

THE EFFECT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT ON WORK ENGAGEMENT WITH MEDIATED JOB SATISFACTION OF GEN Y AND Z NON-ACADEMIC STAFF AT UNIVERSITY "A"

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ABSTRACT

Organizations need highly engaged workers to achieve great performance. This study investigates work-life balance, career development, and job satisfaction as antecedents of work engagement. This study employs a survey design, distributing questionnaires to Generation Y and Z non-academic staff working at a university in Java. Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 software was used to analyse the 80 responses gathered. Our study finds that work-life balance can increase work engagement directly and also through job satisfaction. However, career development can only increase work engagement if employees are first satisfied with their job. This result highlights the importance of universities in designing jobs to ensure employees perceive work-life balance, since they have time to enjoy their personal activities. In addition, universities need to create career opportunities for employees that increase their job satisfaction and boost their level of work engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations face various changes in their environment that necessitate adaptation (Kapil & Rastogi, 2020). Similarly, higher education institutions face various demands from their environment (Oliso et al., 2024). In the context of higher education, employees become valuable resources (Abdullahi et al., 2024) who can provide high-quality services (Oliso et al., 2024). Employees who are dedicated, effective, and perform well are essential for gaining a competitive edge (Kapil & Rastogi, 2020). Increasing employee engagement is one of the most effective ways to boost productivity and achieve the business's objectives (Boccoli et al., 2023). Therefore, higher education institutions must effectively manage their employees to

remain competitive in their industry.

Work engagement is a positive work-related state characterized by emotional commitment, dedication, and a strong connection between employees and their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Engaged workers are more likely to put in extra effort to improve performance and contribute to a competitive advantage for the organization (Aboramadan et al., 2022). According to social exchange theory (SET), workers who receive social and economic support and feel cared for by the company are more likely to reciprocate by achieving favorable job outcomes, such as work engagement (Kapil & Rastogi, 2020). The current study offers work-life balance and career development as forms of organizational support, which are expected to provide

employee satisfaction and subsequently enhance work engagement.

Employees' work-life balance is a key component in promoting job engagement. By implementing policies such as flexible work schedules, sufficient leave, and mental health support services, organizations can foster a work-life balance. Despite its importance, work-life balance remains a challenge in many organizations. Previous studies have found that work-life balance can enhance work engagement (Das & Malik, 2024). However, the study by Pramana and Putra (2022) showed different results; work-life balance does not significantly affect work engagement.

Beyond work-life balance, career development is another key factor influencing work engagement. Employees who experience career development within their organization will increase their work engagement (Sholikhah et al., 2024; Jena & Nayak, 2024). Therefore, organizations should implement career advancement initiatives, such as promotions and mentoring programs, to boost employee engagement and productivity.

Work engagement is closely linked to job satisfaction. Nwachukwu et al. (2022) confirm that job satisfaction has a significant impact on work engagement. We followed the model proposed by Pramana and Putra (2022), which posits that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance and work engagement. This current study provides insight into the mechanism by which work-life balance and career development affect work engagement, considering job satisfaction as a mediating factor.

Like other organizations, higher education institutions depend on skilled human resources, including academic staff (i.e., lecturers) and non-academic staff. Non-academic staff are employees who handle essential university operations, ensuring the smooth management of the institution. Non-academic staff are employees who hold positions in administration, technical,

service, and specialist roles in various areas of work at a university (Erasmus, 2020). They should be given consideration and care because they are human resources supporting university operations in following their duties. According to the previous studies, they experience more work-related stress since they have fewer prospects for growth and promotion (e.g., Poalses & Bezuidenhout, 2018; Noor et al., 2024). We investigate our research model in the context of non-academic staff who work at the university.

Currently, the workforce is predominantly comprised of Generation Y and Z (Abbasi et al., 2024). These generations value flexible work arrangements and prioritize work-life balance and career development. Individuals from Generation Y and Z want to balance their personal and professional lives (Jasrotia et al., 2023; Das & Malik, 2024). They also expect their workplace to provide career development (Das & Malik, 2024; Hui et al., 2020). Additionally, Deloitte (2023) notes that Generation Y and Generation Z prefer hybrid or remote work models, as they better align professional responsibilities with personal needs. Given this trend, organizations, including those in university settings, need to adapt their strategies to attract and retain talent from these generations by offering work-life balance and opportunities for career development.

This current study aims to analyze the relationship between work-life balance, career development, job satisfaction, and work engagement among Generation Y and Z non-academic staff at the university "A" in Java. We investigate the direct impact of career development and work-life balance on work engagement, as well as the mediating role of job satisfaction in these relationships. This current study contributes to the enrichment of understanding regarding work engagement among Generation Y and Z non-academic staff, a topic that has not received much attention. Furthermore, this study sheds light on the

importance of designing jobs that enhance work-life balance experiences and career development management for them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work Engagement, work-life balance, and career development

Work engagement is defined as a positive work-related psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Vigor refers to high energy levels and mental resilience while working. Dedication reflects employees' enthusiasm, sense of significance, and pride in their work. Absorption describes a deep involvement in work, where time passes quickly, and employees struggle to disengage from their tasks (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

According to Bakker et al. (2014), work engagement is influenced by three main factors: job resources, salience of job resources, and personal resources. Job resources such as organizational support, autonomy, and personal development opportunities enable employees to perform effectively and remain engaged. The salience of these resources determines how much employees value them, while personal resources, such as resilience, motivation, and personality traits, further shape engagement levels.

Work-life balance refers to the extent to which individuals are satisfactorily involved in both their work roles and family life (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Greenhaus et al. (2003) offer three components in work-life balance: time balance, engagement, and satisfaction in fulfilling both roles. A high work-life balance has been found to enhance employee work motivation (Demir & Budur, 2023) and organizational commitment (Sheikh, 2023).

Work-life balance (WLB) can be influenced by several factors, including organizational culture, workload, working hours, job autonomy (Emre & De Spiegeleare, 2021), and job design (Dorta-Afonso et al., 2025). Employees will have

more freedom to decide how to complete their jobs if the company provides them with job design features, such as autonomy (Emre & De Spiegeleare, 2021). As a result, they have sufficient time to pursue their interests, such as engaging in hobbies and spending quality time with their family.

Organizations can promote work-life balance through various strategies, including flexible working hours, remote work policies, and wellness programs. Das & Malik (2024) found that work-life balance increases the work engagement of Generation Z employees. People can achieve a work-life balance by enjoying both their work and leisure activities, while also fulfilling their responsibilities as employees. If they feel that the company handling their assignments is supporting them, they will exhibit work engagement.

H1. Work-life balance has a positive effect on work engagement

Career development is a process that involves both the individual employee and the organization to enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to complete current and future tasks (Lee & Lee, 2018). It is a critical component of employee motivation and engagement. Career development contributes to higher job satisfaction, motivation, commitment to their organization, and performance (Loyarte-Lopez et al., 2020). Career counseling, training, project assignments, mentoring, work rotation (Lee & Lee, 2018), supervisor feedback, and assignments for skill enhancement needed in the future (Jena & Nayak, 2024) are all examples of career development programs.

Providing workers with opportunities to advance their careers can give the impression that the company supports them (Bakker et al., 2014). As a result, employees will assess the resources provided by the company and enhance their work engagement. Jena & Nayak (2024) found that career development enhances work engagement.

H2. Career development has a positive effect on work engagement

Job Satisfaction as a Mediator

Job satisfaction refers to individuals' feelings of happiness with their work (Pathak et al., 2023) and their assessment of how well their job-related needs have been met (Sang et al., 2020). Learning opportunities and a balance of job responsibilities can increase job satisfaction (Sang et al., 2020; Gan et al., 2024).

Rashmi and Kataria (2023) and Dorta-Afonso et al. (2025) find that work-life balance has a positive correlation with job satisfaction. Similarly, Jaharuddin and Zainol (2019) demonstrated that employees with a greater work-life balance tend to have higher work engagement. In addition, Jena and Nayak's (2023) study on Generation Z employees found that career development has a positive impact on job satisfaction. Previous studies have found that individuals who are satisfied with their jobs tend to have increased work engagement (Nwachukwu et al., 2022).

H3. Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance and work engagement

H4. Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between career development and work engagement

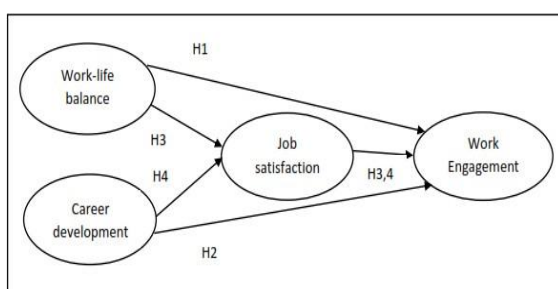


Figure 1: Research Model

RESEARCH METHOD

Respondents

This study uses a quantitative research design, and data were collected by distributing questionnaires to 127 non-

academic staff aged between Generation Y and Z (i.e., the maximum age in 2024 is 44 years) and working at university "A" in Java. There are 80 responses collected that can be used in hypothesis testing.

The majority of respondents in this study were women, totaling 59 people (73.8%), aged under 30 years (55.1%), holding a bachelor's degree (51 people, 63.7%), and having a tenure of less than 1 year (34 people, 42.5%).

Measurement

Work engagement refers to the emotional state of employees regarding their work. It is measured using eight items from Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), such as "I feel full of enthusiasm in carrying out my work."

Career development refers to the employee's experience with how their workplace provides activities that can enhance the sustainability of their career opportunities. The measure of career development utilizes six items from Jena and Nayak (2024), such as "I have been given training to help develop my career."

Job satisfaction is the individual's feeling of pleasure regarding their work. It is measured using three items adapted from the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) used by Wulani and Junaedi (2020), e.g., "Feeling satisfied with my job."

Work-life balance refers to an employee's experience regarding how much they can engage in activities related to and outside of work. It measures with nine items used by Irawanto et al. (2021) in their study, e.g., "I feel that my personal needs are neglected because of work".

We asked respondents to respond to statements/items in the questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. Unlike other variables, negative wording is used in this study's work-life balance construct. So, a scale reversal is performed in the data analysis to ensure consistency of interpretation with other variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

PLS-SEM-based data analysis, conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 software, is performed in two stages: measurement model and structural model testing.

Measurement Model

Validity and reliability checks were performed on the measurement model. The results of the reliability and convergent validity tests are displayed in Table 1. Five of the work-life balance construct's items need to be eliminated since their outer loading values are less than 0.6. Every item in each construct satisfies the requirements for convergent validity since its Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are above 0.5 and its outer loading values are above 0.6 (Hair et al., 2017). The composite reliability (CR) value for each construct exceeds 0.7, meeting the reliability criteria (Dhaliwal et al., 2024).

Table 1: Validity and Reliability

Construct	Item	Outer Loading	AVE	CR
Career Development	CD1	0,725	0,648	0,916
	CD2	0,884		
	CD3	0,867		
	CD4	0,809		
	CD5	0,700		
	CD6	0,828		
Work Life Balance	WLB1	0,829	0,558	0,831
	WLB2	0,877		
	WLB3	0,645		
	WLB4	0,602		
Job Satisfaction	JS1	0,770	0,661	0,854
	JS2	0,804		
	JS3	0,862		
Work Engagement	WE1	0,875	0,558	0,917
	WE2	0,829		
	WE3	0,642		
	WE4	0,849		
	WE5	0,690		
	WE6	0,763		
	WE7	0,685		
	WE8	0,740		

Testing discriminant validity with the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criteria. The test results in Table 2 show that the HTMT value has met the recommended threshold, i.e., less than 0.90 (Azila-Gbettor & Abiemo, 2020).

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Job Satisfaction	Career Development	Work Engagement
Job Satisfaction			
Career Development	0,632		
Work Engagement	0,64	0,406	
Work Life Balance	0,424	0,29	0,459

Model Fit Test

Table 3 shows the results of the model fit test. The R-squared value of the job satisfaction variable is 0.347, indicating that job satisfaction can be explained by 34.7% of the variation in the career development and work-life balance variables. Meanwhile, the work engagement variable has an R-squared value of 0.366, indicating that work engagement can be explained by 36.6% of the variance in the job satisfaction variable.

Table 3: R-squared Value

	R-square
Job Satisfaction	0,347
Work Engagement	0,366

Structural Model

Table 4 presents the results of the structural model testing. This current study finds that career development has no significant effect on work engagement ($\beta = 0.113$; $t = 0.771$, $p > 0.05$). Hypothesis 1 is therefore unsupported. This study supports hypothesis 2 ($\beta = 0.227$; $t = 2.204$, $p < 0.05$). A higher work-life balance can enhance work engagement. The third hypothesis was supported by our study's findings, which showed that the impact of career

development on work engagement is mediated by job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.190$; $t = 2.774$, $p < 0.05$). As expected, the relationship between work-life balance and work engagement is mediated by job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.111$; $t = 2.092$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Table 4: The Result of Structural Model Test

Hypothesis	Path Coef.	t-value	p-value
Career development -> Work Engagement	0,113	0,771	0,441
Work Life Balance -> Work Engagement	0,227	2,204	0,028
Career development -> job satisfaction -> Work Engagement	0,190	2,744	0,006
Work Life Balance -> job satisfaction -> Work Engagement	0,111	2,092	0,037

Our study's findings are consistent with the social exchange theory, which holds that employees will favorably return to an organization's benevolence. Our research, however, demonstrates that contrary to Jena & Nayak's (2024) study, which used a sample of Generation Y employees, career development does not always result in higher levels of work engagement. According to the current study, job satisfaction is likely to mediate career development and enhance work engagement. In light of these findings, job satisfaction functions as a complete mediation. This conclusion implies that for employees to become engaged, their career development must first lead to job satisfaction.

Non-academic staff in the Generation Y and Z age range anticipate that universities will be considerate of them by offering opportunities for career development. The

achievement of career development, however, is unable to raise their level of work engagement. To express positive emotions while working, individuals must first feel a sense of satisfaction. According to Nguyen Ngoc et al. (2022), Generation Z demands a flexible work environment with a pleasant culture. In a similar vein, Gen Y wants to be recognized for their job, have flexibility in their work schedules, and own their skills (Torsello, 2019). In addition, this study uses a general measure of job satisfaction regarding their work. Therefore, it is probable that the study respondents also consider additional requirements that must be fulfilled for them to show work engagement, such as job flexibility and professional advancement. Furthermore, Gen Z workers seek out job experiences that complement their needs, values, interests, and talents (Borg et al., 2023). Some employees may feel that their needs or interests are not being satisfied despite receiving career development at work.

In light of these findings, the university should consider offering training courses that can aid in developing the professional skills necessary to complete assignments, as well as providing opportunities for promotion. Universities must also consider the values and interests of their staff to offer suitable career development opportunities and job openings. To implement social exchange theory, universities should invest in career development, which will, in turn, enhance the work engagement of non-academic staff members, particularly those with Generation Y and Z profiles.

This study supports our hypothesis by demonstrating that work-life balance affects work engagement both directly and indirectly. The study's findings support earlier research by Das and Malik (2024) and Sholikhah et al. (2024), which shows that a healthy work-life balance can improve work engagement. Additionally, our study's analytical results support the previous study by Pramana & Putra (2022), which proved that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance

and work engagement. However, unlike Pramana and Putra's (2022) findings, which suggest that job satisfaction acts as a full mediator, our study indicates that it is a partial mediating factor.

Current study findings suggest that employees must balance their work obligations with their personal needs. However, the work process for non-academic staff members may be constrained by service protocols and working hours. As a result, universities need to effectively manage job design in terms of workload and task completion time. They need to manage the assignments given to non-academic staff to prevent them from overexertion, which can lead to a lack of fulfillment of their interests outside of work.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of career development, work-life balance, and job satisfaction on work engagement. The analysis's findings support the social exchange theory. A work-life balance will make employees feel satisfied in their positions, thereby boosting their engagement level at work. Job satisfaction plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between career development and work engagement. Referring to the data we analyzed, our respondents tend to agree that they experience career development, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and work engagement at their workplace. Therefore, the university needs to continue enhancing its career development programs and monitoring the job design that appeals to its non-academic staff. The university needs to design jobs that provide opportunities for their employees to fulfill their personal activities and equip employees with various development opportunities to become satisfied with their work and increase their work engagement.

Since we only identified non-academic staff from Generation Y and Z, there is a constraint with regard to the research object in this study. Furthermore, our study

focuses solely on job satisfaction as a mediator, and career development and work-life balance as antecedent factors. To evaluate the generalizability of our research model, future studies should investigate non-academic staff members from other generations. Future research on the relationship between career development, work-life balance, and work engagement should also consider occupational commitment as a mediating variable and generational work values as a moderating factor.

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