



Research article

Work environment, career development, and work-life balance: The mediating role of motivation in Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to analyze the influence of the work environment and career development on work-life balance, with motivation as an intervening variable, specifically among Generation Z employees in East Jakarta. This demographic is noted for its distinct characteristics and strong emphasis on balancing personal and professional life.

Methods: The research employs a quantitative approach. Data were collected from Generation Z employees working in East Jakarta using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically snowball sampling. The data analysis was conducted using path analysis within the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework via the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method, utilizing SmartPLS software.

Findings: The results reveal that the work environment does not have a significant direct effect on work-life balance. However, motivation functions as an important intervening variable, strengthening the indirect relationships between the work environment and career development and work-life balance.

Practical Implication: For organizations employing Generation Z, the findings suggest that enhancing work-life balance should focus on fostering employee motivation.

Keywords: *Work Environment, Career Development, Work Life Balance, Motivation*

Article Information:

Received 3/21/2025 / Revised 7/30/2025 / Accepted 12/30/2025 / Online First 12/30/2025

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Abstrak

Tujuan: Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh lingkungan kerja dan pengembangan karier terhadap keseimbangan kerja-hidup, dengan motivasi sebagai variabel perantara, khususnya di kalangan karyawan Generasi Z di Jakarta Timur. Demografi ini dikenal dengan karakteristiknya yang khas dan penekanan yang kuat pada keseimbangan antara kehidupan pribadi dan profesional.

Metode: Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif. Data dikumpulkan dari karyawan Generasi Z yang bekerja di Jakarta Timur menggunakan teknik pengambilan sampel non-probabilitas, khususnya pengambilan sampel snowball. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan analisis jalur dalam kerangka Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) melalui metode Partial Least Squares (PLS), dengan memanfaatkan perangkat lunak SmartPLS.

Temuan: Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan kerja tidak memiliki pengaruh langsung yang signifikan terhadap keseimbangan kerja-hidup. Namun, motivasi berfungsi sebagai variabel perantara yang penting, memperkuat hubungan tidak langsung antara lingkungan kerja dan pengembangan karier serta keseimbangan kerja-hidup.

Implikasi Praktis: Bagi organisasi yang mempekerjakan Generasi Z, temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa peningkatan keseimbangan kerja-hidup harus fokus pada peningkatan motivasi karyawan.

Kata kunci: Work Environment, Career Development, Work Life Balance, Motivation

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology and communication in today's era of globalization allows people to access information instantly. This trend has particularly influenced Generation Z, making them more open to diverse perspectives and better equipped to tackle global challenges and opportunities. Generation Z is characterized by those who grew up with digital technology, fostering adaptability and heightened expectations for a flexible work environment and clear career development opportunities. Consequently, companies must foster a supportive work environment and offer career advancement opportunities to retain this generation's employees.

According to Schmidt (2000), a generation is defined as a group of individuals identified by their birth year, age, location, and significant life events. Pratiwi (2022) indicates that Generation Z members are currently aged 10 to 27, while Sunyoto (2024) defines them as those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, having grown up in the digital era.

Work motivation plays a crucial role in employee performance, and Generation Z primarily seeks meaningful work, values professional development, and prioritizes a balance between their personal life and career (Syahdi, 2024). For this generation, work-life balance—defined as having adequate time for family, relaxation, good communication with coworkers, and the successful completion of tasks—is essential. Muliawati (2020) emphasizes its importance in their job selection and retention.

Generation Z tends to avoid overly stressful and demanding work environments, unlike previous generations. A survey conducted by Jakpat (2024) found that 74% of Generation Z consider work-life balance crucial for maintaining mental health, while 69% believe it enhances work enthusiasm and productivity. However, some previous studies present mixed results on the factors influencing work-life balance. Jaya (2024) asserts that a positive work environment can improve work-life balance, whereas Chotimah (2020) found that the work environment does not always significantly affect work motivation.

Motivation is a condition that drives someone to achieve a specific goal. In companies, motivating employees is crucial, as motivated employees tend to work more enthusiastically and make positive contributions (Khaeruman, 2021, p. 21). The work environment has two aspects: physical and non-physical. The physical environment includes the condition of the workplace and the availability of materials and equipment, while the non-physical environment encompasses social interaction and communication between employees (Heruwanto, 2020). The work environment is where employees carry out their daily activities. A comfortable environment provides a sense of security and enables employees to perform well (Jufrisen, 2022). According to Djuhartono (2021), the work environment influences employee motivation in carrying out tasks, including facilities and infrastructure, harmonious cooperation, competent leaders, and a social environment that supports career development.

Career development is important for employee motivation. Isnowati (2022) states that career development is an employee activity that helps employees plan their future careers and develop themselves optimally. Organizational support is also crucial for career development, alongside employees' desire to advance. Good career development management can improve individual employee performance (Munir, 2022). Career development is a company responsibility, not solely the employee's responsibility (Darmawati, 2021).

Although various studies have examined the relationship between the work environment, career development, and work-life balance, research gaps remain. Research by Yusianto (2023) found that work environment variables significantly positively influence employee work motivation. Hafidzi (2023) suggested that a comfortable work environment, both physical and non-physical, positively influences employee motivation and work performance. Khair (2020) further stated that career development significantly influences employee performance. Sudarnice (2024) found that work-life balance significantly impacts employee performance. Furthermore, research by Purnamasari (2024) found that work-life balance and career development significantly influence employee performance, with motivation acting as a mediator. Research on Generation Z remains limited, particularly in East Jakarta. Therefore, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature by exploring in greater depth how the work environment and career development influence work-life balance, with motivation as an intervening variable.

2. Theory and hypothesis development

Based on Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, individuals are fundamentally motivated to acquire, retain, and protect their valued resources—including tangible (e.g., time), personal (e.g., skills), and social (e.g., support) assets—where the threat of resource loss is more impactful than the potential for gain. A positive work environment and structured career development initiatives serve as critical reservoirs, providing support, growth opportunities, and skills that enhance an employee's resource pool. This accumulation of resources boosts motivation and capability, directly facilitating effective work-life balance by enabling individuals to manage demands without depleting their personal resources. Conversely, a poor work environment or a lack of career development drains these resources, leading to stress, disrupted balance, and an increased risk of burnout as individuals struggle to protect their diminishing assets (Hobfoll, 2001).

The influence of the work environment on work-life balance

The work environment is a fundamental determinant of employee outcomes, encompassing all conditions—both physical and psychological—that surround an individual at work. According to Mahawati (2021:120), the work environment is a crucial factor influencing employee well-being, efficiency, and health, as individuals spend a significant portion of their time in professional

settings. A comfortable, safe, and supportive work environment is therefore essential not only for enhancing performance but also for fostering a sustainable balance between professional duties and personal life. Research by Musa (2020) supports this, indicating that a conducive work environment positively and significantly affects work-life balance, thereby helping employees maintain equilibrium and boost their intrinsic motivation. Conversely, Giorgi (2020) highlights the adverse effects, finding that a poor or stressful work environment can significantly worsen employees' psychological well-being, thereby disrupting work-life harmony. These insights underscore the dual role of the work environment as both a facilitator and a potential barrier to balance.

H1: The work environment is hypothesized to have a direct and positive impact on work-life balance.

The influence of career development on work-life balance

Career development refers to the structured planning and progressive enhancement of an individual's professional path, involving support from the individual, their management, and the organization. As defined by Purba (2017), it is an integral component of career planning that facilitates growth and alignment between personal aspirations and organizational opportunities. Effective career development programs signal organizational investment in employees, which can enhance job satisfaction and provide a clearer sense of professional trajectory. Studies indicate that such development initiatives have a positive and significant impact on work-life balance. This is because perceived growth opportunities and fair advancement prospects can reduce career-related anxiety and increase one's sense of control and fulfillment, which extends into personal life. This finding is corroborated by Nurjanah's (2024) research, which confirms that structured career development positively influences an employee's ability to manage and integrate work and life demands.

H2: Career development is hypothesized to have a direct and positive impact on work-life balance.

The influence of the work environment on motivation

Employee motivation is highly sensitive to contextual workplace factors. A comfortable work environment, including ergonomic factors such as adequate lighting, optimal room temperature, and well-organized workspaces, plays a crucial role in minimizing discomfort and distractions, thereby enabling focus and enthusiasm. Beyond physical attributes, a positive psychosocial environment—characterized by supportive leadership, collaborative teamwork, and fair policies—directly fuels an individual's drive to contribute and achieve. Research by Subaidah (2024) and Rahayu (2024) consistently demonstrates that a holistic, positive work environment significantly strengthens employee motivation. When employees feel valued, safe, and physically comfortable, their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels rise, leading to greater engagement and productivity.

H3: The work environment is hypothesized to have a direct and positive influence on employee motivation.

The influence of career development on motivation

Career development is intrinsically linked to motivation, as it directly addresses employees' growth needs and aspirations. According to Sudiro (2022:64), career development involves enhancing an employee's work abilities and preparedness to assume desired roles and responsibilities within an organization. When employees perceive a clear, attainable path for advancement and skill development, it fosters strong motivation. Anwar (2023) emphasizes that organizations require highly motivated employees to achieve optimal results and that structured career development is a key mechanism for cultivating this motivation. It acts as a signal of long-

term organizational commitment, fulfilling employees' needs for achievement, recognition, and personal growth. Empirical research, such as Ismail's (2024) study, confirms that career development initiatives have a significant positive influence on elevating and sustaining employee work motivation.

H4: Career development is hypothesized to have a direct and positive influence on employee motivation.

The influence of motivation on work-life balance

Motivation, defined as the internal and external drives that stimulate an individual's direction, intensity, and persistence toward achieving set goals, is a critical engine of employee behavior and well-being. In the context of managing competing life domains, work-life balance represents the perceived harmony between professional responsibilities and personal life activities, which is essential for long-term employee health and satisfaction (Mundung, 2022). High work motivation can directly facilitate this balance by increasing engagement and efficiency during work hours, thereby reducing the spillover of work stress into personal time and creating psychological resources for non-work activities. Empirical research supports this connection; studies by Atthariq (2020) and Megayani (2023) demonstrate that robust work motivation significantly and positively influences an individual's ability to achieve and maintain work-life balance, a finding also observed within specific populations such as working students.

H5: Motivation is hypothesized to have a direct and positive influence on work-life balance.

The indirect influence of the work environment on work-life balance through motivation

The relationship between the work environment and work-life balance is often not merely direct but channeled through psychological processes such as motivation. As noted by Manuain (2022), the work environment significantly impacts critical employee outcomes, including performance. A conducive environment—characterized by supportive management, adequate resources, and a favorable climate—enhances work enthusiasm and productivity. Conversely, an unsupportive environment can lead to chronic stress and burnout, which severely deplete an individual's capacity to manage life outside of work. Research by Uçel (2022) confirms the significant role of the work environment in shaping perceptions of work-life balance. Crucially, as Hafidzi (2023) highlights, the work environment is fundamentally linked to an employee's level of motivation. A comfortable setting, encompassing both physical safety and psychological safety, is pivotal in fostering the motivation necessary for sustained effort and engagement. Therefore, the work environment is posited to affect work-life balance indirectly by first elevating or diminishing an employee's motivational state.

H6: The work environment is hypothesized to have a positive indirect influence on work-life balance, mediated by employee motivation.

The indirect effect of career development on work-life balance through motivation

Career development, representing a strategic investment in employees' professional growth, creates a vital link between organizational support and personal equilibrium. It is a shared responsibility where human resource systems assist employees in planning and advancing their career paths. This support, as noted by Franciska (2023), enhances employees' skills and knowledge, yielding mutual benefits for both the individual and the organization while fostering synergy for sustainable growth. At the same time, Rachmawati (2019) demonstrated that career development directly impacts work-life balance, and a significant portion of its influence is channeled through its effect on employee motivation. Career progression, which entails increased responsibility, status, and rewards (Ardiana, 2024), fulfills higher-order psychological needs and thus serves as a powerful motivator. This enhanced motivation, in turn, equips

employees with the focus and proactive attitude needed to better manage the interplay between their professional and personal spheres. Consequently, career development initiatives are understood to improve work-life balance indirectly by first strengthening an employee's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

H7: Career development is hypothesized to have a positive indirect effect on work-life balance, mediated by employee motivation.

3. Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the hypothesized relationships between the constructs. A survey-based, cross-sectional approach was utilized, which is appropriate for testing theoretical models and analyzing the strength and direction of relationships among variables (Sugiyono, 2017). Data were collected numerically via a structured questionnaire, and statistical analyses were conducted to test the proposed hypotheses.

Sampling and Data Collection

The target population for this study was Generation Z employees working in East Jakarta. Given the exploratory nature of research within this specific demographic and the practical challenges in obtaining a definitive sampling frame, a non-probability sampling technique was utilized. Specifically, snowball sampling was employed, in which initial respondents helped recruit additional participants from their networks, a method effective for reaching populations that are difficult to access (Machali, 2021). The minimum required sample size was determined based on the guideline for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) proposed by Hair et al. (2018), which recommends a sample size 10 times the largest number of structural paths directed at a particular construct in the model. With 15 total indicators measuring the four latent variables, and applying a conservative multiplier of 10, the minimum target was 150 respondents. The data collection successfully yielded 178 usable responses, exceeding this threshold and providing an adequate sample for robust statistical analysis (Hendryadi, 2019).

Measures

All constructs were measured using adapted scales from established studies, employing a four-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree) to mitigate central tendency bias. The work environment variable was measured using an 8-item scale adapted from Yang (2022) to assess the physical and psychosocial aspects of the workplace, with a sample item being "The workspace makes working comfortable." The career development variable was assessed using a 6-item scale adapted from Pratiwi (2023, p. 38) to evaluate perceptions of organizational support for growth, exemplified by the item "Training improves my skills." Work-life balance was measured using a 6-item scale adapted from Jufrisen (2024, p. 98) designed to capture the perceived equilibrium between work and personal life, such as "I am able to manage the balance between my work and personal responsibilities effectively." Finally, motivation was evaluated using a 10-item scale adapted from Ramiati (2023, p. 19) focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic drivers, with a sample item reading "I find my work personally rewarding." Prior to full-scale distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed for content validity and clarity, and data collection was administered electronically via an online survey platform.

4. Results and discussion

Outer Model Testing

Before testing the structural model, we conducted a thorough evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) for reliability and validity using standard PLS-SEM criteria. Convergent Validity was assessed using two key indicators: item loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). According to established guidelines, item loadings should exceed 0.70, indicating that a construct explains a sufficient portion of the variance in its indicators (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 1. Outer model evaluation

Variables	Loading Factor	CR	CA	AVE
LK 1.a.	0.776	0.941	0.928	0,664
LK 1.b.	0.788			
LK 2.a.	0.777			
LK 2.b.	0.835			
LK 3.a.	0.847			
LK 3.b	0.841			
LK 4.a.	0.850			
LK 4.b	0.805			
PK 1.a.	0.749	0.941	0.93	0,617
PK 1.b.	0.735			
PK 2.a.	0.809			
PK 2.b.	0.769			
PK 3.a.	0.787			
PK 3.b.	0.784			
WLB 1.a.	0.811	0.899	0.865	0,597
WLB 1.b.	0.870			
WLB 2.a.	0.779			
WLB 3.a	0.825			
WLB 3.b	0.844			
M 1.a.	0.700	0.915	0.884	0,638
M 1.b.	0.717			
M 2.a.	0.832			
M 2.b.	0.728			
M 3.a.	0.796			
M 3.b.	0.836			
M 4.a.	0.849			
M 4.b.	0.808			
M 5.a.	0.794			
M 5.b.	0.78			

Source: SmartPLS versi 4.1.0.9 (2025)

Additionally, an AVE greater than 0.50 for each construct indicates that it accounts for more than half of the variance in its indicators, thereby demonstrating adequate convergent validity.

Internal Consistency Reliability was evaluated using Composite Reliability (ρ_a) and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. We applied a threshold of 0.70 for both measures to ensure that the constructs are reliably measured by their respective indicators. Composite reliability is generally preferred in PLS-SEM since it accounts for varying item loadings, unlike Cronbach's Alpha, which assumes equal weighting (Hair et al., 2022). According to the test results presented in Table 1, convergent validity is supported because it exceeds 0.7. Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha value indicates reliability, as it exceeds 0.7. The composite reliability for all research variables exceeds 0.7, indicating that each variable is reliable. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha for each variable is above 0.7, indicating high reliability.

Inner Model Testing

Structural model testing aims to identify the relationship between independent and dependent variables and to test research hypotheses. Based on the results of the hypothesis testing in Table 2, the hypothesis was tested by examining the t-statistic ($t > 1.96$) and the p-value ($p < 0.05$). Table 3 shows that $LK \rightarrow WLB$ (t-statistic = $0.112 < 1.96$, p-value = $0.911 > 0.05$), which means this variable has no effect. $PK \rightarrow WLB$ (t-statistic = $2.548 < 1.96$, p-value = $0.011 > 0.05$), $LK \rightarrow M$ (t-statistic = $9.025 < 1.96$, p-value = $0 > 0.05$), $PK \rightarrow M$ (t-statistic = $5.409 < 1.96$, p-value = $0 > 0.05$), $M \rightarrow WLB$ (t-statistic = $6.145 < 1.96$, p-value = $0 > 0.05$), $LK \rightarrow M \rightarrow WLB$ (t-statistic = $4.991 < 1.96$, p-value = $0 > 0.05$), $PK \rightarrow M \rightarrow WLB$ (t-statistic = $4.136 < 1.96$, p-value = $0 > 0.05$), indicating that these variables have a significant influence. Overall, these results indicate that not all analyzed paths have an influence.

The results of the first hypothesis test indicate that the work environment significantly influences work-life balance among Generation Z in East Jakarta. Working remotely or freelancing provides convenience in terms of time and location. In this context, the physical work environment becomes less relevant, as workers can adjust their work environment to suit their personal preferences without affecting their work-life balance. This contrasts with Musa's (2020) research, which found that the work environment has a positive and significant influence on work-life balance. Creating a conducive work environment will help employees maintain work-life balance.

Table 2.
Hypothesis Testing Results

Variable	Original Sample	Std. Dev	T-value	P-value	Keterangan
$LK \rightarrow WLB$	-0.01	0.088	0.112	0.911	Rejected
$PK \rightarrow WLB$	0.184	0.072	2.548	0.011	Accepted
$LK \rightarrow M$	0.585	0.065	9.025	0,00	Accepted
$PK \rightarrow M$	0.359	0.066	5.409	0,000	Accepted
$M \rightarrow WLB$	0.677	0.110	6.145	0,000	Accepted
$LK \rightarrow M \rightarrow WLB$	0.396	0.079	4.991	0,000	Accepted
$PK \rightarrow M \rightarrow WLB$	0.243	0.059	4.136	0,000	Accepted

The results of the second hypothesis test indicate that career development significantly impacts work-life balance among Generation Z in East Jakarta. This suggests that Generation Z in East Jakarta values a workplace that supports their career growth while also respecting their personal needs. With structured career development opportunities, employees can allocate time to their personal lives. This finding aligns with Nurjanah's (2024) research, which found that career development significantly affects work-life balance.

The results of the third hypothesis test reveal that the work environment significantly influences motivation among Generation Z in East Jakarta. A conducive work environment plays

a crucial role in enhancing employee motivation. Companies that provide comprehensive work facilities and maintain a clean workspace can encourage employees to be more engaged in their work, especially among Generation Z in East Jakarta. This conclusion is supported by Rahayu (2024), who indicates that a comfortable work environment boosts employee motivation.

The fourth hypothesis test indicates that career development also has a significant effect on motivation among Generation Z in East Jakarta. Generation Z benefits from career development opportunities, including educational support from their employers, which motivates them to perform better at work. This aligns with Ismail's (2024) research, which demonstrated that career development significantly influences employee motivation.

The fifth hypothesis test findings suggest that motivation significantly affects work-life balance among Generation Z in East Jakarta. Employees who feel appreciated for their contributions tend to experience increased self-confidence. When companies recognize employee efforts, it fosters a positive work atmosphere, encouraging employees to remain committed and maintain a balance in their personal lives. This result is consistent with Megayani's (2023) research, which found that work motivation positively affects work-life balance.

The sixth hypothesis test results indicate that the work environment significantly influences work-life balance by motivating Generation Z in East Jakarta. A clean, comfortable work environment contributes to achieving work-life balance, especially when employee performance is recognized. When the work environment is supportive and motivating, employees are more likely to feel balanced in their personal lives. This conclusion is supported by Uçel's (2022) research, which shows that the work environment affects work-life balance.

Finally, the seventh hypothesis test results demonstrate that career development significantly influences work-life balance by motivating Generation Z in East Jakarta. Career advancement and promotions contribute to greater financial well-being for employees. When employees feel financially secure, they tend to be more satisfied with their work hours and overall well-being. This sense of security enhances motivation, engagement, and loyalty, which positively impacts the company. This finding aligns with Rachmawati's (2019) research, which found that career development has a significant and positive effect on work-life balance.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research and discussion above, it can be concluded that: Work environment has no effect on work-life balance among Generation Z in East Jakarta; Career development has a direct effect on work-life balance among Generation Z in East Jakarta; Work environment has a direct effect on motivation among Generation Z in East Jakarta; Career development has a direct effect on motivation among Generation Z in East Jakarta; Motivation has a direct effect on work-life balance among Generation Z in East Jakarta; Work environment has an indirect effect on work-life balance, mediated by motivation among Generation Z in East Jakarta; Career development has an indirect effect on work-life balance, mediated by motivation among Generation Z in East Jakarta.

This study has several limitations that should be considered for further research. First, this study focused only on Generation Z, so the results may not be representative of the entire employee population and may differ when applied to other generations. Second, because the study was conducted in East Jakarta, the results may not be generalizable to other regions with different cultural characteristics; therefore, studies in other geographic locations are strongly recommended. Finally, the variables studied were limited to the work environment, career development, work-life balance, and motivation. Therefore, future researchers are advised to explore additional variables that are more relevant to Generation Z. For future research, it is recommended that researchers include different generations and age groups to gain a broader understanding of the influence of the variables studied. Furthermore, conducting research across regions with diverse cultural characteristics will help compare results and understand

local contexts. It is also important to consider additional variables relevant to the current phenomenon.

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Declarations

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research and publication of this article.

Conflicts of interest/ Competing interests:

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

Data, Materials and/or Code Availability:

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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