

The Effect of Work-Life Integration and Quiet Quitting on Gen Z Employee Productivity: Sem Equation Model

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh Integrasi Kerja-Kehidupan (Work-Life Integration/WLI) dan fenomena Pengunduran Diri Diam-diam (Quiet Quitting) terhadap produktivitas karyawan Generasi Z (Gen Z) menggunakan pendekatan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Di era digital yang mengaburkan batasan antara ruang profesional dan pribadi, Gen Z cenderung mengadopsi integrasi alih-alih keseimbangan konvensional. Namun, tekanan beban kerja yang konstan seringkali memicu pengunduran diri diam-diam, suatu kondisi di mana karyawan hanya bekerja sesuai dengan deskripsi pekerjaan minimum tanpa keterikatan emosional. Penelitian ini menggunakan data primer dari kuesioner yang dibagikan kepada karyawan Gen Z di berbagai sektor industri di Indonesia. Analisis SEM digunakan untuk menguji hubungan struktural antar variabel dan kekuatan efek jalur (path analysis). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Integrasi Kerja-Kehidupan memiliki pengaruh positif terhadap produktivitas jika didukung oleh otonomi kerja, sedangkan Pengunduran Diri Diam-diam memiliki korelasi negatif yang signifikan dengan kinerja jangka panjang dan inovasi individu. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada literatur manajemen sumber daya manusia tentang perilaku organisasi generasi terbaru di pasar tenaga kerja global.

This study aims to analyze the influence of Work-Life Integration (WLI) and the Quiet Quitting phenomenon on the productivity of Generation Z (Gen Z) employees using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach. In the digital era that blurs the boundaries between professional and personal spaces, Gen Z tends to adopt integration instead of conventional balance. However, constant workload pressure often triggers quiet quitting, a condition in which employees only work according to the minimum job description without emotional attachment. This study uses primary data from questionnaires distributed to Gen Z employees in various industrial sectors in Indonesia. SEM analysis is used to test the structural relationship between variables and the strength of the path effect (path analysis). The results show that Work-Life Integration has a positive influence on productivity if supported by job autonomy, while Quiet Quitting has a significant negative correlation with long-term performance and individual innovation. These findings contribute to the human resource management literature on the organizational behavior of the newest generation in the global labor market.



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INTRODUCTION

The paradigm shift in the global workplace has reached a significant turning point with the dominance of Generation Z in the workforce. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, entered the workforce with very different values than previous generations, particularly in how they view the relationship between work and personal life. The emergence of digital technology that enables seamless

connectivity has transformed the traditional concept of Work-Life Balance into Work-Life Integration (WLI). According to Feitosa and Salas (2021), work-life integration is no longer simply separating work and leisure time, but rather the ability to flexibly integrate professional responsibilities into the rhythm of personal life. However, for Gen Z, this integration often creates new challenges in the form of blurred boundaries of self-identity, which can impact their mental well-being.

Gen Z's unique characteristics as digital natives give them high expectations for autonomy and flexibility. They tend to be more productive when given the freedom to set their own schedules, but this flexibility is often misinterpreted by companies as 24/7 availability. Organizations' inability to establish healthy boundaries in remote or hybrid work models has led to widespread emotional exhaustion. As Dwivedi et al. (2021) noted, poor integration between work and personal life can trigger chronic stress, ultimately lowering productivity and job satisfaction. This underpins the importance of this research, which examines the extent to which such integration actually helps or hinders the performance of young employees.

Amid the pressure to be constantly connected, a psychological phenomenon known as "quiet quitting" has emerged. This term refers to employees refusing to work beyond the minimum tasks stipulated in their employment contracts as a form of protection for their mental health and personal boundaries. For Gen Z, "quiet quitting" doesn't mean laziness, but rather a statement of their refusal to let work dominate all aspects of their lives. Formica and Sfodera (2022) argue that this phenomenon is a response to the "hustle culture" that is considered toxic and psychologically unsustainable. This decline in engagement poses a serious threat to organizational productivity, which has traditionally relied on employee volunteerism and creative contributions.

The link between Work-Life Integration and Quiet Quitting is very close in the context of Gen Z productivity. When the expected integration turns into a work invasion into personal space, employees tend to engage in psychological withdrawal as a defense mechanism. Quiet quitting behavior directly impacts the decline in innovative work output. Koopmans et al. (2011) explain that individual work productivity consists of task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. In this case, quiet quitting can be categorized as a decline in contextual performance, where employees are no longer willing to help coworkers or contribute to activities outside their primary job description, which ultimately disrupts the team's collaborative rhythm.

Theoretically, this phenomenon can be analyzed through Social Exchange Theory. Employees will contribute maximally (high productivity) if they feel that the organization provides commensurate returns, not only financially but also in terms of supporting quality of life. If Gen Z feels that their work-life integration is being exploited by the company to exploit their downtime, then the social exchange becomes unbalanced. Emerson (1976) emphasized that every social interaction is based on expectations of fairness, and when this fairness is disturbed, individuals will reduce their efforts to restore the balance, which in the modern context manifests as quiet quitting.

The use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in this study is highly relevant for dissecting the complex relationships between these latent variables. SEM allows researchers to test the simultaneous influence of WLI and Quiet Quitting on productivity, as well as identify mediating or moderating factors. According to Hair et al. (2019), SEM is a powerful statistical tool because it is able to handle measurement error and provide a comprehensive picture of structural relationships in organizational behavior models. By using SEM, this study is expected to provide empirical evidence regarding which pathways are most significant in influencing the work effectiveness of Generation Z in Indonesia.

The importance of meaning in work for Gen Z is also a factor influencing their productivity amidst the quiet quitting phenomenon. For this generation, work must have a clear social purpose or self-development. If work-life integration does not provide space for personal growth, their attachment to the company will fade. Martela and Pessi (2018) stated that meaningful work is a key predictor of loyalty and performance; without it, employees will feel alienated and trapped in mechanical routines that trigger withdrawal behavior. This shows that productivity is not just a technical issue, but an existential one for today's young workforce.

The post-COVID-19 pandemic work environment has also played a significant role in accelerating the trend of quiet quitting and the need for work-life integration. The pandemic has given Gen Z time to reflect on their values and realize that mental health is far more valuable than career advancement at the expense of everything else. Work From Home (WFH) policies, initially considered a solution for integration, often result in unresolved work expectations. Derks et al. (2015) found that

the use of technology for work purposes outside of office hours is positively associated with work-life conflict, which is a key trigger for employees to begin limiting themselves through quiet quitting.

The long-term impact of low productivity due to quiet quitting on organizational sustainability cannot be ignored. Organizations that fail to understand Gen Z's need for healthy integration will face high employee turnover rates or, worse, have a workforce that is physically present but mentally uncontributing. Bakker and Demerouti (2007), through the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, explain that an imbalance between high job demands and low resources (such as flexibility support) will lead to work stress. In this context, Gen Z productivity can only be maintained if organizations provide resources that support genuine work-life integration.

Specifically in Indonesia, this challenge is increasingly apparent due to a work culture that is still strongly based on seniority and long working hours. Gen Z in Indonesia often feels caught between traditional corporate values and their aspirations for digital balance. Therefore, this study aims to redefine how productivity is measured and managed in this new era. By integrating Work-Life Integration and Quiet Quitting variables into a single structural model, it is hoped that strategic recommendations will emerge for HR managers to create a work environment that not only pursues output targets but also respects employees' human boundaries.

In conclusion, given this background, the future of global productivity depends heavily on how organizations adapt to the psychographics of Generation Z. Effective work-life integration should be viewed as a strategic investment, not simply an added perk. Without a thorough understanding of the drivers of quiet quitting, efforts to improve productivity will only lead to systemic failure. Through SEM analysis, this study will demonstrate that employee well-being and organizational productivity are not mutually exclusive, but rather two sides of the same coin that must be managed with a more empathetic and flexible approach.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory design to test the causal relationship between hypothesized variables. The population in this study are active employees belonging to Generation Z (born 1997-2012) who work in various industrial sectors in urban areas of Indonesia. The sampling technique was carried out using a non-probability sampling method through a purposive sampling approach, where the respondent criteria focused on those who had worked for at least one year and used digital devices as their main work instrument. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), a quantitative approach is very relevant to provide objective empirical evidence regarding complex organizational behavior phenomena such as work-life integration and psychological withdrawal in the younger workforce.

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire consisting of a measurable instrument using a 1-5 Likert scale. The Work-Life Integration variable was measured using a scale developed based on the dimensions of flexibility and porosity of work boundaries, while the Quiet Quitting variable was measured through indicators of psychological engagement and refusal of extra-role tasks. The employee productivity variable was measured using the dimensions of task performance and proactive work behavior. In accordance with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2019), before further data analysis, instrument testing was conducted in the form of convergent and discriminant validity tests as well as reliability tests using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability to ensure that the questions in the questionnaire were able to accurately represent the latent variables being measured.

The data analysis technique applied in this study is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) using SmartPLS software. The selection of PLS-SEM is based on its ability to test complex structural models with many indicators and latent variables without requiring strict assumptions of normal data distribution. The analysis is carried out in two main stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to test the relationship between indicators and their latent variables, and evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to test the strength of the influence between variables through the R-square value and path coefficient. According to Chin (1998), this approach is very powerful in identifying the strength of the predictive relationship between variables in dynamic human resource management research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Respondent Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

Based on data collected from 450 Generation Z employee respondents in various sectors (technology, creative, banking, and manufacturing), a profile was found that showed a high dependence on digital technology in carrying out work. The majority of respondents (72%) work in a hybrid or remote work model, which directly facilitates the occurrence of Work-Life Integration (WLI). The results of descriptive statistics show that the WLI variable has a high average score (3.89 out of 5.00), which indicates that Gen Z actively integrates personal activities into their work time and vice versa. However, the Quiet Quitting variable also shows a moderate but significant number (3.12 out of 5.00), which reflects a tendency to limit themselves from exploiting excessive workloads.

Table 1. Summary of Mean Values of Latent Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Work-Life Integration (X1)	3.89	0.74	Tall
Quiet Quitting (X2)	3.12	0.88	Currently
Employee Productivity (Y)	3.45	0.65	Currently

Employee productivity in this study is no longer measured traditionally (working hours), but rather based on output effectiveness. The average productivity score of 3.45 indicates that despite high work-life integration, productivity has not yet reached its optimal point. This raises questions about whether the integration undertaken by Gen Z actually increases efficiency or actually creates distractions that trigger mental burnout. As stated by Koopmans et al. (2011), individual performance is influenced by dimensions of counterproductive work behavior, where quiet quitting acts as a major obstacle to achieving competitive productivity.

Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Prior to hypothesis testing, a measurement model evaluation was conducted to ensure validity and reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for all variables was above 0.50, and the Composite Reliability (CR) was above 0.70. These results indicate that the research instrument has excellent convergent validity and reliability. Discriminant validity testing using the Fornell-Larcker criteria also showed that each latent variable had a stronger correlation with its own indicator than with other variables. In accordance with the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019), this model has met the technical requirements for structural testing to determine the influence between variables.

Analysis of the Influence of Work-Life Integration on Productivity

SEM analysis results show that Work-Life Integration (WLI) has a positive and significant impact on the productivity of Gen Z employees. This means that when employees are given the flexibility to manage personal affairs in between work hours—such as taking care of family or pursuing short hobbies—they tend to feel more autonomous and motivated to complete their professional tasks better. This flexibility reduces stress caused by traditional role conflict. Feitosa and Salas (2021) emphasize that adaptability in virtual teams depends heavily on how well individuals can manage their work-life integration without feeling pressured by rigid work structures.

However, a more in-depth discussion reveals that the positive impact of WLI on productivity is "conditional." WLI is only effective in increasing productivity if the organization provides supporting digital infrastructure and a culture of trust. Without real autonomy, integration often turns into an additional burden, where employees feel "always working" but never truly productive. Dwivedi et al. (2021) warn that reliance on digital media for work integration can lead to information overload, which actually reduces decision-making quality and creativity, core components of Gen Z productivity.

The Dynamics of Quiet Quitting and Its Negative Impact on Productivity

The most striking finding of the study was the strong and significant negative impact of quiet quitting on employee productivity. This finding confirms that psychological withdrawal where employees perform only at the minimum standard hinders the achievement of contextual and innovative performance. Employees who quiet quit tend to reject additional responsibilities crucial to organizational progress. Formica and Sfodera (2022) explain that quiet quitting acts as a "brake" on a company's ambitions; when employees stop putting in extra effort, the company will stagnate in terms of innovation and collective problem-solving.

Discussions about quiet quitting in the Gen Z context are often linked to a loss of meaning in work. When respondents feel their contributions are unappreciated or trapped in an exploitative work culture, they choose to conserve their mental energy. This behavior is not simply a decrease in work volume, but also a decrease in the quality of emotional engagement. Martela and Pessi (2018) argue that without self-realization in their work, employees will view their tasks as mere mechanical burdens. This explains why, in this study, quiet quitting is the variable with the largest negative coefficient, which depresses overall productivity scores.

The Interplay Between Integration and Withdrawal: A Paradox

One of the unique findings in this discussion is the asymmetrical relationship between WLI and Quiet Quitting. Some respondents who have a high level of integration still do quiet quitting. This indicates the phenomenon of "flexibility paradox," where the flexibility provided by the company is used by employees to withdraw further from organizational pressures. Employees integrate their personal lives not to increase productivity, but rather to create distance from work demands that are considered unreasonable. Emerson (1976) through Social Exchange Theory explains that if employees feel the organization demands more than they can mentally give, they will rebalance by withdrawing effort quietly.

This phenomenon is exacerbated by digital burnout. The constantly connected Gen Z often feels like they never truly have a "day off." In response, quiet quitting is seen as the only remaining way to maintain mental health. Derks et al. (2015) found that work intrusion into personal space via smartphones can undermine psychological recovery. In the context of this research, unregulated work-life integration with clear boundaries actually becomes a "gateway" for stress that triggers quiet quitting behavior, ultimately crippling productivity that should be increased through flexibility.

Implications for Gen Z Productivity in Indonesia

In the context of Indonesian work culture, this study highlights the need for a shift in leadership style. Leaders who still use a micromanagement approach will encourage Gen Z to quit more quickly. Conversely, leaders who support Work-Life Integration by focusing on results rather than physical presence will see a surge in productivity. Gen Z productivity in Indonesia is strongly influenced by mutual trust and respect for mental well-being. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) in their JD-R model suggest that organizations must balance work demands with adequate psychological resources to prevent burnout that leads to withdrawal.

Furthermore, work-life integration must be accompanied by education on boundary management. Employees need to be equipped with the skills to know when to truly "unplug" from work to allow for mental recovery. Without this recovery, long-term productivity will remain low, even if integration facilities are provided. Companies in Indonesia must begin to abandon the "always-on" culture if they want to retain productive young talent and prevent a wave of quiet quits that could undermine their competitiveness in the global market.

Overall Structural Equation Model (SEM) Analysis

Overall, the tested SEM model showed a moderate R-square value for the productivity variable (0.42), meaning that 42% of the variation in Gen Z employee productivity can be explained by Work-Life Integration and Quiet Quitting. The remaining 58% is influenced by other factors not examined in this model, such as compensation, leadership, or the physical work environment. This finding confirms that psychological factors and new work patterns play a role in almost half of the determinants of the performance of today's young employees. The results of the path coefficients confirm that the negative effect of quiet quitting is greater in absolute terms than the positive effect of integration, which provides a strong signal for managers to prioritize addressing withdrawal behavior rather than simply adding flexibility facilities.

In closing, this research demonstrates that Gen Z productivity is the result of a delicate balance between work autonomy and mental well-being. Work-life integration presents a significant opportunity to increase efficiency, but without careful management of the phenomenon of quiet quitting, this opportunity will be wasted. Successful companies of the future will be those that create an environment where integration doesn't mean invasion, and where productivity is measured by meaningful contributions, not simply by digital presence.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the productivity of Generation Z employees is significantly influenced by how they integrate work into their personal lives and their level of emotional attachment to organizational tasks. Through structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, it was found that Work-Life Integration (WLI) has the potential to increase productivity when implemented in a work culture based on autonomy and trust. The flexibility that characterizes WLI allows Gen Z employees to manage their professional responsibilities in harmony with their personal lives, which in turn can trigger internal motivation and higher work efficiency (Feitosa & Salas, 2021).

However, a crucial finding in this study highlights that the phenomenon of quiet quitting acts as a major inhibitor that drastically reduces individual productivity levels. When young employees choose to withdraw psychologically and only perform minimum work standards, organizations not only lose quantitative output but also lose the creative and innovative initiatives that are so needed in the digital age. This behavior signals an imbalance in the social exchange between employees and the company, where employees feel that the workload they receive is not commensurate with the support for their mental well-being and the meaning of their work (Formica & Sfodera, 2022).

As a managerial implication, organizations must recognize that sustainable productivity for Generation Z cannot be achieved solely through rigid performance demands, but rather through creating a work environment that respects personal boundaries. Work-life integration must be managed to prevent it from becoming a digital invasion that triggers chronic fatigue and withdrawal behavior. Companies in Indonesia are advised to formulate policies that support employees' right to disconnect from work (the right to disconnect) to prevent quiet quitting. By balancing work demands and adequate psychological resources, organizations can optimize Gen Z talent as a driving force for innovative and loyal productivity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

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