

Literature Review: The Effect of Work Stress on Generation Z Employee Performance with Work–Life Balance as a Mediating Variable at KOPDES Coffee Shop Bangkalan

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to analyze the effect of work stress on the performance of Generation Z employees, with work life balance serving as a mediating variable at Kopdes Coffee Shop Bangkalan. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the business owner and five Generation Z employees selected using purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to work stress, work life balance, and employee performance. The findings indicate that employees do not experience excessive work stress due to the support provided by the business owner through open communication and efforts to maintain employees' emotional well-being. However, external pressures such as family conflicts and financial issues are the main sources of stress affecting performance. Work life balance is proven to play a significant role in maintaining employee performance stability. Policies such as fair shift distribution, designated days off, and flexible working hours enable employees especially those belonging to Generation Z to balance work with personal activities such as education and sidejobs.

Keywords: Work Stress, Employee Performance, Work–Life Balance, Generation Z.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid globalization and digitalization, the world of work has undergone significant changes that influence employees' work patterns and life balance. Employee performance is one of the fundamental aspects determining the success of an organization. In an increasingly competitive work environment, the demand to achieve high performance targets often leads to work stress among employees (Nisa, 2024). Employees experiencing work stress tend to show decreased motivation, reduced concentration, and lower work quality.

Work stress has become a global issue affecting mental health and workforce productivity across various countries, including Indonesia. Work stress is defined as a negative psychological and physiological response to job demands perceived as overwhelming. According to Fahmi in Steven & Prasetyo (2020), prolonged stress can cause serious physical and psychological health problems and reduce individual performance in the workplace (Nisa,

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2024). At the national level, surveys conducted by Statistics Indonesia (BPS) indicate an increase in work stress cases among young workers, particularly Generation Z who are newly entering the workforce (BPS, 2022). Stress arises when excessive demands placed on an individual lead to anxiety, depression, reduced productivity, and declining performance (Attiq et al., 2020).

Generation Z entering the workforce is known as a generation that values balance and has characteristics distinct from previous generations (Sakitri, 2021). They are recognized as technologically literate, flexible, and inclined to prioritize work–life balance. However, Generation Z is also considered to face greater challenges related to workload and work stress. Significant changes in the world of work, particularly regarding employee expectations toward their job and personal life balance, add to these challenges (Oringo et al., 2020). Unbalanced or excessive workloads can cause serious problems such as stress and burnout. Work stress, which occurs when job demands exceed an individual’s capacity to manage them, is one of the most common issues faced by companies today. Prolonged stress may lead to burnout, negatively affecting employees’ mental and physical health and ultimately reducing their performance (Fhauzan et al., 2024). A survey by Kochhar et al. (2022) reveals that employees aged 16 to 24 experience a work stress rate of 52% of the labor force. Imbalances between work and personal life can lead to stress, fatigue, and even burnout.

To address these challenges, the role of employees becomes crucial. Organizations must consistently pay attention to employees’ needs and expectations to maintain performance, increase productivity, and achieve profitability (Ahmadi et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand how factors such as work–life balance mediate the relationship between work stress and the performance of Generation Z employees.

Several previous studies have highlighted the relationship between work stress, employee performance, and the role of work–life balance within organizational contexts. For example, Atthohiri & Wijayati (2021) stated that work–life balance issues arise when individuals are unable to maintain balance between work and personal life, which may lead to medical, psychological, and behavioral problems. One of the psychological consequences of excessive workload is reduced performance. Another study by Hikmah & Lukito (2021) found that employees who manage to maintain balance between work and personal life tend to experience lower levels of stress and exhibit higher performance. Likewise, research by Wirawan (2022) indicates that work–life balance serves as an effective mediator in reducing the negative impact of work stress on employee performance.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive case study design. This design was chosen because it is well-suited to gain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon within its specific context. The study focused on describing and analyzing the dynamics among work stress, work–life balance, and work motivation in relation to Generation Z employee performance within the unique context of the coffee industry (case study at Basco Coffee).

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Informants were selected via purposive sampling and comprised one owner of Basco Coffee and five Generation Z employees. This selection was intended to obtain a comprehensive perspective from both managerial and employee viewpoints. A flexible interview guide was developed to explore each research variable (work stress, work–life balance, and work motivation). Interviews were conducted in depth to elicit participants' perceptions, experiences, and meanings.

The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analytical process followed a systematic six-phase procedure adapted from Braun and Clarke: (1) data familiarization repeatedly reading and reviewing the transcripts; (2) generating initial codes systematically across the dataset; (3) searching for themes by grouping related codes into potential themes; (4) reviewing themes to validate and refine them; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the final report in which the themes were analyzed to answer the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Work Stress

Employees at Kopdes Coffee Shop in Bangkalan do not experience excessive work stress because the owner consistently seeks to maintain employee performance by engaging in casual conversations and openly discussing challenges. Employees experience the greatest pressure from external factors, particularly family conflicts. These external pressures make employees feel stressed; however, the owner continuously attempts to improve the working atmosphere and support employees' emotional well-being to ensure that their performance remains stable and they do not experience prolonged work stress.

Employee Performance

According to the owner of Kopdes Coffee Shop, employee performance is assessed based on discipline and hospitality toward customers. When employees provide friendly service, customers feel comfortable, which leads to positive feedback and loyalty. Meanwhile, employees perceive that their performance fluctuates depending on external pressures such as family problems, financial constraints, and other personal issues.

Work–Life Balance

Work–life balance strongly influences employee performance. The owner of Kopdes Coffee Shop implements fair shift distribution and provides days off for employees to allocate time for family and personal responsibilities. This is especially important for Generation Z employees who require personal “me time” to rest from daily activities. To support this, the owner allows employees to take vacations as long as they remain responsible for their work. Some employees also work multiple jobs or are still pursuing their studies, and they benefit from the flexibility provided by the owner, which helps them balance their academic and work responsibilities

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that employees at Kopdes generally do not experience excessive work stress due to the preventive efforts made by the owner through casual communication and open discussion of various challenges. However, employees do experience significant pressure from external factors, particularly family conflicts, which the owner strives to alleviate in order to maintain a positive atmosphere and stable performance. The owner evaluates employee performance based on discipline and friendliness, which contribute to customer comfort and loyalty. Conversely, employees perceive that fluctuations in their performance are strongly influenced by external pressures such as family issues, financial constraints, and other personal factors. Work-life balance is considered highly important and has a substantial impact on employee performance. The owner supports work-life balance by implementing fair shift distribution, providing regular days off, and allowing flexibility for employees especially Generation Z workers who require personal time or who are simultaneously pursuing studies or additional jobs as long as they remain responsible for their work. These work-life balance policies help employees manage their time between work, family, and other activities. Overall, Kopdes Bangkalan demonstrates a supportive work environment in which the owner actively manages employee well-being, particularly by addressing external pressures and facilitating work-life balance, ultimately contributing to the maintenance of employee performance and customer loyalty.

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