Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov
Series VII: Social Sciences • Law • Vol. 19(68) No. 1 – 2026
https://doi.org/10.31926/but.ssl.2026.19.68.1.4

MEASURING WORK-LIFE INTERFERENCE AMONG GENERATION "Z" STUDENTS AND THE IMPACT ON THEM

Ioana Anisa ATUDOREI[1]

Abstract: *The article presents the results of research that aimed to measure the balance between the personal and professional life of students from the "Z" generation in order to understand the challenges they face during the"r educational journey. Currently, a significant number of students divide their time resources between academic requirements, personal life and in some cases, professional activities carried out part-time or full-time. The choice is influenced by the need to ensure the financial resources necessary for maintenance, the desire to gain experience or in some cases for both reasons. The results of the research indicate the influence of the faculty profile on the balance between work and the personal life of students.*

Key words: *generation "Z", personal life, professional life, work-life balance.*

1. Introduction

The study was conducted at the "Transilvania" University in Brașov, to identify potential problems faced by students who study offline, full-time. They have course, seminar and laboratory activities from Monday to Friday. Unlike the period of the "X" generation, the current regulations of the "Z" generation are currently different. The place that the student obtained upon admission to the faculty remained the same until its completion for the "X" generation. Therefore, the possibility of moving from an unpaid place to a paid place was impossible. The negative side of this decision that was abandoned consists in the possibility of decreasing the involvement of students in learning more in order to be exempted from the amount of the fee, and the positive side was generated by the comfort of keeping the unpaid place by those who occupied it. This aspect could encourage cooperation between students, as well as a feeling of well-being, because they received support from more prepared colleagues. Also, the schedule is not compact, which can lead to free time that cannot be used optimally.

[1] *Transilvania* University of Braşov, ioana.atudorei@unitbv.ro, corresponding author

The fact that today, Generation Z students, depending on their grades, can lose or gain a budgeted place may lead to a decrease in cooperation, because helping colleagues can be perceived as a possible threat to their place and financial security for those who do not pay for college. The dropout rate from university studies has increased in Generation Z compared to Generation X. This phenomenon can be corroborated with the lack of predictability of those who obtain a place without payment, and due to competition, they move to a place with payment and cannot be financially supported by their family. In this case, in order not to abandon college, students choose to get a job in order to be able to pay for their studies. Time resources decrease even more, and their preparation may be affected. These consequences can also lead to a decrease in the balance between professional/student and personal life.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Generational affiliation

The inclusion of individuals in a generation is done due to their homogeneity. The Americans Strauss and Howe (1991) concluded that understanding intergenerational differences is beneficial for managers to adapt to the characteristics and expectations they have. Although there are similarities, the differences must be identified in order to improve the relationship with the business environment, by understanding the specificity and aligning with their needs. According to Raiu (2021), depending on the period in which they were born, individuals were included in one of the following generations: Silent Generation (those born between 1928-1945), Generation Baby-Boomers (those born between 1946-1964), Generation X (those born between 1965-1980), Generation Y (those born between 1981-1996), Generation Z (those born between 1997-2012), Generation Alpha (born from 2013 to the present).

2.2. Generational differences

Compared to students belonging to generation “X”, those of generation “Z” benefit from extensive access to digital resources, an aspect that determines significant changes in their way of relating to the learning process and in the behaviors associated with it (Gallagher, M. S., Lamb, J., & Bayne, S. , (2016); Martindale, T. and Dowdy, M. (2010). They have courses uploaded to institutional platforms by teachers, which they can consult even in the absence of attending classes, also benefiting from additional opportunities to optimize the communication process with both teachers and colleagues, through institutional addresses [(Du, X., Zhang, M., Shelton, B. E., & Hung, J. L. (2022)]. However, recent literature brings a change of emphasis: we are no longer talking only about the separation of the two spheres, but also about their harmonious integration, especially in the case of Generation Z, for whom personal life and work frequently overlap due to technology (Kossek et al., 2021). According to studies, the imbalance between professional and personal life negatively influences the physical and mental health of individuals (Borowiec and Drygas, 2022). Other authors focusing on work-life balance in organizational culture, rewards, organizational commitment,

turnover intention, and using kakao talk multiprofile are Cheong, S.I., Kim, J.Y., & Cho, J.H. (2023).

Generation Z is considered different from the previous ones, because the specific characteristics of Generation X consist of that segment of the population that includes individuals born between 1968-1979. To better understand the differences of Generation Z, it is important to know that unlike Generation Z, members of Generation X are children, who grew up in a period of financial, family and societal insecurity, in Romania the job market being stagnant, with a reduction in the number of companies and limited salary opportunities. Individuals of this generation grew up in homes where both parents worked or in single-parent families due to major divorces and, as such, became children who were forced to work for themselves.

They aspire more than previous generations to achieve a balance between work and personal life and are more independent, more autonomous. Both in the family and in the relationship with their employers, they are more loyal. As "digital natives", young people from generation "Z" combine pragmatism with autonomy of learning and decision, in a context marked by economic crises and geopolitical uncertainty (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Twenge, 2020). They speak openly about mental health and request institutional support, normalizing access to counseling and prevention programs (WHO, 2022). In relation to work, the priority is the harmonization of professional life with personal time, family and passions; the authenticity and social responsibility of the employer matter substantially in the hiring decision, as do continuous learning opportunities (Deloitte, 2023). According to the global survey conducted by Deloitte in 2025 on a sample of over 23,000 respondents, Generation Z focuses on the value of the job and the attitude of the organization's leadership, on work-life balance in organizational culture, rewards, organizational commitment, and urnover intention.

According to the results, Generation "Z" and Millennials focus on growth and learning, while pursuing money, meaning and well-being. Expectations in relation to management reflect the desire for managers to provide guidance, inspiration and mentorship, not just overseeing daily tasks.

Studies indicate that poor work-life balance has a negative impact on physical and mental health (Borowiec and Drygas, 2022). Pookaiyaudom (2015) conducted a study on Chulalongkorn students enrolled in Thai and international education programs in which he assessed their perceptions of understanding and awareness of the concept of well-being and emphasized the importance of the role of work-life balance (WLB). Following the author's research, he emphasizes the importance of achieving WLB through extracurricular activities, as these have a positive impact on life, as well as on the development of knowledge and skills in the educational system that are important for the labor market. There is no unanimously accepted period for the most recent generation, Generation Z, either, with authors reporting 1992 or even 1990 as the year of birth of the oldest representatives of this generation (Iorgulescu, 2016) and authors considering those born between 1995 and 2009 as belonging to Generation Z (Goh, & Okumus, 2020), but there are also authors who consider the year 2000 as the starting point for Generation Z. Some call Generation Z the "iGeneration" and refer to those born from 1992 to the present (Hart, 2017), other authors frame the generation as being

born from the mid-1990s with the end dates for this generation usually reported until the early 2010s (Chicca, & Shellenbarger, 2018; Campbell, S. M., Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K., 2017) or around 2012 (Chicca, & Shellenbarger, 2018; Shatto, & Erwin, 2016; Turner, 2015; Twenge, 2017).

3. Study Objectives and Hypotheses

This study aims to investigate:

1. The impact of university activities and tasks on personal life.
2. Analyze how students felt in the last two weeks based on the profile of the faculty attended.
3. Comparative analysis between the demands felt by students who work part-time or full-time and those who do not work.

The study was built based on seven main hypotheses:

(1) College demands put their mark on personal/family demands;
(2) The time allotted for college makes it difficult to fulfill personal/family responsibilities;
(3) I am unable to do the things I want to do at home (personal activities) because of college demands;
(4) College is making me stressed and I can no longer fulfill my personal/family duties;
(5) Due to college activities, I have to change my plans related to personal/family activities;
(6) The profile of the faculty they attend influences how students felt in the last two weeks;
(7) If students work part-time or full-time in parallel with attending faculty, then the perceived level of demand increases compared to those who do not work.

4. Data collection and method

The research was conducted using the sociological survey method. The instrument used is the structured questionnaire. Two scales were used: the work-family conflict scale and the family-work scale (Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian, 1996, p.113).
Data collection was carried out through the Google Forms platform between 15.05.2025 and 15.06.2025 to include the period in which students attend college, but also the period in which they prepare for exams (session period).

The population studied is represented by students of Transylvania University of Brașov who are taking undergraduate courses. The sample includes students who attend full-time education. Both students who do not pay college fees and those who do pay them were included. The sampling is non-probabilistic. The selection of respondents was based on their availability to contribute to this research. The unit of analysis is represented by the students who answered the questions in the questionnaire, and the sampling unit is the faculty at which they study. Depending on the profile of the faculties, they were grouped into faculties with a technical-engineering, socio-human and vocational profile.

The items of these dimensions were rated on a 7 step Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to the "Strongly Disagree" level and 7 to the "Strongly Agree" level. The socio-demographic data of the participants were collected: gender, age, if they work in parallel with attending college, the type of work schedule (fixed or flexible, part-time or full-time).

The minimum age of respondents is 18 years, and the maximum is 45 years. The mean age is 20.93, the average is 21, and the mode is 20. The coefficient of variation is 10.72, which indicates that the population is homogeneous according to the age variable.

5. Results

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 26, based on the 1054 valid responses collected. The respondents have an average age of 21 years (M=21.15). Depending on the faculty they study at, the distribution of students by faculty profile is: technical-engineering field 62.1%), socio-human field 0.6% and vocational field 7.3%. In terms of gender distribution the majority of the respondents are female (62%), followed by male (38%); 22.2% are employed, 73.5% do not work, and 4.3% refuse to answer or do not know; of those who work, 14.7% can choose their work schedule because they have flexibility, 16.5% cannot choose their work schedule, 11.9% can sometimes choose their work schedule, and 56.9% do not know or cannot appreciate because it was not the case; 26.5% had and currently have a study or merit scholarship, 23.6% had, but currently no longer have a study or merit scholarship, 48.6% did not have a scholarship, and 1.3% do not know or cannot appreciate.

For each dimension all of which had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of over 0.7, indicating good internal consistency. Most of the mean recorded for these dimensions are above 4 (4,26; 4,24; 4,22; 4,02; 4,41 on a scale of 1 to 7) (Tabel 1).

Table 1

Descriptive indicators for the dimensions of the scale measuring the interference between the professional and personal lives of students

Scale Dimensions	Mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation
Q2.1. College demands put their mark on personal/family demands (α=0.87)	4,26	1,66	38,96
Q2.2. The time allotted for college makes it difficult to fulfill personal/family responsibilities (α=0.81)	4,24	1,64	38,49
Q2.3. I am unable to do the things I want to do at home (personal activities) because of college demands (α=0.81)	4,22	1,67	39,57
Q2.4. College is making me stressed and I can no longer fulfill my personal/family duties (α=0.82)	4,02	1,62	40,29
Q2.5. Due to college activities, I have to change my plans related to personal/family activities (α=0.83)	4,41	1,61	36,50

These results indicate a slightly above average impact of professional tasks on personal ones, the highest value being for the variable "Due to college activities, I have to change my plans related to personal/family activities" (Mean value = 4.41). The results show that for each variable that measured the impact of the professional plan on the personal one, for students the professional plan, the faculty, becomes a priority in the allocation of resources.

The value of the coefficients of variation for four measured variables is below 40%, which shows that the series is homogeneous, and the respondents do not have diametrically opposed opinions. For the variable "College is making me stressed and I can no longer fulfill my personal/family duties" the coefficient of variation slightly exceeds the threshold value of 40%, with a value of 40.29% which indicates low heterogeneity.

For each dimension measuring the impact of the personal plan on the personal one, Cronbach's Alpha is above 0.7, so there is good internal consistency. For four variables the mean is below 4, and for one the mean value is 4.06 (on a scale of 1 to 7) (Table 2).

Table 2

Descriptive indicators for the dimensions of the scale measuring the interference between the personal and professional lives of students

Scale Dimensions	Mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation
Q3.1. Personal/household demands affect my academic demands (α=0.80)	3,64	1,61	44,23
Q3.2. The time devoted to personal plans/household activities makes it difficult to fulfill academic responsibilities. (α=0.79)	3,55	1,61	45,35
Q3.3. I cannot do the personal/household things I want to do because of academic demands. (α=0.86)	4,06	1,68	41,37
Q3.4. Personal/household tasks cause me stress and I can no longer fulfill my academic tasks. (α=0.79)	3,40	1,60	47,05
Q3.5. Because of my personal/household activities, I have to change my academic-related plans. (α=0.80)	3,36	1,63	48,51

Analysis of variables "Q2.1. College demands put their mark on personal/family demands" and "Q3.1. Personal/household demands affect my academic demands", confirms hypothesis (1), as it shows that as college demands increase, the impact on personal/household tasks also increases, but the correlation relationship is of low intensity (p=0,00 and Gamma = 0,26).

The correlation between "Q2.2. The time allotted for college makes it difficult to fulfill personal/family responsibilities and "Q3.2. The time devoted to personal plans/household activities makes it difficult to fulfill academic responsibilities" indicates a greater allocation of time to professional activities, to the detriment of personal ones (p=0.00, and Gamma = 0.26). The result confirms hypothesis (2).

The relationship between variables "Q2.3. I am unable to do the things I want to do at home (personal activities) because of college demands" and Q3.3. "I cannot do the personal/household things I want to do because of academic demands" shows a medium to high impact of academic activities on personal ones (p=0.00, Gamma = 0.58), which confirms hypothesis (3).

From the analysis of the variables "Q2.4. College is making me stressed and I can no longer fulfill my personal/family duties" & "Q3.4. Personal/household tasks cause me stress and I can no longer fulfill my academic tasks" it appears that the academic plan generates more stress on students than the stress generated by the personal plan on the professional one, but the correlation is quite low (p=0.00, Gamma = 0.33), thus confirming hypothesis (4).

The correlation between "Q.2.5. Due to college activities, I have to change my plans related to personal/family activities" and "Q3.5. Because of my personal/household activities, I have to change my academic-related plans" shows that there is a directly proportional relationship between the variables, but the intensity is low (p=0.00, Gamma = 0.27). The results confirm hypothesis (5).

The analysis of variables that measure the association between the student's request to the faculty "I feel overworked at university" and the profile of the faculty attended (technical-engineering profile field socio-humanistic field vocational field does not confirm hypothesis (6).

To verify hypothesis (7), the association between the degree of demand perceived by the student due to the tasks he has to perform for the faculty and the employment status (whether he is employed part-time or full-time) was made. According to the Chi-Square test, there is no association between the two variables (p=0.08), so the hypothesis is not confirmed.

6. Discussion

The professional plan (which is associated in this research with the quality of students because they have to participate in courses, seminars, laboratories, learn, do projects and papers, but also practice during the academic year) has a higher impact on the personal plan, compared to the influence that the personal plan has on the professional one, which partially confirms the researchers' results.

They claim that the WIF (interference of the professional plan) is three times more present on the personal plan than the FIW (interference of the personal plan on the professional one (Higgins et al., 1992; Frone et al., 1992; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Gutek et al., 1997). The results are interesting because, although students have individual assignments, but also in teams and in many situations these are done at home or on the university campus, so the work is "taken home", they do not feel an impact as high as that of people who are employed and work in a space provided by employers. The mention is important because the aforementioned research was conducted before the Covid 19 Pandemic when the percentage of those who worked from home was very small or for many jobs there was no idea and possibility of working from home as it is today. There is a possibility that this will produce changes at the perceptual level, but

also at the practical level so that the results will record significant results. Therefore, the discussion of this research opens new opportunities for analyzing the interference between the personal and professional spheres.

The study can be extended to measure well-being on a professional, social, financial, physical and community level. According to Harter (2002), when these five components are achieved, it can be said that there is well-being. He also mentions that the five elements of well-being are not subject to cultural specificity nor are they valid only for some nations. In this regard, depending on the results, policies can be developed to support students during their educational journey through scholarships and other facilities at the national level. Legislative changes such as: the number and value of scholarships, transportation facilities and others can influence the situation of students by offering or not predictability in relation to the tasks they have assumed. The lack of predictability can be an important determinant in the relationship with studies. The need to procure financial resources to be able to support oneself during the faculty can reduce study time and generate fatigue. The goal of enabling students to achieve their maximum potential should be a social and educational goal. In this regard, a balance must be achieved between the personal and professional levels, which according to Sibold and Berg (2006) determines high performance at both the individual and organizational levels.

7. Conclusions

The results of the research conducted on students show that there is a slight impact of the professional plan on the personal one in the case of students, but they do not confirm a three times greater impact of the WIF on the FIW, as shown by the research conducted on employees. However, the research has some limitations, especially related to the selection of respondents that was carried out based on availability. This aspect may influence the research results because we can assume that students who work full-time may have a lower degree of attendance of courses, seminars, laboratories, which reduced their inclusion in the sample. There is also the possibility that among the working students, more who have a flexible or part-time schedule will be included in the sample. Although the research sample was weighted according to the number of students in each faculty according to the Rector's report that includes the number of students in the bachelor's degree cycle, their selection was not made based on a statistical step. Therefore, the research results cannot be generalized to the research universe. In conclusion, the results are conclusive only for the studied population.

This study may open up new avenues for future research on a sample that includes more diverse socio-demographic categories based on the selection of students based on a sampling frame. In this way, more diverse socio-demographic categories would be included, which would allow for more robust results and lead to a better understanding of the interference between the personal and professional plans. The impact of multiple roles (employed student status, unemployed student status, and personal plan) could also be studied.

Another aspect that deserves to be studied is the student timetable. This situation is further complicated by the structure of the university timetable, which, not always being compact, generates free time between courses, seminars and laboratories. This situation can lead to a significant underutilization of the available time, to a decrease in efficiency in the use of time resources and can impact the state felt by students. On the other hand, it can be seen as an opportunity that can be used for, socializing, relaxing, eating, doing homework that is done as a team. The role of traveling between different buildings where they have classes and on certain days they have to travel can also be analyzed, because we can assume that this has a beneficial impact or can be disturbing and tiring. The research may open new directions of analysis that may also include legislative proposals that facilitate the situation of employed students.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the students who participated in the data collection activity and made this research possible.

References

Borowiec, A. A., & Drygas, W. (2022). Work–life balance and mental and physical health among Warsaw specialists, managers and entrepreneurs. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *20*(1), 492.

Campbell, S. M., Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2017). Fuzzy but useful constructs: Making sense of the differences between generations. *Work, Aging and Retirement*, *3*(2), 130-139.

Cheong, S. I., Kim, J. Y., & Cho, J. H. (2023). Effect of generation Z's job value on organizational attitudes: Focusing on work-life balance in organizational culture, rewards, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and using kakao talk multiprofile. *Journal of Public Relations*, *27*(1), 41-77.

Chicca, J., & Shellenbarger, T. (2018). Generation Z: Approaches and teaching–learning practices for nursing professional development practitioners. *Journal for nurses in professional development*, *34*(5), 250-256.

Du, X., Zhang, M., Shelton, B. E., & Hung, J. L. (2022). Learning anytime, anywhere: a spatio-temporal analysis for online learning. *Interactive Learning Environments*, *30*(1), 34-48. Frone, M.R., Russell, M., and Cooper, M.L. (1992).

Frone, M.R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M.L. (1992). Antecedents and Outcomes of Work-Family Conflict: Testing a Model of the Work-Family Interface. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77, 65-78.

Gallagher, M. S., Lamb, J., & Bayne, S. (2016). The sonic spaces of online distance learners. In *Place-based spaces for networked learning* (pp. 87-99). Routledge.

Goh, E., & Okumus, F. (2020). Avoiding the hospitality workforce bubble: Strategies to attract and retain generation Z talent in the hospitality workforce. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *33*, 100603. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100603

Greenhaus, J. H., Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 76–88.

Gutek, B.A., Parasuraman, S. & Greenhaus, J.H. (1997). Services and work-and-family life. *Integrating work and family: Challenges and choices for a changing world*, 77-90.

Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L. & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: a meta-analysis. *Journal of applied psychology*, 87(2), 268.

Higgins, C.A., Duxbury, L.E. & Irving, R.H. (1992).Work-family conflict in the dual career family. *Organizational Behavior and Human DecisionProcesses*, 51(1),51-75.

Iorgulescu, M.C. (2016). Generation Z and its perception of work. *Cross-Cultural Management Journal*, *18*(01), 47-54

Kossek, E.E, Gettings, P., Misra, K. (2021). The Future of Flexibility at Work. *Harvard Business Review*, *28*.

Martindale, T., & Dowdy, M. (2010). Personal learning environments. *Emerging technologies in distance education*, *7*(1), 177-193.

Netemeyer, R.G., Boles, J.S., McMurrian, R. (1996). Development and validation of work-family conflict and family-work conflict scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(4), 400–410.

Raiu, S. L. (2021). Generations X, Y and Z on the labor market. Specific characteristics, strategies for involvement in active learning and approaches to the relationship between managers and employees. *Romanian Sociology*, 19(2), 89-121.

Seemiller, C., Grace, M., Dal Bo Campagnolo, P., Mara Da Rosa Alves, I., & Severo De Borba, G. (2019). How generation Z college students prefer to learn: a comparison of US and Brazil students. *Journal of educational research and practice*, *9*(1), 25.

Sibold, J.S. & Berg, K. (2009). *Mood enhancement persists for up to 12 hours following aerobic exercise*. Seattle, WA.

Shatto, B., & Erwin, K. (2016). Moving on from millennials: Preparing for generation Z. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, *47*(6), 253-254. https://doi:10.3928/00220124-20160518-05.

Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (1991). *Generations: The history of America's future, 1584 to 2069*. New York, USA: William Morrow and Company.

Twenge, J. M. (2020). Why increases in adolescent depression may be linked to the technological environment. *Current opinion in psychology*, *32*, 89-94. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2019.06.036

Webograbhy:

https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/human-capital-trends.html

https://www.deloitte.com/ca/en/services/consulting/research/2023-global-human-capital-trends-report.html

https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/issues/work/genz-millennial-survey.html

Other information may be obtained from the address: ioana.atudorei@unitbv.ro