	0.795	Valid	AIC2	0.769	Valid	SUA2	0.827	Valid
TAD3	0.903	Valid	PES3	0.731	Valid	AIC3	0.713	Valid	SUA3	0.716	Valid
WLB1	0.738	Valid	FRT1	0.775	Valid	PSG1	0.777	Valid	RIT1	0.765	Valid
WLB2	0.746	Valid	FRT2	0.820	Valid	PSG2	0.753	Valid	RIT2	0.807	Valid
WLB3	0.775	Valid	FRT3	0.730	Valid	PSG3	0.731	Valid	RIT3	0.712	Valid
ECSR1	0.712	Valid	EIA1	0.811	Valid	CPS1	0.752	Valid	PSQC1	0.840	Valid
ECSR2	0.705	Valid	EIA2	0.777	Valid	CPS2	0.714	Valid	PSQC2	0.787	Valid
ECSR3	0.741	Valid	EIA3	0.751	Valid	CPS3	0.768	Valid	PSQC3	0.739	Valid
CAB1	0.697	Accepted									
CAB2	0.695	Accepted									
CAB3	0.714	Valid									

Table 6 presents the results of convergent and discriminant validity assessments. All indicator loadings ranged from 0.695 to 0.903, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. Although CAB1 (0.697) and CAB2 (0.695) were slightly below the recommended 0.70 threshold, both indicators remained acceptable as they exceeded 0.50 and maintained theoretical relevance. Furthermore, the HTMT values ranged from 0.397 to 0.889, below the recommended 0.90 criterion, confirming adequate discriminant validity among the constructs. The highest HTMT value was observed between work–life balance and perceived digital recruitment effectiveness (0.889), indicating conceptual similarity without compromising construct distinctiveness. Therefore, all measurement indicators and constructs were retained for subsequent structural model analysis.

Tabel 6. Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Value

	Digital Recruitment Experience	Job Search Self-Efficacy	Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	Work Life Balance
Digital Recruitment Experience				
Job Search Self-Efficacy	0.675			
Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	0.397	0.848		
Work Life Balance	0.834	0.731	0.889	

Table 7 shows that all constructs met the reliability and convergent validity criteria, with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeding 0.70. The AVE values ranged from 0.560 to 0.610, indicating that each construct explained more than 50% of the variance in its indicators. Therefore, the measurement model was considered reliable, convergent and valid and could proceed to structural model assessment.

Table 7. Construct Validity and Reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Digital Recruitment Experience	0.941	0.945	0.949	0.610
Job Search Self-Efficacy	0.929	0.929	0.938	0.560
Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	0.940	0.943	0.948	0.607
Work Life Balance	0.949	0.954	0.955	0.587

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model assessment began with an examination of inner variance inflation factor (VIF) values to identify potential collinearity among the predictor constructs. The analysis subsequently evaluated the model's explanatory power and predictive relevance using R^2 , adjusted R^2 , Q^2 predict, RMSE, and MAE (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 8. Inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Values

	Digital Recruitment Experience	Job Search Self-Efficacy	Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	Work Life Balance
Digital Recruitment Experience		3.617	4.218	
Job Search Self-Efficacy			3.264	
Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness				
Work Life Balance	1.000	3.617	4.240	

Table 8 shows that the inner VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 4.240, with the highest value found for work–life balance in predicting perceived digital recruitment effectiveness. All values were below the critical threshold of 5.00, indicating no critical collinearity among the predictor constructs. However, values above 3.00 indicate moderate shared predictive variance, so the affected structural relationships should be interpreted cautiously.

Tabel 9. Summary of Structural Model Evaluation and Predictive Ability

Evaluation Aspect	Indicator/Variable		Value		Criterion	Interpretation
R-square	Digital Experience	Recruitment	$R^2 = 0.724$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.723$		0.50–0.75	Moderate explanatory power, approaching strong
R-square	Job Search	Self-Efficacy	$R^2 = 0.694$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.692$		0.50–0.75	Moderate explanatory power
R-square	Perceived Recruitment Effectiveness	Digital	$R^2 = 0.915$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.914$		> 0.75	Strong explanatory power
Q²predict	Digital Experience	Recruitment	0.797		> 0	Predictive relevance
Q²predict	Job Search	Self-Efficacy	0.614		> 0	Predictive relevance
Q²predict	Perceived Recruitment Effectiveness	Digital	0.710		> 0	Predictive relevance
SRMR	Saturated Model		0.090		< 0.10	Acceptable model fit
SRMR	Estimated Model		0.090		< 0.10	Acceptable model fit
PLSpredict	Digital Experience: RMSE	Recruitment	0.453		Lower values indicate better prediction	Relatively low prediction error
PLSpredict	Digital Experience: MAE	Recruitment	0.342		Lower values indicate better prediction	Relatively low prediction error
PLSpredict	Job Search Self-Efficacy: RMSE		0.627		Lower values indicate better prediction	Prediction error remains acceptable
PLSpredict	Job Search Self-Efficacy: MAE		0.453		Lower values indicate better prediction	Prediction error remains acceptable
PLSpredict	Perceived Recruitment Effectiveness: RMSE	Digital	0.542		Lower values indicate better prediction	Relatively low prediction error
PLSpredict	Perceived Recruitment Effectiveness: MAE	Digital	0.393		Lower values indicate better prediction	Relatively low prediction error
CVPAT	Digital Experience	Recruitment	Average difference = -0.383; t = 8.442; p < 0.001	loss =	Negative and statistically significant	Predictive ability confirmed
CVPAT	Job Search Self-Efficacy		Average difference = -0.358; t = 8.047; p < 0.001	loss =	Negative and statistically significant	Predictive ability confirmed
CVPAT	Perceived Recruitment Effectiveness	Digital	Average difference = -0.427; t = 9.888; p < 0.001	loss =	Negative and statistically significant	Predictive ability confirmed
CVPAT	Overall Model		Average difference = -0.389; t = 10.198; p < 0.001	loss =	Negative and statistically significant	The overall model demonstrates predictive ability

The structural model demonstrates moderate explanatory power for digital recruitment experience ($R^2 = 0.724$) and job search self-efficacy ($R^2 = 0.694$), and strong explanatory power for perceived digital recruitment effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.915$) (Hair et al., 2022). All Q^2 predict values were greater than zero, indicating that the model has predictive relevance for the three endogenous constructs. The SRMR value of 0.090 for both the saturated and estimated models remained below the 0.10 threshold, indicating an acceptable model fit. The RMSE and MAE values indicate varying prediction errors across constructs, with digital recruitment experience producing the lowest prediction errors. Furthermore, the negative and statistically significant CVPAT average loss differences for each construct and the overall model confirm that the structural model has meaningful predictive ability.

Next, a structural model (inner model) was tested to see the relationship between constructs. The following are the results of the evaluation of the structural research model:

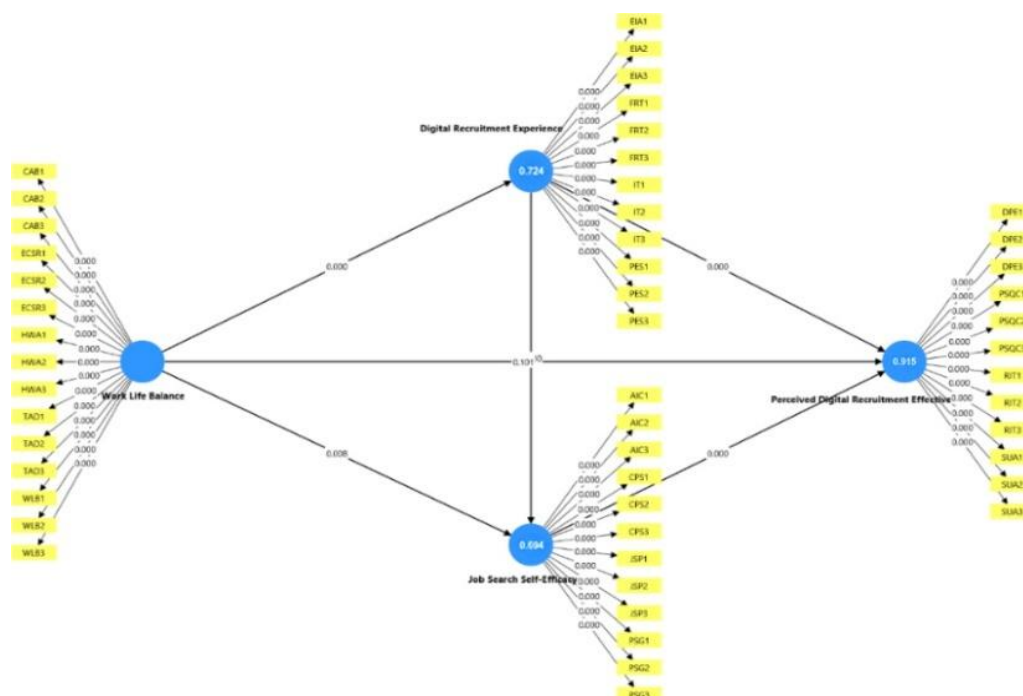


Figure 2. Structural Model

The hypothesis-testing results, as shown in Table 10 below, indicate that five of the six direct relationships were statistically significant. Work-life balance did not directly affect perceived digital recruitment effectiveness ($\beta = -0.062$, $p = 0.101$), resulting in the rejection of H1. In contrast, digital recruitment experience ($\beta = 0.678$, $p < 0.001$) and job search self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.382$, $p < 0.001$) had positive and significant effects on perceived digital recruitment effectiveness. Work-life balance also significantly affected digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy, while digital recruitment experience significantly affected job search self-efficacy. All indirect relationships were significant, with the strongest mediation occurring when work-life balance influenced perceived digital recruitment effectiveness through digital recruitment experience ($\beta = 0.607$), followed by the serial mediation through digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.206$). The non-significant direct effect of work-life balance, combined with the significant indirect effects, indicates an indirect-only or full-mediation pattern.

Table 10. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Original Sample (O)	P-values	T-values	Decision
Direct Effects					
H1	Work–Life Balance → Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	–0.062	0.101	1.640	Not Supported
H2	Digital Recruitment Experience → Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	0.678	0.000	14.652	Supported
H3	Job Search Self-Efficacy → Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	0.382	0.000	8.711	Supported
H4	Work–Life Balance → Job Search Self-Efficacy	0.437	0.008	4.649	Supported
H5	Digital Recruitment Experience → Job Search Self-Efficacy	0.429	0.000	4.663	Supported
H6	Work–Life Balance → Digital Recruitment Experience	0.851	0.000	70.917	Supported
Indirect Effects					
H7	Work–Life Balance → Digital Recruitment Experience → Job Search Self-Efficacy → Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	0.206	0.000	5.174	Supported
H8	Work–Life Balance → Digital Recruitment Experience → Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	0.607	0.000	14.943	Supported
H9	Work–Life Balance → Job Search Self-Efficacy → Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	0.095	0.012	2.503	Supported
H10	Work–Life Balance → Digital Recruitment Experience → Job Search Self-Efficacy	0.539	0.000	6.549	Supported
H11	Digital Recruitment Experience → Job Search Self-Efficacy → Perceived Digital Recruitment Effectiveness	0.230	0.000	5.232	Supported

Discussion

The non-significant direct effect of work–life balance on perceived digital recruitment effectiveness differs from Ahamad et al. (2023), who found that work–life balance benefits strengthened employer attractiveness and job-pursuit intentions. This difference reflects the distinct outcomes examined, because employer attractiveness concerns candidates' evaluations of an organization, whereas perceived digital recruitment effectiveness concerns their assessment of the recruitment process. The finding also qualifies Hofer et al. (2024) by showing that work–life balance remains an important employment expectation for Generation Z. However, it does not automatically generate a favorable evaluation of digital hiring. Conversely, the positive effect of digital recruitment experience supports Priyadarsini & Sreejith (2025) and McCarthy et al. (2017), who emphasize the importance of candidate experience, fairness, communication, and treatment during selection. This study extends these findings by showing that process speed, HR responsiveness, usability, and transparency shape Generation Z's perceptions of digital recruitment effectiveness.

The positive relationship between job search self-efficacy and perceived digital recruitment effectiveness is consistent with Zheng et al. (2025) and Dahal et al. (2026),

who identify self-efficacy as an important psychological resource for job-search preparation, persistence, coping, and successful navigation of employment processes. It also supports Saks et al. (2015) and Santoriello et al. (2025) by showing that candidates' confidence influences not only their job-search behavior but also their evaluation of digital recruitment systems. Candidates with stronger self-efficacy are better able to understand recruitment requirements, manage selection challenges, and perceive digital hiring processes as useful and effective. The mediation findings further extend El-Menawy & Saleh (2023) and Li et al. (2025) by demonstrating that digital recruitment experience transmits work–life balance signals into perceived recruitment effectiveness, while job search self-efficacy strengthens candidates' confidence in navigating selection stages. Accordingly, the indirect-only sequential mediation model integrates organizational values, candidate experience, and psychological readiness to explain digital recruitment evaluations among Generation Z job portal users in Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya.

Organizations should display work–life balance information directly in job advertisements, including working hours, hybrid-work arrangements, workload expectations, leave policies, and employee well-being programs. HR and recruitment teams should establish response-time standards, provide automatic application-status updates, communicate selection stages clearly, and deliver timely feedback to candidates. Job-portal providers and career-support institutions should simplify application forms, reduce technical barriers, and provide interview, assessment, and career-planning tools that help Generation Z complete each recruitment stage confidently.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that work–life balance does not directly influence perceived digital recruitment effectiveness among Generation Z; rather, its effect emerges through digital recruitment experience and job search self-efficacy. The findings contribute to the digital recruitment literature by introducing a sequential mediation model that explains how organizational work values are transformed into positive recruitment perceptions through experiential and psychological mechanisms. The results highlight that organizations should not only communicate work–life balance benefits but also strengthen candidate-oriented digital recruitment practices through transparent information, responsive HR interactions, efficient processes, accessible platforms, and supportive experiences. Nevertheless, the cross-sectional design, purposive sampling approach, and self-reported data limit causal interpretation and generalizability. Future studies should employ longitudinal or experimental designs and examine additional factors, such as employer branding, artificial intelligence-based recruitment, digital trust, and organizational reputation, to further explain how digital recruitment ecosystems shape candidate perceptions and employer attractiveness.

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