

Exploring the impact of flexible work arrangements, social support, gender, and job category on the work-life balance of Generation Z workers

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Abstract

The work-life balance is the ability of individuals to effectively manage resources such as time and energy across multiple roles within the professional and personal life domain, extending beyond the confines of familial responsibilities. This balance significantly correlates with life satisfaction, job contentment, work dedication, and better mental health. This study aimed to explore the impact of Flexible Work Arrangements, Social Support, Gender, and Job Categories on Generation Z Workers. Conducting a quantitative analysis and using a non-probability sampling method, the study comprised a sample of 258 workers aged between 18 to 28 years residing in Jabodetabek. The Work/Nonwork Interference and Enhancement Scale measuring tool developed by Fisher et.al (2009) was used to evaluate the work-life balance. The evaluation of flexible work arrangements used the assessment tool developed by Hyland (2000), while the measurement of social support used the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) by Zimet et al (1988). The validity of the measuring instrument underwent scrutiny through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), with hypothesis testing conducted via Multiple Regression Technique. The results showed that five independent variables significantly influence the work-life balance, namely the use of adaptability, the availability of flexibility, preference for resilience, family support, and gender. However, variables such as aid from friends, significant other support, and job category are not significant in this context.

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INTRODUCTION

The findings from the 2020 Population Census conducted by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in Indonesia found that the country's total population is predominately 270.20 million individuals. Generation Z comprises the largest segment, accounting for 27.94%, followed by the Millennial Generation at 25.87%, Generation X at 21.88%, Baby Boomer at 11.56%, and the Post- Generation Z at 10.88%. Java Island continues to be the main hub for population concentration, with DKI Jakarta Province reporting a high number of inhabitants of Generation Z at 2,297,094 (BPS, 2021).

A generation is defined as a collective born within a specific timeframe, sharing common life experiences such as major events and technological advancements (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Recognised generational divisions include Baby Boomers (1945-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), Millennials or Generation Y (1980-1998), and Generation Z (1995-2009) (Goh & Lee, 2018).

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In terms of work perception, Generation Z is characterized by strong self-confidence, a penchant for independence, and a disdain for authority. Recognizing the significant role of work in achieving the desired dreams and happiness (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015), post-millennials are prone to leave an organization when it fails to provide job satisfaction. Previous study shows that Baby Boomers prioritize hard work, achievement, and extrinsic rewards as expressions of loyalty and commitment, while Generations X and Y value status and the freedom associated with work (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008).

As Generation Z prepares to enter the workforce shortly (Mărginean, 2021), their substantial representation in the total population necessitates attention. Similar to the Millennials, Generation Z exhibits distinct thoughts and demands compared to the preceding era. A cross-generational survey engaging 1992 respondents conducted by Farcas (2019) in the United States showed that Generation Z expressed the lowest satisfaction with the work-life balance compared to previous age groups.

Survey results from Deloitte (2022) consisting of 14,808 Generation Z and 8,412 millennials across 46 countries underscore the significance of the work-life balance as the primary determinant for job selection, surpassing opportunities for learning and high salaries. A parallel analysis by Tirto.id, in collaboration with Jakpat and engaging 1,500 respondents reflects relatively similar results. The work-life balance takes precedence, followed by a friendly environment, and high salary for Generation Z (Rohmah, 2022).

Sánchez-Hernández et al. (2019) contribute to this narrative, affirming that Generation Z and Millennials highly prioritize the work-life balance. The majority of individuals in these eras anticipate a job environment that supports various factors conducive to achieving a harmonious the work-life balance.

The construct of work-life balance, rooted in the idea of finding harmony and satisfaction in professional and personal roles (Mazerolle et al., 2018), has evolved into a societal concept. It is associated with organizational and public policy initiatives aimed at enhancing flexible work arrangements, promoting equality, and fostering a positive connection between work and personal lives (McDonald et al., 2013). Although the concept of achieving the work-life balance seems elusive and utopian, making thoughtful choices about the opportunities to pursue and decline, rather than reacting to circumstances, enables leaders and workers in organizations to meaningfully and proportionately engage with work, family and society (Lidija et al., 2017).

Extensive study establishes the multifaceted impact of work-life balance on life satisfaction, job contentment, work dedication, and improved mental health (Aruldoss et al., 2021; Haar et al., 2014). Analysis conducted by Akanji et al. (2020) shows that low levels of the work-life balance can lead to stress and conflict between work and family. Additionally, the connection between the work-life balance and employee turnover intention is discernible, with higher personnel engagement and a reduced inclination to quit being associated with better life equilibrium (Shankar & Bhatnagar, 2010). Furthermore, the relationship extends to health outcomes (Gagnano et al., 2020; Lunau et al., 2014).

The work-life balance is influenced by various variables, which can be grouped into internal and external elements. Internal factors include gender (Adisa et al., 2019; Akanji et al., 2020; Putra et al., 2022; Starmer et al., 2019), resilience, hardiness, and affection (Bagley et al., 2018; Kim & Windsor, 2015; Mazerolle et al.,

2018), personality (Akanni & Oduaran, 2017; Bagley et al., 2018; Gorsy & Panwar, 2016; Zahoor et al., 2021), stress (Akanji et al., 2020; Bell et al., 2012; Holden & Sunindijo, 2018; Ross & S., 2014), emotional intelligence (Kumarasamy et al., 2016; Nurjanah & Indawati, 2021), work engagement (Wood et al., 2020), and role conflict (Omar et al., 2015). External factors consist of flexible work arrangements (Björntoft et al., 2020; Hayman, 2009; Hill et al., 2001), patriarchal culture (Adisa et al., 2019), organizational meaningfulness (Palumbo et al., 2021), supervisor and coworker support (Tasnim et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2017), family aid (Abendroth & Den-Dulk, 2011; Gupta, 2016; Russo et al., 2016; Tasnim et al., 2017), workload (Issa, 2014; Omar et al., 2015), social support (Annink, 2017; Tavassoli & Sune, 2018; Uddin et al., 2020), working hours (Akanji et al., 2020; Holden & Sunindijo, 2018; Hsu et al., 2019), and income (Ueda, 2012).

This study focuses on the influence of external factors, specifically social support, flexible work arrangements, and job category while for internal variables, it examines how gender contributes to the work-life balance in Generation Z. The selection of social support as a factor for scrutiny arises from the literature showing Generation Z's inclination towards individualistic attitudes compared to previous generations (Pichler et al., 2021). Tang (2019) also underscores the distinct nature of the post-millennial, showing their preference for social responsibility, high individualism, adaptable companies, and a reliance on technology. Generation Z workers often lack training in direct communication, potentially impeding the development of socially engaged skills (Turner, 2015).

Hofstede (in Gelade et al., 2008) contends that in individualistic societies, strong interpersonal bonds diminish, with individuals primarily concerned about the immediate family. Examining how the work-life balance is influenced by social support becomes an intriguing aspect, given Generation Z's individualistic tendencies.

Literature suggests that social support can foster the establishment of work-life balance among workers, with crucial sources being spouses, family, and friends. This support, both work-related and from external friendships, provides emotional and instrumental assistance (Annink, 2017). Study conducted by Tavassoli and Sune (2018) further supports the positive correlation between support from family and supervisors and an employee's work-life balance.

Additional analysis by Uddin et al. (2020) further substantiates the crucial role of perceived support at work, including emotional and instrumental support from supervisors, coworkers, and family, in shaping the work-life balance of female bankers in Bangladesh. Another study engaging 45 married female workers underscores the significance of family and spousal support in enabling women to effectively manage their work-life balance, showing a significant difference in those without aid (Gupta, 2016). The compelling evidence showing the influence of social environment support on the work-life balance makes it an interesting avenue for exploration in the context of Generation Z, known for its individualistic tendencies.

The subsequent factor selected for examination in relation to its influence on the work-life balance in Generation Z is flexible work arrangements (FWA). A wealth of prior studies, including Björntoft et al.'s (2020) analysis, affirms the substantial impact of work flexibility on the work-life balance. However, flexible work arrangements not only exhibit a positive correlation with the work-life balance but also act as a mitigating

factor against negative influences. Enhancing work flexibility promotes a more seamless integration of work, family, and personal life (Hayman, 2009).

Exploring flexible work arrangements is essential, considering it is a criterion that significantly influences Generation Z's decision to apply to a company or organization (Ngoc et al., 2022; Nurqamar et al., 2022). There is a prediction that a substantial portion of Generation Z will gravitate towards freelancing, stressing high work flexibility and problem-solving based on skills, rather than adhering to a traditional office-based 8-hour workday (Wiedmer, 2015).

The subsequent focal point for investigation in this study is gender. Previous study suggests that women face greater challenges in achieving the work-life balance, particularly in developing countries with a strongly patriarchal culture (Akanji et al., 2020). The strong association between women and household obligations, coupled with role demands, is identified as a significant factor complicating the work-life balance (Annink, 2017). Starmer et al. (2019) also reflected this sentiment, stating that women devote more time to household chores than men, with gender evolving as a key factor connected to the work-life balance.

Examining gender as a variable within the context of Generation Z workers is crucial, given that a significant majority espouse belief in equality and advocating equal treatment for everyone. This generation places a heightened significance on issues surrounding diversity, equality, and inclusion, surpassing the prominence in comparison to other generations (Schroth, 2019). Study on the impacts of gender on the work-life balance of Generation Z workers remains limited, underscoring the necessity to revisit how it specifically influences the cohort's life equilibrium.

Another factor deemed essential for exploration in understanding its impact on the work-life balance of Generation Z workers is the job category. There is a gap in the direct study addressing the influence of job categories on the work-life balance of Generation Z workers. Although prior studies provide some indications of the potential influence of job categories on the work-life balance, such as the findings by Fuadiputra and Novianti (2021) showing that job autonomy in the banking sector does not significantly impact the work-life balance, contrasting results in Golden et al. (2006) show a positive correlation between job autonomy and work-family conflict. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the effect of flexible work arrangements, social support, gender, and job category variables on the work-life balance of Generation Z workers. Consequently, it focuses on guiding workers or companies in effectively managing employee performance, particularly within the category of Generation Z employees.

METHOD

The population used in this study consisted of Generation Z workers aged between 18 to 28 years residing in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi. A total of 271 respondents were successfully obtained for this analysis. To test the study hypothesis, multiple regression analysis was used to examine the influence of the independent variables, namely flexible work arrangements and social support, on the dependent factor known as the work-life balance. This method also facilitated determining the magnitude and

direction of the influence of the independent elements on the dependent variable. The sample collection method used was non-probability sampling, specifically accidental sampling.

Validity tests were conducted using *lisrel 8.7*, and hypothesis evaluation used multiple regression analysis methods with the assistance of *SPSS 16* software. The data analyzed consisted of a True score obtained from the findings of factor evaluation.

The Work/Nonwork Interference and Enhancement Scale instrument developed by Fisher et.al (2009) was used for measurement purposes. This instrument, featuring a 5-point scale with 17 items in four dimensions, includes Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL) with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.91, Work Enhancement of Personal Life (WEPL) with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.70, Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.82, and Personal Life Enhancement of Work (PLEW) with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.81. The work-life balance scale adopted a 5-point Likert scale (very often = 5, rarely = 3, never = 1).

The measurement of flexible work arrangements variables used a measuring instrument developed by Hyland (1999). This instrument, featuring three dimensions and eight items, includes Available flexible with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.76, Preference for flexible with a Cronbach alpha figure of 0.91, and Use of flexible with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.88. Flexible work arrangement scale adopted a 5-point Likert scale (very often = 1, rarely = 3, never = 5).

Regarding social support, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet et al. (1988) was used for measurement. This instrument, with three dimensions and four items, includes Perceived support from a family with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.87, Perceived aid from friends with a Cronbach alpha figure of 0.85, and Perceived assistance from significant others with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.91. The social support scale used a 4-point Likert scale (very suitable = 4, very unsuitable = 1). All three measuring instruments were adapted into Indonesian and subsequently tested for validity using confirmatory factor analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The population in this study consisted of Generation Z workers aged between 18 and 28 years, residing in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. Initially, 271 respondents were obtained, but after excluding individuals who were older or domiciled outside Jabodetabek, the final dataset used for analysis consisted of 258 workers. Employment categories were classified into three groups, namely government workers, private employees, and freelancers. To ensure the robustness of the measurement instruments, the *lisrel 8.7* application was used leading to a fit model where all tools showed a favorable fit ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$ and $RMSEA < 0.05$). Subsequently, none of the items showed a negative factor load coefficient and the coefficient values of T were all greater than 1.96. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Instrument	Chi-square	df	P-value	RMSEA
1	Work-life balance	105,05	84	0,05988	0,031
2	Available adaptability	11,96	8	0,15312	0,044
3	Preference for flexibility	10,60	10	0,38970	0,015
4	Use of resilience	19,25	12	0,08256	0,049
5	Perceived support from family	0,31	1	0,57709	0,000
6	Perceived support from friends	0,00	1	0,94583	0,000
7	Perceived support from significant other	1,56	1	0,21160	0,047

Multiple regression analysis was carried out and the results are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.523 ^a	.274	.250	8.17179

a. Predictors: (Constant), job_category, Support from significant other, gender, support from family, preference for flexibility, support from a friend, available adaptability, use of resilience

Table 2 showed that the R-square value in this study was 0.274 or 27.4%. This showed that the influence of available adaptability, preference for flexibility, use of resilience, family support, friends aid, special individual assistance, gender and job category on the work-life balance was 27.4%, with the remaining 72.6% being influenced by variables beyond the scope of this study.

The next step included examining the results of the F test to determine the significance of independent variable on the dependent factor. Further details are presented in the following table:

Table 3. Significance of Regression Analysis Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6267.242	8	783.705	11.731	.000 ^a
	Residual	16627.742	249	66.778		
	Total	22894.984	257			

a. Predictors: (Constant), job_category, support from significant other, gender, support from family, preference for flexibility, support from friends, available adaptability, use of resilience

b. Dependent Variable: Work-life balance

Table 3 showed that the F test result was 11.731 with a significance level of .000 (sig <0.05). Consequently, the null hypothesis, asserting "There is no significant influence between flexible work arrangements, social support, gender, and job category" was rejected. This rejection implied a significant influence between the variables on the work-life balance of Generation Z workers.

Examination of the regression coefficient of each independent variable was subsequently conducted. When the significance level (sig) was less than 0.05, the regression coefficient was considered significant. This signified that flexible work arrangement, social support, gender, and job category had a significant impact on

the work-life balance of Generation Z workers. The specific influences of each independent variable on the work-life balance are detailed in the following table:

Table 4. Coefficient Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	81.010	6.034		13.425	.000
	<i>Available adaptability</i>	.424	.093	.436	4.546	.000
	<i>Preference for flexibility</i>	-.288	.084	-.296	-3.427	.001
	<i>Use of resilience</i>	-.462	.099	-.476	-4.656	.000
	<i>Support from family</i>	-.225	.059	-.221	-3.825	.000
	<i>Support from friend</i>	.050	.060	.049	.836	.404
	<i>Support from a significant other</i>	-.016	.055	-.016	-.284	.775
	<i>Gender</i>	-2.462	1.153	-.117	-2.136	.034
	<i>Job Category</i>	-.911	.816	-.065	-1.117	.265

a. Dependent variable: *Work-life balance*

Gender

1=Man

2=Women

Job Category

1= Public Servant

2= Private employee

3= Freelance

Examining the regression coefficients in the table, the derived equation was expressed as follows:

Work-life balance = 81.010 + 0.424 (available adaptability) * - 0.288 (preference for flexibility) * - 0.462 (use of resilience) * - 0.225 (family support) * + 0.050 (friends support) * - 0.016 (significant others support) - 2.462 (gender) * - 0.911 (job category) + e (*significant).

The significance of each independent variable was evident from the Sig. value, where a figure of Sig. <0.05 showed the significance of the resulting regression coefficient. The findings showed six significant regression coefficients, namely the variables of family support, available adaptability, preference for flexibility, use of resilience, and gender. However, the other three variables, namely job category, support from friends, and significant others, did not show a significant regression coefficient value.

An examination of the variance proportion of each independent variable on the dependent elements was carried out. This test aimed to determine the share of variance of each independent variable on the work-life balance, and the results are detailed in the following table.

The results also showed a significant influence of the available adaptability variable on the work-life balance of Generation Z workers. The positive direction of the coefficient showed that the higher the available adaptability, the higher the work-life balance for the post-millennial workers.

These findings correlated with Hill et al. (2001), showing that when companies provide workers greater flexibility in terms of work time and location, the employees are more inclined to strike a balance

between their professional and personal lives. This study also suggests that such flexibility leads to increased productivity and improved work quality. Similarly, Hayman's (2009) analysis emphasized the importance of available adaptability as a key element for workers to attain the work-life balance. Organizational policymakers were encouraged to review policies on work flexibility to enhance the work-life balance of their employees.

The next variable under consideration was the preference for flexibility, which significantly influenced the work-life balance factor. The negatively charged regression coefficient showed that when an individual possesses a high preference for flexibility in a job, the work-life balance tends to be lower.

Contrary to these findings, Wöhrmann et al. (2021) suggested a positive correlation between individual orientation towards flexibility and the work-life balance. This study stated that individual preferences for flexibility played a minor role in establishing the work-life balance. The discrepancy in results was elucidated and supported by Hyland's (1999) argument, asserting that an individual's preference for flexibility can influence their need for adaptability. A elevated need for resilience was correlated with a high preference for flexibility, in contrast to individuals with a low preference. Study stated that this directional difference stemmed from variations in the constructs used. Wöhrmann et al. (2021) measured individual orientation towards flexibility by examining the control with preferences, while the current study focuses specifically on personal choice.

The study addressed the use of resilience, showing a significant negative impact on the work-life balance variable. This implied that as Generation Z workers increase the use of resilience, the work-life balance diminishes. The finding deviated from the study conducted by Hayman (2009), stating a positive relationship between the use of resilience and the dimensions of the work-life balance variable, indicating the significance of flexibility in achieving workers' life-work equilibrium.

The difference in the direction of the results was attributed to the assumption that excessive use of resilience blurs the 'boundary line' between personal and work life. This assumption found support in a study by Palumbo et al. (2021), focusing on workers allowed to work from home. The study showed that despite its flexibility, working from home can lead to conflicts between work and daily life due to the indistinct boundaries between the two.

The subsequent variable, support from family, significantly influenced the work-life balance variable in this study. The negative coefficient direction suggested that higher family support corresponds to a lower work-life balance among Generation Z workers.

These findings deviate from the directional influence observed in previous study by Abendroth and Den-Dulk, (2011), which showed the positive impact of emotional support from families on workers' work-life balance. According to Annink (2017), the variance in the direction of social support on the work-life balance can be attributed to individual conditions, institutional factors, and social contexts. The study stated that the institutional and social context, varying across countries, contributed to diverse experiences regarding the inhibiting or strengthening role of social support in achieving the work-life balance.

In the context of this study, the analysis assumed that the family support received by Generation Z workers was inclined towards encouraging the individual to allocate time and energy to work due to their

youthful age. This assumption correlated with the fact that a majority of respondents were unmarried, leading to family support being directed more towards their professional lives than personal lives.

The variable of support from friends was not found to be significant in influencing the work-life balance factor in this study. The positive coefficient showed that higher friend support correlated with greater the work-life balance. Furthermore, the variable of assistance from significant others or special individuals within the social support dimension also showed no significant effect on the work-life balance variable, featuring a negative coefficient. This implied that higher support from special individuals corresponded to a lower work-life balance among Generation Z workers. These findings diverged from the study conducted by Oguegbe et al. (2021), which showed that social support (family assistance, friends and special people) significantly and positively influence workers' work-life balance.

The difference in the significance of friend support was explained by Hobson (in Annink, 2017), asserting that social assistance factors were interconnected with norms related to gender, parenting, and work. These norms played a crucial role, potentially influencing social support in creating the work-life balance. Regarding peer support, economic norms seemed to act as a constraining factor, limiting social support in creating the work-life balance. This became apparent when examining the income range of most respondents in the study, who generally earn relatively modest salaries.

The discrepancy in the significance of friend support also suggested that Generation Z workers leaned towards individualistic tendencies compared to previous age groups (Pichler et al., 2021). This correlated with Tang's (2019) assertion that Generation Z prefers socially responsible, highly individualistic, adaptable, and technologically savvy companies compared to other generational groups.

The subsequent findings showed a significant effect of the gender variable on the work-life balance. The regression coefficient showing a negative value was significantly higher for women, showing that females find it easier to achieve the work-life balance than men. This observation was crucial given its divergence from prior studies. For instance, Starmer et al. (2019) stated that gender was a key factor in realizing satisfaction with the work-life balance, where women were often associated more with household responsibilities than men. Another study by Adisa et al. (2019) showed that in cultures thick with patriarchal norms, assuming women's primary responsibilities were household chores, females faced greater challenges in attaining the work-life balance.

Study assumed that the prevailing conditions, with a loud advocacy for gender equality, empowered women with more control over career choices compared to the past. However, traditional stereotypes regarding men persisted. Women, especially in Jabodetabek, can choose between pursuing a career and competing with men or opting for a more traditional role of staying at home. Societal expectations continued to demand that men be the family's backbone and fulfil the household needs through work. Men choosing not to work were generally perceived more negatively by society than women making the same choice.

The last variable examined was job category, which was found to have no significant effect on the work-life balance factor. It was also observed that government employees (ASN/Honorer/TNI/BUMN) had a larger and negative coefficient value than the other two job categories.

These results deviated from the findings of previous study, as Hsu et al. (2019) emphasized the importance to consider job categories when evaluating the impact of a variable on the work-life balance. Publication by Holden and Sunindijo (2018) showed that workers in the construction industry were more susceptible to having a low work-life balance. However, an analysis by Khadka and Khadka (2023) reported that teachers exhibited good job satisfaction and the work-life balance, with no significant conflicts between work and family life.

It was suspected that the non-significant results in the job category stemmed from inherent influences within each work, impacting workers' work-life balance. Factors such as gender, workload, working hours, and other variables within each job category contributed to these results.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on the categorization conducted, it was showed that the majority of respondents (72%) in this study had a moderate work-life balance score, with 14% falling into the low category and another 14% in the high group. This implied that the majority of Generation Z workers residing in Jabodetabek enjoyed a relatively satisfactory work-life balance, showing their ability to stabilize resources between work and personal lives. Social assistance, specifically family support, and flexible work arrangements were also found to exert a significant influence on the work-life balance of Generation Z workers.

The cumulative impact of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA), Social Support, Gender, and Job Category on the Work-life Balance of Generation Z Workers was determined to be 27.4%. The remaining 72.6% was influenced by variables beyond those considered in this study. Therefore, it was recommended that further studies should explore other aspects related to the work-life balance of post-millennial workers, incorporating additional independent variables such as workload, work engagement, personality, and more.

Job category was identified as having an insignificant influence on the work-life balance factor. It was suspected that the observed impact on an individual's work-life balance is influenced by inherent characteristics within job categories. Consequently, it was suggested to conduct research within specific job sectors with similar characteristics to comprehensively understand the impact on work-life balance.

The study respondents consisted of Generation Z individuals, predominantly young and unmarried, suggesting lighter dependents compared to married counterparts. For future study, it was recommended to replicate this study with married Generation Z individuals to explore potential differences in the impact on the work-life balance.

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