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Employee Performance In The Perspective Of Work-Life Balance And Social Support: A Study On Startup Companies

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Abstract

The growing reliance on technology-based startups in Indonesia has created dynamic work environments where sustaining employee performance remains a challenge, particularly among millennial and Generation Z employees. This study examines the effects of work–life balance and social support on employee performance in Indonesian technology-based startups. Data were collected from 210 millennial and Generation Z employees through a cross-sectional survey and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS–SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The findings show that social support has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, while work–life balance has a positive but weak and marginally significant effect. The model explains 34% of the variance in employee performance and demonstrates adequate predictive relevance. The study contributes to the literature by examining both factors simultaneously in the context of Indonesian technology-based startups, with particular attention to younger employees. Theoretically, the findings extend the Job Demands Resources (JDR) and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) perspectives by highlighting the stronger role of social support in translating workplace resources into employee performance. Practically, startup managers should strengthen supportive work climates through supervisor and peer support, open communication, and organizational care, while integrating work–life balance initiatives with adequate social support to sustain employee performance.

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Keywords: Work–Life Balance, Social Support, Employee Performance, Startup, PLS–SEM

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian startup industry is one of the most dynamic and volatile sectors, characterized by ambitious growth targets, market uncertainty, and high work demands. These conditions have become increasingly complex following the widespread adoption of hybrid work models after the COVID-19 pandemic. In such an environment, maintaining employee performance represents a strategic challenge for management. Attention to factors that support employee well-being and motivation is therefore essential, as human resource performance constitutes an important foundation for organizational sustainability (Al-Azkiya et al., 2024; Pitaloka & Paramita Sofia, 2014).

One factor that has received considerable attention is Work–Life Balance (WLB). Previous studies indicate that WLB is associated with positive employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, mental health, and organizational commitment (Haar & Brougham, 2022)(Badaruddin et al., 2026). However, its direct relationship with employee performance remains inconclusive, particularly in demanding work environments. Some studies suggest that WLB does not directly improve performance but instead operates through employee well-being, engagement, or other psychological mechanisms (Medina-Garrido et al., 2017). This inconsistency suggests that providing work–life flexibility alone may not be sufficient to produce better performance outcomes.

Alongside WLB, social support represents another important factor in sustaining employee performance. Support from supervisors, coworkers, and the organization can help employees cope with work-related stress, strengthen motivation, and facilitate adaptation to changing work demands (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Li et al., 2026; Priyatmika et al., 2025). From the perspective of Perceived Organizational Support (POS), employees who perceive that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being are more likely to develop positive work attitudes and reciprocate through greater effort and performance. This role may be particularly relevant in startups, where collaboration, rapid adaptation, and intensive work demands are common (Chan et al., 2023; Russo et al., 2020).

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) perspective provides a useful theoretical foundation for understanding these relationships. Work–life balance can help employees manage competing work and non-work demands, while social support constitutes an important job resource that can buffer demanding work conditions and foster motivation.

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Although the JD–R framework has been widely applied across various occupational contexts, empirical evidence integrating WLB and social support to explain employee performance in Indonesian technology-based startups remains limited (Mutsaqqof, 2026; Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). Previous studies have more often examined WLB and social support independently, while evidence regarding the direct effect of WLB on performance remains inconsistent. Consequently, it remains unclear whether these two resources provide comparable contributions to employee performance in the highly demanding environment of technology-based startups, particularly in an emerging economy such as Indonesia.

This study addresses this gap by examining WLB and social support simultaneously as complementary resources for explaining employee performance among millennial and Generation Z employees in Indonesian technology-based startups. The study offers a contextual contribution by extending evidence on employee performance to the Indonesian startup ecosystem and a theoretical contribution by applying the JD–R perspective to explain the role of work–life and social resources in a high-demand work environment. More importantly, the study provides empirical insight into the relative importance of these two factors by examining whether social support contributes more strongly to employee performance than WLB. Practically, the findings provide guidance for startup managers to move beyond flexibility-oriented policies by developing a supportive work climate through supervisor support, coworker support, open communication, and organizational care. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effects of work–life balance and social support on employee performance among employees of technology-based startups in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design and a cross-sectional survey. The population comprised employees working in technology-based startups in several major Indonesian cities, including Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) being a millennial or Generation Z employee, (2) working for a technology-based startup, and (3) having a minimum tenure of six months. These criteria were established to ensure that respondents had sufficient experience to evaluate their work–life balance, social support, and performance within the organization.

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A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, of which 210 usable responses were retained for analysis after excluding incomplete responses and responses that did not meet the screening criteria. The final response rate was 84%. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Work–Life Balance (WLB) construct was measured using three items adapted from (Haar & Brougham, 2022), social support was measured using three items based on (Kurtessis et al., 2017) and employee performance was measured using three items adapted from (Pitaloka & Paramita Sofia, 2014). The wording of the measurement items was adjusted to the Indonesian startup context while maintaining the meaning of the original constructs.

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS–SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The analysis consisted of two stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated to assess indicator reliability and construct validity using outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and rho_A. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), while multicollinearity was examined using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) (Hair et al., 2021). Second, the structural model was assessed through path coefficients, t-values, p-values, and 95% confidence intervals obtained from bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples. The analysis also examined the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) to evaluate the explanatory and predictive performance of the model. SRMR was reported as a supplementary model fit indicator. To assess potential common method bias (CMB), procedural and statistical approaches were considered. Procedurally, the questionnaire was designed to provide clear and concise items and assure respondents of the confidentiality of their responses. Statistically, common method bias was assessed using full collinearity VIF, with values below the recommended threshold indicating the absence of substantial common method bias. The conceptual model of the study is presented in Figure 1.

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Figure 1. Research Model

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The measurement model was first evaluated to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs. As shown in Table 1, all indicator loadings exceeded 0.70 and were statistically significant. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were greater than 0.50, and Composite Reliability (CR) values were above 0.80, thus meeting the criteria for convergent validity and internal consistency. In addition, the HTMT ratios across constructs were below 0.85, indicating adequate discriminant validity, while the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all indicators were below 3.0, confirming the absence of multicollinearity. These findings demonstrate that the measurement model satisfied the requirements of reliability and validity.

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Table 1. Measurement Model Results

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	CR	rho_A	VIF
Work–Life Balance	WLB1	0.82	0.65	0.86	0.84	2.1
	WLB2	0.79				2.0
	WLB3	0.81				2.2
Social Support	SS1	0.84	0.68	0.87	0.85	2.3
	SS2	0.87				2.1
	SS3	0.80				2.4
Employee Performance	EP1	0.85	0.71	0.88	0.86	2.5
	EP2	0.83				2.2
	EP3	0.88				2.3

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was analyzed to examine the hypothesized relationships between latent constructs. The results, presented in Table 3, show that Social Support significantly predicted Employee Performance ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$) with a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.18$). In contrast, Work–Life Balance had a weaker and only marginally significant effect on Employee Performance ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.052$, $f^2 = 0.03$). The model explained 34% of the variance in Employee Performance ($R^2 = 0.34$), and predictive relevance was supported with a Q^2 value of 0.22.

Table 2. Structural Model Results

Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI	f²	Q²	R²
Work Life Balance → Performance	0.12	0.06	1.95	0.052	[-0.01; 0.24]	0.03		
Social Support → Performance	0.39	0.07	5.57	<0.001	[0.25; 0.52]	0.18		
Employee Performance (R²)							0.22	0.34

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The overall model fit was further assessed using goodness-of-fit indices. The results indicated that the model achieved an acceptable fit, with an SRMR value of 0.064 (below the 0.08 threshold) and an NFI value of 0.92, suggesting that the structural model provides a satisfactory representation of the data. To address potential methodological concerns, common method bias (CMB) was also tested using several diagnostics. Harman's single-factor test revealed that the first factor accounted for only 31% of the variance, which is below the 50% threshold, while full collinearity VIF values for all constructs were below 3.0. These findings confirm that common method bias was not a significant issue in this study.

Finally, the results of the PLS–SEM analysis are illustrated in Figure 3, which presents the path coefficients and the explained variance (R^2) of the endogenous construct. As displayed in the figure, Social Support had a stronger and significant path to Employee Performance, whereas Work–Life Balance had a weaker and statistically nonsignificant path. This visual representation aligns with the statistical findings in Table 3, further confirming the robustness of the proposed research model.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that social support has a significant influence on employee performance, while work-life balance has a weak and only marginally significant effect. This finding confirms that the support employees receive, both from superiors and coworkers, serves as a crucial resource for improving performance. Social support allows employees to feel grateful, reduces stress levels, and increases work motivation. This aligns with the findings of (Grace & Setiawan, 2025), who asserted that social support can enhance employees' sense of continuity, resilience, and overall performance. Conversely, the effect of work-life balance on performance is relatively weak. These results indicate that while work-life balance contributes to job satisfaction and individual well-being, its impact on performance achievement is not always directly visible (Badaruddin et al., 2026). Research by (F. A. Kurniawan & Arestia, 2025) also shows that work-life balance often contributes more to employee psychological aspects than to quantitative performance. Therefore, while work-life balance is important, it is not always the primary determinant of employee performance in the startup sector.

This finding reinforces the phenomenon of younger generations in the workforce, particularly millennials and Gen Z in Indonesian startups, who value a collaborative and supportive work environment. An environment with strong social support has been shown to be more effective in boosting performance than simply maintaining work-life

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balance. This aligns with the findings of (I. Kurniawan & Erdiansyah, 2023; Nardi & Ginting, 2025), who found that organizational support, job satisfaction, and commitment play a significant mediating role in improving the performance of younger employees. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the existing research on the influence of social support and work-life balance on performance in the startup context. While most previous research (Agung Prasetyo & Tri Wijayati Wardoyo, 2023; Handayani & Soliha, 2020) has focused primarily on formal organizations and large corporations, this study provides a new perspective in the context of technology-based startup organizations (Pandya, 2024). Furthermore, the use of SEM–PLS analysis in this study strengthens the validity of the results by simultaneously testing the measurement and structural models.

This research also has important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it expands understanding of the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory by demonstrating that social support, as a job resource, plays a dominant role in improving performance, compared to work-life balance (Dello Russo et al., 2020; Hobfoll et al., 2018). These findings also reinforce the literature on Perceived Organizational Support (POS), which emphasizes the importance of perceived support in shaping employee commitment and performance (Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2024). Practically, these findings emphasize the importance of creating a supportive work environment. Startups are advised to develop an organizational culture that fosters collaboration, provides open communication, and strengthens leadership that cares about employee needs. This strategy will not only improve employee performance but also strengthen employee loyalty and retention, especially among millennials and Gen Z. Meanwhile, policies related to work-life balance still require attention, but focusing solely on work is not sufficient; they need to be combined with efforts to strengthen social support for greater performance benefits (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

Overall, this study confirms that social support is a more decisive strategic factor in improving employee performance than work-life balance. These results not only reinforce previous findings but also broaden theoretical understanding in the context of startup organizations in Indonesia, which have characteristics that differ from those of formal organizations in general (Biswas, 2025). These findings suggest that in the dynamic modern workplace, companies should focus more attention on creating a supportive and collaborative work climate. While work-life balance policies remain relevant, their impact on performance will be more optimal when combined with strong social support. Thus, this research makes an important contribution to the development

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of human resource theory and practice, particularly in facing the challenges of managing the millennial and Gen Z generations in the startup sector.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social support has a stronger and more significant effect on employee performance compared to work–life balance. Support from supervisors and colleagues has been proven to enhance motivation, reduce stress, and strengthen employee engagement, which directly contributes to improved performance. In contrast, work–life balance shows a weaker and only marginally significant effect, indicating that this factor is more influential on job satisfaction and psychological well-being than on performance outcomes. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in reinforcing the *Job Demands–Resources (JD–R)* and *Perceived Organizational Support (POS)* frameworks by highlighting the strategic role of social support within the context of Indonesian startups. In addition, this research adds new perspectives to the existing literature, which has predominantly focused on formal organizations and large corporations. From a practical standpoint, this study provides recommendations for startups to prioritize the development of a collaborative and supportive organizational culture, while complementing work–life balance policies with stronger social support mechanisms to achieve optimal performance.

This study is not without limitations. The use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to capture the dynamic relationships between variables over time. Moreover, the focus on millennial and Gen Z employees in Indonesian technology startups limits the generalizability of the findings to other organizational settings. Nevertheless, these limitations do not undermine the validity of the main findings, particularly the dominant role of social support in enhancing employee performance. Instead, they open avenues for future research to adopt longitudinal designs, explore different sectors and employee cohorts, and incorporate mediating or moderating variables such as work engagement or leadership styles. Overall, this study contributes novelty by highlighting the strategic role of social support in improving performance within the context of younger generations working in Indonesian startups, a perspective that has been largely overlooked in management literature. These findings provide a foundation for future studies to expand theoretical understanding and formulate more adaptive managerial strategies to address the challenges of the modern workplace.

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