
**THE INFLUENCE OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND JOB SATISFACTION
ON THE PERFORMANCE OF MILLENNIAL AND GEN Z EMPLOYEES
WITH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AS AN INTERVENING VARIABLE**

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Abstract

Shifts in the workforce's demographic structure have led to workplaces being increasingly dominated by Millennials and Generation Z, presenting new challenges for human resource management—particularly regarding differences in characteristics, communication styles, work ethics, and expectations for work-life balance, all of which can trigger interpersonal conflict and impact productivity. This study aims to analyze and explain the influence of work-life balance (WLB) and job satisfaction on employee performance, with employee engagement serving as an intervening variable, among Millennial and Generation Z employees at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk in Batulicin, South Kalimantan. A quantitative approach utilizing explanatory research methods was employed. Data collection was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires both in person and via Google Forms using a 1-5 Likert scale. Non-probability sampling was used via a saturated sampling approach, resulting in a total of 291 respondents: 186 Millennials (63.9%) and 105 Generation Z employees (36.1%). The respondent demographic was predominantly male (66.7%), with the majority having a tenure of 1-3 years (49.8%). Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 software, alongside a Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) approach to compare the generational groups. Evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) revealed that all variable indicators had loading factor values > 0.6 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values > 0.5 , thereby meeting convergent and discriminant validity requirements the model also demonstrated reliability, with composite reliability values > 0.7 . Evaluation of the structural model (inner model) indicated good predictive relevance ($Q^2 > 0$) and a high level of overall model fit (high Goodness of Fit Index: 0.512 for Millennials and 0.657 for Gen Z). The R-squared values for the Millennial generation group indicate that 43.7% of the variation in employee performance (a moderate level) and 50.9% of the variation in employee engagement can

be explained by the model. Meanwhile, for the Generation Z group, the model strongly explains 69.3% of the variation in employee performance and 60.8% of the variation in employee engagement. Overall, work-life balance and job satisfaction were found to have a positive impact on both employee engagement and employee performance, with employee engagement serving as an effective mediator bridging this relationship across both workforce generations at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Job Satisfaction, Employee Engagement, Employee Performance, Millennials, Generation Z

INTRODUCTION

Shifts in workforce demographics at both global and national levels have brought about significant changes. Millennials (born 1981–1996, currently aged 29–44) and Generation Z (born 1997–2012, currently aged 13–28) are increasingly dominating the composition of the workforce within the Indonesian working-age population (15–64 years). Recent data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) reveals varying labor force participation rates the 15–24 age group shows a participation rate of approximately 68% the 25–29 age group records a very high rate of 93.33% and the 40–54 age group maintains a dominant participation rate exceeding 80%. Amidst these growth dynamics, these two generational groups have emerged as the primary drivers of organizational productivity today.

The simultaneous presence of Millennials and Generation Z (Gen Z) in the workplace presents companies with unique cross-generational human resource challenges. These challenges stem primarily from fundamental differences in their intrinsic characteristics, work ethics, professional values, and workplace preferences. Millennials generally prioritize career stability, continuous professional development, and a structural integration of job responsibilities with their personal lives. In contrast, Gen Z heavily influenced by social change prioritizes operational flexibility, mental health awareness, and the establishment of firm, clear boundaries between work tasks and personal life. These differing psychological orientations indirectly influence how both generations perceive and manage work-life balance (WLB) and job satisfaction, factors that ultimately determine overall employee performance.

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to an individual's ability to align work tasks with personal life obligations. While Millennials view WLB as a primary factor for remaining with an organization, Generation Z utilizes it as a coping mechanism to mitigate burnout, maintain mental health, and carve out time for personal development outside of work. Beyond WLB, job satisfaction serves as a crucial cognitive and emotional benchmark reflecting how employees evaluate their daily routines, work environment, and workplace social relationships. High levels of job satisfaction drive superior employee performance, supported by optimal compensation, career development pathways, and supportive supervision. To understand how WLB and job satisfaction translate into optimal performance, contemporary organizational behavior models emphasize employee engagement defined as the level of psychological commitment, cognitive involvement, and physical energy employees dedicate to their organization. This mechanism is grounded in Social Exchange Theory, which posits

that when an organization provides favorable treatment (such as facilitating WLB and fostering job satisfaction), employees naturally reciprocate by increasing their engagement and productivity as a form of positive social exchange.

Despite the extensive literature on human resource management, research gaps remain. First, few empirical studies simultaneously integrate work-life balance (WLB) and job satisfaction into a unified model that specifically positions employee engagement as a mediating variable to predict performance. Previous research has tended to examine these relationships in isolation or utilize different mediators, leaving a conceptual gap regarding how organizational rewards systematically transform into operational performance. Second, empirical comparative studies examining the convergence between Millennials and Gen Z within a single framework particularly those employing Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) via Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) remain very limited. Examining these two generational groups concurrently is crucial for providing companies with a comprehensive understanding of contemporary workforce dynamics.

The need to bridge this research gap is particularly evident at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk, an agribusiness company based in Batulicin, South Kalimantan, that operates large-scale oil palm plantations and related industries. Operating in a sector that demands high-intensity field operations and structural discipline, the company faces distinct intergenerational friction. Millennial employees at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk tend to value processes, experience, and teamwork; in contrast, Gen Z workers prioritize speed, independence, and instant results. These differences often trigger interpersonal tension and communication misalignment stemming from the Millennials' reliance on structure versus Gen Z's desire for rapid outcomes, as well as differing perceptions of work discipline. Such dynamics can undermine employee engagement and organizational cohesion, making targeted research on these employee groups a highly strategic move.

Motivated by these contextual issues and empirical gaps, this study offers a clear scientific contribution by exploring the links between work-life balance (WLB), job satisfaction, and employee performance, with employee engagement serving as an intervening variable, specifically through a comparison of Millennial and Gen Z cohorts at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk. The study aims to address seven key questions: examining the impact of WLB and job satisfaction on performance; determining their influence on employee engagement; investigating the direct effect of engagement on performance; and analyzing the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction and employee performance across both generations. Theoretically, the study seeks to enrich the literature on cross-generational human resource management and validate Social Exchange Theory within an industrial context. From a practical standpoint, the research provides actionable insights for HR practitioners to design more effective HR policies, minimize cross-generational conflict, and optimize corporate performance within the modern agro-industry sector.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social Exchange Theory serves as the grand theory underpinning the conceptual framework of this study. This theory posits that social relationships among individuals, including contractual relationships within organizations, are formed through an exchange

process based on a weighing of benefits (rewards) and sacrifices or costs. Originally introduced by Homans (1958) and further developed by Blau (1964), the theory emphasizes that workplace social interactions involve not merely purely economic transactions but also crucial social aspects such as trust, loyalty, and long-term commitment.

In the context of human resource management, social exchange theory posits that the employment relationship between employees and the organization constitutes an interactive, mutually influential partnership. Employees periodically evaluate the level of support, attention, and appreciation, whether material or non-material, provided by the organization (Matrafi, 2024). When employees perceive that the organization treats them fairly, attends to their well-being, and fosters a conducive work environment, they are naturally motivated to respond positively.

The core principle governing this social exchange relationship is reciprocity a psychological and moral drive for individuals to return the kindness or benefits received from another party (Radmond, 2016). When a company addresses employee needs through work-life balance policies and by fostering job satisfaction, these actions are perceived as valuable rewards. In return, employees reciprocate the organization's goodwill by strengthening their psychological commitment, manifested as employee engagement, and dedicating their best efforts to optimizing organizational productivity and performance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research design using an explanatory research approach. This method was selected to explain and test the causal relationships and influences among the latent variables under study, specifically Work-Life Balance (X1) and Job Satisfaction (X2) on Employee Performance (Y), with Employee Engagement (Z) serving as an intervening variable.

This study was conducted at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk, located in Batulicin, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan. This location was selected due to workforce characteristics relevant to demographic shifts, specifically the dominance of Millennial and Generation Z employees within the company's operations. Field data collection and analysis were carried out during the period from January to February 2026.

The population of this study comprises all active employees at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk Batulicin belonging to two target generational groups: Millennials (employees born between 1981 and 1996) and Generation Z (employees born between 1997 and 2012).

The sampling technique employed was non-probability sampling using the saturated sampling method (total sampling), wherein all members of the population meeting the criteria served as research respondents. Based on these criteria, the sample obtained and analyzed in this study consisted of 291 respondents, comprising 186 employees from the Millennial generation and 105 employees from Generation Z.

Data for this study were collected using primary data obtained through the distribution of structured questionnaires to respondents. The questionnaires were carefully designed to measure respondents' perceptions regarding the indicators of the variables: Work-Life Balance, Job Satisfaction, Employee Performance, and Employee Engagement.

Each statement item in the questionnaire instrument is measured using a Likert scale with a five-level multiple-choice or checklist scoring range to generate interval data. These score levels are defined as follows:

Score	Response Option Description
5	Strongly Agree (SS)
4	Agree (S)
3	Neutral / Undecided(N)
2	Disagree (TS)
1	Strongly Disagree (STS)

To avoid ambiguity, the research variables are operationally defined in accordance with the study's focus, as follows:

a. Work-Life Balance (X1): A condition in which employees are able to effectively balance and fulfill their work responsibilities within the company alongside their personal roles, tasks, and activities outside of work, supported by a set of planned activities and organizational culture.

b. Job Satisfaction (X2): The positive emotional state and level of employee satisfaction regarding aspects of their work, encompassing compensation commensurate with contributions, opportunities for personal development, relationships with colleagues, and appreciation from superiors.

c. Employee Performance (Y): The quality and quantity of work achieved by an employee in carrying out their duties in accordance with standards, high precision, time efficiency, and targets established by the company.

d. Employee Engagement (Z) The level of employees' emotional attachment, energy, enthusiasm, and dedication to their work and the organization employing them, which drives long-term productive contributions.

The analysis of empirical data in this study employs the Partial Least Squares (PLS) based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method using SmartPLS software. This approach involves two evaluation stages: the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to assess validity (specifically convergent validity via Average Variance Extracted/AVE > 0.5) and construct reliability, and the evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to examine the f-square effect size and r-square.

To examine differences in effects and characteristics across generational groups over time, further analysis was conducted using Multi-Group Analysis (MGA). Hypothesis testing for both direct and indirect (mediation) effects was performed using a bootstrapping resampling procedure with a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$). The testing criteria established a t-statistic threshold of 1.96; if the bootstrapped t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted, and the effect was deemed statistically significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the influence of Work-Life Balance (WLB) and Job Satisfaction (JS) on the performance of Millennial and Gen Z employees at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk Batulicin, with Employee Engagement (EE) serving as an intervening variable. Data

collection was conducted via questionnaires distributed to the entire population of permanent employees falling within the Millennial (born 1981–1996) and Gen Z (born 1997–2012) cohorts comprising 186 and 105 respondents, respectively resulting in a total census sample of 291 respondents. The respondent profile was predominantly male (194 individuals or 66.7%) compared to female (97 individuals or 33.3%), reflecting the operational nature of the company's business. Based on the frequency distribution of respondent answers, the employees' perceptions regarding each variable are outlined below:

1. Work-Life Balance (X1) shows an overall mean score of 3.92. The indicator with the highest mean is the ability to separate personal matters from work (mean 4.05), specifically the item "I am able to separate personal matters from work." This indicates that employees perceive themselves as having good self-regulation capacity in balancing their roles.

2. Job Satisfaction (X2) shows an overall average score of 3.88. The indicator with the highest score is satisfaction with colleagues (4.15), specifically regarding the statement "The work environment at this company makes me feel comfortable." Meanwhile, the indicator with the lowest score is satisfaction with the job itself (3.67), based on the statement "I feel satisfied with my current job."

3. Employee Engagement (Z) yielding an average score of 3.93. The highest indicator was found in the 'dedication' dimension (4.00), specifically the item "I am enthusiastic about doing my job." Conversely, the lowest indicator was in the 'absorption' dimension (3.78), with the item "My work inspires me." Overall, employees tended to express agreement and demonstrated a strong level of engagement with the company.

4. Kinerja Karyawan (Y) showed good average scores. The majority of Millennial and Gen Z employees expressed agreement regarding punctuality (mean: 4.00)—"I am able to manage my work time efficiently"—and work quality (mean: 3.98)—"I complete my work with a high level of precision."

Model and Hypothesis Testing Results (SEM-PLS)

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SmartPLS software. Hypothesis testing was performed separately for two generational groups (Millennials and Gen Z) using bootstrapping resampling at a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 5\%$, $t\text{-table} = 1.96$).

A. Millennial Generation Group (N = 186)

The results of testing the direct and indirect effects on the Millennial group are summarized as follows:

- WLB -> Performance: Original Sample = 0.388; $t\text{-statistic} = 5.794$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ (Significant, H1 accepted).
- Job Satisfaction -> Performance: Original Sample = 0.344; $t\text{-statistic} = 4.124$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ (Significant, H2 accepted).
- WLB -> Employee Engagement: Original Sample = 0.412; $t\text{-statistic} = 4.891$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ (Significant, H3 accepted).
- Job Satisfaction -> Employee Engagement: Original Sample = 0.395; $t\text{-statistic} = 3.982$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ (Significant, H4 accepted).

- Employee Engagement -> Performance: Original Sample = 0.251; t-statistic = 2.987; p-value = 0.003 (Significant, H5 accepted).
- Mediation WLB -> EE -> Performance: Original Sample = 0.103; t-statistic = 2.541; p-value = 0.011 (Significant, H6 accepted - Partial Mediation).
- Mediation JS -> EE -> Performance: Original Sample = 0.082; t-statistic = 2.289; p-value = 0.011 (Significant, H7 accepted - Full Mediation).

B. Generation Z group (N = 105)

The results of the direct and indirect effect tests for the Gen Z group are summarized as follows:

- WLB -> Performance: Original Sample = 0.357; t-statistic = 4.066; p-value = 0.000 (Significant, H1 accepted).
- Job Satisfaction -> Performance: Original Sample = 0.329; t-statistic = 3.181; p-value = 0.001 (Significant, H2 accepted).
- WLB -> Employee Engagement: Original Sample = 0.445; t-statistic = 4.487; p-value = 0.000 (Significant, H3 accepted).
- Job Satisfaction -> Employee Engagement: Original Sample = 0.381; t-statistic = 3.749; p-value = 0.000 (Significant, H4 accepted).
- Employee Engagement -> Performance: Original Sample = 0.223; t-statistic = 2.588; p-value = 0.005 (Significant, H5 accepted).
- Mediation WLB -> EE -> Performance: Original Sample = 0.099; t-statistic = 2.126; p-value = 0.017 (Significant, H6 accepted – Partial Mediation).
- Mediation JS -> EE -> Performance: Original Sample = 0.085; t-statistic = 2.118; p-value = 0.017 (Significant, H7 accepted – Partial Mediation).

The Impact of Work-Life Balance on Employee Performance

The research results indicate that work-life balance has a positive and significant impact on employee performance at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk Batulicin, for both the Millennial and Gen Z groups. These findings demonstrate that the better the balance between work and personal life perceived by employees, the higher their resulting performance. These results align with previous studies conducted by Waworuntu, Kainde & Mandagi (2022), Kurniawati & Mulyanto (2024), Bella, Andriyani & Hasya (2025), and Subarto & Solihin (2025). Based on a comparative analysis, the impact of work-life balance on employee performance was slightly greater in the Millennial group (0.388) than in the Gen Z group (0.357). This indicates that work-life balance plays a more crucial role in boosting the performance of Millennial employees. The researchers attribute this phenomenon to the fact that most Millennial employees are in a stage of full adulthood, bearing family, social, and financial responsibilities that are more complex than those of Gen Z. For Millennials, achieving work-life balance serves as a highly valued form of organizational reward. Consistent with Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Matrafi, 2024), when employees receive support for balancing their roles from the institution, they reciprocate with optimal work performance.

The Effect of Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance

Job satisfaction has been shown to have a positive and significant impact on employee performance across both generations at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk Batulicin. Theoretically, job satisfaction is an employee's positive emotional response to their tasks and work environment. Satisfied employees fully dedicate their time, energy, and mental effort to achieving company targets because they view their work as an essential part of their lives (Handaka & Fauzan, 2024). These empirical findings support previous research by Astuti & Suwandi (2022) and Subarto & Solihin (2025). The level of job satisfaction at the research site is classified as high, with a mean score of 3.88. The indicator with the highest mean is satisfaction with coworkers (4.30), indicating a highly supportive and harmonious horizontal work climate, a factor that is crucial for the younger generation, who value inclusive collaboration. Conversely, the indicators for career advancement opportunities and satisfaction with the work itself received the lowest scores. This serves as a key point for HR management to establish clear career paths in order to sustain the internal motivation of employees across generations.

The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in the Relationship Between Work-Life Balance and Performance

Mediation analysis results indicate that employee engagement positively and significantly mediates the impact of work-life balance on employee performance across both generational groups (Millennials and Gen Z). Partial mediation was observed in both groups, implying that while work-life balance can directly influence employee performance, the impact is optimized when it fosters emotional attachment and dedication (employee engagement).

These findings align closely with the Social Exchange Theory (SET) framework proposed by Matrafi (2024). When organizations implement adaptive work-life balance policies—such as workload flexibility during leave or reasonable scheduling—employees feel valued. This sense of being valued promotes psychological stability and reduces work-related stress, thereby cultivating a deep sense of belonging and emotional attachment (employee engagement). It is this attachment that drives the high energy (vigor) and work enthusiasm necessary to achieve peak productivity. These findings support the studies conducted by Bella, Andriyani, and Hasya (2025) as well as Sataruno et al. (2023).

The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in the Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Performance

Interestingly, the mediation analysis regarding the impact of job satisfaction on employee performance mediated by employee engagement reveals differences in the nature of this mediation:

1. For the Millennial generation, the mediation model observed is full mediation. This implies that the job satisfaction experienced by Millennial employees does not automatically or mechanistically boost their performance. Instead, such satisfaction must first be accumulated and transformed into employee engagement before it can yield tangible performance improvements. Millennial characteristics suggest that material satisfaction or horizontal environmental factors (such as workplace comfort) only trigger productivity when employees feel emotionally engaged and perceive an alignment between their personal

vision and the company's goals.

2. For Generation Z, the mediation model observed is partial mediation. The practical nature of Gen Z and their preference for rapid outcomes (instant results) allow them to directly translate job satisfaction or managerial appreciation into immediate performance improvements, without needing to undergo a lengthy process of deep emotional organizational engagement. Nevertheless, employee engagement is still shown to amplify the overall impact of job satisfaction on their performance.

Overall, these findings enrich the understanding of strategic cross-generational HR management, demonstrating that interventions to boost engagement achieved by fostering job satisfaction and work-life balance are essential instruments for sustaining an organization's long-term productivity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis and discussion regarding the influence of Work-Life Balance (WLB) and Job Satisfaction on the performance of employees across generations, with Employee Engagement serving as an intervening variable at PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk Batulicin, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Work-Life Balance is proven to have a positive and significant influence on employee performance among both Millennial and Generation Z groups. The ability of employees to separate personal matters from work and maintain professionalism, particularly regarding the dimension of "Personal Life Interference with Work," serves as a key driver that tangibly enhances their productivity and the quality of their work output.

2. Job Satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on employee performance among Millennials and Generation Z. High levels of satisfaction regarding harmonious relationships with colleagues, appropriate compensation, supervisory support, and a comfortable work environment are proven to foster work effectiveness and the optimal achievement of the company's operational targets.

3. Work-Life Balance has a positive and significant impact on enhancing Employee Engagement among Millennial and Generation Z employees. A work-life balance supported by the organization fosters emotional attachment, enthusiasm, and a high level of dedication, encouraging young employees to devote their best energy to their daily work routines.

4. Job Satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on Employee Engagement across both generations. When employee expectations are met and the work environment is perceived as supportive of both professional and personal growth, employees demonstrate a positive reciprocal response in the form of stronger work engagement.

5. Employee Engagement is proven to have a direct, positive, and significant influence on employee performance among Millennial and Generation Z groups. Employees who possess high levels of enthusiasm and engagement consistently demonstrate superior work performance, greater attention to detail, and more efficient time management.

6. Employee Engagement effectively acts as a mediating (intervening) variable that bridges the influence of Work-Life Balance on employee performance. This confirms that work-life balance policies implemented by organizations do not merely impact performance directly; rather, they first optimally enhance employee engagement, which subsequently leads to improved work performance across generations.

7. Employee engagement has been shown to play a significant role as a mediating variable in the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance. This finding aligns with Social Exchange Theory (SET), wherein job satisfaction viewed as a form of organizational support (a reward) is reciprocated by employees through heightened emotional engagement; this engagement subsequently serves as a primary mechanism for substantially accelerating employee performance outcomes.

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