



The Effect of Hybrid Working and Transformational Leadership on Job Stress With Work-Life Balance as A Mediator

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Abstract. The purpose of this research is to investigate how hybrid work arrangements and transformational leadership impact the job stress of Generation Z workers in Denpasar City, utilizing work-life balance as a mediating factor.. A causal-explanatory approach was employed with a sample of 156 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) via SmartPLS 3.0. The results indicate that hybrid working and transformational leadership have a positive and significant effect on work-life balance. Furthermore, worklife balance, hybrid working, and transformational leadership directly exert a negative and significant effect on job stress. Work-life balance is also proven to mediate the effect of hybrid working on reducing job stress. The conclusion of this study supports Social Exchange Theory, where flexibility and leader support trigger a positive reciprocation in the form of enhanced work-life balance and reduced job stress for Gen-Z.

Keywords: Gen-Z; Hybrid Working; Job Stress; Transformational Leadership; Work-Life Balance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human resources are the most vital asset in a company to achieve its goals; therefore, managing human resources serves as the primary step in organizational management (Sanders, 2023). Currently, companies have begun employing Gen-Z as part of their talent regeneration pipeline. Gen-Z refers to the generation born between 1997 and 2012 who grew up in the digital era (Lubis, 2020). This generation is motivated by the desire to find their dream job and opportunities to develop their skills, leading them to believe they will switch jobs more frequently than previous generations (Marquez, 2022). They are known to be technologically adaptive, value flexibility, and are oriented toward work-life balance. However, workplace reality often fails to align with these expectations, thereby generating potential job stress among employees (Mustika, 2025).

Bali Province, as a world tourist destination, has consistently been a preferred location for conducting hybrid working activities, which are currently favored by many groups, particularly Gen-Z. Data published by the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of Bali Province (2025) shows that Gen-Z workers in Bali Province have begun entering the working-age population to replace previous generations, with one of the largest concentrations located in Denpasar City. Individuals born between 1997 and 2012 who are entering the working age in Denpasar City constitute 15.43%, demonstrating that Gen-Z holds a significant influence. High performance demands, rapidly changing organizational dynamics, and challenges in adapting to cross-generational work cultures make Gen-Z more vulnerable to psychological pressure

(Septiani, 2024).

Job stress is an emotional state arising from an imbalance between workload and an individual's capacity to cope with the pressures faced (Simbolon, 2024). Unmanaged stress impairs an employee's ability to interact positively with their workplace environment and even their external environment (Winoto, 2024). The job stress experienced by employees can be influenced by work-life balance in dividing time between personal life and work activities (Dwitanti, 2023). A work approach capable of creating harmony between professional demands and personal needs, opening space for individuals to work more flexibly without sacrificing quality of life, can be implemented through hybrid working to achieve work-life balance (Khatimah, 2022).

Hybrid working is a flexible working model that employees can choose in the form of flexible working hours, telecommuting, and flexible work volumes (Widiaristi, 2024). Hybrid working is closely associated with leaders who apply transformational leadership, as this approach is deemed more relevant for navigating the challenges of limited physical interaction while remaining productive and collaborative despite flexible execution (Febriantina, 2025). Transformational leadership centers on encouraging and driving team members to maximize their capabilities and foster constructive organizational transformations (Marlius, 2024). Based on these phenomena, this study aims to analyze the effect of hybrid working and transformational leadership on job stress through work-life balance as a mediating variable.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The underlying theory in this research is Social Exchange Theory, which posits that individuals initiate and maintain relationships due to expected rewards (Tran et al., 2022). This theory is grounded in the notion that individuals view their relationships within an economic framework, calculating sacrifices and weighing them against the rewards gained (Suryawan, 2021). This study focuses specifically on the exchange of work-life balance benefits between employees and the firm. When a firm provides supportive working policies and practices, employees feel supported and reciprocate with higher performance and greater commitment to the organization (Le et al., 2020). Job stress is identified as an employee's psychological condition characterized by negative responses such as tension, anxiety, anger, and depression resulting from workload (Simanjuntak et al., 2021). There are five stress indicators: irritability, lack of communication, mental exhaustion, frequent daydreaming, and job avoidance. On the other hand, work-life balance is the allocation of time between work and personal life based on priorities (Resky, 2025). Indicators of work-life balance include time balance, involvement

balance, and satisfaction balance (Yusnita & Nurlinawaty, 2022). Hybrid working is a flexible work approach offering a unique opportunity to enhance person-environment fit, enabling employees to select suitable arrangements (Widiaristi, 2024). Hybrid working indicators include time flexibility, timing flexibility, and place flexibility (Ramadhan, 2024). Furthermore, transformational leadership is a leadership approach centered on inspiring and motivating team members (Khairudin, 2022). Its indicators encompass being an agent of change, serving as a role model, encouraging subordinate performance, acting on value systems, continuously developing abilities, and handling complex problems effectively (Ihsanika, 2024).

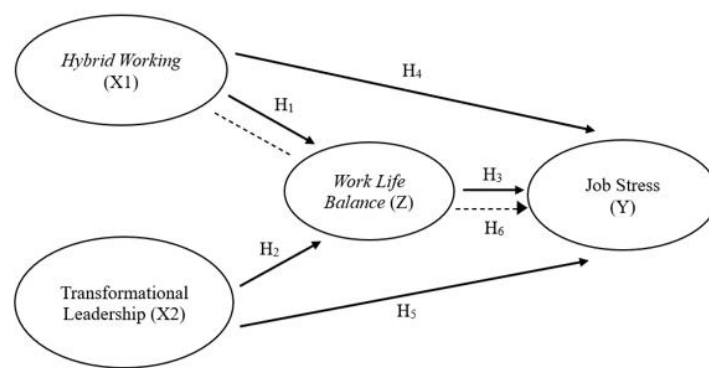


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Social Exchange Theory asserts that individuals initiate and maintain relationships based on expected rewards (Tran et al., 2022). Social exchange occurs when an individual performs actions relative to others to secure desired rewards and avoid penalties or losses (Fadhilah, 2020). This study focuses on the specific exchange of work-life balance benefits between employees and the company. The perceived benefits of work-life balance offered involve reviewing hybrid working and transformational leadership that are felt to support employees, thereby lowering perceived job stress.

The Effect of Hybrid Working on Work-Life Balance

The implementation of a hybrid working system has proven to be a crucial factor influencing employee work-life balance. According to Alfina (2024), flexibility in hybrid working provides room for individuals to manage daily activities more optimally while mitigating the risk of conflict between work demands and family life. The advantages of this system impact not only personal aspects but also operational ones. Mahesti (2025) emphasizes that flexible work structures in hybrid working can enhance company operational efficiency without compromising employee work-life balance. This reinforces findings by Pytaloka (2025), which note that the flexibility and balance offered by hybrid working make it a highly sought-

after work pattern, particularly among young generations such as Gen-Z. H1: Adopting a hybrid work model significantly and positively improves work-life balance.

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Work-Life Balance

Transformational leadership is a crucial factor that significantly influences employee work-life balance. This leadership style is considered capable of providing inspiration while supporting the creation of balance between work demands and personal life (Tsalsabila, 2025). Continuously, Perkasa (2025) highlights how transformational leadership adapts to modern work dynamics in nurturing employees so that a balance between workplace and family roles can be achieved. This supportive aspect is manifested through granting autonomy or work freedom based on performance targets, which ultimately contributes positively to employee life balance (Safria, 2022). H2: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work-life balance.

The Effect of Work-Life Balance on Job Stress

Work-life balance is a pivotal factor determining job stress levels in employees. An imbalance between personal and professional life has the potential to trigger pressure and adverse work situations for individuals (Adhitarma & Adnyani, 2023). Consistent with this, findings by Wirawan (2022) confirm that work-life balance has a negative and significant effect on job stress, indicating that the better the work-life balance an employee possesses, the lower the level of stress experienced. These results reinforce previous research by Hidayat et al. (2018), which also recorded a fundamental inverse relationship between work-life balance optimization and reduced job stress risk. H3: Work-life balance has a negative and significant effect on job stress.

The Effect of Hybrid Working on Job Stress

Adopting a hybrid work model has been shown to play a vital role in shaping the amount of stress employees experience at work.. Mahardika (2025) revealed that spatial and temporal flexibility in hybrid working effectively lowers stress levels, especially for employees with high mobility and demanding routines. In line with this, Ramadhan (2024) highlights the popularity of this work pattern among Gen-Z, as it is deemed more financially efficient while reducing work pressures. Furthermore, successful implementation of hybrid working directly impacts job stress reduction through a harmonious division of roles between professional demands and family life (Abean, 2025). H4: Hybrid working has a negative and significant effect on job stress.

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Job Stress

Transformational leadership is a crucial factor proven capable of influencing employee job stress levels. According to Rohani (2025), applying this leadership style effectively reduces job stress because transformational leaders tend to be open to listening to aspirations, criticisms,

and complaints from team members. Aligned with these findings, Swandana (2025) emphasizes that this visionary leadership negatively impacts job stress, where a conducive and comfortable work atmosphere can be created during task execution. This is reinforced by Rasid (2025), who confirmed that transformational leadership exerts a negative and significant influence on lowering employee job stress levels. H5: Transformational leadership significantly reduces occupational stress.

The Role of Work-Life Balance in Mediating the Effect of Hybrid Working on Job Stress

Previous research demonstrates that work-life balance plays an essential mediating role in the relationship between hybrid working and job stress. Patricia (2025) explains that hybrid working implementation can suppress employee job stress levels through the achievement of superior work-life balance. This phenomenon appears significant among young worker generations such as Gen-Z, where a strong drive to achieve work-life balance through hybrid working schemes directly results in decreased job stress levels (Hadun, 2025). This aligns with Kumia's (2025) empirical findings, which demonstrate that work-life balance serves as a vital mediator in the relationship between hybrid work and job stress. H6: Work-life balance mediates the effect of hybrid working on job stress.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

To address the research hypotheses, questionnaires were distributed to Generation Z born between 1997 and 2012 using Google Forms. They are known to be technologically adaptive, value flexibility, and are oriented toward work-life balance (Mustika, 2025). The questionnaire link was distributed online to reach a broader spectrum of respondents. By the submission deadline, a total of 156 fully completed and valid questionnaires were gathered for the analysis phase. Questionnaire distribution was carried out between April and May 2026. The questionnaire was meticulously designed to ensure data validity and reliability. The list of items was developed based on insights from prior interviews conducted with Gen-Z workers practicing hybrid working in Denpasar City. Table 1 presents the list of items presented to respondents.

Table 1. Survey Instrument.

No	Statement Item	Response Options
1	I feel unhappy and belittled by the actions and words of co-workers. (Y1.1)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
2	I find it difficult to express my opinions at work. (Y1.2)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
3	I feel mentally exhausted because I am	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"

	psychologically drained at work. (Y1.3)	
4	I feel unfocused at work due to demanding job tasks. (Y1.4)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
5	I always procrastinate on work and, if possible, avoid assigned tasks. (Y1.5)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
6	I feel I can simultaneously handle other tasks during working hours. (Z1.1)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
7	I feel I can spend time with my family even while working. (Z1.2)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
8	I feel happy being able to carry out my work outside regular work hours. (Z1.3)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
9	I feel I can perform my work at flexible times. (X1.1)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
10	I feel I can complete my tasks early or late relative to traditional operational hours. (X1.2)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
11	I can do my work from anywhere. (X1.3)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
12	I feel my leader is a pioneer of change. (X2.1)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
13	I feel my leader serves as a good personal role model. (X2.2)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
14	I feel motivated by my leader to be productive. (X2.3)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
15	I feel my leader makes decisions through mutual consensus. (X2.4)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
16	I feel I am always learning new things from my leader. (X2.5)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"
17	I feel my leader resolves complex problems quickly. (X2.6)	1: "Strongly Disagree" ... 5: "Strongly Agree"

Based on Table 1, respondents in this study were dominated by females (81 respondents, 51.9%), followed by male respondents (75 respondents, 48.1%). All respondents resided in the Denpasar City area, totaling 156 Gen-Z employees engaged in hybrid working. Data collection utilized a 1–5 Likert scale questionnaire distributed online for efficiency and to capture real-world responses closely. The statements were carefully constructed to ensure high data quality. This study adopted a causal-explanatory research design aiming to determine cause-and-effect relationships among variables, classified as associative quantitative research. Denpasar City was chosen as the study location due to its high concentration of companies adopting hybrid working for Gen-Z workers. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via Partial Least Squares (PLS) on SmartPLS 3.0 software. The analysis evaluated two models: the outer model (measurement model testing validity and reliability) and the inner model (structural model testing R-square and path coefficients for hypothesis testing).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research findings require careful and structured interpretation to derive robust, unbiased conclusions. Preliminary testing conducted to ensure measurement model reliability and validity. SmartPLS 3 utilized to evaluate data using the partial least squares approach. Testing criteria followed guidelines established by Hair et al. (2017).

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Criteria for Measurement Model (Hair et al., 2017).

No.	Indicator of Reliability/Validity	Criteria
1	Internal Consistency Reliability	Composite reliability > 0.70. For exploratory research, composite reliability between 0.60 and 0.70 is acceptable.
2	Indikator Reliability	Outer/factor loadings for all indicators > 0.70 and statistically significant. Indicators with loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 may be considered for removal only if doing so increases composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above thresholds.
3	Convergent Validity	AVE > 0.50
4	Discriminant Validity	The outer loading of an indicator on its primary latent construct must exceed its cross-loadings on any other constructs.

Measurement Model Assessment (Outer Model)

Based on testing results, all indicators were declared valid reflections of their latent variables. For hybrid working, the highest contribution shown by the timing flexibility indicator (0.842). For transformational leadership, encouraging subordinate performance and acting on values were the strongest reflective indicators (0.739 each). Meanwhile, perceived satisfaction balance contributed most dominantly to work-life balance (0.850), and job avoidance the strongest reflector for job stress (0.789). Discriminant validity tests produced robust results, with all indicator loadings exceeding the 0.7 threshold. This demonstrates that questionnaire items consistently reflect their intended constructs. Convergent validity tests for variables X1, X2, Z, and Y yielded AVE values above 0.5, confirming high structural validity for further statistical processing.

Table 3. Measurement Model Results.

No	Reliability/Validity Metric	Variable	X1	X2	Z	Y
1	Composite Reliability		0.874	0.868	0.865	0.864
2	Indikator Reliability dan Discriminant Validity (Outer Loading)	X1.1	0.829	0.269	-0.445	0.460
		X1.2	0.842	0.283	-0.452	0.464
		X1.3	0.835	0.182	-0.469	0.419
		X2.1	0.202	0.716	-0.391	0.395
		X2.2	0.166	0.728	-0.399	0.312
		X2.3	0.206	0.739	-0.372	0.390
		X2.4	0.330	0.739	-0.442	0.361
		X2.5	0.211	0.709	-0.433	0.425
		X2.6	0.148	0.703	-0.452	0.338
		Z1.1	-0.419	-0.436	0.728	-0.428
		Z1.2	-0.436	-0.452	0.755	-0.432
		Z1.3	-0.403	-0.468	0.760	-0.426
		Y1.1	-0.305	-0.349	0.714	-0.447

		Y1.2	-0.461	-0.445	0.789	-0.598
		Y1.3	0.449	0.358	-0.517	0.793
		Y1.4	0.395	0.499	-0.481	0.829
		Y1.5	0.480	0.417	-0.549	0.850
3	Convergent Validity: AVE		0.698	0.522	0.562	0.679

To evaluate how well exogenous variables account for changes in endogenous variables, the R-square metric is applied, which falls on a scale between 0 and 1. An R-square value close to 0 indicates weak explanatory power, whereas a value close to 1 indicates strong explanatory power.

Table 4. R-Square Test Results (Coefficient of Determination).

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Job Stress (Y)	0.537	0.528
Work Life Balance (Z)	0.428	0.420

An R-square of 0.537 for Job Stress (Y) reveals that the independent variables account for 53.7% of its total variance.. Work-Life Balance (Z) yielded an R-square of 0.428 (42.8% explanatory power). All variables satisfied AVE (>0.50) and Composite Reliability (>0.70) thresholds.

Path Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

In order to evaluate the hypotheses, structural path analysis is applied to assess the significance of both direct and indirect connections between the dependent and independent variables.

Table 5. Path Analysis Results.

Variable	Path-Coefficient	p-Value
Hybrid Working (X1) -> Work Life Balance (Z)	0.422	0.000
Transformational Leadership (X2) -> Work Life Balance (Z)	0.391	0.000
Work Life Balance (Z) -> Job Stress (Y)	-0.299	0.000
Hybrid Working (X1) -> Job Stress (Y)	-0.285	0.000
Transformational Leadership (X2) -> Job Stress (Y)	-0.338	0.000

The outcomes of the hypothesis tests reveal that every direct relationship among the variables is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, Hybrid Working (X1) and Transformational Leadership (X2) were found to have a positive and significant effect on Work-Life Balance (Z), with coefficients of 0.422 and 0.391 respectively; thus, H1 and H2 are accepted. Furthermore, Work-Life Balance (Z), Hybrid Working (X1), and Transformational Leadership (X2) were all found to have a negative and significant effect on Work Stress (Y), with coefficients of -0.299, -0.285, and -0.338 respectively, indicating that increases in these three variables effectively reduce employee work stress levels. Consequently, H3, H4, and H5 are also accepted.

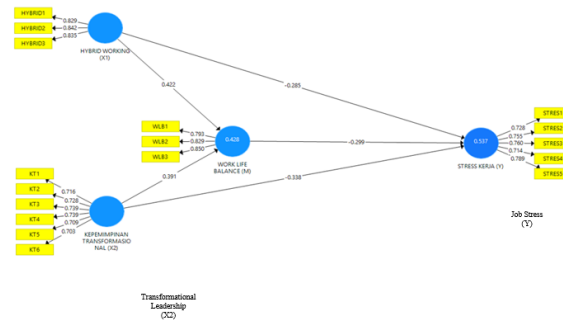


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Structural Model.

The results regarding direct effects indicate that Hybrid Working (X1) has a positive and significant impact on Work-Life Balance (Z), with a coefficient of 0.422 ($p < 0.05$). Transformational Leadership (X2) also has a positive impact on Work-Life Balance (Z), with a coefficient of 0.391. Furthermore, Work-Life Balance (Z), Hybrid Working (X1), and Transformational Leadership (X2) all exert a significant negative influence on Work Stress (Y), with coefficients of -0.299, -0.285, and -0.338, respectively.

Table 6. Indirect Effect Test Results.

Variable	Path-Coefficient	p-Value	Remarks
Hybrid Working (X1) -> Work Life Balance (Z) -> Job Stress (Y)	-0.126	0.000	Signifikan

The results of the indirect effect analysis indicate that hybrid working has a significant negative effect on work stress, mediated by work-life balance, with a coefficient of -0.126. Thus, all six hypotheses proposed in this study are accepted.

Discussion

Based on the first hypothesis (H1) test results, adopting a hybrid work schedule significantly and positively improves the work-life balance of Gen-Z staff in Denpasar City.. The offered work flexibility facilitates employees in harmonizing personal and professional demands, thereby minimizing potential role conflicts. Based on Social Exchange Theory, this flexibility policy is viewed as a form of organizational structural support that triggers a reciprocal relationship, wherein employees respond by optimizing the quality of their life balance. The findings for the second hypothesis (H2) indicate that a transformational leadership style significantly enhances employee work-life balance. Modern, visionary, and emotionally attentive leadership characteristics serve as an accelerator for employees in reducing disparities between professional and domestic roles. Viewed through the lens of social exchange theory, supervisor support functions as a positive stimulus reciprocated by Gen-Z employees through better emotional management and a more balanced mindset.

The evaluation of the third hypothesis (H3) reveals that a healthy work-life balance significantly diminishes workplace stress. This indicates that the higher the perceived balance between personal life and work, the lower the level of stress experienced by employees. Within the framework of Social Exchange Theory, achieving this equilibrium represents an exchange of valuable resources, where employees respond to organizational support by reducing emotional tension, thereby effectively mitigating the accumulation of job stress. The assessment of the fourth hypothesis (H4) validates a notable inverse correlation between hybrid work arrangements and occupational stress. For Gen-Z employees, the practical nature of this flexible working model has a tangible impact on cost efficiency and workload balance. Referring to social exchange theory, the trust established by the company through this policy successfully triggers positive reciprocation in the form of strengthened emotional commitment, which effectively dampens the accumulation of job stress.

The findings for the fifth hypothesis (H5) prove that transformational leadership is demonstrably capable of suppressing job stress levels. Forward-looking leaders who are open to subordinate aspirations serve as a decisive factor in creating a comfortable work environment. Referring to social exchange theory, full attention from leaders functions as an important social resource that triggers positive reciprocation from Gen-Z employees namely, the creation of a psychologically safe space that mitigates mental pressure. Testing the sixth hypothesis (H6) demonstrates that work-life balance significantly mediates the effect of hybrid working on job stress reduction. Better implementation of hybrid working leads to higher work-life balance, which ultimately results in reduced job stress among Gen-Z employees. These findings further reinforce the relevance of Social Exchange Theory, where organizational flexibility facilities are reciprocated by employees with positive psychological responses, creating a mutually beneficial work ecosystem.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that hybrid working and transformational leadership play crucial roles in enhancing work-life balance while suppressing employee job stress levels. Partially, both the implementation of hybrid working and a transformational leadership style are proven to have a positive and significant effect on enhancing work-life balance. On the other hand, both variables, along with work-life balance, exert a negative and significant effect on job stress, indicating that the more optimal the implementation of hybrid working, transformational leadership, and work-life balance, the lower the level of job stress experienced by employees. Furthermore, work-life balance is significantly proven to function as a mediating variable

bridging the effect of hybrid working on the reduction of employee job stress. The findings offer both theoretical and practical value. Theoretically, the study enriches existing literature concerning how hybrid work and transformational leadership influence job stress through work-life balance among Gen-Z workers in Denpasar City. Practical implications pertain to the research contribution regarding the utilization of study variables as considerations for decision-making, particularly in reducing job stress among Gen-Z employees in Denpasar City. Based on the limitations of this study, several recommendations are addressed for future research development. Future research is suggested to incorporate additional predictor variables of job stress, such as quantitative workload and targets exceeding employee capacity, role ambiguity due to unclear responsibilities, and role conflict arising from conflicting work demands. Beyond expanding the variables, future studies are also expected to improve the generalizability of results by enlarging the sample size and replicating the study across different subjects and industry sectors.

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