Connected but Stressed:

Understanding the role of work values and boundary management in well-being among Gen Z in the Dutch digital workforce

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Author: Elsa Engeline Charlotte Pouw
Date: 23rd of April 2025

Graduation Committee:
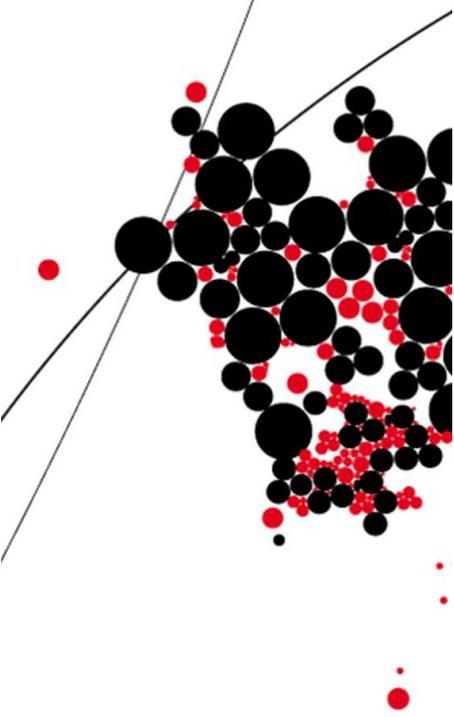1st Supervisor: Dr R.B. Rajah
2nd Supervisor: Dr P. Weritz

University of Twente
P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede, The Netherlands

Faculty: Behavioural, Management & Social Sciences
Department: MSc Business Administration
Specialization: International Management & Consultancy

Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been a challenging yet rewarding journey. During this period, I have gained valuable new insights into the complexities of digital connectivity, boundary management, and well-being of Gen Z in the Dutch digital workforce. I would like to take a moment to express my gratefulness to those who supported and guided me along the way.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my first supervisor, Dr. Rashimah Rajah, for her continuous guidance and constructive feedback during the writing of my thesis. Because of her expertise in employee well-being and job connectedness, among other things, she was always there to guide me. I am grateful for her support and for the valuable discussions that contributed to this research. Additionally, I would like to thank my second supervisor, Dr. Pauline Weritz, for her support and valuable feedback during my thesis. Her perspective gave me new insights that helped me strengthen the overall quality of my thesis.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to all the Dutch respondents who were willing to participate in this research. Without their valuable input, this study would have lacked depth and relevance. All respondents gave valuable insights that contribute to the understanding Gen Z's boundary management preferences and well-being in the digital workforce.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, my boyfriend Thijs, and other friends for supporting and encouraging me during my thesis period. Their support has helped me to stay focused and committed to finishing this research.

Elsa Pouw
Rijssen, 23rd of April 2025

Abstract

The Dutch digital workforce has experienced a significant change in recent years, mainly because of the acceptance of flexible work arrangements and the rising demand for after-hours connectivity, especially for Generation Z (Gen Z), a cohort that increasingly reported stress and burnout. Studies indicate that there is a significant number of Gen Z employees that want to quit their jobs within two years, which means that it is important for organizations to redevelop their management strategies and adapt to the characteristics and values of Gen Z. This thesis explores how Gen Z's work values and boundary management preferences impact their well-being in the Dutch digital workforce. Using an inductive qualitative approach, 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted across different generational cohorts, with the focus on Gen Z employees. Data analysis was performed thematically to identify patterns in work values, boundary management, digital connectivity, and well-being. The results of this study reveal that Gen Z particularly values freedom, flexibility and autonomy, which encourages work-life integration. Some Gen Z employees still face challenges with setting and maintaining boundaries because of digital connectivity, resulting in stress, making it difficult to mentally disconnect from work and impacting well-being negatively. Findings offer new insights for organizations that aim to retain and support Gen Z employees in the Dutch digital workforce.

Keywords: Generation Z, work values, boundary management, well-being, Dutch digital workforce, digital connectivity, stress management, organizational culture.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

In recent years, the Dutch digital workforce has experienced a significant change, mainly caused by the acceptance of flexible work arrangements and the increasing demand for after-hours connectivity (Page, 2024). This change has been driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased remote work and forced employers and workers to reevaluate how to maintain a balance between job responsibilities and personal well-being (International Labour Office, 2020; Zucconi, 2024). This shift has brought to light how increased flexibility and constant digital connectivity can blur the boundaries between work and personal life, which negatively impacts employees' well-being and increases stress levels (Derks et al., 2016; van Zoonen et al., 2023).

Generation Z (Gen Z) are individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019). As digital natives, they were born and raised in an environment that has been characterized by technological innovations and economic and social changes that have impacted on their work attitudes and work expectations (Barhate & Dirani, 2022; Szymkowiak et al., 2021). In comparison with previous generations, Gen Z places a high importance on work-life balance and desires flexibility in their work arrangements, as well as more alignment between personal values and organizational goals (Deloitte, 2023; Waworuntu et al., 2022). The relationship between Gen Z's values and well-being is especially important in the Netherlands. According to the Subjective Well-Being Theory (Diener, 1984), well-being is important as it focuses on how individuals assess their lives psychologically and emotionally. Gen Z makes up a significant number of the Dutch population, over 3.3 million people, and accounts for roughly 35% of the workforce (Statistics Netherlands [CBS], 2024). The Netherlands ranks as the second most digitally competitive country worldwide, which shows its dedication to embrace and examine digital technologies as a key force for economic transformation in the public sector, corporate sector and wider society (IMD, 2023). This high level of digital competitiveness presents an optimal environment for investigating work values of Gen Z, a generation accustomed to working in digital workplaces.

According to recent studies (Deloitte, 2024; Lever, 2022), there is a concerning trend among Gen Z workers: high levels of stress and burnout are common. A study by Deloitte (2023) addresses that 40% of gen-Z employees experience symptoms of burnout, and 38% of the respondents say that they always or most of the time experience stress. Furthermore, roughly 40% of Gen Z employees want to quit their jobs within two years, with burnout as a primary cause (Deloitte, 2024; Lever, 2022). This leads to the conclusion that it is crucial for organizations to redevelop their management strategies and adapt to the unique characteristics and values of Gen Z, not only to retain them, but also to foster a supportive workplace that care about Gen Z's work values and boundary management preferences.

1.1. Research Goal and Research Question

Though there is a growing body of research on work values and well-being of Gen Z, there is still much that remains unknown about the interaction of these work values with boundary management strategies, specifically segmentation (clear separation between work and personal life) vs. integration (blending of work and personal life). Since these relationships were not yet fully known, this research used an inductive approach, which means that themes, patterns, and theoretical insights were drawn directly from the data rather than determined through established hypotheses (Thomas, 2006).

Previous studies have addressed work values and digital connectivity (Derks et al., 2016; Dries et al., 2008; Twenge, 2010; van Zoonen et al., 2023), but there are no qualitative studies exploring the impact of boundary management preferences on well-being outcomes, such as mental health, stress, and burnout within the Dutch digital workforce. This is particularly essential considering the significant change towards remote work (International Labour Office, 2020; Zucconi, 2024), the high rate of stress and burnout among Gen Z (Deloitte, 2024; Lever, 2022), and the Netherlands' ranking as the second most digitally competitive country worldwide (IMD, 2023). As such, there is a lack of in-depth understanding of how boundary management preferences relate to well-being outcomes like stress and burnout, especially among Gen Z within the Dutch digital workforce. Without these in-depth insights, organizations may risk applying policies that

miss the actual needs and values of Gen Z. Therefore, the following research question was formulated: *"How do Gen Z's work values and boundary management preferences (segmentation vs. integration) impact their well-being in the Dutch digital workforce?"*

To answer the research question, this study employed an exploratory qualitative research design by conducting semi-structured interviews with 17 participants across various generational cohorts, focusing primarily on Gen Z employees in the Dutch digital workforce. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to make sure they were aligned with the study's focus. Data analysis was performed through the use of the Gioia method to enable an in-depth examination of the participants' experiences (Gioia et al., 2013). As a result of the interview data, the following aggregate dimensions were explored: work values, well-being, workload and stress management, boundary management, organizational culture and support, and digital connectivity and its impacts. These dimensions provided insight into how Gen Z manages work-life boundaries and how this impacts their well-being.

1.2. Academic Relevance

This study contributed to an understanding of work values and well-being within a digitally-driven context with the use of insights related to Boundary Management Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), Subjective Well-Being Theory (Diener, 1984), and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Furthermore, this research built upon previous research by Twenge (2010) and Dries et al. (2008) on generational shifts in work values. A conceptual model was developed by linking these existing theories and literature with the qualitative results. The findings of this research described how each generation addresses work values, digital connectivity, and well-being in different ways. The model highlights the key relationships and highlights how Gen Z's intrinsic, extrinsic and social work values influence boundary management and well-being. It further shows how digital connectivity, organizational culture and stress management act as moderators in these relationships. Based on this conceptual model, several propositions were developed to guide future research and theory development on Gen Z's boundary management preferences and well-being in the Dutch digital workforce.

1.3. Practical Relevance

This study provided concrete recommendations for organizations that seek to improve work-life balance, employee well-being and boundary management for Gen Z in the Dutch digital workforce. Given that Gen Z is already entering the workforce and will continue to do so in the coming years, it is important to focus on their values and challenges and how to overcome them. The results of this research are beneficial for organizations that want to implement enhanced policies that have positive effects on the well-being of employees and overall job satisfaction, which could potentially reduce burnout and improve mental health. This study suggested organizations to implement digital connectivity policies to set clear boundaries regarding availability and after-hours communication. In addition, offering boundary management training such as controlling notifications, dealing with digital interactions and time-blocking was suggested. Finally, the study noted the impact of managerial support and organizational culture on well-being and recommended that managers should foster a supportive work environment and respect Gen Z's boundaries. Overall, this study aimed to help organizations to support Gen Z effectively in a digital workforce.

1.4. Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into several key sections. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical background where literature about key concepts is reviewed, giving a foundation for chapter 3, research methodology, which describes the inductive qualitative research design, data collection, and data analysis approach. Chapter 4 presents the study's findings on Gen Z's work values, well-being, digital connectivity, stress management, boundary management, and organizational culture. Chapter 5 presents the discussion, which interprets the findings and highlights theoretical and practical contributions, followed by limitations and suggestions for future research. Finally, the conclusion gives an answer to the research question.

2. Theoretical Background

This section of the research proposal elaborates on the theories and concepts that are relevant to understanding Gen Z and their unique characteristics. It starts by defining key concepts, including generation, work values, well-being and mental health. It also discusses how different generational cohorts have different work values, with an emphasis on the characteristics and expectations of Gen Z. Furthermore, the theories of well-being are discussed, and the theory of boundary management is examined to comprehend how people maintain a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives, particularly in the setting of a workforce that is highly connected with technology.

2.1. Defining Key Concepts

This chapter provides an overview of the definitions of generation, work values, well-being and mental health to build an understanding of the key concepts underlying this study.

Generation

According to Mannheim (1970), a generation is more than just a biological fact, such as shared birth years, but also a social phenomenon in which people in the same age group go through comparable social and historical experiences that influence their consciousness, behavior and thoughts. Generations are important social change agents because of their "common location in the historical dimension of the social historic process", which leads them to particular behaviors and consciousnesses (Mannheim, 1970, p. 167).

Work Values

Understanding work values of a generation is crucial for organizations and managers in order to successfully attract the new generation of employees (Twenge, 2010). Work values are the goals or rewards that people seek from their job. They express broader human values in the context of the workplace (Schwartz, 1999). These values, which have their roots in social, cultural, and personal experiences, have a significant impact on how individuals view and interact with their jobs. Traditionally, work values have been divided

into the following general categories (Ginsberg et al., 1951; MOW International Research Team, 1987; WOSY International Research Group, 1989): extrinsic, intrinsic, and social related work values. However, recent research indicates the importance of altruistic work values as well as a separate category (Twenge, 2010), especially in modern generations such as Gen Z.

Extrinsic work values

Extrinsic work values define the extent to which employees value material or instrumental work elements, such as promotion opportunities, as important (Taris & Feij, 2001). These values include status, respect and a high salary (Twenge, 2010). Employees who are perceived as extrinsic are those who are pursuing a career, power, and status. They frequently place a higher priority on salary and job security when evaluating career possibilities (Twenge, 2010).

Intrinsic work values

Intrinsic work values define the extent to which employees value immaterial elements of their jobs that allow for self-expression as crucial, such as job variety and autonomy (Taris & Feij, 2001). These values highlight aspects such as creativity, personal development, meaningfulness, and the chance to work on interesting and challenging projects (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Twenge, 2010). References to the "interesting nature of work" show an effort to explain how work can provide intrinsic satisfaction and emotional needs (Ginsberg et al., 1951, p. 86). Because of their drive to meet psychological needs like competence, autonomy and relatedness, intrinsic values are positively related to well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Social work values

According to Taris and Feij (2001), social work values relate to the extent to which workers consider it crucial to maintain positive relationships with their supervisor and coworkers. Social work values include a preference for teamwork, a supportive and friendly work environment, and positive relationships with coworkers. These values emphasize the importance of workplace culture and the necessity of a feeling of community and belonging at work (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008).

Altruistic work values

Altruistic work values emphasize the desire to improve society and assist others. Altruistic employees look for jobs that allow them to change the world, whether it be through direct service, social impact, or improving the lives of others (Twenge, 2010). Studies show us that there are no significant differences in altruistic work values across generations (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Twenge, 2010), but research has also shown that Gen Z feels very responsible with regards to environmental issues and a significant number report feeling anxiety or concern about climate change (Deloitte, 2024).

Well-Being and Mental Health

Well-being is a broad concept that describes the overall experiences and life satisfaction of the person concerning physical, emotional, and psychological health. Well-being reflects how people evaluate their lives concerning personal happiness and fulfillment of key life goals. In the workplace, well-being is described by how healthy, satisfied, and engaged individuals feel at work (Diener, 1984). The World Health Organization describes mental health as a critical factor of well-being, a state where every person realizes their own potential, can deal with the normal pressures of life, work productively, and thereby contribute to their community. Poor mental health can reduce common well-being that results in issues such as stress, anxiety, and burnout (World Health Organization, 2004).

2.2. Shift in Work Values Across Generations

Each generation has its own characteristics and work values. Over generations, these values have changed significantly, reflecting broader shifts in society, the economy, and technology (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Dries et al., 2008). While there is some variation across the generational studies regarding the exact years that define each cohort, the birth years below are used since this allows the research to stick to widely cited studies and reflect commonly accepted generational boundaries (Dimock, 2019; Szymkowiak et al., 2021; Twenge, 2010). All generational cohorts and their estimated population within the Netherlands are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1. *Generational cohort.*

Cohort	Birth Years	Dutch Population (Statistics Netherlands [CBS], 2024)
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	2.4 million
Generation X	1965-1980	2.7 million
Generation Y / Millennials	1981-1996	3.1 million
Generation Z	1997-2012	3.3 million

Baby Boomers (1946-1964) are frequently characterized as "free agents," or "radical individualists who prioritize their own rights over those of their families, teams, and organizations" (Kupperschmidt, 2000). They are "workaholics" working very long hours under pressure and value stability, loyalty and hierarchy in the workplace (Dries et al., 2008; Twenge, 2010). Challenge, workaholism, and advancement are the traditional values associated with the Baby Boomers, but also work values as material rewards, innovativeness and career advancement (Dries et al., 2008).

Generation X (Gen X), born between 1965 and 1980, are characterized as independent workers who value balance, autonomy and entrepreneurship. This generation places a significant value on free agency, which is defined as an individual's capability to be in control over his or her career choices without depending so much on the organization (Dries et al., 2008). Due to the rise of dual-income households and changing family dynamics, this generation has become more demanding when it comes to their work schedules. This generation was also significantly more likely to value freedom from supervision than Baby Boomers (Twenge, 2010).

Generation Y or Millennials (1981-1996) are formed by the growth of digital technologies and globalization. They were the first generation to have computers in classrooms, who are comfortable with e-learning and network learning (Shorey et al., 2021). Millennials rate work as less central to their lives and place a higher emphasis on personal fulfillment, job satisfaction and work-life integration (Dries et al., 2008; Twenge, 2010). This generation is less attached to hierarchical structures, and they value balance

significantly, hence their adaptability and willingness to work under non-traditional models are observed as pointed out by Dries et al. (2008). Table 2 below provides an overview of the generational cohorts with their work values.

Table 2. Generational cohorts with their characteristics and work values

Generation	Characteristics	Work values
Baby Boomers	Free agents & individualists	Challenge
	Prioritize own rights over family, teams & organizations	Workaholism
		Career advancement
	Strong preference for stability	Materialism
	Tend to work long hours under pressure	Innovativeness
Generation X	Independent workers	Balance
	Emphasis on free agency: controlling career without relying on organizations	Autonomy
		Entrepreneurship
	More demanding of flexible schedules	Free agency
Generation Y / Millennials	Comfortable with digital technology, globalization	Balance
		Learning
	Prioritize personal fulfillment and work-life integration	Willingness to work
		Adaptability
	Less attached to hierarchical structures	Security

2.3. Characteristics of Gen Z

As any generation is formed in different historical, social, and technological conditions that define their values, behaviors, and expectations, it is crucial to understand the characteristics of a certain generation (Mannheim, 2013). Understanding these characteristics helps organizations to create solutions which meet the specific concerns and expectations of a generation and enhance communication, participation and commitment.

Gen Z is a cohort of individuals that is born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019; Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Gen Z places a high importance on work-life balance and desires flexibility in their work arrangements. Flexibility in working arrangements is a primary demand that Gen Z carries, which underpins the emergence of less conventional working models, from part-time roles and job-sharing to side activities (Deloitte, 2024). Moreover, Gen Z is motivated by purpose and seeks to pursue a meaningful job. They prefer companies that share their values and show a dedication to environmental and social concerns (Barhate & Dirani, 2022). They are not afraid to decline job offers whose values do not align with their own, because they want to work in environments where there is a genuine commitment to environmental and social concerns (Deloitte, 2024). Gen Z is used to always being connected. It faces stressors as digital connectivity, performance pressure, insecurities in life and social pressures, resulting in higher levels of anxiety and burnout at work (Deloitte, 2023; TNO, 2023). Therefore, Gen Z wants to work in an organization that offers flexible work arrangements, such as remote work and flexible working hours, which they think would reduce stress levels and help achieve the much-needed work-life balance (Waworuntu et al., 2022).

Furthermore, a major concern for Gen Z is environmental sustainability. At least 62% of Gen Z said they experienced anxiety or worry related to climate change (Deloitte, 2024). They want businesses to support consumers in making more sustainable decisions and for governments to press businesses to take more climate action. In order to better match their work with their environmental values, two out of ten Gen Zs and millennials have

already switched jobs or sectors (Deloitte, 2024). Additionally, they actively investigate the environmental policies of the businesses they purchase from.

Mental Health Challenges of Gen Z

Most of the Gen Z workers suffer from mental issues such as stress and burnout. According to observations in the Deloitte study, 40% of the Gen Zs reported that they experience burnout due to high work pressures while 38% at all times feel stressed (Deloitte, 2024). Burnout has been defined as a psychological syndrome caused by prolonged organizational stress that is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Gen Z is a generation that faces challenges to maintain good mental health, mainly because of the "always-on" culture that is facilitated by the digital tools. Constantly being connected and performance pressures in challenging roles drive up anxiety, stress, and depression (Deloitte, 2024; TNO, 2023). Research has not shown yet where this workload comes from (TNO, 2023). The mental health of Gen Z is called into question more often, for which employers are expected to provide resources, support, and flexible conditions to take some of the pressures off (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

2.4. Subjective Well-Being Theory

The Subjective Well-Being Theory (SWT) narrows down the concept of well-being by focusing specifically on how people internally assess the quality of their lives (Diener, 1984). It incorporates the psychological and emotional aspects of well-being. According to the SWT, there are two key components that can guarantee or predetermine well-being: cognitive evaluation, the extent to which people are satisfied with their life as a whole, and affective evaluation, the extent to which the emotions that people have regarding certain objects or people are positive or negative (Diener, 1984).

SWT is particularly useful in understanding how individuals assess the quality of their lives in both personal and working contexts (Diener, 1984). As already stated, some of the leading factors that influence the subjective well-being of Gen Z include work-life balance, job meaningfulness, and consistency of personal values with the organization.

According to research, the rise of digital workplaces and after-hours connectivity frequently causes the lines between work and life to become blurred, which decreases subjective well-being and increases stress levels (Derks et al., 2016). One reason for this decline in subjective well-being is role conflict. When boundaries between roles, like work and family, become blurred or poorly managed, then individuals can experience stress from trying to fulfill competing demands (Ashforth et al., 2000). This will be elaborated on further in chapter 2.6. Furthermore, research has shown that the use of smartphones for work at night has direct effects on sleep and energy the next day. According to Lanaj et al. (2014), smartphone use for work purposes increases morning depletion because it interrupts with sleep and decreases recovery time. This morning depletion decreases the work engagement during the day, affecting the level of concentration and productivity of the employees (Lanaj et al., 2014).

2.5. Self-Determination Theory

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT), as proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000), aimed at offering a coherent theory for comprehending the ways in which autonomy, competence, and relatedness affect well-being. For a person to feel at their best, the three fundamental psychological needs should be satisfied. First, autonomy refers to an individual being able to make decisions and act independently. Second, competence is the degree of effectiveness or ability that individuals have in their work. Third, relatedness describes how individuals develop deep relationships with each other. For the mental health and well-being improvement at the workplace, autonomy is required. High levels of autonomy mean that employees are more in charge of the way they balance work and life commitments and deal with work's responsibilities and their plans for the day. As a result, they will often report lower stress levels and higher levels of satisfaction with their jobs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Research has shown that higher levels of autonomy lead to improved well-being outcomes (Kossek et al., 2006). Moreover, van Zoonen et al. (2023) discovered that workers who have autonomy in controlling after-hours connectivity, by means of rules enabling them to take breaks from work when required, report feeling less exhausted. This emphasizes how important autonomy is to upholding boundaries between work and life and preventing burnout in a digitally connected workplace.

The Relationship Between Flexibility and Well-Being

The idea behind flexible work arrangements (FWAs) is to alter work schedules so that employees have more freedom to select their location or working hours (Amri et al., 2022). According to research, having flexible work arrangements can have a positive impacts for employees including better mental health, stress and burnout reduction, and an increase in job satisfaction and productivity (Mungania et al., 2016). When properly implemented, FWAs can raise employees' perceptions of the organization's support, improving well-being and decreasing burnout (Amri et al., 2022). However, there are drawbacks to flexibility as well, most notably the expectation of always being connected via digital communication tools. While this after-hours connectivity makes communication easier, it further raises the risk of blurring the boundaries between work and personal life, which could have a negative impact on mental health and overall well-being (Derks et al., 2016; van Zoonen et al., 2023). This expectation of continuous connectivity could worsen stress and decrease the positive effects of flexible work on mental health for Gen Z, a generation that was raised with digital tools.

2.6. Boundary Management Theory

Boundary Management Theory is a useful framework for understanding how people manage the conflicting demands of their personal and professional lives. It is based on the belief that people establish and maintain boundaries between various aspects of their lives, such as work and family, in an effort to ensure harmony and reduce conflict (Ashforth et al., 2000). These boundaries can be segmented or integrated.

Segmentation vs. Integration

Employees with a high segmentation preference keep their personal and professional life clearly separated. They usually stick to rigid working hours and can stay away from doing work-related tasks in their spare time. To keep balance, these individuals set clear boundaries and avoid the overlap between their work and non-work responsibilities (Ashforth et al., 2000). On the other hand, individuals with high integration preference feel at ease merging their professional and personal roles. For example, they tend to be agreeable to responding to their office email during personal time or attending to some

personal work during office hours, as they find flexibility in such merger of domains (Ashforth et al., 2000).

Boundary Management in the Digital Workforce

In today's digital workplace, employees are expected to remain constantly connected through digital communication tools, which raises the risk of blurring the boundaries between work and personal life (Derks et al., 2016). After-hours connectivity can lead to higher levels of anxiety and exhaustion, particularly for those who feel pressured to address work-related matters outside of regular business hours (van Zoonen et al., 2023). Over time, these stressors can lead to symptoms of burnout and since Gen Z is already reported to experience high levels of stress and burnout, further eroding their well-being through constant connectivity is likely to worsen these mental health challenges (Deloitte, 2024). For Gen Z, who clearly prefer work-life balance and flexibility, the pressure to stay connected can create significant tension. This tension arises because they may feel obligated to respond to work demands even during personal time, which disrupts their ability to relax, recharge, and engage in non-work activities that contribute to well-being (Derks et al., 2016).

Impact of Boundaries on Well-Being and Productivity

Dealing with boundaries well is of great importance in improving and increasing the productivity of employees. Research has shown that when individuals can manage boundaries in a way that suit them, they are less stressed, more satisfied with their work, and better with their general well-being (Kossek et al., 2006). There has not been enough thorough research done specifically on how Gen Z workers handle these boundaries and how that affects their well-being and productivity. There are also negative consequences in cases where such boundaries are not properly managed, including burnout, poor performance and apathy which affect the workplace negatively (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Employees may become more stressed and dissatisfied with their jobs, for instance, if they prefer segmentation but must continue to be connected to work after hours. As stated by Ashforth et al. (2000), individuals who favor integration but operate in tight spaces with defined limits could feel limited and unable to properly manage their professional and personal obligations.

This theoretical background discussed the characteristics, boundary preferences, and well-being challenges that Gen Z workers face in today's digital workforce. Gen Z demands flexibility and clear boundaries between work and private life in a time when there is an increasing demand for being constantly connected. The insights of this theoretical background formed the basis for the methodology of how Gen Z's work values and boundary management preferences impact well-being. The following section describes the methodology behind researching these dynamics within the Dutch digital workforce.

3. Research Methodology

This section describes the methodology that is used to answer the research question: *"How do Gen Z's work values and boundary management preferences (segmentation vs. integration) impact their well-being in the Dutch digital workforce?"* This methodology was proposed to answer the research question and collect high-quality data to assess the work values of Gen Z and their impact on well-being, focusing on how segmentation versus integration of work-life boundaries could impact burnout. In the following, the research design, the data collection, and the data analysis are presented.

3.1. Research Design

This research used an exploratory qualitative research design, efficient and valid in studying relatively new or insufficiently studied phenomena (Stebbins, 2001). The purpose was to investigate how work values of Gen Z relate to well-being in the digital workplace and boundary management as a part of the workplace dynamics. A qualitative approach can unravel the in-depth understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of the individuals that could not be facilitated through a quantitative approach (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The research goal was to understand how Gen Z's work values and boundary management preferences impact their well-being in the Dutch digital workforce. Since these relationships were not yet fully known, this research employed an inductive approach, which means that patterns, themes, and theoretical insights were drawn directly from the data instead of determining them through established hypotheses (Thomas, 2006). The use of an inductive approach is common in numerous types of qualitative studies, especially with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

Participants were selected across various generations for the purpose of investigating how differences in perception may be seen across generational cohorts in matters of work values, well-being, and work-life boundaries. The next section covers the data collection method, which describes the sample size and requirements of the participants, as well as the research procedure.

3.2. Data Collection

Research that involves human subjects can take many forms. When the scientific research is based on data collected by human participation, it can occur that the interests of the participants studied may conflict with the interests of the researcher and the value of science. Therefore, an ethical review is highly important. This study was submitted before starting the data collection for ethical review to the Ethics Committee BMS of the University of Twente. After a thorough review, the proposed study was approved by the commission. Once the ethical approval was given, the researcher started with participant recruitment and data collection.

Sample Size and Requirements

Through the use of LinkedIn and own network, the researcher reached out to potential participants. Participants were selected by using purposive sampling, which is a non-probabilistic sampling method in which participants are selected based on certain characteristics that may turn relevant for the research questions (Stebbins, 2001). This sampling method aimed to gather those participants whose insights are most likely to answer the research question, particularly targeting Gen Z employees working within the Dutch digital workforce.

To ensure the relevance and reliability of the study, interviewees had to meet the following criteria. Firstly, only participants who belong to one of the predefined generational cohorts and who are currently or recently employed in roles that involve digital connectivity were selected. Additionally, to maintain the relevance of the Dutch digital workforce environment, all interviewees had to be working in the Netherlands and should have exposure to digital tools, remote work or flexible work conditions. In order to maintain ethical compliance, all participants had to be at least 18 years old. The participants had to possess these selection criteria to ensure that they were aligned with the study's objectives and to prevent data collection from going outside the scope of the study.

For this research, 16 participants had to be interviewed representing different generational cohorts to collect different perspectives. This number of participants was chosen to reach saturation, which means that there were no new themes or insights that emerged from the gathered data (Guest et al., 2006). Previous research had shown that 16 in-depth interviews were required to reach the saturation level (Namey et al., 2016). However, because one interviewee did not fully align with the research scope, the researcher decided to interview an additional respondent. During an interview with a Gen Z participant, it became clear that the participant was a working student instead of a full-time employee. Therefore, an additional interview was held to make sure the dataset stayed within the research scope, bringing the total number of interviewed participants to 17, including 7 male and 10 female participants. The following groups were interviewed:

- 11 Gen Z participants born between 1997-2006: the main subjects of interest in this study because they represent the newer generation of employees that face the new work-life challenges.

- 2 Baby Boomers born between 1946-1964: for a historical perspective on the change in work values and how boundary management has changed over time.

- 2 Gen X participants born between 1965-1980: to highlight the work values and boundary practices of a past generation that contrast considerably with those of younger generations in terms of autonomy and flexibility.

- 2 Millennial participants born between 1981-1996: offer comparisons illustrating work values and expectations that influenced the workplace prior to Gen Z.

Research Procedure

The chosen method for this qualitative research was semi-structured interviews. This research method provided a structured set of questions to guide the interviewee but still allowed the interviewer to think out of the box to enable unforeseen thoughts and information to arise during discussion interaction (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guide ranged on aspects such as: work values, perceived well-being at work, boundary management strategies and the challenge of work-life balance, and how digital connectivity influences well-being and boundary management practices. The interview guide, which can be found in Appendix A, had open questions that gave participants the

opportunity to elaborate on their experiences, and follow-up questions to further investigate specific issues.

Before the interviews were held, all participants were provided with an informative e-mail with the purpose of the research and the interview process, including time commitment and topics to be discussed. Alongside with the e-mail, a consent form was given to the participants to review and sign (see Appendix B), ensuring that they understood the purpose of the research. In addition, the participants were reminded at the start of the interview that they were being recorded. The interviews were held in Dutch, which helped the participants communicate in their mother tongue. Since the research focused on the Dutch digital workforce, interviewing participants in Dutch aligned with the cultural and linguistic background of the participants.

The interviews took place online using Microsoft Teams or in person, depending on the preferences of the participants. This way, respondents were able to select the format that closely matched their availability and comfort. All interviews were conducted in December 2024. Each interview lasted around 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded on phone and then transcribed with TurboScribe, a transcription tool to convert audio into text with high accuracy. The interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams were recorded and transcribed using Teams. Since transcription tools can make transcribing mistakes, the transcripts were critically reviewed and corrected where necessary. When having an audio recording transcribed, it is important that the transcription is done verbatim, without paraphrasing (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). After the transcription process, the entire interviews were translated in English with an AI translation tool for consistency throughout the data processing phase of the research and to enable the wider academic community to engage with the findings. The table below presents the relevant characteristics of the respondents.

Table 3. *Interviewees' Characteristics*

Nr.	Generation	Gender	Age	Current position
1	Gen Z	Male	25	Project Employee
2	Gen Z	Male	25	Specialist Finance & Insurance
3	Gen Z	Male	24	Sales Support
4	Gen Z	Female	23	Marketing
5	Gen Z	Male	21	Marketing
6	Gen Z	Male	21	Sales & Process Coordinator
7	Gen Z	Female	24	Client Manager
8	Gen Z	Female	24	Application Consultant
9	Gen Z	Female	23	Digital Content Coordinator
10	Gen Z	Female	25	HRM Consultant
11	Gen Z	Female	27	Project Leader
12	Gen Y / Millennials	Female	33	Event Coordinator
13	Gen Y / Millennials	Female	39	Marketing
14	Gen X	Female	50	Financial Controller
15	Gen X	Female	55	Financial Administration
16	Baby Boomers	Male	65	Sales
17	Baby Boomers	Male	76	Sales

3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed through the use of an inductive coding approach: the Gioia method, since the nature of the investigation, that is exploratory, served to develop theory from qualitative data. The Gioia method allowed a structured but flexible approach that enabled in-depth examination of the experiences shared by participants (Gioia et al., 2013). The first phase of analysis was characterized by data immersion, in which the interview transcripts were read and re-read several times to develop an intimate familiarity with the data. This was necessary to allow the researcher to become familiar with the finer aspects of participants' experiences, attitudes, and values, as well as observe emerging patterns across the content (Gioia et al., 2013). Such a process of data immersion provided a foundation for subsequent phases of coding.

Coding process

Key steps of the coding process were open coding, axial coding, and identification of aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013). The first step was open coding, which are the actual expressions and terms used by participants in describing their experiences and views are obtained. Codes were emergent rather than predefined, as they emerged from the data themselves without imposing predefined categories (Holton et al., 2007). Secondly, the open codes were organized into second-order themes. The themes were more abstract and linked to the underlying theoretical concepts relevant to the study. Axial coding made it possible to identify links between individual codes and allow an advanced understanding of how different aspects of the participants' experiences interlink (Gioia et al., 2013). The final step entailed integrating the second-order themes into aggregate dimensions representative of the broader concepts and theoretical contributions of the study. This resulted in the construction of the data structure, a visual representation that mapped out the relationships among first-order codes, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013). MAXQDA software was used to efficiently code and organize the data in order to facilitate this process.

Throughout the coding process, the principles of theoretical sampling and constant comparison were applied. The process of gathering data for comparative analysis intended to produce formal and substantive theory is known as theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Constant comparison involved comparing new data with existing data that has already been collected to look for patterns and differences to ensure the code are consistent. The emerged data were continually tested against codes and themes for consistency and allowed the developing theoretical framework to refine (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). This iterative process ensured no new codes or themes were overlooked and allowed the researcher to modify the emergent theory in response to the data. The final stage of data analysis was reaching theoretical saturation, whereby no new insights, themes, or dimensions emerged from the data (Gioia et al., 2013).

4. Results

This chapter presents the study's findings. As a result of the analysis of the interview data, six aggregate dimensions were developed. These six dimensions were developed from a series of first-order concepts and second-order themes as outlined in the methodology. Each dimension provides insights into how employees, Gen Z in particular, experience and manage their professional lives concerning work values, stress, flexibility, and digital boundaries. The table below shows the data structure that was created using the Gioia method.

Table 4. *Data structure*

First-Order Concepts	Second-Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
Importance of work-life balance Shift in work values over time Value of sufficient workload and enough challenge Importance of freedom (autonomy) and responsibility Preference for Variety Self-expression and creativity are important	**Intrinsic Work Values**	
Importance of recognition/appreciation and understanding of one's efforts. Importance of well-organized company Importance of personal life stage in career decisions Importance of respect Importance of sufficient time and focus for task completion Importance of promotion and growth opportunities Salary is important, but not sustained motivator Importance of salary Salary as a measure of fairness and recognition	**Extrinsic Work Values**	**Work Values**
Value of an open workplace culture Importance of communication Importance of a positive work environment Importance of relationships with colleagues and enjoyment in work Supportive and collegial work environment	**Social work values**	
Making impact on society not very important	**Altruistic work values**	
Familial Influence on Work Habits Younger generation having a different mindset	**Upbringing and Generational Differences in Work Ethic**	

First-Order Concepts	Second-Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
Desire for fitness facilities to improve well-being Prolonged sitting affects physical health; standing desks are a welcome solution.	**Physical Well-Being**	
Positive work experience supports post-work energy and motivation Positive engagement with work outside office hours Positive mental well-being at work	**Positive Engagement with Work**	
Work related issues carry over into personal life Work stress impacts personal life and performance Getting work interruptions during personal time impacts mood Persistent mental engagement after work Frustration about work situation Mental exhaustion post-work Having work-related thoughts at night due to busy schedule	**Impact of Work on Mental Well-Being**	**Well-Being**
Positive impact of work values and work-life balance on well-being Negative impact of missing work values on well-being	**Impact of Work Values on Well-Being**	
Increasing workload Acceptance of workload as part of the job More capacity to reduce workload Overworking for peace of mind	**Workload Management**	
Managing disappointment from unplanned work challenges Tolerance for infrequent work interruptions during personal time Motivating effect of healthy stress and pressure Managing stress/mental challenges by physical activity Managing stress by writing task lists and organizing priorities Managing stress through open communication Stress Resilience	**Stress Management and Resilience**	**Workload and Stress Management**
Stress/pressure cause by dependence on colleagues Stress or pressure is part of the job Stress caused by work challenges Stress due to workload and responsibility Stress from deadlines Stress due to constant connectivity	**Stress causes**	

First-Order Concepts	Second-Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
Ability to disconnect from work Struggle to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life Blending work and personal life Positive work-life balance supports well-being Balanced approach to work-life integration with clear limits	**Work-life Balance**	
Maintaining a clear separation between work and personal life Segmentation can prevent losing motivation and burnout Difficulty in declining requests Confidence in setting boundaries Personal relationships influence boundaries Struggle with setting limits as a new employee	**Setting and Maintaining boundaries**	**Boundary Management**
Autonomy in managing connectivity Desire to disconnect from work outside office hours Separate phone to separate work and personal life Managing digital connectivity to reduce distractions and improve focus Turning off notification to maintain boundaries and reduce stress	**Managing Digital Boundaries**	
Preference for constant connectivity Preference for working from home to improve focus Flexibility in work arrangements	**Flexibility and Autonomy in Work Arrangements**	
Company expects availability after work The positive impact of a healthy work culture on personal well-being Organizational support for a healthy work-life balance enhances well-being Workplace culture that emphasizes emotional support. Company addressing policies concerning digital connectivity Mutual expectation among colleagues of digital connectivity	**Workplace Culture and Organizational Support**	**Organizational Culture and Support**

First-Order Concepts	Second-Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
Convenience of digital connectivity Being informed outside work hours offers a sense of control and preparedness Digital connectivity offers flexibility	Benefits of Digital Connectivity	Digital Connectivity and its Impacts
Constant connectivity affects personal life Receiving work-related messages on personal device Always reachable due to digital connectivity Digital connectivity part of the job	Challenges of Constant Connectivity	

4.1. Work Values

Work Values is one of the six aggregate dimensions discovered. The data analysis revealed that Gen Z's work values can be categorized into three main types: intrinsic, extrinsic and social work values. Detailed descriptions of the different work values and its impact on well-being can be found below. Altruistic were not specifically found in the data analysis, since most participants did not express a strong desire to make an impact on society.

Intrinsic Work Values

Gen Z highly values autonomy, freedom and flexibility in their work. These are important criteria for Gen Z when choosing a job. Many participants expressed the need for control over their work hours and responsibilities, as this contributes to a healthier work-life balance.

> "My work values, like **flexibility and freedom, positively affect my work-life balance**. I can decide when I work and when I have personal time, and **I can keep those separate because I experience that freedom**. And the organization is flexible enough to make it possible." – Interview 4 (Gen Z)

> "I think **freedom and the ability to fill in tasks yourself** are important. You don't have to do everything on your own, but having some **autonomy is definitely a priority for me**." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)

> "**It boosts my motivation and lowers stress**. It's reassuring to know I'm trusted to manage my own schedule without being constantly monitored. **That freedom makes a huge difference**." – Interview 8 (Gen Z)

> *"**Freedom** is very important to me. For example, my company promotes the idea of working where and when you want. I think that kind of **flexibility** is crucial." – Interview 10 (Gen Z)*

Besides flexibility, Gen Z participants pointed out that engagement comes from variety, enough workload and challenges as well. Some mentioned that repetitive tasks harm their motivation, but varied tasks and enough workload help them to remain interested in their work.

> *"I love **variety**. It's something I really enjoy. I'm very sensitive to repetitive tasks—I struggle with doing the same thing constantly. I get bored quickly. **Having different tasks** keeps it interesting for me." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

> *"I also like staying busy; **having a good workload is important to me**. I need to feel engaged." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)*

> *"At my current job, I have more interesting responsibilities, work with larger budgets, and oversee clients with serious goals. **That's why I made the switch— to take on more challenges and learn faster**." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)*

> *"**The challenge had gone out of my previous role**. The work became very routine—more or less the same every day. The customer contact was limited, as the salesperson handled the communication and passed the job onto us to handle the paperwork and arrange transportation. It felt very standardized. I realized I wanted **more variety** and to try something new." – Interview 10 (Gen Z)*

Furthermore, some Gen Z participants mentioned a shift in their work values, particularly with regards to salary and work enjoyment.

> *"At first, I thought only salary mattered, but now I see that the other values need to align too, and salary comes after that." – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

> *"They were very important to me before, and I enjoyed that aspect. But I've realized that work enjoyment—finding fulfillment in what I do—is also very important. Even if you have great colleagues, if the work itself doesn't bring you satisfaction, it becomes dull quickly." – Interview 10 (Gen Z)*

Extrinsic Work Values

Recognition, appreciation, respect, salary and career growth opportunities are the main important extrinsic work values that contribute to Gen Z's motivation and well-being. Many participants, including a Millennial, mentioned the importance of recognition and appreciation in the workplace, including compliments and constructive feedback. They reported that being appreciated by other employees or supervisors increased their job satisfaction and enables them to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Appreciation was also described as more than just money, and that there was a desire for being seen, understood and taken seriously.

> *"I also value **recognition**. I think it's important for people to acknowledge and respect what I do, **to see and appreciate my work**. That recognition makes me feel like I'm doing well and contributes to my happiness at work." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

> *"Receiving compliments or even constructive feedback from colleagues and others in the company provides a **sense of satisfaction and motivation**." – Interview 5 (Gen Z)*

> *"**That sense of being valued helps me relax outside of work**. I don't feel pressured to constantly check my laptop or worry about unfinished tasks. **When you're valued at work, you're more likely to feel good at home too**. It's all connected." – Interview 8 (Gen Z)*

> *"What I find important is **appreciation**. Appreciation doesn't always have to be expressed in money, but it's about **being seen, understood, and taken seriously**." – Interview 14 (Millennial)*

In addition to recognition, respect in the workplace was identified as an important work value that contributes to well-being. Participants mentioned that respect often came from being appreciated for their workload and priorities, instead of being expected to take on responsibilities without consideration. Some were dissatisfied with workplace cultures that prioritize productivity over personal well-being, stressing that fair treatment and workload awareness lead to a better well-being.

> *"**Respect**. Respect in the sense of acknowledging that I'm busy and being mindful of what I have on my plate. Not just pushing through and thinking, "He'll figure it*

*out; just get it done." That mindset of "don't complain, just deal with it" doesn't work for me. **Respect is a crucial value for improving my well-being**." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

Regarding salary, most Gen Z participants claimed that while financial compensation is important, it is not their main drive. Many underlined that salary was needed to cover the cost of living, but it was not a sustained motivator that determined long-term job satisfaction. Some explained that a raise or a good starting salary could be motivating in the beginning, but it did not provide continuous motivation in the workplace.

*"To cover the cost of living, it's as simple as that. Everything is so expensive. Since you spend so much time working, **it's fair to expect decent compensation**. I think salary has become an even bigger issue in today's economy, where people are often underpaid. Many families with two incomes still struggle to make ends meet. That's why salary is important to me. **Money isn't my main motivator, but I want to be able to enjoy life** without constantly worrying about expenses." – Interview 2 (Gen Z)*

*"Salary doesn't really do that. It's a **one-time motivator**. It matters when you sign a contract, when you get a raise, or at the start of a new year—but it's not a continuous motivator." – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

On the contrary, Gen X participants viewed salary as a measure of fairness and recognition, something that should be granted rather than negotiated.

*"Salary is tricky. I'm a bit old-fashioned in that regard. **I don't believe in asking for a raise—you either get one, or you don't**. That's different from how younger people approach it nowadays." – Interview 13 (Gen X)*

In addition to salary, opportunities for professional growth were important motivators for Gen Z. Respondents explained that the chance of promotion, along with other means of further professional development, made them put in more effort and perform better.

*"Those aspects definitely motivate me. For instance, the opportunity for promotions is a strong incentive to do your best and exceed expectations. While I don't necessarily aim to become a director or anything, **it's important to have***

*growth opportunities. **Knowing there's room to move up is motivating**." – Interview 5 (Gen Z)*

*"Another thing I love is that **if you're eager to learn or develop in a certain area, there's room for that**—provided it aligns with the company's goals. They'll let you pursue it. **That's a big reason why I see myself staying here for a long time**; I feel like I'm in the right place." – Interview 11 (Gen Z)*

Social Work Values

Across all generations, relationships with colleagues and work enjoyment are the foundation of a positive work experience. In the interviews, respondents mentioned that a good team atmosphere was helpful for collaboration and job satisfaction. Gen Z values good relationships at work, but they also prefer to separate their work and personal life. As many mentioned, although they enjoy camaraderie, teamwork, and occasional social activities with colleagues, most of the Gen Z respondents did not want work to become too personal.

*"Being able to joke around and have fun with colleagues is really important to me. I'd give it a 4—not necessarily a 5 because, ultimately, you're there to work. But **teamwork and enjoying work with colleagues are very important**. It's part of the overall work experience." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

*"I think **it's important to feel a sense of camaraderie in the workplace**. It doesn't have to become overly personal, like always meeting up outside of work, but I do enjoy occasional drinks with colleagues and a general sense of togetherness at work." – Interview 9 (Gen Z)*

*"**Colleagues. So, a nice, pleasant team. A positive work environment where everyone brings a positive attitude.** I've worked for different companies, and **I find it very important to have a positive, familial atmosphere.** Since you spend so much time at work, that's the most important thing for me. The tasks you have to do or the position you hold come second. For me, it's most important to enjoy what I do." – Interview 15 (Millennial)*

*"**The work should be enjoyable, and the atmosphere and contact with colleagues are also very important**. A close-knit and fun team." – Interview 12 (Gen X)*

Another important factor that was frequently mentioned is a positive work environment. Respondents mentioned that it positively impacts their well-being. Furthermore, an inspiring and supportive workplace can play a motivational role to encourage professional growth and to provide a sense of stability.

> *"I also appreciate an **inspiring environment that encourages you to develop yourself and take big steps forward**." – Interview 9 (Gen Z)*

> *"Well, the positive aspects are the **pleasant work environment, a nice team,** and **a fun job**. Those are definitely **positive for my well-being**." – Interview 12 (Gen X)*

In addition, the importance of an open workplace culture was another recurring first-order concept for Gen Z respondents and Millennials, where colleagues maintain positive interaction without unnecessary conflict or tension. Many Gen Z respondents reported that while not all colleagues should necessarily become close friends, they valued an open workplace which is free from tension. One respondent even mentioned that an open culture influenced their decision-making for choosing an employer. On the other hand, some Gen Z respondents pointed out that workplace culture should not be overly social either, once more underlining the preference to keep clear boundaries between work and private life.

> *"**An open culture is very important**—that you can get along with all your colleagues. You don't have to be friends with everyone, but it's nice to feel that there's no tension in the workplace." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)*

> *"Yes, at my current employer, **the culture was a big draw for me**. It's very accessible; everyone gets along well. However, I don't think **it should become too social. I like keeping work and private life separate**." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)*

> *"**Openness is also important to me**. Sometimes it feels like a big family or group of friends here. It's approachable, and you can say and do a lot with each other." – Interview 14 (Millennial)*

Good communication and clarity were also stressed out as important factors of an effective work environment. Especially Baby Boomers emphasized the need for clear direction from management and discipline. Understanding what is expected of an employee and maintaining open communication were essential to efficiency and

harmony in the workplace. Moreover, one Gen Z respondent mentioned the importance of communication, emphasizing that miscommunication can lead to irritation and lack of clarity.

> *"Communication is also very important to me at work. **When communication isn't smooth**, it doesn't necessarily ruin my wellbeing, but **it can make me irritated**. **Miscommunication can lead to preventable issues or lack of clarity**." – Interview 8 (Gen Z)*

> *"**Clarity and good communication from management** are very important. You need to know where you're headed. That's essential in a team as well. Honesty, **knowing where you stand with each other, and a bit of discipline**." – Interview 17 (Baby Boomer)*

Upbringing and Generational Differences in Work Ethic

Some Gen Z participants mentioned that their working practices were shaped by their upbringing. Hard working, being flexible, and working outside offices hours were normal in families with entrepreneurs. Others indicate that being raised in such a setting created in them a strong work ethic and an acceptance of blending work and personal life, which made responding to emails and managing work-related tasks outside office hours a natural occurrence. In contrast, Baby Boomers also mentioned that their values were shaped by structured experiences, such as military service, which placed an emphasis on discipline, responsibility, and perseverance.

> *"Have my work values changed over time? No, **I come from a family where hard work was always a given**. If you had to be home by nine, you were home by nine. If you needed to do something in the evening, you did it. If something had to be done on Sunday, you did it on Sunday. It didn't really matter." – Interview 1 (Gen Z)*

> *"It's always been this way. **I think it comes from my upbringing—I grew up in a family of entrepreneurs, so we were always working.** It's normal for me to have work emails and calls outside regular hours." – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

> *"**My work values**, even back in the military, **were shaped by my upbringing.** I had a very enjoyable career in the military. I firmly believe that **mandatory service gave young people at the time a sense of structure and values**. It instilled many of the values I had learned at home—**clarity, discipline, responsibility**—which were*

essential in running a large family business. Those same values were reinforced during my time in the military. Being deployed for a year and seven months taught me a lot. I experienced very difficult situations, which helped me better understand myself and my limits." – Interview 17 (Baby Boomer)

Furthermore, generational differences in work discipline and structure were observed. A Baby Boomer noted that the younger generation has a different mindset and may lack the discipline and structured approach to work that they value, particularly in areas such as punctuality and adherence to schedules.

*"Honesty, knowing where you stand with each other, and a bit of **discipline**. That's something I sometimes miss with the younger generation. For example, if they're supposed to start at 9:00, they'll stroll in at 9:10 or 9:15 and think it's okay to leave early because they arrived late. **Discipline and structure in work are sometimes lacking in the current generation.**" – Interview 17 (Baby Boomer)*

4.2. Well-Being

The next aggregate dimension identified is Well-Being, which consists of three second-order themes: physical well-being, positive engagement with work, and impact of work on mental well-being. Well-being plays a significant role in work satisfaction, motivation, and health in general. It can affect how daily work is experienced by employees. Particularly among Gen Z, well-being is becoming more and more important, and they are seeking for jobs that promote both mental and physical health.

Physical Well-Being

Physical well-being is a relevant factor in how employees experience their work, specifically among employees where prolonged sitting can negatively impact their physical health, such as in the digital workforce. Some Gen Z respondents indicated that they did not have a very active job, where prolonged sitting affected their physical health. They found it important that employers provide solutions for this, such as standing desks, to improve comfort and physical health.

*"Physically, however, sitting at a desk all day doesn't do my back any favors. That's definitely an issue. **Standing desks make me very happy because sitting all day just doesn't work for me.**" – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

*"**I'd improve the office facilities**. The desks and chairs aren't great—there are standing desks in some areas, but not where I usually sit. I'd also like dual monitors instead of just one. **Those changes would make my workday more comfortable**." – Interview 10 (Gen Z)*

Additionally, some Gen Z respondents mentioned how difficult it is to find time to exercise after work because of busy schedules and long commutes. They expressed a desire for on-site fitness facilities or offering discounts on gym memberships to improve a healthier lifestyle and physical well-being.

*"Additionally, I'd love to see **on-site fitness facilities**. Because I commute a long way, I can't work out in the morning, and by the time I get home in the evening, it's often too late to exercise. **Having that option at work would make a big difference for me**." – Interview 9 (Gen Z)*

Positive Engagement with Work

Most respondents across all generation experienced a positive engagement with work, indicating that a fulfilling and enjoyable work environment contributed to their overall well-being. Many participants mentioned they actually look forward to coming to work and felt a general sense of mental well-being in their professional lives. Furthermore, most Gen Z respondents mentioned that having a positive work experience supports their post-work energy and motivation. They expressed how fulfilling and successful workdays give them energy and motivation in their personal life. Some stated that when their work is going well, it gives them stability and improves their mood.

*"Mentally, I feel good. **I enjoy going to work**." – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

*"I drove home earlier today **feeling good because I'd had a productive day** with great client conversations, and things were running smoothly. **That does wonders for your motivation**. Most days are like that, although there are occasionally less enjoyable days." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)*

> *"When things are going well at work, I feel more positive and grounded in general. Work provides a solid foundation for the rest of my life, and knowing that it's going well gives me confidence." – Interview 9 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"It has a positive impact. I enjoy my job, which makes me feel better overall. If I didn't like my work, I think it would affect my mood outside of work too." – Interview 11 (Gen Z)*

In addition, Gen Z respondents mentioned that they were involved with their work outside office hours, especially when they received positive feedback or when tasks were successfully performed. Reading an e-mail about an approval or completing a project in the evening did not feel as a burden for some respondents but rather a satisfaction and accomplishment. However, attitudes towards working outside regular hours varied across generations. Some Gen Z respondents expressed a preference for maintaining clear boundaries between work and personal life, which will be further examined in chapter 4.4. For Baby Boomers, engaging with work is being a part of their routine, and they see it as a source of personal satisfaction rather than an obligation.

> *"For me, receiving positive emails, like an approval for a proposal, is enjoyable—even in the evening." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"If I know I need to deliver something and it's not finished, I'll work on it in the evening or let the client know when they can expect it. It doesn't have a negative impact right now because I enjoy my work." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"Sure. I used to work a lot from home, and IT even noticed how many hours I was putting in. For me, it doesn't feel like work—it feels more like a hobby." – Interview 17 (Baby Boomer)*

Impact of Work on Mental Well-Being

Both Gen Z and Millennial employees mentioned finding it disturbing and feeling frustrated over persistent digital reachability, especially during weekends or vacations. They reported that digital interruptions made it hard to mentally disconnect from work, creating a stressful and irritated mood. Some described how they avoided checking emails during personal time but then received repeated follow-ups that caused additional frustration. In addition, employees who frequently interact with clients had an

even greater urge to be constantly connected. One Millennial respondent remembered past job experiences where continuous demands from clients intruded on her personal life and made it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

*"On Monday mornings**, I sometimes dread going to work** because I already feel **overwhelmed by tasks I was notified about on Sunday**. **It impacts my mood** and makes me **less motivated**." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

*"**During a vacation, I found it annoying**. I was in Italy, and **I kept receiving emails**. I consciously didn't respond because I didn't think it was necessary. But **they kept sending more and more emails** to the point where I thought, "This is unnecessary." At least, I didn't think it was necessary, but they clearly did. So that was frustrating because it was during my vacation, and it wasn't urgent. People just kept asking. **That was irritating**." – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

*"Before that, I worked at a marketing agency for nine months. There, **they constantly called me during my personal time**. I was always preoccupied with work because I was working for clients. If something needed to be done immediately, I had to get it done. **I found that very frustrating**. I understood that clients were relying on me, but I didn't like it." – Interview 15 (Millennial)*

In addition to work interruptions, several respondents mentioned that mental exhaustion after work is often a challenge. Gen Z respondents reported that on days with heavy workloads and high expectations from others lead to mental exhaustion, which often made it difficult for them to unwind in the evenings. Some described struggling with getting to sleep and overthinking about their work tasks, that further reduced their energy and mental recovery. Gen Z reported that they are aware of it and that they need to learn setting boundaries and communicating this to avoid burnout.

*"**Mentally, I sometimes feel very tired after a workday**. There's little time during the week to do other things outside of work. I think my mental health could be improved in that regard." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

*"My colleagues encouraged me to speak up if I was feeling overwhelmed, but I was hesitant at first. It wasn't until **I found myself struggling to sleep, going to bed with a cluttered mind and waking up exhausted, that I realized I needed to set limits**." – Interview 8 (Gen Z)*

> *"It can be exhausting, of course. **Some days, the workload is overwhelming, with people constantly needing things from you**. On those evenings, I feel like doing absolutely nothing." – Interview 13 (Gen X)*

Most respondents reported having work-related thoughts at night, being constantly mentally engaged after work. Respondents described situations where they found themselves overthinking about work or even waking up at night with stress. However, perceptions about this differed between generations. While older generations, such as Gen X, accepted it as part of the job, Gen Z and Millennials often saw this as a source of stress that affected their ability to relax.

> *"Even in the evening, I find myself thinking, "Oh, I need to handle this or that." **It's hard to disconnect**." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"**It also caused some stress**. I'd find myself working late at night or waking up with a tight feeling in my chest, thinking, I have to focus today and get this done." – Interview 8 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"Occasionally, **when I'm very busy, I might wake up at night thinking about work**. But I think that's just **part of the job**. It's also a sign of involvement." – Interview 12 (Gen X)*

From analyzing the data, it was found that work-related stress not only impacts mental health but also affects personal life and performance. Several Gen Z respondents mentioned that when work-related stress becomes too much, it affects their personal lives as well, resulting in a drop in their motivation, energy and well-being. Millennials reflected on their past experiences when they were forced to reconsider their career choices because of the extreme work-related stress. They realized that their circumstances were no longer sustainable. One Baby Boomer respondent confirmed that stress can result from private or work-related issues.

> *"**But if my personal life suffers because of work stress, it will affect my performance** and make me think, I've had enough. That's not how I want to feel—I want to stay positive and do my best for others." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"It was very different two years ago—**low energy, no motivation, and no mental space for other things**. I did wonder, "What have I gotten myself into? Was this*

*the right time for a career switch?" After working somewhere for ten years, it's not necessarily easy, but it becomes more manageable. But my previous job was so incredibly **stressful**. And that was discussed and noted several times, but it got so out of hand that at some point I thought, I just have to find something else, because this is just not going to change and this is not a sustainable situation." – Interview 14 (Millennial)*

*"Yes, it shows that **if things aren't going well, people often get sick**. **Stress can stem from private or work-related issues**. If you're not feeling good at home, you probably won't feel good at work either." – Interview 17 (Baby Boomer)*

Impact of Work Values on Well-Being

The existence or lack of work values has a direct impact on well-being and motivation. In the absence of core work values, many Gen Z respondents expressed feeling disengaged or demotivated. For some the lack of challenge, unpleasant relationships with colleagues or prioritizing salary over job satisfaction negatively affected their overall happiness. On the other hand, people who felt that their work environment and their values aligned reported feeling more engaged, motivated, and generally happy.

> *"**I think finding a job where I value my colleagues, enjoy the work, and feel happy overall has a positive impact on my well-being.** If I didn't like my job or if my colleagues were constantly annoying me, I'd feel terrible every day. It makes a big difference. When I used to prioritize money above all else, I could see how that would lead to unhappiness in a job I didn't like." – Interview 2 (Gen Z)*

> *"When those values aren't present, I find myself **distracted and demotivated**. I just can't wait for the day to end. It makes me feel like, "This isn't worth it." It has a **negative impact** on me." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

> *"In my previous job, **the lack of challenge negatively affected my motivation**. The positive aspect was my colleagues, but the work itself didn't add value to my day. That's not sustainable in the long term." – Interview 10 (Gen Z)*

4.3. Digital Connectivity

The third aggregate dimension that is identified is Digital Connectivity and its Impacts, which consists of two key themes: the benefits of digital connectivity and the challenges of digital connectivity. While some Gen Z respondents expressed staying informed allows them to maintain control over their workload, others mentioned that being constantly connected and receiving work-related messages on personal devices can blur boundaries between work and personal life. This chapter discusses this in further detail.

Benefits of Digital Connectivity

Analysis showed that digital connectivity offers several benefits, including flexibility and a better control over tasks. Some Gen Z respondents reported that they prefer staying informed outside work hours, because this offers them a sense of control and preparedness. Staying informed after work prevents them from surprises and helps them to mentally organize their responsibilities. Moreover, Gen Z respondents also mentioned that digital connectivity offers them flexibility, as they can respond at their convenience, without feeling pressured to respond immediately in face-to-face interactions.

> *"**I like knowing what's going on and staying informed**. Since I also work one day a week on subsidy projects, I sometimes check those emails on other days— whether at home in the evening or on the train. **It helps me stay on top of things**."*
> *– Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

> *"I think it's great because **it allows me to respond at my convenience**. If I had to interact with customers in person all the time, I'd need to provide immediate answers on the spot. **With digital communication, I have more freedom**. I can say: I'll check this for you and get back to you, without the urgency of someone standing in front of me. **It gives me flexibility**." – Interview 2 (Gen Z)*

Challenges of Constant Connectivity

While digital connectivity offers flexibility and control, it also brings some challenges. Some Gen Z respondents find it beneficial, but most Gen Z respondents find it challenging to receive work-related messages on their personal device. It easily blurs the work-life boundaries, and they mentioned feeling tempted to check for updates and stay engaged

outside office hours. Even with the notifications turned off, it keeps Gen Z employees feeling engaged, leading to feelings of being 'switched on' all the time. Some respondents also mentioned that the downside is that you're always reachable, which negatively impacts their personal life. Messages come through no matter what, making it difficult for them to mentally disconnect from work.

> *"**I have my work email on my personal phone** because I don't have a separate work phone. That means **I receive all work-related messages**—emails, WhatsApp messages, calls—on my personal device." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

> *"Yes, **at my previous job, I didn't have a work phone,** so I had Teams installed on my personal phone. Sometimes I needed it while working in the warehouse, and it was handy for that. But I didn't like having work apps on my personal device because it felt like **work was creeping into my private life**. Even with notifications turned off, **I'd still be tempted to check for updates**." – Interview 10 (Gen Z)*

> *"Sometimes I'll be at home and get an email or an update about the next day, and it gets stuck in my head. I start thinking, "I still need to handle this or that." **From Monday through Saturday night, I feel like I'm always switched on.** Sunday is the only day when I can truly disconnect." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

Several Gen Z respondents mentioned digital connectivity being part of the job. Separating work from personal life makes it then difficult and is not feasible for every organization. Millennials and Gen X respondents reported that having a clear separation or policy can help create natural boundaries.

> *"**The time differences make it necessary for some employees to have meetings outside of regular hours**. For instance, I know **colleagues who sometimes have important calls on Saturday evenings** because that's the only time that works. So, **while it could be beneficial overall, it might not be feasible for every company**." – Interview 9 (Gen Z)*

> *"We don't force anyone to do anything outside of work hours. I do notice that you don't want colleagues to feel they must work during weekends or evenings to keep up. **In our kind of work, it's common to take laptops home**. If we used desktop computers instead, for example, you wouldn't have that option, which would naturally **create that boundary**." – Interview 12 (Gen X)*

*"**Especially for people in certain roles**. For example, in sales, you're always "on."
They're **constantly reachable** for clients via email, apps, phone—whatever. For
someone like me, it's different, but I think a policy like that could help with mental
health." – Interview 15 (Millennial)*

4.4. Workload and Stress Management

The fourth dimension identified is Workload and Stress Management, which consists of
three second-order themes, namely: stress causes, stress management and resilience,
and workload management. The following sections describe the key causes that
contribute to work stress, how employees manage stress, and strategies used to manage
workload.

Stress Causes

Stress is a common experience across all generations, but the specific causes differ
depending on responsibilities and individual work styles. The main stressors identified
during the analysis are workload, deadlines, work challenges, dependence on
colleagues, and the belief that stress comes with the territory. All respondents feel stress
or pressure due to workload and responsibility. Gen Z mentioned that there are specific
goals to meet, which can create mental strain. In addition, deadlines can create stress,
especially among Gen Z and Millennials, who experience stress when they are not able to
complete work tasks or when external demands interfere. Feelings such as losing track
of everything are common when deadlines build up, creating stressful situations.

*"**Mentally, you do experience a certain workload and responsibility, which can
sometimes cause stress**. There are specific goals to meet, and some weeks are
better in terms of sales than others. That can weigh on you mentally, so stress does
come into play." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)*

*"That's when the stress set in—not being able to complete tasks, dealing with
pressure from people following up on you. **Deadlines** or things that absolutely had
to be done by noon **created a lot of stress**. It just became too much. At some
point, you lose track of everything, and it all blends together." – Interview 15
(Millennial)*

Most respondents reported work challenges as a source of stress as well, such as changing performance, high customer demands, and multitasking demands. Especially for older generations, the use of digital systems is seen as a work challenge and can lead to higher stress levels. In addition, a Gen Z respondent explicitly mentioned constant reachability as a work challenge that increases the level of stress. Being constantly connected with work makes it difficult to fully recover, leading to mental exhaustion. Dependence on other colleagues can also create pressure and stress in the workplace. Respondents mentioned feeling pressured to meet deadlines because other colleagues are depending on them. This can create stress that is outside the control of individuals, which makes it even more challenging to cope with.

> *"I do experience stress. **It could be from having a poor sales week or when certain projects don't go well.** These issues arise regularly—maybe not daily, but definitely weekly. And they can lead to stress." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)*

> *"Because of the sheer amount of work. Also, **the Autoline software we use is very time-consuming.** You can't just generate a report—it always has to go through an Excel file." – Interview 13 (Gen X)*

> *"Yes, particularly because customer expectations are incredibly high, especially when dealing with a premium product like Audi. **Customers demand quick and seamless service,** and while our procedures are solid, **they also add pressure.** For example, the **XX customer management system requires you to act quickly and efficiently.** But in a smaller setting like ours, where you're juggling multiple roles—serving customers, managing the showroom, handling administrative tasks—**it can be challenging to keep up.**" – Interview 16 (Baby Boomer)*

> *"My stress level builds up because of the **constant reachability**. I live from day off to day off. I really need the weekends to recover from the workweek." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

> *"You know you need to get things done on time because other people are depending on you. **The interdependence with colleagues creates that pressure** — you need to deliver so that others can move forward." – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

Lastly, some respondents approach stress as being part of their work. Gen X respondents specifically tend to claim that stress comes with the territory of their job roles, especially

in sectors that have high demands in deadlines and performance levels. Some Gen Z respondents also mentioned this perspective and pointed out that their work habits were shaped by their upbringing in entrepreneurial families, where there was a lot of flexibility and work outside office hours was normalized. To those respondents, stress is part of the job and handling work outside office hours feels natural.

> *"It's not like I ever think, "I'll be glad when it's 5 o'clock so I can get out of here."* ***Stress and pressure come with the territory****. If you want to achieve something, you have to accept that it's **part of the job**." – Interview 1 (Gen Z)*

> *"Honestly, **I think in certain roles—like higher-level positions closer to the executive level with more responsibilities—there's probably a lot more pressure**. But for me, there isn't any undue pressure. I'm expected to be present at events, which I agreed to as part of my role, so that's fine. It definitely happens here, but it's not something that's expected of me." – Interview 14 (Millennial)*

> *"Having worked in accountancy for so long, I've always dealt with deadlines. **It's just part of the job**." – Interview 11 (Gen X)*

Stress Management and Resilience

Several respondents across generations describe the motivating effect of a healthy stress level when it remains manageable. Some Gen Z respondents and Millennials shared that moderate pressure keeps them away from complacency, while Baby Boomers reported that self-confidence and experience as key factors to handle pressure in a workplace.

> *"I feel good. Why? I experience some pressure to get things done, **but it's a normal amount of pressure**—not the kind that feels overwhelming. **I think that's healthy**. A little pressure is good; otherwise, you become too complacent, which isn't me. I don't deal with stress after work either. **I can let go of work easily, so it doesn't affect my mental health outside of work**." – Interview 2 (Gen Z)*

> *"Yes, occasionally. But it's **healthy stress**. That's the kind I actually prefer, to be honest—**a kind of natural, healthy pressure and tension. It keeps me motivated.** When that pressure disappears, like during slower times, I have to push myself harder to tackle the tasks that have been sitting on the back burner." – Interview 14 (Millennial)*

*"I've always felt that **a healthy level of tension is good. That's how you learn to handle pressure**, but you must be confident in yourself and your abilities. If you believe in yourself, you experience far less stress. I can't say that I've ever truly been stressed." – Interview 17 (Baby Boomer)*

There are several strategies that Gen Z respondents mentioned to manage stress. One of them is managing stress by writing task lists and organizing priorities. Some reported that by making to-do lists and planning tasks create a sense of control and improve efficiency.

*"I also like to **write things down**. I'll make a **to-do list** and cross items off as I complete them. **It makes everything feel more tangible and concrete**, and I realize it's not as overwhelming as it seemed." – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

*"Over time, I became more efficient because I understood my tasks better. That helped reduce the stress. **Planning tasks for when I'm most productive made a big difference**." – Interview 8 (Gen Z)*

Another important strategy to manage stress is open communication, especially for Gen Z, who mentioned that they actively discuss work-related thoughts with colleagues or supervisors. They noted that asking for help and sharing challenges helps them to cope with stress. In addition, physical activity is also mentioned as a strategy for managing stress, as Gen Z respondents reported that they care about their mental health and therefore make time to exercise.

*"I think I handle stress pretty well. **I talk about it**—I don't keep everything to myself. **I discuss things at work, whether it's going well or not**." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)*

*"I'd say I'm **naturally stress-resistant**. Even when I have a heavy workload, I don't get overwhelmed. Instead, **I try to communicate openly** if I think I won't finish something and ask for help if needed." – Interview 10 (Gen Z)*

*"I also think mental health is important, which is why **I make time for exercise**. For instance, **if I feel stressed, I'll go for a run**, and that usually helps. Staying active is crucial for me." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)*

During analysis, stress resilience became a common term across individuals, especially among Gen X and Baby Boomers who mentioned being able to handle high workloads without feeling overwhelmed. These generations described managing stress as being something that is developed over time and that they learned from experiences to stay calm under pressure. Fewer Gen Z respondents described themselves as being stress-resistant, though some mentioned learning how to manage it over time. In addition, mainly older generations reported having a tolerance for infrequent work interruptions during personal time, as long as they remain infrequent and manageable.

> "I'm quite **resilient to stress**; I don't get stressed easily. But occasionally, it does get to me." – Interview 13 (Gen X)

> "**Stress is something you need to learn to manage**. **It's a mental skill**. When the workload is heavy, I don't let it overwhelm me. You can only do so much" – Interview 17 (Baby Boomer)

> "So far, I've managed every time. **I end up working extra**, sometimes six days a week, to get everything done. Yes, and **you know it's only for a short period**." – Interview 13 (Gen X)

> "I've always been able to maintain control over it. **Occasionally, I get messages in the evening**, like a customer asking about a price or feature. **If it happens now and then, it's fine**." – Interview 16 (Baby Boomer)

Moreover, Baby Boomers reported that it is important to keep a positive mindset, even when unplanned challenges or disappointments occur at work. They emphasized the importance of not allowing setbacks to dominate the overall experience. Instead, focus on the positive work moments.

> "And I think **an important value is not to be negative about everything but positive**. A positive mindset, for both young and old. If you keep that and don't always see obstacles—I drive around them—that's very important. People's positivity is very important. And I notice some always have a negative slant. Things will go wrong occasionally. **That 1-3% that goes wrong in a week gets attention. No. You should focus on the 97%.**" – Interview 17 (Baby Boomer)

> "Of course, **there are days when things don't go as planned**. Sometimes clients disappoint you, like this morning. A colleague and I had a chat about it; we were

*both a bit let down. **But you can't let that overshadow everything else**.*" –
Interview 17 (Baby Boomer)

Workload Management

Managing workload is a challenge that affects Gen Z, as they experience peak periods as well as structural increases in workload. Gen Z respondents often mentioned that sometimes the workload and pressure can be very intense, especially during peak periods, leading them to work overtime. While some described these challenges as temporary, a few Gen Z respondents indicated that the workload has become structural and constantly burdening rather than short-term peaks.

> *"Although you've caught me at the busiest time of the year. **It's very hectic right now, which means working more than I'd ideally like to**." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"Also, **when it gets extremely busy, it can feel overwhelming**. It's not like this all the time, but **certain periods can be very intense**." – Interview 11 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"**It's becoming structural now**. I've been in this role for almost a year, and in the beginning, there were clear peaks and dips. But now it feels like **the workload is consistently increasing**." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

All generations mentioned the importance of hiring extra staff or providing extra capacity, stating that this would reduce the workload and stress. It is also mentioned that extra support leads to better performance, as employees will have time to complete their work properly. Several respondents indicated that while some functions are made easier by digital tools, there is also an increase in the amount of work done, which requires additional help to manage tasks effectively. Employees still struggle with the amount of digital communication, documentation, and system management, despite the fact that digital systems increase efficiency. Employees now have to cope with more tasks due to the integration of digital platforms, which makes it challenging to find a balance between strategic and operational duties without enough support.

> *"I'd like more capacity—**more colleagues to help reduce the workload**. It's not about the physical workspace, which is great, but more about having the time and resources to do things properly." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)*

*"Maybe hiring an extra person. **A lot of my tasks, like filling out financing and insurance forms, are repetitive and time-consuming**. About 20% of my work is core tasks, and the rest feels unnecessary. **If someone could take over those tasks, it would reduce my workload and eliminate the need for overtime**. During busy periods, like when a new batch of Porsches arrives, the workload is overwhelming. **It would be great to have someone else take on some of that to lower the pressure**." – Interview 2 (Gen Z)*

*"**When you have that extra support, you notice more peace on the work floor**, which results in better customer interactions, more thoughtful quotes, and smoother test drives. Ultimately, this leads to higher sales. When you rush things, customers notice. If you have the time and space to properly engage with customers, particularly in sales, the results are nine times out of ten better. **Better management of operational tasks would reduce stress and workload**, enabling more focus on customers and sales." – Interview 16 (Baby Boomer)*

Despite experiencing workload challenges, many respondents Gen Z, Millennials and Baby Boomers reported to work voluntarily outside office hours, as it gives them peace of mind and prevents having extra pressure the next day. According to these respondents, overworking can be seen as a way to manage their workload, especially during peak periods.

*"**I don't mind working overtime when necessary**. I know this is just a busy period, so I manage it by organizing my tasks, which **gives me peace of mind**." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)*

*"I'm more of an **integrator**. If I need to finish something and I have the time, I'll work at home in the evening. **It gives me peace of mind to have it done, and it prevents additional pressure the next day**." – Interview 17 (Baby Boomer)*

4.5. Boundary Management

The fifth aggregate dimensions identified is Boundary Management. The analysis revealed four second-order themes within this dimension, namely: work-life balance, setting and maintaining boundaries, managing digital boundaries, and flexibility and autonomy in work arrangements. While some Gen Z respondents emphasized a clear separation between work and personal life, others preferred a more integrated approach, which is further discussed in this chapter.

Work-life Balance

Work-life balance is an important aspect of boundary management. Most Gen Z respondents reported that they were able to achieve a healthy work-life separation. Some explained that they found themselves able to disconnect from work, explaining that they do not experience stress outside office hours and only work if absolutely necessary.

> *"I don't deal with stress after work either. **I can let go of work easily, so it doesn't affect my mental health outside of work**. When I'm not at work, I'm really not there. If something urgent comes up, **they can always call me, and I'll help out. I might open my laptop if needed**, but I don't spend my weekends worrying about Monday." – Interview 2 (Gen Z)*

> *"I'm pretty good at closing the door on work when I leave the office. **Once I'm home, I'm able to let go of work.**" – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

However, at the same time respondents across all generations expressed to find it sometimes challenging to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life. Especially when external expectation, such as after-hours emails from colleagues or high levels of job involvement can give the impression that employees must stay engaged in order to meet expectations. Some respondents described it as an internal conflict when they attempt to maintain boundaries.

> *"**It can be challenging**, especially because we work with assembly teams who respond to emails in the evening after being on-site all day. **When they send me a question at night, I feel inclined to answer because it saves time for the next day**." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)*

> *"**Sometimes, I struggle to find the right balance for myself**. So yes, I like it, but I also feel like I'm in a sort of internal conflict." – Interview 14 (Millennial)*
>
> *"In the automotive world, especially with a premium product, there's always a level of emotional investment and enthusiasm for the brand and company. **It's challenging to completely separate work and private life.** However, it's about maintaining a balance that suits you personally." – Interview 16 (Baby Boomer)*

All generations indicated leaning towards integration, but Gen Z and Millennials tend to have a more balanced approach with clear limits. They indicated that they do not mind being interrupted occasionally during personal time but they emphasize the importance of setting clear limits to protect their own well-being.

> *"If I had to choose, I'd say I lean more toward **integration**. I feel like I have a good balance, and **I don't mind being interrupted for work occasionally** in the evenings." – Interview 11 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"It's neutral because, on the one hand, **you're always somewhat connected to work**. **But on the other hand, I can manage it well**—for example, by logging out on Saturday afternoons and **setting clear boundaries**." – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"However, **when it's imposed on me**, like during a weekend trip, **I can be quite firm**. I always say, even to the management, "I'll work whenever, but if I want time off or a vacation, I should be able to take it." That's still my stance: **my freedom is my top priority**, especially when it's my own decision." – Interview 14 (Millennial)*

Gen X respondents are work-life integrators who, while recognizing work as an important part of their self-identity, also desire a better work-life balance, stating that greater separation of work from life would also lead to higher job satisfaction.

> *"It's more about **achieving balance**. I don't advocate for myself much—I probably should—but I think **having better balance would increase my overall satisfaction**. It's not that I'd be more motivated or involved in my work, but **I'd feel more content**." – Interview 13 (Gen X)*

Furthermore, some respondents also pointed out that a good work-life balance supports well-being. Some mentioned that learning to say no and setting limits over time has

enabled them to deal with stress more successfully, leading to a greater sense of peace and more control over their workload.

>*"At the start of my job, I said "yes" to everything because I wanted to try everything and learn as much as I could. But after some time, I found myself still working on tasks at home and feeling stressed.* **I've learned to say "no" occasionally**. *It's not easy, but it brings a lot of* **peace of mind**." – Interview 8 (Gen Z)

Setting and Maintaining boundaries

The ability to set boundaries differed among employees, including levels of confidence, work-life separation, and the challenges newer employees experience. Gen Z employees were aware that setting boundaries improves well-being and to effectively communicate those boundaries with employers. Millennials for example mentioned feeling confident to establish clear boundaries, often due to previous work experiences that helped them recognize the importance of setting boundaries.

>**"If it ever starts to stress me out, I'll make changes, like setting stricter boundaries**." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)

>**"Setting boundaries improves your wellbeing,** *but you have to allow yourself to* **be a bit vulnerable to communicate those boundaries** *effectively."* – Interview 8 (Gen Z)

>*"When I started working here again,* **I made it clear that I couldn't be present at all the evening events,** *which was previously expected of me."* – Interview 15 (Millennial)

Another method that employees employed to strengthen boundaries, especially among Gen Z, is the maintenance of a clear separation between work and personal life. Some Gen Z respondents highlighted the importance of completely disconnecting from work outside office hours and making sure that most of their personal time remains uninterrupted. Other Gen Z respondents mentioned that setting clear boundaries helps them to maintain their well-being as well as their personal relationships.

>**"I keep work and personal life mostly separate**. *It's important for me to have free time to spend with my girlfriend and friends."* – Interview 5 (Gen Z)

> *"**During vacations, however, I completely disconnect**. My clients know I'm unavailable, and I provide them with a backup contact." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"It would have a negative impact. If I felt like I had no choice, it would go against my principles. **Work is work, and when I'm home, I shouldn't have to keep working**." – Interview 10 (Gen Z)*

Managing Digital Boundaries

People take different approaches when it comes to setting digital boundaries between work and personal life. Some Gen Z respondents mentioned they prefered to completely disconnect outside office hours, especially on weekends, because having uninterrupted personal time helped them recharge after a long week. Others shared that they made it a point not to be available for work-related matters once their scheduled hours were over.

> *"I think it would make a difference if I could disconnect from Friday evening to Sunday without any work-related interruptions. **But even during the week, I don't want to be reachable for work outside office hours**." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*
>
> *"I work a lot, and my social life is taking a hit. I often need weekends to recover from the workweek. Once things calm down, **I'd like to have clearer boundaries where work is work and free time is free time**." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)*

Most Gen Z respondents mentioned having autonomy in managing digital connectivity. They described a workplace culture where not responding to messages outside office hours was generally accepted. Some noted that there was some sort of mutual understanding about availability after work.

> *"**I feel like I have a lot of control**. If I don't respond to a message outside of work hours, it's generally accepted, and I know colleagues who do the same. There's a mutual understanding, so **I feel I have the freedom to decide**." – Interview 9 (Gen Z)*

Several Gen Z respondents expressed that having a separate phone for work helped them maintaining clearer boundaries, as they could disconnect from work communications at any time. Others spoke about turning off notifications or their work phone as a strategy to maintain boundaries and reduce stress. Some respondents described how changing

their behavior over time with regard to connectivity had helped them with managing work-related stress more successfully.

> *"For people who struggle with it, **offering a second phone** or turning off emails after hours could help. **Employers can provide solutions for employees who need more boundaries**." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)*

> *"**Emails are only on my laptop and work phone**, so I don't check them on weekends. I figure if it's urgent, the client will call. **This separation helps me maintain boundaries**—I don't want to be on my personal phone and see a work message pop up." – Interview 7 (Gen Z)*

> *"Yes, **having a separate work phone really helps me maintain boundaries**. It ensures that when I'm home, I don't have to think about work unless I want to." – Interview 10 (Gen Z)*

> *"My advice would be to **turn off unnecessary notifications**—not just for work purposes, but also **for your overall mental clarity**. Give your brain some time to relax and focus deeply without interruptions." – Interview 9 (Gen Z)*

> *"Early on**, I didn't set boundaries and was always checking emails,** even on weekends. **That caused unnecessary stress**. Now I **turn off my work phone** after hours and only deal with work during designated times. It's made a big difference in **reducing stress and improving my overall mood**." – Interview 11 (Gen Z)*

Boundary Setting Challenges for Early-Career Employees

However, analysis revealed that many Gen Z respondents, those who are in the early stages of their careers, seemed to have challenges with setting boundaries, specifically regarding dealing with an increased work volume or trying to impress people in the office. Some reported that they had a difficult time refusing new responsibilities because they were worried about their image and career advancement. Worries about one's employment status and being seen as capable only made this more complex, which increased the challenge of setting boundaries.

> *"Yes**, in my first year here, I struggled a lot with boundaries,** especially because I was managing over 100 projects on my own after a colleague left. **I felt a strong need to prove myself,** and I didn't know how to say no or stop working. It was **overwhelming**." – Interview 11 (Gen Z)*

*"I understand that **when you're young** and just starting out, **it's harder to say no**. People might think, "Who do they think they are?" That's why **younger people often struggle more with setting boundaries**." – Interview 15 (Millennial)*

*"I'm afraid that **if I say no or admit I can't handle something, people will think less of me.** I worry about how it might affect my chances of getting a permanent contract or how it impacts my perceived value. I'm quite sensitive and tend to take things personally." – Interview 3 (Gen Z)*

Flexibility and Autonomy in Work Arrangements

A significant aspect of boundary management, described by Gen Z respondents, is how flexibility and autonomy in work arrangements influence the employees' ability to set and maintain boundaries. Many respondents noted that they appreciated a mutual approach to flexibility in the workplace, where working outside of regular hours is more the exception rather than the rule and employers demonstrate understanding and accommodation for personal needs. Some respondents mentioned that being in charge over their schedules gives them a sense of control and autonomy that bring peace of mind. In this case, offering flexibility is important to Gen Z employees. This flexibility helped them to manage their workload at their own personal preferences, which supports their boundary management strategies. Additionally, others highlighted their preference for remote working, which kept them engaged while enhancing their focus and productivity.

*"**I have a lot of flexibility in my work**. For example, if I've had a late night due to a birthday party on Wednesday, I can easily decide to start work on Thursday afternoon. **That flexibility gives me peace of mind**. Not having to be in the office at 8:30 a.m. sharp makes a big difference. Since they're so flexible with me, **I also want to give back and perform well for them**." – Interview 5 (Gen Z)*

*"Yes, it's about **finding balance**. Sometimes I'll leave early to compensate for working later on other days. **Flexibility is key for me**." – Interview 8 (Gen Z)*

*"Knowing I can **work from home when needed and still stay connected** is incredibly helpful. **It provides flexibility** and ensures I can **maintain productivity** even when I'm not physically in the office." – Interview 9 (Gen Z)*

Although clear boundaries were mentioned as very important to most of the Gen Z respondents, there were also some who never want to disconnect and prefer to be in touch with their work outside office hours, which is known as the integrated approach. Some Gen Z respondents expressed preferring to be reachable on purpose as a personal preference rather than a compulsory expectation.

> *"I think I'm a bit of a workaholic. **I like staying busy with work**. Even on Saturdays, I sometimes find myself answering emails or taking calls. **I've consciously chosen to have just one phone instead of two because I like staying in the loop**." – Interview 6 (Gen Z)*

4.6. Organizational Culture and Support

Organizational Culture and Support is identified as the sixth aggregate dimension. Workplace culture and organizational support significantly impacts employee well-being, work-life balance and their expectations on being available outside work hours. Gen Z respondents mentioned preferring a workplace culture that encourages the maintenance of work-life boundaries, which can differ from company to company regarding policies and industry norms. For some organizations, 'always on' availability is the norm, especially where roles involve customer interaction which makes it challenging for Gen Z employees to switch off. Other organizations addressed clear policies concerning digital connectivity, such as not permitting emails to be sent over the weekend or fostering a culture where working after hours is questioned rather than encouraged.

> *"**It might work in some companies, but not in ours**. At least not in the sales department—here, everyone is always on their phone. Even on Sunday evenings, people are responding to customers. **It's just part of the culture**." – Interview 2 (Gen Z)*

> *"At Voortman, they've had rules in place for a while, partly because of their religious background. For instance, **you're not allowed to send emails on Sundays—it's strictly a rest day**. If someone does notice you working on a Sunday, like responding to emails, a manager might have a word with you and remind you that **it's discouraged**." – Interview 5 (Gen Z)*

*"At our company, there's this **culture** where if you're still emailing at 8 p.m., people might ask, "Are you okay? Why are you doing that?" **It's not encouraged at all**. In fact, you'd probably get called out for sending emails that late." – Interview 8 (Gen Z)*

Furthermore, Gen Z respondents emphasized that when organizations seek to positively impact employee's work-life balance through offering flexibility, remote working and well-being initiatives, it will report higher job satisfaction and engagement. Some companies took a step further than flexible working hours by also providing resource time and even training sessions on how to manage work-life balance, which demonstrates concern for the employee's well-being. In addition, a supportive workplace culture that highlights emotional support further enhances the overall work environment. Gen Z respondents mentioned that they feel empowered by knowing that everyone including their colleagues and managers look out for their welfare, encourage breaks and show understanding when personal challenges are faced.

*"I should also mention that **the organization is supportive** in this regard—they **encourage a healthy work-life balance and give employees a lot of freedom**. That makes me happy to go to work." – Interview 4 (Gen Z)*

*"It aligns with the **company's focus on employee well-being**. They also offer various resources, like a platform with training sessions on improving work-life balance. I recently checked it out when I had some downtime, and I think **it shows they care about our well-being**. They're also **flexible** if you need to leave for personal reasons. It's nice to know that they **prioritize our welfare**." – Interview 10 (Gen Z)*

*"Yes, and **colleagues also look out for one another**. If someone seems overwhelmed, people encourage them to take a break or go home. **It's a very supportive culture**." – Interview 8 (Gen Z)*

*"**Even during difficult personal moments**, like a family loss, **I've felt supported**. I'm not the type to immediately raise issues, but when I've shared personal matters, **my manager has always responded with understanding and asked how they could support me.** I really appreciate that." – Interview 9 (Gen Z)*

5. Discussion

This research aimed to answer the initial research question: *"How do Gen Z's work values and boundary management preferences (segmentation vs. integration) impact their well-being in the Dutch digital workforce?"* The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between Gen Z's work values, boundary management and well-being and to outline new variables that emerged from the results. First, a brief summary of the findings is given, followed by a discussion of the theoretical and practical contributions of this study.

The study's findings reveal that Gen Z highly values autonomy, freedom and flexibility in their work. They mentioned that these intrinsic work values are important to them when choosing a job and it also enhances their ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Furthermore, extrinsic work values, such as recognition, appreciation and respect, are positively contributing to Gen Z's motivation and well-being. Some reported that these values increase their job satisfaction and makes them able to maintain their boundaries. However, some extrinsic work values, such as salary and professional growth, make Gen Z put in more effort and perform better, which can lead to weaker boundary management due to the expectation of constant availability. Social work values, mainly relationships with colleagues and a positive work environment, further contribute to job satisfaction. However, Gen Z also prefers to keep their work and personal life separate. The existence of work values has a direct positive impact on well-being. When work values are met, Gen Z report greater engagement and motivation. Workload and stress surfaced as major issues. The main stressors for Gen Z employees are high workload, deadlines, work challenges and constant digital connectivity. On the other hand, stress is not always negative. Some respondents consider mild stress to be beneficial. Gen Z manages stress by writing task lists and organizing priorities, open communication and physical exercise. However, many Gen Z employees who are in the early stages of their careers, have challenges with setting and maintaining boundaries because they are concerned about their image and career advancement. Stress resilience seems to increase with experience, as older generations mentioned having more control over managing stress and to stay calm under pressure.

Digital connectivity has a positive side in terms of flexibility and control over workload, but Gen Z also mentioned that constant connectivity blurs work-life boundaries. Most Gen Z employees prefer to segment work from their personal lives, yet they find it difficult to disconnect from work in a digital workforce. Finally, organizational culture significantly influences boundary management and well-being. Gen Z employees reported preferring an organization that encourages a healthy work-life balance and emphasizes emotional support, which positively impact their job satisfaction, motivation and well-being.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

By linking existing theories and literature on these concepts with the qualitative results, a conceptual model was developed (see Figure 1). This model highlights the key relationships that are observed in the data comparing them with existing research to emphasize the theoretical contributions and gaps addressed by this study. It builds upon the Boundary Management Theory by Ashforth et al. (2000) and the Self-Determination Theory by Ryan and Deci (2000) by also considering digital connectivity and organizational culture as important factors. Individual-level and organizational-level factors are distinguished in this model, which are further elaborated below. A larger version of the conceptual model can be found in Appendix C.
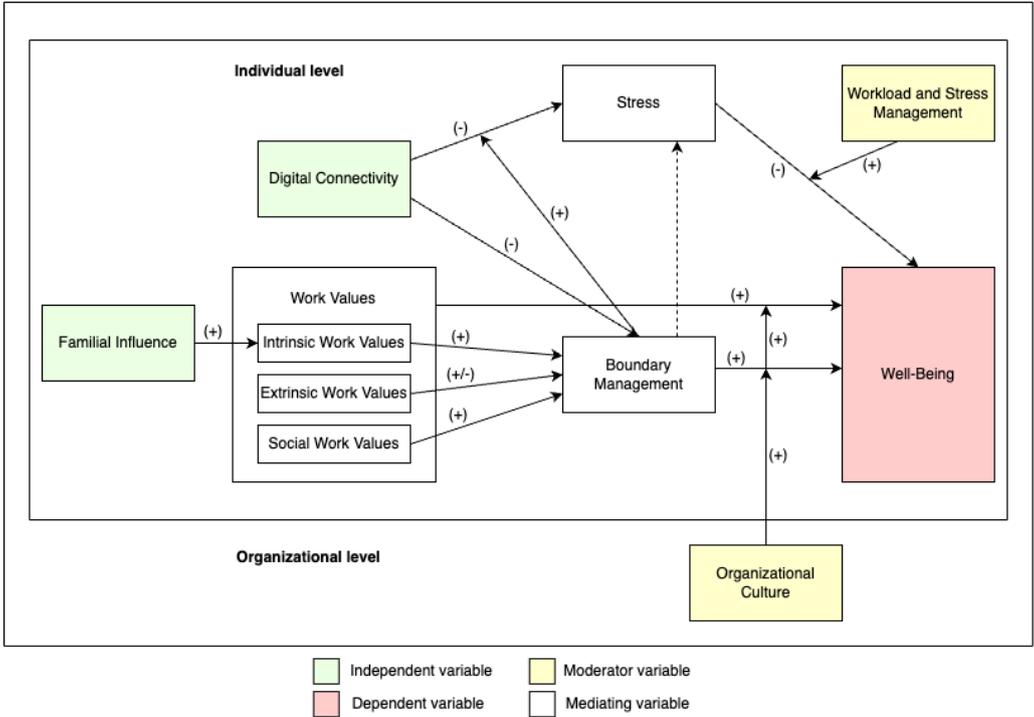

Figure 1. *Conceptual Model*

One consideration when creating the conceptual model was whether boundary management should be divided into segmentation and integration. According to Ashforth et al. (2000), boundary management suggest a clear dichotomy, while the study's results were that Gen Z employees do not always stick to one approach. Instead, some Gen Z respondents mentioned having flexible boundary preferences. For example, they sometimes prefer segmentation and at other times prefer integration during peak periods. This aligns with existing literature suggesting that the emphasis is not whether someone favors integration or segmentation, but whether their work environment supports their preference (Kreiner, 2006). Therefore, boundary management was treated as a single construct to avoid forcing a strict distinction of segmentation and integration.

The Impact of Work Values on Boundary Management

The study's findings reveal that intrinsic work values, such as freedom, autonomy and flexibility influence how Gen Z employees manage their boundaries. The existence of freedom, autonomy and flexibility encourages work-life integration, as employees prefer flexible work arrangements, for example choosing when and where to work. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that higher levels of autonomy result in a well-improved work-life balance and higher outcomes regarding well-being (Kossek et al., 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The Self-Determination Theory proposes when psychological needs are met, including autonomy, employees are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of digital workforce, this autonomy can allow individuals to actively manage their work-life boundaries, which is known to be related to lower stress levels and less exhaustion (van Zoonen et al., 2023). This highlights the importance of autonomy to uphold work-life boundaries and prevent burnout in a digital workforce.

The relationship between boundary management and extrinsic work values was more complicated. Gen Z respondents reported that being appreciated by other employees or supervisors increases their job satisfaction and enables them to maintain a healthy work-life balance. However, some extrinsic work values, such as salary and career growth, could also lead to weaker boundary management because participants mentioned feeling pressure to be constantly available that increase their stress levels.

61

Social work values, particularly relationships with colleagues and a positive work environment, also shape how Gen Z employees manage their boundaries. Gen Z values good relationships at work, but they also prefer to separate their work and personal life. Hence, Gen Z with strong social work values may be more engaged in work relationships, which leads to higher work-life integration. This finding can be supported by Kossek et al. (2012), who mentioned that some individuals prefer integration more because of social support and team dynamics at work, while others maintain clear boundaries despite of social engagement to protect their well-being. Based on these findings, the following propositions are developed:

Proposition 1.1: Intrinsic work values, such as autonomy, freedom, and flexibility, are positively associated with boundary management among Gen Z employees.

Proposition 1.2: Extrinsic work values, such as salary and career growth, are negatively associated with boundary management.

Proposition 1.3: Extrinsic work values, such as recognition and appreciation from supervisors and colleagues, are positively associated with boundary management.

Proposition 1.4: Social work values are positively associated with boundary management.

Familial Influence on Work Values

This research shows that Gen Z's work values are often shaped by their upbringing. Participants who were being raised in entrepreneurial families, where hard working, being flexible, and working outside offices is seen as normal, can create a strong work ethic and a preference in work-life integration. This is in line with existing research that shows that values are shaped by socialization in early childhood, particularly within families, schools and communities (Hofstede, 2001). These values remain relatively stable over time and affect organizational behavior. An additional study supports that work values are shaped by shared socialization experiences, including family dynamics (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). This suggests that work values are not only shaped by personal traits or workplace contexts, but are deeply ingrained in early socialization processes, particularly the family environment. Therefore, the following proposition is formulated:

Proposition 2: Familial influence is positively associated with intrinsic work values.

Impact of Work Values on Well-Being

The existence of work values also has a direct positive impact on well-being and motivation. Gen Z respondents mentioned the importance that their work values are aligned with the work environment. They expressed feeling more engaged, motivated and generally happy. Conversely, when there is a lack of work values it negatively impacts the general well-being of Gen Z. This relationship is supported by previous studies. When individuals can act in a way that is consistent with their values, such as self-direction and achievement, they will experience greater life satisfaction and well-being (Schwartz, 1992).

Furthermore, the Self-Determination Theory explains that people thrive when three basic needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These needs are often mentioned by Gen Z employees in this study as important work values. When jobs support these values, for example autonomy through flexible work, motivation becomes more self-determined, not just driven by rewards or pressure (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In summary, when organizations support Gen Z's work values, it will result in more engagement, motivation and improved well-being. This suggests the following propositions:

Proposition 3.1: The existence of work values is positively associated with Gen Z's motivation and well-being.

Proposition 3.2: Organizational culture moderates the relationship between work values and well-being, such that organizations who support work values strengthen the positive relationship between work values and well-being

Impact of Boundary Management on Well-Being

This study builds upon the Boundary Management Theory by Ashforth et al. (2000), which provides empirical insights into how employees manage the conflicting demands of their personal and professional lives in a digital workforce. Individuals who maintain clear work-life boundaries experience less stress, mental exhaustion and have a better well-being (Kossek et al., 2006). When boundaries between work and personal life become blurred or poorly managed, then employees can experience stress from trying to fulfill challenging demands (Ashforth et al., 2000). While this research supports these

mentioned studies, it further reveals that this relationship is not uniform. Organizational culture plays an important role in moderating the relationship between boundary management and well-being. While some organizations have clear policies against working outside of office hours, others expect employees to be available after their shifts have ended. Gen Z respondents described the importance of feeling valued and appreciated within the organization. Organizations that encourage work-life balance and emphasize emotional support through flexible policies, remote working and well-being initiatives foster a healthier well-being among employees. Respect and recognition in the digital workforce motivate employees and decreases the negative impact of work-related stress. These insights align with existing research that highlight the significance of an organizational culture that is rooted in values in fostering employee well-being.

According to Schein (2010), organizational culture is a set of common beliefs and assumptions that direct behavior in the workplace. Employees are more likely to feel valued and involved when these values encourage adaptability, trust, and psychological safety. Comparably, Kossek et al. (2011) highlights that work-family conflict is decreased and employees are better able to manage their recovery and well-being when their supervisors and employers support clear boundaries, particularly when those boundaries are directly related to their personal or family lives. This is consistent with Gen Z's desire for organizational cultures that encourage clear boundaries and avoid "always-on" expectations. When individuals' boundary management preferences are aligned with their boundary experiences at work, they report higher job satisfaction, lower work-life conflict and improved well-being (Kreiner, 2006).

Furthermore, Perceived Organizational Support (POS), which measures how much an organization values the contributions of its employees and cares about their well-being, influences psychological health, commitment and job satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 2002). In this study, Gen Z employees reported that they felt more engaged and supported when organizational policies showed concern, such as providing flexibility during difficult personal situations or promoting a healthy work-life balance. Even less significant signals, such as discouraging late-night email, were perceived as supportive.

In summary, an organizational culture affects how people feel, both during and after working hours, and how work gets done. For Gen Z, a culture that promotes a healthy work-life balance, especially in a digital workforce, leads to improved well-being. This leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 4.1: Boundary management is positively associated with well-being.

Proposition 4.2: Organizational culture moderates boundary management and well-being, such that well-being is improved when organizational values and individual boundary management preferences are aligned.

Influence of Digital Connectivity on Boundary Management and Stress

Previous studies already explored work-life balance in digital contexts (Derks et al., 2016; van Zoonen et al., 2023), but this study further specifically explored how Gen Z experiences boundary management in a workforce that is heavily shaped by digital connectivity. This study indicates that digital connectivity can provide both benefits, such as flexibility, and challenges. It weakens boundary management, especially for Gen Z employees with a high preference for segmentation. Several Gen Z employees described difficulties in being constantly available by emails and work-related applications on personal devices. It easily blurs the work-life boundaries, resulting in stress and making it difficult for them to mentally disconnect from work, which eventually impacts well-being negatively.

According to van Zoonen et al. (2023), the pressure that Gen Z experiences to stay connected can create significant tension. This tension arises because they may feel obligated to respond to work demands even after office hours, which interrupts their ability to relax, recharge, and involve in non-work activities that contribute to well-being (Derks et al., 2016). However, some Gen Z employees mentioned that they have learned to say no and to set boundaries, which has helped them to deal with stress more successfully, leading to peace of mind and more control over their workload. Another approach to maintain clear boundaries according to Gen Z respondents is using a separate work phone and turning of notifications on their work phone. They described how changing their behavior regarding digital connectivity has helped them with

managing work-related stress more effectively. Based on these findings, the following propositions are formulated:

Proposition 5.1: Digital connectivity is negatively associated with boundary management.

Proposition 5.2: Boundary management moderates the relationship between digital connectivity and stress, such that Gen Z employees with stronger boundary management experience lower stress levels.

The Impact of Stress on Well-Being

The relationship between workload, stress management, and well-being is also highlighted. Workload, deadlines, work challenges, dependence on colleagues are the main stressors for Gen Z employees, resulting in mental strain and exhaustion. Several participants mentioned an inability to relax because work-related thoughts stay present even after work hours. This aligns with existing literature that suggests that prolonged organizational stress is a key predictor of reduced well-being, emotional exhaustion and even burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

In spite of these challenges, Gen Z employees are able to manage stress through several strategies, including making to-do lists and planning tasks, open communication, and physical exercise. These strategies helped Gen Z to reduce the negative impact of stress on their well-being. This reflects previous findings by Lazarus (1984), who created the transactional model of stress and coping, which highlights the importance of how people cope with stress and how it affects their mental health. These findings lead to the following propositions:

Proposition 6.1: Work-related stress is negatively associated with well-being.

Proposition 6.2: Effective stress and workload management moderates the negative relationship between stress and well-being, such that Gen Z employees with stronger coping mechanisms experience less negative well-being outcomes.

5.2. Practical Contributions

This study provides valuable insights for organizations that want to improve work-life balance, employee well-being and boundary management for Gen Z in the Dutch digital workforce. This chapter presents the key practical contributions of this research.

Digital Connectivity Policies

Gen Z employees primarily value freedom, flexibility and autonomy, but they also need clear guidance and support from the workplace to manage digital connectivity. While FWAs are often seen as a solution for a better work-life balance and more freedom, it can raise the risk of blurring work-life boundaries, which can negatively impact well-being (Derks et al., 2016; van Zoonen et al., 2023). Therefore, organizations should introduce structured digital connectivity policies, such as giving Gen Z employees clear expectations on work-related communications outside office hours. These policies include setting boundaries on response times, availability, and the use of specific communications channels. For example, some organizations set policies stating that non-urgent communications that come after 6 p.m. can be dealt with the next business day, but urgent communications must be flagged and dealt with in a specific timeframe. Such clarity enables control over boundaries and reduces confusion around the concept of availability, which is especially crucial in digital workforces. Several companies have implemented such practices successfully. For instance, software platform Zapier has embraced "asynchronous communication" norms and flexibility policies to reduce constant connectivity (Garza, 2023). They hope with their time-off policies and norms to create a culture where all employees can prioritize their personal life without giving up their professional success (Garza, 2023). Similarly, Duck Creek Technologies emphasizes a "flexible-first" model, where it prioritizes work-life balance of its employees, allowing them to choose where they work most effectively without sacrificing teamwork, innovation, and productivity (Smalley, 2023). With their well-being program they aim to support their employees' mental and physical well-being as well as their personal development. These businesses serve as examples of how structure and flexibility can coexist for the good of both workers and organizational outcomes.

Provide Trainings in Boundary Management Strategies

Furthermore, this study also highlights the importance of training Gen Z employees in boundary management skills. Previous research has shown that individuals who can manage boundaries by themselves, they feel less stressed, are more satisfied with their work, which positively influences their general well-being (Kossek et al., 2006). Gen Z employees should therefore be trained in boundary management strategies, such as controlling notifications and coping with digital interactions. Organizations themselves should be giving these kinds of trainings. They are best suited to integrate boundary practices, as boundary management is most effective when it is aligned with the organizational context (Kossek et al., 2006). Workshops, e-learning courses, and digital kits can be done in-house, which is more cost-effective and scalable. These workshops can revolve around managing emails, creating communication norms and employing do-not-disturb functions or time-blocking tools. In bigger companies, individual trainers or work-related psychologists may be contracted to work with HR or Learning & Development (L&D) departments so that they can deliver more specialized training programs. Feasibility of this recommendation may vary per organization in terms of size and resources. A low-cost alternative for smaller organizations can be online courses, for example provided by LinkedIn Learning, which can still be effective.

Managerial Support and Organizational Culture

In addition, managers play a significant role in realizing the benefits of FWAs in terms of work-life balance and well-being. Perceived supervisor support (PSS) is shown to have a significant impact on the retention, engagement, and well-being of employees (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Employees who feel supported by their supervisors are more likely to stay committed to their organization, experience lower stress levels, and report higher job satisfaction. This aligns with the findings that managerial support, specifically in work-life balance, reduces burnout and increases job satisfaction (Kossek et al., 2011). This can include setting boundaries, offering emotional support, and reducing workload. Organizations should foster a supportive organizational culture, where managers are encouraged to respect Gen Z's boundaries. Managerial support fosters a positive workplace environment where Gen Z employees feel valued and appreciated while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

In order to put this support into practice, an organization can apply a structured managerial approach. Microsoft, for instance, uses the "Model, Coach, Care" framework that expects managers to model, guide, and care for their team members. This model has been useful in creating a supportive culture during shifts towards hybrid work environments (Belikoff, 2021; Microsoft., 2022). In the same way, Deloitte also focuses on leadership style, organizational structure, and work culture as drivers of employee health and well-being (Bhatt et al., 2023). Deloitte highlights that well-being should not be viewed as mere benefits but rather something that should be fundamentally integrated into the structure and management of work. The company supports "human sustainability," where leaders are expected to actively practice self-care, like disconnecting after hours and being open about their own challenges. Such steps improve psychological safety and trust in teams (Bhatt et al., 2023).

Stress Resilience

Another insight emerged during data analysis is stress resilience. Primarily older generations mentioned being able to handle high workloads without feeling overwhelmed. These generations learned how to remain calm under pressure through experiences and to keep a positive mindset, even when unforeseen challenges occur at work. In contrast, fewer Gen Z employees mentioned being stress-resistant. The majority reported having difficulties with disconnecting from work and high levels of pressure during peak periods. Given this contrast, it is recommended to foster stress resilience among Gen Z employees through cognitive reappraisal training, an important element of emotion regulation (Gross & John, 2003). Research has shown that individuals who consistently use reappraisal should experience more positive and less negative emotion, have stronger relationships with others and have higher levels of well-being (Gross & John, 2003). Therefore, organization can actively support this by implementing coaching sessions or workshops regarding cognitive reappraisal. This can help Gen Z employees to develop emotional regulation skills and enhance their capability to recover from daily work stressors in a demanding digital workforce.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Even though this study provides valuable insights into Gen Z's work values, their boundary management preferences, and well-being in the Dutch digital workforce, this study also comes with limitations. This chapter discussed the limitations and gives some suggestions for future research. The first limitation is the study's scope and sample size. Most interviewees work and live in Overijssel, a province in the Netherlands. This raises the question of whether findings would vary in other provinces, where workplace culture and expectations for being digitally connected may be different. A suggestion for future research could be to make sure that participants from all regions are included in the sample when researching Gen Z's work values and boundary management preferences, to determine if there are provincial differences. This study also essentially focuses on the digital workforce. Future research could include interviewees from a larger range of industries to assess whether the study's findings can be generalized to all Gen Z employees.

As noted in chapter 5, section 5.1, the conceptual model shows a relationship between boundary management and stress, which is not explored in this study. The findings suggest that blurred work-life boundaries can lead to increased stress-levels, which also aligns with prior research (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Kreiner, 2006). However, this study did not access this relationship directly to see whether Gen Z employees with a high preference for segmentation experience lower stress levels than those with a high preference for integration or measure long-term effects on sleep and resilience. Therefore, further quantitative validation is required to confirm the relationship between boundary management and stress management. Lastly, managerial perspectives were not taken into account in this study. A suggestion for future research is to include interviews with managers, HR professionals, and other supervisors to fully understand how organizations perceive and implement policies regarding digital connectivity and boundary management.

6. Conclusion

The main question of this study was: *"How do Gen Z's work values and boundary management preferences (segmentation vs. integration) impact their well-being in the Dutch digital workforce?"* Empirical data is gathered through 17 semi-structured interviews across generational cohorts in the Dutch digital workforce, with a focus on Gen Z. The study's findings show that Gen Z's boundary management preferences vary between integration and segmentation, which depends on individual preference and context. Some individuals prefer a clearer separation of work and personal life, whereas others are more willing to have a flexible integration, particularly when autonomy is valued. However, due to digital connectivity and high-performance expectations, work-life boundaries become blurred and stress levels increase, making it difficult for Gen Z to mentally disconnect from work, which eventually impacts their well-being negatively.

Although stress is not always negative, prolonged organizational stress can lead to exhaustion and eventually burnout. Gen Z employees mentioned several strategies to manage work-related stress, including making to-do lists and planning tasks, open communication, and physical exercise. Furthermore, an organizational culture affects how individuals feel, both during and after office hours, and how work gets done. For Gen Z, an organizational culture that supports a healthy work-life balance, especially in a digital workforce, leads to improved well-being.

Practically, organizations should introduce structured digital connectivity policies and offer trainings to Gen Z in stress and boundary management strategies. Managers play an important role in realizing a healthy work-life balance. They should offer emotional support, reduce workload and respect Gen Z's boundaries. This way, managerial support can improve the well-being and engagement of Gen Z employees.

In conclusion, this research has offered an in-depth understanding of the relationship of work values, boundary preferences and well-being in a digital workforce. Organizations that actively support Gen Z's work values and boundary management preferences, can stimulate well-being, motivation and long-term engagement.

Reference List

Amri, M. M., Maharani, A., & Hidayah, Z. (2022). Job burnout and flexible working arrangement associations on employee wellbeing with perceived organizational support as mediator: a study during pandemic. *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen*, *20*(3), 594-610. https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jam.2022.020.03.11

Ashforth, B. E., Kreiner, G. E., & Fugate, M. (2000). All in a day's work: Boundaries and micro role transitions. *Academy of Management Review*, *25*(3), 472-491. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2000.3363315

Barhate, B., & Dirani, K. M. (2022). Career aspirations of generation Z: a systematic literature review. *European Journal of Training and Development*, *46*(1/2), 139-157. https://doi.org/10.1108/ejtd-07-2020-0124

Belikoff, C. (2021). *Microsoft: Reflecting on another year that redefined work*. Retrieved March 25, 2025 from https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/industry/microsoft-in-business/future-of-work/2021/12/13/reflecting-on-another-year-that-redefined-work/

Bhatt, J., Fisher, J., & Bordeaux, C. (2023). *The workforce well-being imperative*. Retrieved March 25, 2025 from https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/employee-wellbeing.html

Boswell, W. R., & Olson-Buchanan, J. B. (2007). The use of communication technologies after hours: The role of work attitudes and work-life conflict. *Journal of Management*, *33*(4), 592-610. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206307302552

Cennamo, L., & Gardner, D. (2008). Generational differences in work values, outcomes and person-organisation values fit. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *23*(8), 891-906. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940810904385

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Deloitte. (2023). *4 op de 10 Gen Z's kampt met burn-outklachten door hoge werkdruk*. Deloitte. Retrieved August 29, 2024 from https://www2.deloitte.com/nl/nl/pages/human-capital/articles/4-op-de-10-gen-zs-kampt-met-burn-outklachten-door-hoge-werkdruk.html

Deloitte. (2024). *Deloitte Global 2024 Gen Z and Millennial Survey* Deloitte. Retrieved August 29, 2024 from https://www.deloitte.com/content/dam/assets-shared/docs/campaigns/2024/deloitte-2024-genz-millennial-survey.pdf

Derks, D., Bakker, A. B., Peters, P., & van Wingerden, P. (2016). Work-related smartphone use, work–family conflict and family role performance: The role of segmentation preference. *Human Relations*, *69*(5), 1045-1068. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726715601890

Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, *95*(3), 542. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.95.3.542

Dimock, M. (2019). Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins. *Pew Research Center*, *17*(1), 1-7.

Dries, N., Pepermans, R., & De Kerpel, E. (2008). Exploring four generations' beliefs about career: Is "satisfied" the new "successful"? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *23*(8), 907-928. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940810904394

Eisenberger, R., Stinglhamber, F., Vandenberghe, C., Sucharski, I. L., & Rhoades, L. (2002). Perceived supervisor support: contributions to perceived organizational support and employee retention. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(3), 565. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.3.565

Garza, C. (2023). *Why Zapier created a policy to support global mobility*. Retrieved March 25, 2025 from https://zapier.com/blog/global-mobility/

Ginsberg, E., Ginsburg, S. W., Axelrad, S., & Herma, J. L. (1951). *Occupational choice: An approach to a general theory*. Columbia University Press.

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, *16*(1), 15-31. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (2017). *Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Routledge.

Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *85*(2), 348. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.2.348

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, *18*(1), 59-82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Holton, J. A., Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2007). The coding process and its challenges. *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*, 265.

IMD. (2023). *World Digital Competitiveness Ranking 2023*. International Institute for Management Development. Retrieved September 12, 2024 from https://www.imd.org/centers/wcc/world-competitiveness-center/rankings/world-digital-competitiveness-ranking/

International Labour Office. (2020). *Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: A Practical Guide*. International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *72*(12), 2954-2965. https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031

Kossek, E. E., Lautsch, B. A., & Eaton, S. C. (2006). Telecommuting, control, and boundary management: Correlates of policy use and practice, job control, and work–family effectiveness. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *68*(2), 347-367. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2005.07.002

Kossek, E. E., Pichler, S., Bodner, T., & Hammer, L. B. (2011). Workplace social support and work–family conflict: A meta-analysis clarifying the influence of general and work–family-specific supervisor and organizational support. *Personnel Psychology*, *64*(2), 289-313. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2011.01211.x

Kossek, E. E., Ruderman, M. N., Braddy, P. W., & Hannum, K. M. (2012). Work–nonwork boundary management profiles: A person-centered approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *81*(1), 112-128. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2012.04.003

Kreiner, G. E. (2006). Consequences of work-home segmentation or integration: A person-environment fit perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *27*(4), 485-507. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.386

Kupperschmidt, B. R. (2000). Multigeneration employees: Strategies for effective management. *The Health Care Manager*, *19*(1), 65-76. https://doi.org/10.1097/00126450-200019010-00011

Lanaj, K., Johnson, R. E., & Barnes, C. M. (2014). Beginning the workday yet already depleted? Consequences of late-night smartphone use and sleep. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *124*(1), 11-23. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2014.01.001

Lazarus, R. S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing Company.

Lever. (2022). *The State of Internal Mobility and Employee Retention Report*. Retrieved August 29, 2024 from https://www.lever.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Lever_Great-Resignation-Report_2022.pdf

Lyons, S., & Kuron, L. (2014). Generational differences in the workplace: A review of the evidence and directions for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *35*(S1), S139-S157. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1913

Mannheim, K. (1970). The sociological problem of generations. *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 306.

Mannheim, K. (2013). *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. Routledge. (1928, 1952)

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*, *15*(2), 103-111. https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20311

McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, *2*, 2333393615597674. https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393615597674

Microsoft. (2022). *Management Excellence at Microsoft: Model, Coach, Care*. LinkedIn Learning. Retrieved March 25, 2025 from https://www.linkedin.com/learning/management-excellence-at-microsoft-model-coach-care/the-meaning-of-manager-14492917

MOW International Research Team. (1987). *The meaning of working*. Academic Press.

Mungania, A. K., Waiganjo, E. W., & Kihoro, J. M. (2016). Influence of flexible work arrangement on organizational performance in the banking industry in Kenya. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *6*(7), 159-172. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v6-i7/2238

Namey, E., Guest, G., McKenna, K., & Chen, M. (2016). Evaluating bang for the buck: a
    cost-effectiveness comparison between individual interviews and focus groups
    based on thematic saturation levels. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *37*(3), 425-
    440. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214016630406

Page, M. (2024). *Netherlands leading country in flexible working policies*. Retrieved
    January 10, 2025 from https://www.michaelpage.nl/en/advice/market-
    updates/netherlands-leading-country-flexible-working-policies

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of
    intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*,
    55(1), 68. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical
    advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social
    Psychology* (Vol. 25, pp. 1-65). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-
    2601(08)60281-6

Schwartz, S. H. (1999). A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work.
    Applied Psychology: an International Review, *48*(1).
    https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1999.tb00047.x

Shorey, S., Chan, V., Rajendran, P., & Ang, E. (2021). Learning styles, preferences and
    needs of generation Z healthcare students: Scoping review. *Nurse Education in
    Practice*, *57*, 103247. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2021.103247

Smalley, A. (2023). *35+ companies that support work-life balance and well-being*.
    Retrieved March 25, 2025 from https://powertofly.com/up/companies-that-
    support-work-life-balance

Statistics Netherlands [CBS]. (2024). *Population pyramid*. Centraal Bureau voor de
    Statistiek. Retrieved September 12, 2024 from https://www.cbs.nl/nl-
    nl/visualisaties/dashboard-bevolking/bevolkingspiramide

Stebbins, R. (2001). *Exploratory research in the social sciences* (Vol. 48). Sage
    Publications.

Szymkowiak, A., Melović, B., Dabić, M., Jeganathan, K., & Kundi, G. S. (2021).
    Information technology and Gen Z: The role of teachers, the internet, and

technology in the education of young people. *Technology in Society*, *65*, 101565. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2021.101565

Taris, R., & Feij, J. (2001). Longitudinal examination of the relationship between supplies–values fit and work outcomes. *Applied Psychology*, *50*(1), 52-80. https://doi.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00048

Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *27*(2), 237-246. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748

TNO. (2023). *Burn-outklachten onder jonge werknemers: een groeiend probleem?* https://publications.tno.nl/publication/34641160/h2Rez1/TNO-2023-burnout.pdf

Twenge, J. M. (2010). A review of the empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *25*, 201-210. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-010-9165-6

van Zoonen, W., Treem, J. W., & Sivunen, A. E. (2023). Staying connected and feeling less exhausted: The autonomy benefits of after-hour connectivity. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *96*(2), 242-263. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12422

Waworuntu, E. C., Kainde, S. J., & Mandagi, D. W. (2022). Work-life balance, job satisfaction and performance among millennial and Gen Z employees: a systematic review. *Society*, *10*(2), 384-398. https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v10i2.464

World Health Organization. (2004). Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging, evidence, practice (Summary report).

WOSY International Research Group. (1989). Interview schedule of the work socialization of youth study. *Gent: Laboratory or Sociopsychology of Work and Organization and For Testconstruction*.

Zucconi, A., Vargas Llave, O., Consolini, M. (2024). *Flexible work increases post-pandemic, but not for everyone*. Retrieved January 10, 2025 from https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/resources/article/2024/flexible-work-increases-post-pandemic-not-everyone

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide (Dutch Version)

Bedankt voor het deelnemen aan dit interview en je tijd. Mijn naam is Elsa Pouw en ik voer onderzoek uit naar de werkwaarden en het welzijn van Generatie Z in de Nederlandse digitale werkomgeving. Het interview zal ongeveer 45-60 minuten duren. Ons gesprek is vertrouwelijk, en je kunt vragen overslaan of het interview op elk moment beëindigen. Heb je vragen voordat we beginnen? Geef je toestemming om deel te nemen aan dit interview en om ons gesprek op te nemen voor onderzoeksdoeleinden?

Introductie

"Om te beginnen, kun je jezelf even kort voorstellen (naam, leeftijd)?"

"Kun je in het kort omschrijven waar je werkt en wat jouw verantwoordelijkheden zijn?"

Sectie 1: Werkwaarden

Ik wil graag beginnen met jouw kijk op wat je belangrijk vindt in je werk en wat jou motiveert.

Algemene werkwaarden

"Kun je me vertellen wat voor jou echt belangrijk is in een baan? Wat zorgt ervoor dat je je prettig voelt of gemotiveerd bent?"

- Vervolgvraag: "Waarom zijn deze waarden belangrijk voor jou?"
- Vervolgvraag: "Hoe beïnvloeden deze werkwaarden je motivatie en welzijn in je werk?"

"Zijn je werkwaarden in de loop van de tijd veranderd? Zo ja, hoe?"

Specifieke verkenning (indien nodig):

"Op een schaal van 1 tot 5, hoe belangrijk vind je de volgende aspecten van werk? Waarom?"

- Intrinsieke waarden: DinGen Zoals jezelf uitdrukken, creativiteit of betekenisvol werk.
- Extrinsieke waarden: Zaken zoals salaris, werkzekerheid of promotiekansen.

- Sociale waarden: Relaties met collega's, een gevoel van gemeenschap.
- Altruïstische waarden: Positieve impact op de maatschappij of milieu.

Sectie 2: Welzijn en mentale gezondheid

Nu wil ik graag praten over jouw welzijn en mentale gezondheid op het werk. Welzijn omvat zowel fysieke als mentale gezondheid, en gaat over hoe tevreden en gezond je je voelt in je werkomgeving. Voor veel mensen kan werk zowel een positieve als een negatieve invloed hebben op hun welzijn.

Algemeen Welzijn

"Hoe zou je jouw algehele welzijn op het werk beschrijven?"

- Vervolgvraag: "Zijn er specifieke aspecten van je baan die een positieve of negatieve invloed hebben op je welzijn?"

Mentale Uitdagingen

"Heb je weleens stress ervaren op je werk? Zo ja, wat denk je dat de oorzaak hiervan is?"

- Vervolgvraag: "Ervaar je nog steeds stress op het werk?"
- Vervolgvraag: "Hoe ga je meestal om met werk gerelateerde stress?"

Impact van Werk op Mentale Gezondheid

"In hoeverre heeft je werk invloed op je mentale gezondheid buiten werktijd?"

- Vervolgvraag: "Zijn er specifieke beleidsmaatregelen of praktijken waarvan je denkt dat ze jouw mentale welzijn op het werk zouden verbeteren?"

Sectie 3: Voorkeuren voor grensbeheer (segmentatie vs. Integratie)

Ik wil nu graag praten over hoe je de balans tussen werk en privéleven beheert. In de literatuur heet dit de Boundary Management Theory waarin vaak wordt gesproken over 'segmentatie' en 'integratie'. Segmentatie houdt in dat mensen graag hun werk en privé strikt van elkaar scheiden en werken alleen binnen vaste uren. Integratie houdt in dat mensen werk en privé wat meer door elkaar mengen en vinden het bijvoorbeeld geen probleem om werk e-mails te beantwoorden buiten werktijd. Ik ben benieuwd hoe jij deze balans ervaart.

Voorkeur voor Werk-Privé Grensbeheer

"Hoe ervaar jij de balans tussen werk en privé in je leven? Probeer je werk en privé gescheiden te houden, of meng je ze liever?"

- Vervolgvraag: "Kun je een voorbeeld geven van een moment waarop je deze balans goed of juist minder goed kon behouden?"

Uitdagingen bij Grensbeheer

"Welke uitdagingen ervaar je bij het onderhouden van jouw voorkeur voor werk-privé balans?"

"Voel je druk om ook buiten werktijd werk gerelateerde zaken af te handelen? Kun je een voorbeeld noemen?"

- Vervolgvraag: "Wat voor invloed heeft dit op jouw motivatie en welzijn?"

Sectie 4: Digitale connectiviteit en de impact daarvan

We zijn nu bij de laatste sectie gekomen dat gaat over de digitale connectiviteit. Dit verwijst naar de mate waarin je via digitale middelen, zoals e-mail en berichtenapps, bereikbaar bent voor werk. In de huidige digitale werkomgeving kan dit zowel positief als negatief zijn. Sommige mensen waarderen de flexibiliteit, terwijl anderen het als belastend ervaren omdat het moeilijker is om 'uit' te schakelen. Ik wil graag weten hoe jij deze digitale verbondenheid ervaart.

Effecten van Digitale Connectiviteit

"Hoe ervaar jij het om digitaal bereikbaar te zijn voor werk?"

- Vervolgvraag: "Vind je dit voordelig of uitdagend?"
- Vervolgvraag: "Kun je een moment beschrijven waarin digitale verbondenheid je werk-privé balans hebben beïnvloed?"

Beleid en Praktijken met Betrekking tot Connectiviteit

"Heeft jouw organisatie een beleid omtrent digitale verbondenheid buiten werktijd?"

- Vervolgvraag: "Denk je dat dergelijk beleid jouw werk-privé balans en welzijn zou verbeteren?"

Autonomie in het Beheren van Connectiviteit

"In hoeverre voel je dat je zelf kunt bepalen wanneer je bereikbaar bent?"

- Vervolgvraag: " Wat doet dit met je motivatie of stressniveau?"
- Vervolgvraag: "Zijn er specifieke tools, gewoontes of afspraken die jou helpen om hiermee om te gaan?"

Aanvullende verbindende vraag

"Hoe denk je dat jouw werkwaarden en hoe je werk en privé balanceert (bijvoorbeeld gescheiden houden of combineren) samen jouw welzijn beïnvloeden in een digitale werkomgeving?"

- Vervolgvraag: "Kun je een voorbeeld geven van hoe digitale aspecten van je werk, zoals constant bereikbaar zijn, hierbij een rol spelen?"

Afsluitende vragen

"Als je iets aan je werkomgeving zou kunnen veranderen, wat zou je dan veranderen om je welzijn te verbeteren?"

- Vervolgvraag: "Hoe zouden deze veranderingen je motivatie en betrokkenheid bij het werk beïnvloeden?"

"Is er nog iets anders dat je wilt delen over je ervaringen met betrekking tot werkwaarden, welzijn, of werk-privé grenzen?"

Hartelijk dank voor je tijd en inzichten. Ik zorg ervoor dat je antwoorden vertrouwelijk blijven en ik zal je informeren zodra de onderzoeksresultaten beschikbaar zijn. Heb je nog laatste vragen of opmerkingen?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form (Dutch Version)

Doel van het onderzoek

Dit onderzoek wordt geleid door Elsa Pouw.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is om te begrijpen hoe de werkwaarden van Generatie Z invloed hebben op hun welzijn in digitale werkplekken in Nederland. Het onderzoek richt zich op werkwaarden, work-life balance, en grensbeheer in de context van een verbonden digitale werkomgeving.

Hoe gaan we te werk?

U neemt deel aan een onderzoek waarin we gegevens verzamelen via een semi-gestructureerd interview. Het interview zal ongeveer 60 minuten duren en zal zich richten op de volgende onderwerpen:

1. Werkwaarden: Wat u belangrijk vindt in uw werk, zoals extrinsieke beloningen (salaris, promoties), intrinsieke aspecten (zelfexpressie, creativiteit), altruïstische waarden (maatschappelijke impact), en sociale waarden (positieve werkrelaties).

2. Welzijn en mentale gezondheid: Uw ervaringen met werk-gerelateerde stress, werktevredenheid, en de invloed van werk op uw mentale gezondheid en algehele welzijn.

3. Werk-privé balans (Boundary Management): Uw voorkeuren voor het scheiden of combineren van werk en privé (segmentatie vs. integratie) en de uitdagingen die u hierin ervaart.

4. Digitale connectiviteit: De mate waarin digitale verbondenheid (zoals e-mail en berichtenapps) uw werk-privé balans beïnvloedt, en uw autonomie hierin.

We zullen informatie vergaren door u te interviewen en uw antwoorden op te nemen via een audio-opname. Er zal ook een transcript worden uitgewerkt van het interview. De verzamelde onderzoeksgegevens worden uitsluitend ten behoeve van dit onderzoek gebruikt en gedeeld met de Universiteit Twente, Nederland.

Potentiële risico's en ongemakken

- Er zijn geen fysieke, juridische of economische risico's verbonden aan uw deelname aan deze studie. U hoeft geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt uw deelname op elk gewenst moment stoppen.

- Tijdens uw deelname aan deze studie kunnen u vragen worden gesteld die u als (zeer) persoonlijk kunt ervaren, vanwege de gevoelige aard van het onderwerp. Wij stellen deze vragen enkel en alleen in het belang van het onderzoek. U hoeft echter geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt uw deelname op elk gewenst moment stoppen.

Vergoeding

U ontvangt voor deelname aan dit onderzoek geen financiële vergoeding.

Vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens

Wij doen er alles aan uw privacy zo goed mogelijk te beschermen. Er wordt op geen enkele wijze vertrouwelijke informatie of persoonsgegevens van of over u naar buiten gebracht, waardoor iemand u zal kunnen herkennen. Voordat onze onderzoeksgegevens naar buiten gebracht worden, worden uw gegevens zoveel mogelijk geanonimiseerd, tenzij u in ons toestemmingsformulier expliciet toestemming heeft gegeven voor het vermelden van uw naam, bijvoorbeeld bij een quote.

In een publicatie zullen anonieme gegevens of pseudoniemen worden gebruikt. De audio-opnamen, formulieren en andere documenten die in het kader van deze studie worden gemaakt of verzameld, worden opgeslagen op een beveiligde locatie bij de Universiteit Twente en op de beveiligde (versleutelde) gegevensdragers van de onderzoekers. De onderzoeksgegevens worden bewaard voor een periode van 10 jaar. Uiterlijk na het verstrijken van deze termijn zullen de gegevens worden verwijderd of worden geanonimiseerd zodat ze niet meer te herleiden zijn tot een persoon. De onderzoeksgegevens worden indien nodig (bijvoorbeeld voor een controle op wetenschappelijke integriteit) en alleen in anonieme vorm ter beschikking gesteld aan personen buiten de onderzoeksgroep.

Tot slot is dit onderzoek beoordeeld en goedgekeurd door de ethische commissie van de faculteit BMS (domain Humanities & Social Sciences).

Vrijwilligheid

Deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. U kunt als deelnemer uw medewerking aan het onderzoek te allen tijde stoppen, of weigeren dat uw gegevens voor het onderzoek mogen worden gebruikt, zonder opgaaf van redenen. Het stopzetten van deelname heeft geen nadelige gevolgen voor u of de eventueel reeds ontvangen vergoeding. Als u tijdens het onderzoek besluit om uw medewerking te staken, zullen de gegevens die u reeds hebt verstrekt tot het moment van intrekking van de toestemming in het onderzoek gebruikt worden. Wilt u stoppen met het onderzoek, of heeft u vragen en/of klachten? Neem dan contact op met de onderzoeksleider.

Elsa Pouw

e.e.c.pouw@student.utwente.nl

Voor bezwaren met betrekking tot de opzet en of uitvoering van het onderzoek kunt u zich ook wenden tot de Secretaris van de Ethische Commissie / domein Humanities & Social Sciences van de faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences op de Universiteit Twente via ethicscommittee-hss@utwente.nl. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd vanuit de Universiteit Twente, faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences. Indien u specifieke vragen hebt over de omgang met persoonsgegevens kun u deze ook richten aan de Functionaris Gegevensbescherming van de UT door een mail te sturen naar dpo@utwente.nl.

Tot slot heeft u het recht een verzoek tot inzage, wijziging, verwijdering of aanpassing van uw gegevens te doen bij de Onderzoeksleider.

Door dit toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen erken ik het volgende:

1. Ik ben voldoende geïnformeerd over het onderzoek door middel van een separaat informatieblad. Ik heb het informatieblad gelezen en heb daarna de mogelijkheid gehad vragen te kunnen stellen. Deze vraGen Zijn voldoende beantwoord.

2. Ik neem vrijwillig deel aan dit onderzoek. Er is geen expliciete of impliciete dwang voor mij om aan dit onderzoek deel te nemen. Het is mij duidelijk dat ik deelname aan het onder- zoek op elk moment, zonder opgaaf van reden, kan beëindigen. Ik hoef een vraag niet te beantwoorden als ik dat niet wil.

Naast het bovenstaande is het hieronder mogelijk voor verschillende onderdelen van het onderzoek specifiek toestemming te geven. U kunt er per onderdeel voor kiezen wel of geen toestemming te geven. Indien u voor alles toestemming wil geven, is dat mogelijk via de aanvinkbox onderaan de stellingen.

- Ik geef toestemming om de gegevens die gedurende het onderzoek bij mij worden verzameld te verwerken.

    Ja   Nee

- Ik geef toestemming om tijdens het interview opnames (geluid) te maken en deze uit te werken in een transcript.

    Ja   Nee

- Ik geef toestemming om mijn antwoorden te gebruiken voor quotes in publicaties (anoniem).

    Ja   Nee

- Ik geef toestemming om de verzamelde onderzoeksdata te bewaren en te gebruiken voor toekomstig onderzoek.

    Ja   Nee

Naam Deelnemer: **Naam Onderzoeker:**

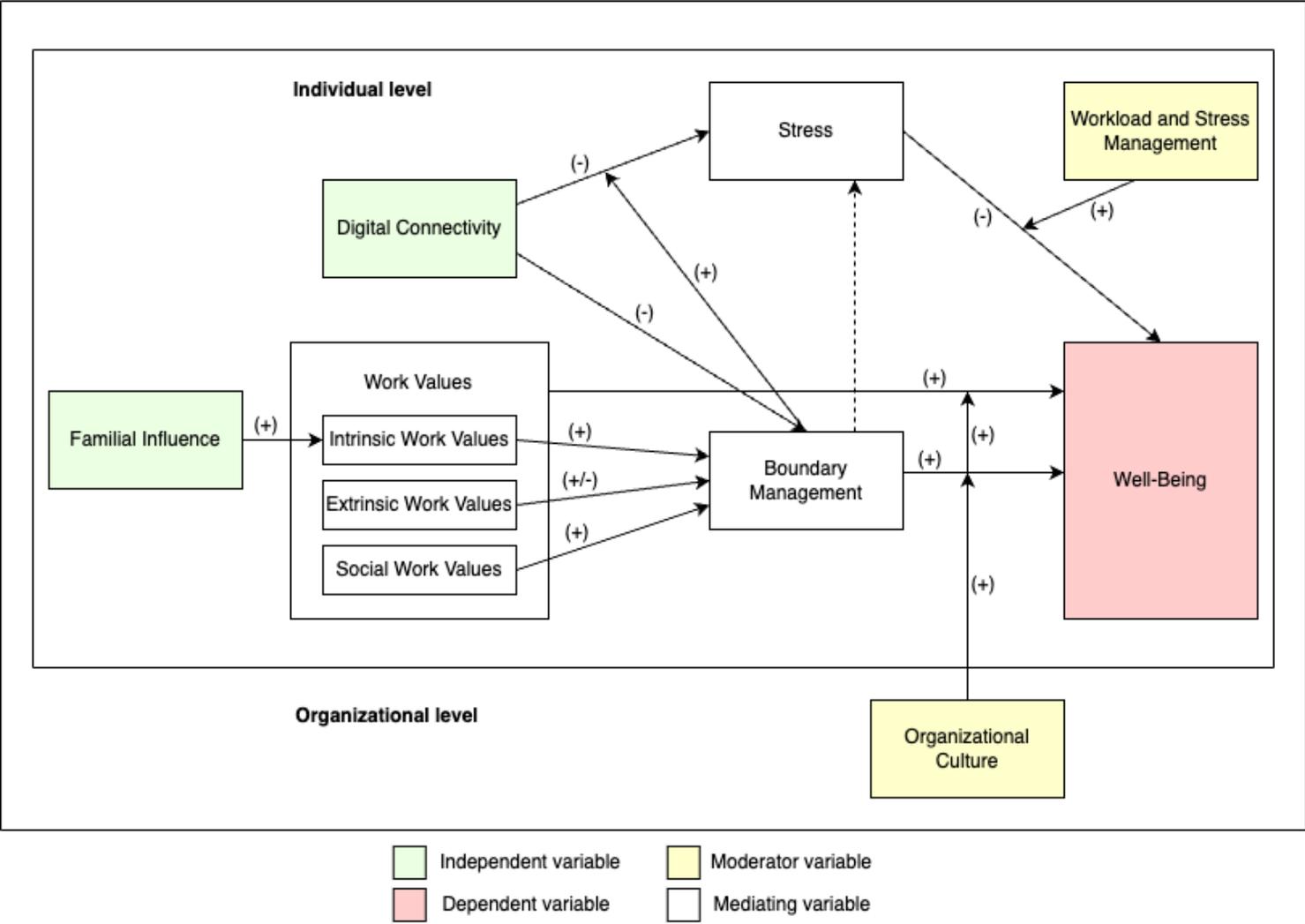Handtekening: Handtekening:

Datum: Datum:

Appendix C: Conceptual Model

Figure 2. *Conceptual Model*