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The relationship between work-related social media use and work-life integration among generation Z employees in Indonesia

Laura Aurelia Austine Untung, Zamralita*, Jessica

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Tarumanagarai, Jakarta, Jl. Letjen S. Parman No. 1, Grogol Petamburan, Jakarta Barat, DKI Jakarta 11440, Indonesia
* e-mail: zamralita@fpsi.untar.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The use of work-related social media by Generation Z has become a widespread phenomenon, creating a dilemma between flexibility and the blurring of boundaries between professional and personal lives. As digital natives, they are expected to seamlessly integrate work and personal life; however, they are also vulnerable to technostress. This study examines the relationship between Work-Related Social Media Use (WSMU) and Work-Life Integration (WLI) among Generation Z employees. This study adopts Boundary Theory and the Job Demands-Resources model as its theoretical framework. A correlational quantitative approach was employed, involving 203 Generation Z employees selected through convenience sampling method. Data were collected using the Work-Life Boundary Enactment Scale and Work-Related Social Media Questionnaire. The results of the correlation analysis rejected the initial hypothesis. A highly significant negative relationship was found between WSMU and WLI (r = -0.206, P = 0.003). This suggests that employees who effectively utilize social media for work tend to enact stronger segmentation strategies rather than integration. Further analysis revealed that hybrid workers reported significantly higher integration levels than office-based workers, and female employees engaged in more productive WSMU behaviors.

Keywords: work-related social media used; work-life integration; generation z; employees; social media

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the fundamental structure of the workplace has been reshaped by digital transformation (Schilirò,2024). This era, defined by pervasive digitalization and uninterrupted connectivity, has irreversibly shifted the interface between professional duties and private life (Keshwani & Patel, 2023). This shift is especially evident in Indonesia, a country serving as a prime case study because of its rapidly growing digital population (International Trade Administration, 2025). The Indonesian digital landscape has expanded dramatically; early 2024 data shows internet penetration hitting 211.6 million users (79.5% of the population), a significant jump from 150 million (56%) pre-pandemic (Komdigi, 2024; We Are Social, 2019).

Alongside this growth in connectivity is the deep entrenchment of social media in everyday routines. In 2024, the number of active social media users in Indonesia reached 167 million (64.3%) (Prasastisiwi, 2024; We Are Social, 2019). Crucially, this is not merely a form of entertainment. Platforms such as WhatsApp have evolved into critical business infrastructure, with Indonesia hosting the third-largest user base globally, at 112 million (CNN,2025). The widespread adoption of instant messaging tools, such as WhatsApp Business, Slack, and Microsoft Teams, marks a transition to business communication that is immediate, continuous, and mobile (Mathur, 2025).

This saturated technological environment is the native habitat of Generation Z (born 1997–2012), who are entering the labor market as genuine "digital natives" (Chang & Chang, 2023). Unlike previous generations, they have never known a pre-Internet world. They instinctively utilize technology for career growth, using social media not only for socializing but also for professional correspondence, content marketing and networking (Nugrohojati & Linando, 2025). Their influence is statistically significant; as of early 2025, Gen Z constitutes 25.93% of the Indonesian workforce and is projected to reach 30% of the global labor force by 2030 (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2025; McKinsey, 2023).

However, Gen Z has a distinct psychological profile in the workspace. They hold specific employment values and prioritize a balance between personal well-being and career obligations. Reports indicate that 40% of Gen Z workers choose to stay with an employer based on work-life balance policies (LinkedIn, 2024; IDN Research Institute, 2024). They seek financial stability and meaningful work, often placing overall life welfare above high salaries (Deloitte, 2025; Top Employer Institute, 2024). However, a paradox exists: while technologically adept, they are acutely conscious of the downsides of digital saturation, specifically how using social media for work can erode boundaries, potentially harming their mental health in the near future.

The ubiquity of communication tools has cultivated an "always-on" organizational culture. This culture, marked by technological dependence and expectations of rapid response, makes psychological detachment from work increasingly difficult (McDowall & Kinman, 2017). While theoretically offering flexibility, this connectivity simultaneously obscures the line between the professional and personal domains (Patel, 2023). The psychological cost is significant. Research shows that 28% of individuals struggle to mentally disengage from work, 26% report tangible personal life disruptions, and 20% suffer from mental exhaustion (Myers-Briggs, 2019). Moreover, anxiety is prevalent, with 40% of employees feeling anxious during workdays and 72% admitting that it interferes with their daily lives (Razzetti, 2021).

As digital tools become embedded in workflows, working hours and loads intensify, leading to digital fatigue and burnout (Bondanini et al., 2025; Bloëdt, 2024). This creates a dilemma in which tools meant to offer freedom often disrupt life harmony. This necessitates the re-evaluation of boundary management. Traditionally, Work-Life Balance (WLB) has emphasized strict segmentation. However, for digital natives accustomed to constant connectivity, Work-Life Integration (WLI) may be a more appropriate framework.

WLI serves as a boundary management strategy where domains are permeable, allowing thoughts and activities to flow between work and non-work spheres (Wepfer et al., 2018), contrasting with WLB's rigid separation. Theoretically, WLI suits Gen Z's constant connectivity habits. However, high integration poses several risks. Studies suggest that while flexible, excessive boundary blurring can increase exhaustion and reduce perceived balance by crowding out recovery activities (Wepfer et al., 2018), The success of

flexible arrangements depends on employees' ability to manage this integration (Aditya et al., 2023). It is vital to note that digital technology often drives this connectivity, rather than merely facilitating it (Wepfer et al., 2018). Thus, while integration can boost engagement, it carries the risk of fatigue.

Despite the prevalence of social media in professional settings, understanding *how* and *why* employees use these tools is limited. Work-Related Social Media Use (WSMU) encompasses employee behaviors regarding social media that can either aid or hinder performance (Landers & Callan, 2014). This ranges from team collaboration to external networking. The literature suggests that excessive use causes information overload, further blurring work-leisure lines and fueling burnout (Keshwani & Patel, 2023). Landers and Callan (2014) developed the Work-Related Social Media Questionnaire (WSMQ) to differentiate between beneficial (e.g., information gathering) and harmful (e.g., time theft) behaviors. Interestingly, beneficial WSMU does not always correlate linearly with performance, nor does harmful use always predict poor outcomes. This implies that access alone does not boost productivity; without strategic regulation, risks exist.

In Indonesia, WSMU are pervasive. Statistics show that 30% of internet users conduct business research online, and over 21% use social media specifically for work (We Are Social, 2024). While studies have mapped personal branding on Instagram/Facebook, research is lacking on the intensity of instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp (used by 92% of Indonesians for work) and their impact on integration (Gandana & Oktaviandy, 2021; We Are Social, 2024).

Existing research offers conflicting narratives on this topic. Some find a positive link between WSMU and work-life balance, often driven by non-productive "pre-occupation" (Kumar & Priyadarshini 2018). Others view social media as a resource but note that "heavy users" face greater strain (Oksa et al., 2023). Most prior studies have limitations: pre-pandemic contexts, a focus on Gen Y, or Western settings (e.g., Finland) with different work cultures. Furthermore, most viewed this through WLB (segmentation) rather than WLI (flexibility), which is more relevant to Gen Z.

This study bridges these gaps by investigating the WSMU-WLI relationship among Gen Z employees in Indonesia. This study seeks to understand whether the digital habits of Gen Z facilitate harmonious integration or whether the "always-on" nature of the digital world necessitates stronger boundaries. Applying Boundary Theory, this study tests the hypothesis that Work-Related Social Media Use is positively related to Work-Life Integration among Generation Z employees.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental design utilizing a correlational approach to explore the link between Work-Related Social Media Use (WSMU) and Work-Life Integration (WLI). The inclusion criteria required participants to be between 13 and 28 years old (born 1997–2012), currently working in Indonesia, and having at least one year of experience as permanent employees. An *a priori* power analysis was performed using G*Power (version 3.1.9.4) to determine the sample size. Assuming a two-tailed test, alpha of 0.05, power of 0.95, and medium effect size, the minimum requisite sample size was 134. The final sample comprised 203 employees, exceeding the minimum requirement.

The demographic was largely female (70.4%) in staff-level roles (77.3%) and the in. Most worked from the office (71.9%), followed by hybrid (19.7%) and remote (8.4%) setups, respectively. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling on social media (Instagram, X/Twitter). This non-probability method effectively reached "digital natives" in their natural online environment, ensuring diverse industry representation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data were collected over two weeks (late September to mid-October 2025). Of the 209 respondents, 203 met the criteria and were analyzed.

Two adapted instruments with validated reliability were used in this study. WLI was assessed using the WorkLife Boundary Enactment Scale (Wepfer et al., 2018), which was adapted into Indonesian. It uses 10 items on a 7-point bipolar scale to measure integration direction (Work-to-Life and Life-to-Work), showing good internal consistency (α = 0.784). WSMU was measured using the Indonesian version of the Work-Related Social Media Questionnaire (Landers & Callan, 2014), a 36-item, 5-point Likert scale instrument distinguishing beneficial from harmful usage (α = 0.837). Data were analyzed using SPSS

version 27. After confirming normal distribution via the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (p > 0.05), Pearson product-moment correlation and comparative tests (t-tests, ANOVA) were conducted.

3. RESULT

3.1. Participants Overview

The final analysis included 203 Generation Z employees in Indonesia. The ages ranged from 17 to 28 (M = 23.47), with 25 being the dominant age. Regarding education, 62.6% held Bachelor's degrees (S1), and 30% were high school/vocational graduates. The sample was primarily female (70.4%) and unmarried (89.7) %. Professionally, 77.3% were staff, with 65.5% of participants having 1-2 years of tenure. Most of them were office-based (71.9%). Industries varied, led by finance/insurance (23.6%) and retail/wholesale (15.3%). Note that, owing to the descriptive nature and limited variation in some segments, these findings should be viewed as preliminary and context-specific to this regional setting rather than broadly generalizable globally. Consequently, these results cannot be broadly applied to other generations or to different countries; rather, they serve as an initial empirical starting point for subsequent research using more varied samples or cross-national comparisons. See Table 1

Table 1. Participants Overview

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	60	29.6
	Female	143	70.4
Age	17	2	1
	18	2	1
	19	4	1.5
	20	20	9.9
	21	34	16.7
	22	23	11.3
	23	20	9.9
	24	14	6.9
	25	39	19.2
	26	14	6.9
	27	15	7.4
	28	17	8.4
	17	2	1
	18	2	1
	19	4	1.5
	20	20	9.9
	21	34	16.7
	22	23	11.3
	23	20	9.9
	24	14	6.9
	25	39	19.2
	26	14	6.9
	27	15	7.4

	28	17	8.4
Position	Staff	157	77.3
	Senior Staff	15	7.4
	Supervisor	19	9.4
	Assistant Manager	5	2.5
	Manager	7	3.4
	Staff	157	77.3
Work Tenure (year)	1	70	34.5
	2	63	31
	3	26	12.8
	4	14	6.9
	5	15	7.4
	6	7	3.4
	7	4	2
	8	2	1
	9	2	1
Work System	Work From Office (WFO)	146	71.9
	Work From Home (WFH)	17	8.4
	Hybrid	40	19.7
Work Industry	Finance and Insurance	48	13.6
	Construction, Property, and Design	16	7.9
	Public Services and Government	29	14.3
	Manufacturing	12	5.9
	Retail and Wholesale	31	15.3
	Media, Advertising, and Digital	29	14.3
	Transportation and Logistics	11	5.4
	Food & Beverage, Tourism, and Hospitality	21	10.3
	Agriculture, Plantations, and Mining	6	3
Last Education	High School	61	30
	Diploma	10	4.9
	S1	127	62.6
	S2	5	2.5
Marital Status	Unmarried	182	89.7
	Married without children	11	5.4
	Married with children	19	4.9

3.2. Overview of Work-Life Integration (WLI)

Descriptive analysis showed moderate boundary management. The mean WLI score was 3.68 (SD = 1.04) on a 7-point scale, indicating employees neither strictly segment nor fully integrate work and life. The Work-to-Life dimension (M = 3.74, SD = 1.26) was slightly higher than Life-to-Work (M = 3.62, SD = 1.31), suggesting work permeates personal time slightly more than the reverse. See Table 2

Table 2. Work-Life Integration Overview

Dimension	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dv.
Work-to-Life	1.20	7.00	3.739	1.257
Life-to-Work	1.00	6.80	3.616	1.305

3.3 Overview of Work-Related Social Media Used (WSMU)

Engagement levels were moderate (M = 3.52, SD = 0.48), implying balanced usage. Productive dimensions like Information Gathering (M = 4.02) scored higher than destructive ones like Disparaging Others (M = 1.93) or Plagiarism (M = 1.69), indicating generally ethical usage. This variable demonstrated a moderate level of engagement across the sample. The descriptive statistics revealed an overall mean score of 3.52 (SD = 0.48$). This moderate score implies that while social media is a utilized tool in the professional environment of these Gen Z employees, its usage is balanced, not too much as we initially thought it would be. Among the specific behaviors measured, dimensions related to productive use, such as *Information Gathering* (M = 4.02), scored higher than destructive behaviors like *Disparaging Others* (M = 1.93) or *Plagiarism* (M = 1.69), suggesting a generally ethical and functional application of social media in their workplaces. However, one of the favorable dimensions "Crowdsourcing" scored low, suggesting that employee rarely asking other people's help in social media when it comes to work problem. See Table 3

Table 3. Work-Related Social Media Used Overview

Dimension	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dv.
Information Gathering	1.00	5.00	4.022	0.888
Intra-office Communication	1.00	5.00	3.82	0.996
Social Media as Technical Solution	1.00	5.00	3.729	1.118
Organizational Reputation Management	1.00	5.00	3.58	0.956
Communicating with Existing Customer / Client	1.00	5.00	3.522	1.181
New Customer/ Client Outreach	1.00	5.00	3.520	1.198
Participation in Online Work Community	1.00	5.00	3.3	1.209
Crowdsourcing	1.00	5.00	3.09	1.091
Multitasking	1.00	5.00	3.064	1.223
Time Theft	1.00	5.00	2.958	1.238
Relationship Refusal	1.00	5.00	2.325	1.165
Creating Offensive Content	1.00	5.00	2.259	1.225
Disparaging Others	1.00	5.00	1.929	1.171
Representing Organization Poorly	1.00	5.00	1.926	1.116

Establishing Inappropriate Relationship	1.00	5.00	1.852	1.684
Diminishing Personal Reputation	1.00	5.00	1.764	1.127
Plagiarism	1.00	5.00	1.685	1.093

3.4. Correlation Analysis

Assumption checks confirmed normal distribution for WLI (p = 0.200) and WSMU (p = 0.061). The central hypothesis posited a positive relationship. However, Pearson correlation revealed a significant negative correlation (r = -0.206, p = 0.003), rejecting the hypothesis. Sub-dimension analysis showed this was driven by the Life-to-Work dimension (r = -0.245, p < 0.001); while the Work-toLife was insignificant. This suggests higher productive social media use correlates with stronger boundaries against personal life intrusion into work. Conversely, frequent non-productive use links to higher integration (blurred boundaries).

3.5. Difference 2Test of Demographic Data

Additional analyses were conducted to identify differences based on demographic factors. An independent samples t-test showed a significant gender difference (t(96.82) = -3.085, p = 0.003), with females reporting higher productive WSMU (M = 3.76) than males (M = 3.52). A One-Way ANOVA found work arrangements significantly affected boundary management (F(2,200) = 7.140, p = 0.001). Tukey HSD post-hoc tests revealed Hybrid workers reported significantly higher WLI than officebased workers (p = 0.002). No other significant differences were found for either WLI or WSMU. The detail is in Table 4 and Table 5

Table 4. Difference Test: Work-Related Social Media Used based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dv.	t	df	p
Female	143	3.761	0.441	-3.085	96.817	0.003
Male	60	3.518	0.538			

Table 5. Difference Test: Work-Life Integration based on Work System

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dv.	p
Work From Office (WFO)	146	3.51	0.9872	0.001
Work From Home (WFH)	17	4.02	0.8371	
Hybrid	40	4.14	1.1265	

4. DISCUSSION

The primary aim of the study was to explore the WSMU-WLI relationship in Gen Z employees, assuming digital natives would favor integration. However, the significant negative correlation between productive WSMU and WLI led to the rejection of this hypothesis. Thus, reveals a "paradox of productive connectivity", whis is employees effectively using social media for work tend to adopt segmentation strategies, maintaining distinct boundaries. Conversely, higher integration (blurred boundaries) associates more strongly with less productive behaviors, aligning with research linking uncontrolled Life-to-Work integration to reduced performance (Hartini et al., 2024).

Theoretically, these results challenge "techno-invasion" concepts, proposing that productive Gen Z employees actively manage boundaries rather than passively letting technology blur domains (Keshwani & Patel, 2023). Low WLI scores among effective users suggest a conscious effort to protect non-work time, explicable by Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Hobfoll posits individuals strive to protect resources (time, energy). Since productive social media use consumes cognitive resources, segmentation acts as a coping mechanism to prevent exhaustion (Hobfoll, 2001; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). The specific negative correlation in the Life-to-Work dimension ($p < 0.001$) reinforces this as a deliberate strategy to shield professional resources from personal intrusion.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model further illuminates this dual nature (Oksa et al., 2023). Beneficial behaviors (Information Gathering) act as Job Resources facilitating efficiency, while harmful ones (Time Theft) act as Job Demands causing technostress (Demerouti et al., 2001; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). Thus, productive use is managed via segmentation, while harmful use leads to uncontrolled integration (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015; Oksa et al., 2023; Kumar & Priyadarshini, 2018). Additionally, low Crowdsourcing scores suggest a nuance in their professional problem-solving strategies. Rather than broadcasting work-related challenges to external online communities to seek solutions, these employees appear to favor autonomous information seeking or relying on established internal networks (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). This tendency may stem from a heightened awareness of organizational confidentiality or a preference for maintaining professional credibility by resolving issues within their immediate, trusted circles rather than exposing knowledge gaps to a public audience (Goffman, 1959).

Beyond the psychological dynamics, the study identified significant contextual variations regarding work arrangements and gender. Contextually, hybrid workers reported significantly higher WLI than office-based workers, supporting the idea that hybrid models' autonomy and lack of physical boundaries foster integration (Aditya et al., 2023; Wigert & White, 2022). Furthermore, female employees' had higher productive WSMU scores align with Gender Communication Theory (Tannen, 1990), which suggests women utilize "rapport-talk" to build relationships. As productive WSMU often involves client/team maintenance, women may be more inclined to leverage social media for these relational tasks (Krasnova et al., 2017).

The interpretation of these findings must be considered within the study's limitations. Correlational design's that's been used prevents causal conclusions. Convenience sampling also limits generalizability to the broader Indonesian Gen Z population. Regarding instrumentation, two specific WSMQ items from *Crowdsourcing* dimension (When I can't solve a problem at work, I ask for help on social media) and one from the *Participation in Online Work Community* dimension (I post on my organization's social media site or group page), showed low validity ($r < 0.138$) but were retained to preserve the theoretical structure, as the dimension's overall reliability remained acceptable. Future research should rigorously adapt and validate the WSMQ for the Indonesian's work culture context and employ longitudinal designs to track evolving boundary strategies as Generation Z matures further into the workforce.

The interpretation of these findings must be considered within the study's limitations. As a correlational research design, the study identifies associations but cannot establish causal relationships between social media usage and boundary management strategies. Furthermore, the reliance on convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the results to the broader Generation Z population in Indonesia. Regarding instrumentation, two specific items from the *Work-Related Social Media Questionnaire* (Landers & Callan, 2014), one from the *Crowdsourcing* dimension (When I can't solve a problem at work, I ask for help on social media) and one from the *Participation in Online Work Community* dimension (I post on my organization's social media site or group page), showed validity coefficients below the standard threshold ($r < 0.138$). However, these items were retained to preserve the theoretical integrity of the original 17-dimension structure, as the dimension's overall reliability remained acceptable. Consequently, future research is strongly advised to rigorously adapt and validate the WSMQ into Indonesian to ensure stronger psychometric properties and greater relevance to the local work culture Future research with longitudinal designs would also be beneficial to track how these digital boundary management strategies evolve as Generation Z matures further into the workforce.

5. CONCLUSION

This study challenges the assumption that Generation Z, as digital natives, inherently prefers highly integrated work-life boundaries. The analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between WSMU and WLI, which contrary to the hypothesis. This indicates that employees who engage in productive and ethical social media behaviors are more likely to enforce segmentation strategies, creating boundaries to prevent personal matters from intruding on work—a finding driven by the Lifeto-Work dimension.

Contextually, it is also highlighted that hybrid arrangements foster significantly higher integration than traditional office settings, and female employees demonstrate higher productive social media engagement than males. Theoretically, this suggests that for Gen Z, effective digital engagement is not synonymous with boundary blurring but is often accompanied by active boundary management to conserve cognitive resources. Practically, organizations should avoid blanket social media bans. Instead, implementing flexible policies like hybrid models, and providing ethical guidelines to distinguish social media as a resource versus a demand is recommended to help employees distinguish between social media as a job resource versus a job demand, ensuring that digital connectivity enhances rather than compromises employee well-being.

Ethical Approval

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined by Tarumanagara University

Informed Consent Statement

Every participant received an informed consent form prior to the start of data collection. They were clearly explained the objectives of the study. Participation on the research was entirely voluntary, and all answers were treated as confidential and utilized solely for academic research purposes.

Authors' Contributions

Z, J, and LAAU contributed to conceptualization, writing, review, and editing. Z and LAAU contributed to methodology and formal analysis. Z and J contributed to validation. LAAU contributed in writing original draft preparation.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

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Notes on Contributors

Laura Aurelia Austine Untung
Laura Aurelia Austine Untung is currently an undergraduate psychology student at Tarumanagara University. She has a big passion in the field Organizational and Industrial Psychology. Her latest interest right now is about integrating social media used in professional setting among employees across different

industries and backgrounds, in aim to improving work-life conditions among employees while also developing organization's team dynamic.

Zamralita

Dr. Zamralita, M.M., a psychologist specializing in industrial and organizational psychology, serves as a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Tarumanagara. Her main research interests include work engagement, psychological capital, organizational commitment, and the dynamics between job demands and available resources. She has produced valuable insights into employee well-being, work-life balance, career progression, and burnout among workers in various Indonesian industries. Beyond teaching, she currently holds the position of Head of the Undergraduate Psychology Program at the same university. Dr. Zamralita regularly organizes community outreach programs and workshops focused on talent assessment, career counseling, and organizational improvement. Through her work, she consistently bridges psychological theory with practical workplace applications, making meaningful contributions to human resource development and mental health support in Indonesian organizations.

Jessica

Jessica, M.Psi., Psikolog, is a lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Tarumanagara, with a strong passion and specialization in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Her professional interest lies in understanding human behavior within the workplace, aiming to optimize organizational dynamics and employee development. Beyond her academic responsibilities, Jessica is actively engaged in conducting psychological examinations and talent mapping. Through these initiatives, she is dedicated to helping the younger generation identify their potential early on, ensuring they are well-prepared for their future career paths and professional challenges.

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