



Exploring Gen Z Engagement: Work–Life Balance and Flexibility in Creative Programming Work

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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This study investigates the influence of Work-Life Balance (WLB) and Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) on Employee Engagement (EE) among Generation Z professionals in Indonesia's creative programming sector. With Gen Z's increasing demand for autonomy and meaningful work, the study used a quantitative descriptive-associative method to collect data from 86 respondents via purposive sampling in LinkedIn programming communities in West Java. The analysis included validity and reliability tests, descriptive statistics, and multiple linear regression. Results reveal that WLB significantly enhances employee engagement, highlighting the importance of balance in time, involvement, and satisfaction. However, FWA does not considerably affect engagement, possibly because it is an expected norm among Gen Z, lacking differentiation unless backed by organizational support or meaningful work. The study emphasizes the importance of prioritizing work-life balance for organizations to enhance employee engagement. Managers should offer not only flexible work arrangements but also meaningful work experiences that align with employees' values. Flexibility should be supported by a strong organizational culture and leadership that fosters well-being and purpose, ensuring higher employee engagement and long-term productivity.

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INTRODUCTION

The global work landscape is undergoing substantial transformation, particularly within technology-driven sectors such as the creative industry. These changes are driven by the widespread adoption of flexible work models following the COVID-19 pandemic (Asthu et al., 2023; Tao et al., 2024), along with the increasing entry of Generation Z (Gen Z) into the workforce. Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z currently represents 27.94% of Indonesia's

population (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2021). Many of them are beginning careers in digital-first roles, such as application and game development, where programming is central. As digital natives, Gen Z professionals bring strong expectations for autonomy, flexibility, and meaningful engagement at work (McKinsey & Company, 2023; Al-Atikho & Bhakti, 2024).

In the creative industry, employee engagement has become a strategic priority. Engagement is defined as a fulfilling and work-related psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It is positively associated with innovation, productivity, and organizational commitment. However, traditional drivers of engagement, such as job challenge or monetary incentives, may not fully address the evolving expectations of Gen Z employees. Increasingly, this generation emphasizes mental well-being, lifestyle alignment, and the ability to maintain work-life balance (Faatur, 2024; Rachmadini & Riyanto, 2020).

Recent empirical studies highlight that work-life balance (WLB) and flexible work arrangements (FWA) are key components of how Gen Z evaluates their professional experience. Research conducted by Wahyudi et al. (2025) and Atieq et al. (2023) shows that Gen Z professionals tend to report higher levels of engagement when given autonomy in managing time and space, as well as clear boundaries between work and personal life. These findings reflect national trends. For example, Fiverr (2024) reported that approximately 70% of Gen Z workers in Indonesia either work as freelancers or intend to do so, primarily to gain flexibility (Shr, 2025). Despite this, Gallup (2024) found that only 25% of employees in Indonesia are highly engaged, indicating a gap between what young workers need and what organizations currently provide.

This gap is particularly relevant in the context of creative programming work. This subsector is characterized by asynchronous collaboration, fluid project-based structures, and geographically dispersed teams (Habibi, 2025). These working conditions provide flexibility and encourage creativity. However, they may also blur the boundaries between work and personal life, reduce opportunities for social interaction, and weaken organizational identification (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020; Butarbutar et al., 2022). These risks call for a deeper understanding of how WLB and FWA influence engagement outcomes for Gen Z workers.

While the literature on employee engagement continues to grow, most existing research tends to focus on older generations or conventional work environments. Few studies have examined both WLB and FWA as simultaneous predictors of engagement among Gen Z professionals, particularly those working in digital and creative fields.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the influence of work-life balance and flexible work arrangements on employee engagement among Gen Z programmers in Indonesia. The study focuses on members of professional programming communities on LinkedIn, particularly those based in West Java. This region has the highest number of creative economy enterprises in the country (Badan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2016) and is recognized as a major center for digital creative industries.

This research makes three contributions. First, it extends engagement theory by contextualizing its antecedents in terms of Gen Z worker preferences. Second, it emphasizes the relevance of WLB and FWA as contemporary engagement drivers in digital creative sectors. Third, it provides practical insights for HR practitioners and organizational leaders who are designing engagement strategies for the next generation of the workforce.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a descriptive-associative design to examine the influence of work-life balance and flexible work arrangements on employee engagement among Generation Z programmers in Indonesia's creative industry.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents based on specific inclusion criteria: individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (classified as Generation Z), currently working in the creative programming subsector, and residing in West Java. The population consisted of 585 members from a professional programming community on the LinkedIn platform. Based on these criteria and Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, a total of 86 eligible respondents were included in the final sample. This sampling strategy was aligned with the study's objective to examine how work-life balance and flexible work arrangements influence engagement among Gen Z programmers.

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The questionnaire consisted of three constructs: Work-Life Balance (WLB), Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA), and Employee Engagement (EE). The WLB items were adapted from McDonald & Bradley (2005), covering three dimensions: time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance. The FWA items were derived from Rau & Hyland (2002), consisting of flextime and telecommuting dimensions. The EE items were based on the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) developed by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004), which includes vigor, dedication, and absorption.

The data analysis process included instrument testing (validity and reliability), descriptive statistics, classical assumption testing (normality,

multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity), and multiple linear regression analysis. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test to determine the partial effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 25.0 for Windows.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Characteristics of Respondents

The study involved 86 Generation Z respondents working in creative programming sectors in West Java, Indonesia. Most participants were aged 23–28 years (79.07%), female (51.16%), and held a bachelor’s degree (75.58%). The majority had 1–2 years of work experience (60.47%).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–22 years	18	20.93%
	23–28 years	68	79.07%
Gender	Male	42	48,84%
	Female	44	51,16%
Education	High School	3	3.49%
	Diploma	14	16.28%
	Bachelor/D4	65	75.58%
	Postgraduate	4	4.65%
Work Duration	6–12 months	24	27.91%
	1–2 years	52	60.47%
	> 2 years	10	11.63%

Descriptive Statistics

This study measured three variables: Work-Life Balance (WLB), Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA), and Employee Engagement (EE) using Likert-scale indicators. Results are summarized below.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Interpretation
WLB	3.96	High
FWA	4.18	High to Very High
EE	4.19	High to Very High

Respondents reported high levels of WLB, with the highest-rated item being satisfaction with current work-life conditions. FWA also received high ratings, especially on the ability to work remotely. EE showed strong results, especially in pride, enthusiasm, and energy at work.

Instrument Testing

All items in WLB, FWA, and EE met the validity threshold ($r > 0.2120$), and all variables demonstrated high internal consistency as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha scores above 0.8.

Table 3. Summary of Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variable	Valid Items	Valid	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
WLB	8	All	0.825	Very Reliable
FWA	7	All	0.805	Reliable
EE	9	All	0.846	Very Reliable

Classical Assumption Testing

Before performing multiple regression analysis, classical assumption testing was conducted to ensure that the data met the necessary statistical requirements. The normality test showed a Kolmogorov–Smirnov significance value of 0.158, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the residuals are normally distributed and the normality assumption is fulfilled.

Next, the multicollinearity test yielded a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of 1.198 for all independent variables. This value is well below the critical threshold of 10, suggesting no symptoms of multicollinearity among the predictors.

Lastly, the heteroscedasticity test was conducted using the Glejser method. The resulting significance values were all above 0.05, indicating that there were no heteroscedasticity issues in the model.

Table 4. Classical Assumption Results

Test Type	Result
Normality	Sig = 0.158 > 0.05 (normal)
Multicollinearity	VIF = 1.198 < 10
Heteroscedasticity	Sig > 0.05 (no symptoms)

These findings confirm that the data met all the classical assumptions necessary for reliable multiple regression analysis.

Hypothesis Testing (Multiple Linear Regression)

Multiple linear regression was conducted to examine the effect of Work-Life Balance (WLB) and Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) on Employee Engagement (EE) among Gen Z professionals in creative programming sectors. The analysis involved both partial tests (t-tests) to determine the individual effect of each independent variable, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the overall model's explanatory power.

Partial Test (t-test)

Table 5. t-Test Results

Variable	β	t-value	Sig.	Conclusion
WLB	0.918	10.357	0.000	Significant positive effect
FWA	0.056	0.569	0.571	Not significant

WLB significantly affects EE, supporting the idea that balanced work-life conditions enhance engagement. Meanwhile, FWA showed no significant effect, possibly due to it being a normative expectation among Gen Z.

Determination Coefficient (R²)

The coefficient of determination (R²) provides insight into how much of the variation in employee engagement can be explained by the independent variables in the model. In this study, the R² value was 0.735, and the adjusted R² was 0.728. This means that approximately 73.5% of the variance in employee engagement is explained by the combined influence of Work-Life Balance and Flexible Work Arrangement. The remaining 26.5% may be attributed to other factors not included in the model, indicating a strong explanatory power of the selected variables.

Table 6. R² Result

R ²	Adjusted R ²	Innterpretation
0.735	0.728	73.5% variance in EE explained by WLB and FWA

Work-Life Balance and Employee Engagement

The results confirm that Work-Life Balance (WLB) plays a critical role in enhancing employee engagement among Generation Z professionals. The t-test results showed a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.918$, $t = 10.357$, $\text{sig.} = 0.000$), indicating that when Gen Z employees experience a better balance between work and personal life, they tend to be more engaged.

Generation Z individuals tend to place high value on autonomy, flexibility, and purpose-driven work. Therefore, WLB serves as a core psychological resource that sustains motivation and resilience. In creative programming sectors, which demand innovation and adaptability, maintaining personal well-being through WLB may enhance focus, creativity, and persistence at work.

Flexible Work Arrangement and Employee Engagement

Contrary to expectations, Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) did not

show a statistically significant influence on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.056$, $t = 0.569$, $\text{sig.} = 0.571$). This result suggests that although Gen Z respondents reported high levels of flexibility in their work setting (as reflected in the descriptive mean of 4.18), such flexibility may no longer function as a differentiating factor in boosting engagement. One possible explanation is that FWA, including flextime and telecommuting, has become a normative or expected aspect of creative programming jobs. As a result, its presence may not lead to increased engagement unless accompanied by other meaningful organizational factors.

Discussion

This finding aligns with the framework proposed by Greenhaus et al. (2003), which suggests that time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance each play a crucial role in employees' psychological well-being and fulfillment. This framework is further supported by Ambalika et al. (2024), who demonstrated that work-life balance (WLB) has a significant influence on engagement among Gen Z professionals in Indonesia. In a similar vein, Jasmine & Utomo (2024) found that WLB positively correlates with employee engagement, though its impact on organizational commitment is mediated through engagement. This aligns with Saks (2022), who argued that the effectiveness of engagement drivers evolves in response to changes in employees' expectations.

However, while WLB plays a central role in boosting engagement, the impact of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) on engagement appears more complex. Yamin & Pusparini (2022) suggest that FWA only significantly impacts engagement when perceived organizational support is present. This is further corroborated by Rosita et al. (2024), who found that flexible working reduces turnover and enhances WLB and job embeddedness among Gen Z and millennial employees. Yet, these positive outcomes may not always translate into direct engagement unless they are coupled with intrinsic motivators and supportive HR practices. In conclusion, while flexibility remains a valued job feature, its impact on engagement is conditional. For FWA to drive meaningful engagement among Gen Z programmers, organizations must integrate it with other support mechanisms, including career development, leadership responsiveness, and recognition initiatives.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the influence of Work-Life Balance (WLB) and Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) on Employee Engagement (EE) among Generation Z professionals in Indonesia's creative programming sector. The findings indicate that WLB has a significant and positive effect on employee engagement, highlighting the importance of time, involvement, and satisfaction balance in shaping psychological attachment to work. On the other hand, FWA showed no significant impact on engagement, suggesting that flexibility may have become a normative expectation among Gen Z employees and thus does not function as a primary engagement driver.

These findings emphasize the need for organizations, especially in the creative digital sector, to prioritize meaningful work-life integration strategies rather than relying solely on structural flexibility. As Gen Z continues to enter and reshape the workforce, understanding the nuanced drivers of engagement becomes essential for sustaining motivation, innovation, and retention.

Future research may expand by incorporating additional variables such as leadership style, organizational support, or job meaningfulness to deepen the understanding of Gen Z engagement. Comparative studies across industries or generational cohorts may also provide richer insights into evolving workforce expectations.

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