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Generation Z's Perspective on Work-Life Balance: Case of Kosovo

An Honors Society Project

Lorinë Bajrami

Advisor:

Venera Demukaj

Second Readers:

Albina Balidemaj & Diellza Gashi

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Abstract

This capstone project examines the perspective of Generation Z in Kosovo toward work-life balance by specifically looking at their preferences regarding flexibility, remote work, and the compromise of work-life balance with other work-related factors. People who are born between 1996 and 2010 belong to the Generation Z cohort, which is characterized by profound digital savviness, mental health awareness, preference for flexibility in workplace, and strong desire to balance work and personal life.

The data for analyzing the Gen Z's perspectives on life work-balance is collected through an online survey (n=174) and two focus group discussions. Global reports and existing research are used as secondary data, which assisted in creating the research framework for the primary data collection.

The findings from this study highlight Generation Z's importance of work-life balance, with an emphasized need for flexible working hours. Despite being digital natives, members of this cohort in Kosovo prefer a hybrid work model, with more days working in-person and less days working online. Work-life balance, career advancement, and salary are the top three factors Kosovar Gen Z consider when choosing a job. However, the majority of Gen Z are willing to sacrifice work-life balance when offer more job security, higher salaries, and more professional fulfillment. However, there are differences based on gender, location, and working sector.

The study is subject to certain limitations, including the likelihood of self-reporting bias inherent in convenience sampling for online surveys and a tendency to attract respondents who are more digitally savvy, potentially overlooking a segment of the Gen Z population in Kosovo. It is worth noting that future researchers could further examine the cultural factors on these preferences in Kosovo compared to other regions, and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the work-life dynamics of Kosovo's Generation Z on a global scale.

Keywords: work-life balance, generation Z, flexibility, remote work, Kosovo.

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List of Abbreviations

IT – Information Technology

WLB – Work-Life Balance

Gen Z – Generation Z

Gen Y - Generation Y

Gen X - Generation X

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

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Introduction

While AI's impact on the workplace is receiving significant attention, there seems another more profound shift in motion - that of generations (Lerner, 2024; Gomez et al., 2019). The modern workplace landscape is undergoing a significant transformation with the emergence of Generation Z, which is characterized by their unique approach to work, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic (Gomez et al., 2019; Lund et al., 2021). Born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, Generation Z are expected to make up around 27% of the workforce by 2025 (Koop, 2021). Consequently, this shift poses a significant change in the workplace as 27% of the workforce will consist of people who do not remember a world without the internet and probably have never used paper maps (Gomez et al., 2019). Their distinct work ethos sets them apart from the previous generations as they prioritize enjoying work over making a lot of money, and they are much self-aware regarding mental health and sustainability (Ernst & Young, 2021). A Deloitte 2021 report, shows that both Millennials and Generation Z regard flexibility and adaptability as paramount traits within the workforce, with 46% of Gen Z individuals emphasizing this as the most critical characteristic for the success of any business (Deloitte, 2021). The emphasis on flexibility also extends to career paths, with LinkedIn's "Workforce Confidence Index" indicating that Gen Z professionals are likely to change roles more frequently than previous generations, seeking diverse experiences and skill development over linear career progression (Anders, 2022). This preference emphasizes the shifting priorities in the modern workplace, where dynamic and agile work environments are becoming increasingly important. Similarly, this cohort anticipates a technology-centric work environment, implying flexible working hours and remote working, along with development of professional skills as well as emphasis on work-life balance (Coetzee & Deas, 2021). Moreover, Gen Z prioritizes a balanced work-life and expects to adjust their work schedules for personal needs, seeing it as a mark of employer trust (Coetzee & Deas, 2021). Therefore, understanding the attitudes and expectations of Generation Z is important for shaping future workplace policies and practices, as this cohort will encompass a large portion of the global workforce.

Within the context of Kosovo, there is no comprehensive research about Gen Z toward work, nevertheless, there is some data on Kosovo youth which partially mirrors Gen Z. In 2022,

youngsters aged between 15 to 24 comprised 10.7%¹ of Kosovo's current employees and their labor force participation rate was 19% (ASK, 2022). Local studies show that youth in Kosovo rank regular payments, salary level, and payment of pension contributions as the top three key indicators when choosing a job (RIINVEST, 2019). To explore Kosovar Gen Z's attitude toward work-life balance, this Capstone Project draws on the existing research outside Kosovo, such as Sánchez-Hernández, M Isabel et al.'s study on work-life balance in great companies to work for and the pending issues for engaging new generations at work (Sánchez-Hernández, M Isabel et al., 2019). In doing so, this study examines the attitudes of Generation Z of Kosovo toward work-life balance, specifically by looking at their preferences regarding flexibility, remote work, and the compromise of work-life balance with other work-related factors. By analyzing the attitudes of generations Z in Kosovo as per their demographic characteristics, this capstone project aims to provide valuable insights to employers, policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in the field of labor market.

Background Information

The current workplace comprises four generations, namely Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, also known as Millennials, and Generation Z, who have recently started to join the workforce (Guerrero et al., 2019). While many scholars are reluctant to provide an exact cutoff point to determine the start of a new generation, Kodithuwakku et al. refers to people born between 1996 and 2010 as part of Generation Z cohort (Kodithuwakku et al., 2018). That being said, this generation has experienced various socio-economic disruptions, including the Great Recession, rapid technological advances, climate concerns, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have shaped their identity and distinct perspective on work. The most common trait of Gen Z is their massive online presence, be that for working, shopping, or making friends, which shapes their perspective and concerns, to the point they are unable to differentiate between working remotely or in the office (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). Deloitte's Global 2023 Gen Z and Millennial Survey from across 44 countries reveals that Gen Z's top concerns are the high cost of living, unemployment, climate change, and mental health, which are reflected in their life

¹ Author's Calculation

choices such as taking side jobs, postponing big life decisions including starting a family or buying a house, and not driving a car or buying second-hand clothes (Deloitte, 2023).

Generational differences in the workplace are striking: Gen X (born 1965–1978) seeks work/life balance and monetary motivation, with a preference for traditional workspaces (Knoll, 2014). Gen Y (born 1979–1997) integrates work and personal life, favoring flexibility and a job's social impact, influenced by the internet and social media (Knoll, 2014). In contrast, Gen Z (born 1998–ongoing) prioritizes structured workspaces with clear planning, reflecting their upbringing amidst advanced personal technology like tablets and smartphones (Knoll, 2014). This cross-comparison highlights the evolving values and preferred work environments across generations, offering insight into managing diverse workplace expectations (Knoll, 2014). Table 1 provides a summary of the defining characteristics of Generation X, Y, and Z regarding family, technology, work behaviors, and workplace preferences (Knoll, 2014).

Table 1. Characteristics of Generation X, Y, and Z

	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
Born	1965 –1978	1979 – 1997	1998 – ongoing
Broad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reliance • Skepticism • Work/life balance • Motivated by money • Crave security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediacy • Confidence • Tolerance • Value social connection • Desire to rebuild institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation for order, structure • Strong work ethic • Value sense of predictability • in their lives
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Latch-key kids,” witnessed mass layoffs and divorce of parents • Value independence in their own children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very close to parents • Can “boomerang” back to parents’ house if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High home-schooling rates and proportion of one “stay at home parent” families • Family as a secure base
Defining technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile phone and e-mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online search engines and social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tablet, smartphone, visual social media
Work behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivated by compensation and career potential • Less concerned with social causes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy seamless mash up of work and personal life • Feel job should contribute to greater good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May value practical career choices • Less developed face-to-face social and conflict resolution skills • Leaders in online

			collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susceptible to distractions
Planning/workplace preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable with traditional workplace planning models • Accepts and uses new workspace ideas with practical application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At ease with the ambiguity of an open, unstructured, workspace with high degree of choice, flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will favor a “legible” planning layout with clear circulation, visual access, and obvious intent of spaces • Need spaces for mentoring, • heads down focus work, and blended online/face-to-face collaboration

Source: Knoll. (2014). What comes after Y? Generation Z: Arriving to the office soon.

In the context of the labor market, in a post-pandemic environment, Gen Z expects to have flexibility, in terms of when, how, and where they work, nevertheless, there does not seem to be much enthusiasm for fully remote work (Robertson, 2023). Having their work-life balance respected is considered to be another fundamental aspect for Gen Z employers, as is providing meaningful work to them (Robertson, 2023). In the same vein, mental health and well-being are of significant importance to Gen Z, which is also reflected in the analysis of causes that lead to the Great Resignation (Robertson, 2023).

As the modern workplace evolves, Gen Z's preferences are coming to the forefront, with flexible work arrangements being a critical requirement. Studies have consistently highlighted the desire for work-life balance among Millennials and Gen Z, which has contributed to the promotion of flexible work schedules. Remote work has become increasingly prevalent, supported by a variety of digital tools and platforms, allowing for a more adaptable work-life model (Vocantas, 2023). The pandemic has further accelerated these changes, with approximately one-third of Gen Z and Millennials in full-time or part-time work expressing a high level of satisfaction with their work/life balance, a notable increase from the one in five reported in 2019 (Deloitte, 2023). Satisfaction with work flexibility, along with diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, has also seen a rise. This satisfaction is partly due to a reevaluation of the role work plays in life during the pandemic, suggesting a permanent change in expectations toward the work environment (2023).

Monster's data suggests that Gen Z may be one of the most significant drivers behind the shift to remote and flexible work, emphasizing the value they place on flexibility, work-life balance, and meaningful work (2023). Their findings show that a full 71% of Gen Z members would consider a pay cut to engage in work they find meaningful (Monster, 2023). In this way, among the primary reasons for leaving a job, Gen Z cites a clash of values with an employer, poor work-life balance, and a toxic work environment(source). Further, the most appreciated job characteristics for Gen Z are a flexible schedule and the option for remote work, with 59% and 53% respectively favoring these benefits (Monster, 2023). When looking at effective initiatives to foster better work-life balance, Gen Z has clear preferences: 17% emphasize flexible working hours, 13% advocate for a reduced work week, and 12% prioritize remote work. Implementing a hybrid work policy, which combines both in-office and remote work, seems essential for retaining Gen Z talent, as they seek to align their personal and professional lives more harmoniously (Lombardo, 2023).

In the context of Kosovo, in addition to global events, the country has gone through drastic changes since 1997, including war, change of economic and political regime, and educational reforms, whose impact on Gen Z is yet to be studied. According to Kosovo's Agency of Statistics' 2011 report, there were approximately 480,000² Kosovar members of Gen Z, however, because of youth emigration and outdated data, this statistic should be used with caution (ASK, 2011). Kosovar Gen Z might not entirely align with the characteristics mentioned in the Table 1 due to the unique historical, economic, and social conditions that have shaped the country. As the generation of freedom, UN administration, and the declaration of independence, Kosovar Gen Z lacks any memory of the former Yugoslavia or the efforts that led to the creation of the state of Kosovo (Muja, 20219). Gen Z is the most active generation in Kosovo in social media, with the highest number of online users, characterized by consumption habits that are always oriented towards seeking truth, originality, and freedom of expression (Hallakate, 2020). In regards to employment, a 2019 study of Kosovo's youth found that job security is their primary factor when choosing a job, implying concerns regarding employees' entitlements, extended working hours, compensation issues, and similar matters (Jobelius & Hantke, 2019). In the same vein, RIINVEST's study on Kosovo's labor market reports that youth values regular

² Author's Calculation

payments the most and career advancement the least, and that these values are prioritized differently based on gender (RIINVEST, 2019). Since the existing research on the labor force of Kosovo mainly focuses on the aspects of youth unemployment, women participation in the labor market, and the skills mismatch, a specific study on Kosovar Gen Z's attitude toward work-life balance contributes to the literature of Kosovo's labor market dynamics, specifically on Generation Z. The main goal of this project is to provide an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of Generation Z in Kosovo on the work-life balance, through exploring their preferences for aspects like flexibility, the ability to work remotely, and how they reconcile work-life balance with other professional elements.

Conceptual Framework

There is no consensus among scholars on a precise definition of a generation, nevertheless Jayatissa suggests that this concept is usually referred to “a cohort of people who share a common upbringing and historical context” (2023). According to David Stillman, the practice of naming generations began with the Baby Boomers, born in a period marked by a significant increase in birth rates, which is how they got their name (2017). Now every generation has their specific name, however there is no cutoff point where one begins and the other ends. Despite several studies suggesting different year boundaries for Generation Z, Kodithuwakku et al.'s description of Generation Z is used in this project. They define Generation Z as the cohort born between 1996 and 2010, and suggest that little is known about this generation, which is the future of the workforce (Kodithuwakku et al., 2018). Because of Gen Z's profound familiarity with technology and the digital environment, they are often referred to as Digital Natives, Gen Tech, .com Generation (Fodor & Jaeckel, 2018; Dolot, 2018; Huțanu et al., 2018). Gen Z, as any other generation, has its own unique preferences regarding the workplace, including their perspective toward work-life balance.

Reiter, in her article “Work Life Balance: What DO You Mean” categorizes several definitions of work-life balance (WLB) through a framework of ethical ideologies (2007). The author emphasizes the importance of the situationist perspective when defining WLB, claiming that this perspective is highly relevant in research since it offers flexibility in understanding WLB for different groups based on their unique contexts (Reiter, 2007). In the context of Kosovo, it is important to use an approach that allows for the exploration of how factors such as

cultural, economic, and social affect the perception of Gen Z's regarding work-life balance. The situationist perspective is reflected in the definition provided by Clark, who defines WLB "as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict;" and which will be used for understanding WLB in this capstone project (2000).

As for the elements affecting work-life balance, the scope of this project includes only those which are most relevant to WLB. Flexibility is one of the most crucial elements of WLB, which to fit this study is defined in line with Kossek and Michel's study, suggesting flexibility in the timing of work, meaning when work occurs, as well as flexibility in amount of work, meaning the amount of work hours (2011). Kossek and Michel's study also included remote work as part of flexibility in terms of the location or place of work, however, for better understanding of Kosovar Gen Z's perception toward remote work, it is included as a separate element in the research (2011). Sánchez-Hernández et al. define remote work as the "possibility of working from a distance for some or all of the day," which is how this concept should be understood in this project (2019). The definitions provided in this conceptual framework, with a focus on Gen Z, WLB, flexibility, and remote work, set the stage for the comprehensive literature review provided in the next section.

The use of Clark's Work/Family Border Theory enriches the exploration of work-life balance for Gen Z in Kosovo. This theory focuses on how individuals manage the boundaries between their work and personal lives, aiming to achieve a balance by minimizing role conflict and maximizing satisfaction in both spheres (Clark, 2000). The theory articulates that people act as daily border-crossers, constantly navigating and negotiating the domains of work and family, which are often marked by distinct cultures, norms, and expectations (2000). Through the management of these borders, individuals strive to create harmony between their professional responsibilities and personal lives, adapting their strategies based on the unique demands and structures of each domain (2000). Given the unique challenges faced by Kosovo's Gen Z, Clark's theory offers a valuable lens to examine their work-life balance in light of technological adeptness and socio-economic changes.

Literature review

This literature review looks at Generation Z, focusing on their traits, work preferences, and attitudes toward work-life balance. It includes an overview of their general characteristics, how they view work-life balance, and specific insights from South-Eastern Europe.

Understanding Generation Z

Gen Z has grown up in a world marked by political changes, violence, and societal unrest since the aftermath of 9/11. Because they were reared by skeptical Generation X parents and have experienced harsher realities than baby boomers and millennials, Generation Z is not as optimistic as those generations (Christensen, Wilson, and Edelman, 2018). Gen Z has never experienced a time without instant access to information and communication tools at their fingertips (Schwieger and Ladwig, 2018). Thus, this generation is characterized by its technological savviness, entrepreneurial spirit, and self-confidence, much like Gen Y (Dwidienawati and Gandasari 2018). Both Gen Y and Gen Z prefer group-work, clear rules, value for their opinions, face-to-face communication, and using visuals for online communication; however, they differ in their expectations for instant feedback in communication and have a weaker focus on oral presentations and a content-driven approach than Gen Y (Raslie and Ting, 2020). Furthermore, generation Z is highly conscious of environmental issues, particularly the scarcity of resources like water, showing their strong sense of duty to protect natural resources (Mihelich, 2013, as cited in Singh and Dangmei, 2016). Brand, Rausch, and Brandel highlight generational differences in sustainability orientation, revealing that Generation Z exhibits a stronger sustainability orientation and willingness to purchase sustainable products online compared to Generation X (2022). While both generations value eco-labels, Generation Z places a higher importance on social sustainability labels, reflecting their heightened awareness and concern for social issues in their purchasing decisions (Brand, Rausch, and Brandel, 2022). This generation prefers a "slow-life strategy" by postponing major life milestones like marriage and parenthood, diverging from Gen X's earlier life transitions, while their profound engagement in environmental and social activism, shaped significantly by their seamless integration with technology, sets them apart in their values and daily interactions (Twenge, 2023).

Raised in a world of rapid technological growth, Gen Z demonstrates a strong inclination toward learning via mobile applications and online videos, with their educational engagement

significantly influenced by teachers' integration of modern technologies in the classroom (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). This reflects Gen Z's distinct and forward-looking perspective, marked by an inclusive mindset and high career aspirations (Jayatissa, 2023). Jaytissa suggests that it is essential for employers to understand and meet the needs of this tech-savvy generation to effectively harness their capabilities for shared success (2023). In the workplace, Gen Z employees usually have idealistic expectations, focusing on interesting and meaningful work (Schroth, 2019; Kirchmayer, and Fratricova, 2017). Gen Z expects future employers to acknowledge that they may have mental health challenges and it might impact their work (Robertson, 2023). They anticipate flexibility in work schedules, professional development and promotion opportunities, as well as having their voice heard by managers and supervisors (Schroth, 2019). Grow and Yang's study also displays a marked proclivity for flexitime, health-care benefits, a supportive work environment, and opportunities for upward mobility (2018). In their 2021 study, Leslie et al. segmented Generation Z into three categories to understand their ideal work environment. These groups included: Chill Worker Bees, who value a comfortable work setting; Social Investors, who emphasize a balanced work-life dynamic; and Go Getters, who are keen on career advancement (Leslie et al., 2021). These findings uncover the diversity within Generation Z, challenging uniform stereotypes and revealing varied subgroups in line with theories by Mannheim and later by Rudolph & Zacher (1952; 2017; Green et al., 2012).

Work-Life Balance and Generation Z

The nature of the relationship between employees and employers has evolved in the modern work environment (Obedgiu, 2017). This change emphasizes short-term exchanges and individual gains, leading to a decrease in the traditional sense of security and long-term commitment previously provided by employers (2017). The modern psychological contract, representing the expectations an employee has on the employer, currently has a focus on competency advancement, continuous training, and work-life balance (Aderibigbe, 2020). This shift, influenced by Industry 4.0 technologies, enables greater flexibility and easier access to information (Aderibigbe, 2020). Considering the impact of work-life balance on the overall relationship between employers and employees, as well as efficiency of the labor market, several studies have been conducted to understand work-life balance, with emphasis on flexibility and remote work. Maintaining a positive work-life balance is essential to increasing employee satisfaction and preventing workers from considering a job change. Suganda's 2022 study

findings suggest that work-life balance can have a negative influence on employees' turnover intentions, consistent with earlier studies of Suifan et al. and Haar & Brougham (2016; 2020; Oosthuizen, Coetzee, and Munro, 2016; Fox and Fallon, 2003; Kirschmayer, and Fratricova, 2017). Kodithuwakku, Jusoh, and Chinna's study involving a sample of Gen Z employees from the telecommunication industry emphasized the importance of flexibility (2018). The analysis has shown that flexibility was the most important factor contributing to job satisfaction, which has a significantly negative relationship with the intention to leave (Kodithuwakku, Jusoh, and Chinna, 2018). In regards to the preferences of Gen Z toward work-life balance, studies have shown that WLB is one of their primary expectations from the employers, alongside job security (Bohdziewicz, 2016; Kirschmayer, and Fratricova, 2017). Findings from Santillan et al.'s study show Gen Z's strong preference toward hybrid work models, a mixture of online and in-person work, to further improve their work-life balance, which is in alignment with Fetoshi's findings (2023; 2021). Reflecting these findings, Robertson's study shows that there is minimal interest in fully remote jobs from Gen Z, who focus on hybrid working models (2023). This cohort says that working in-person for 5 days a week prevents them from balancing work-life balance, thus, the majority prefer hybrid models since those models offer the necessary flexibility to them (Santillan et al., 2023). While a significant portion of studies include remote work as a part of job flexibility, Sanchez-Hernandez et al. treat flexible hours and remote work as separate factors, and their findings suggest that flexibility is valued more than remote work by Gen Z (2019). In regards to gender differences, according to Lašáková et al. women of Generation Z place greater emphasis on connections at work, a fulfilling job, success, and acknowledgment (2023). On the other hand, Gen Z men place a higher value on having a positive impact, benefits and aspects of a stress-free, relaxing personal life (Lašáková et al., 2023).

Generation Z in South-eastern Europe

The dramatic past in South-eastern Europe, shaped the mental programming of Generation Z, which is expected to be different Gen Z when compared to other European countries (Scholz, 2019). The existing research on Gen Z in the Balkan region provides valuable insights regarding this cohort's work expectations. Iorgulescu's study with Romanian university students shows that Gen Z values the most career advancement, high wages, and job security when choosing a job (2016; Marginean, 2021). The least factors they consider when choosing a job appear to be working for a renowned company, coverage of good healthcare, as well as

several paid vacation days (Iorgulescu, 2016). Additionally, Gen Z has a constant need for mentorship by its superiors and constant development (Iorgulescu, 2016; Marginean, 2021). Marginean's findings show a preference for a blend of remote and on-site work as well as an inclination toward jobs in the public sector (2016). Apart from Romania, Pulevska-Ivanovska et al.'s study on Macedonia shows that Gen Z prioritizes work-life balance, with a focus on workplace flexibility and flexible working hours (2017). In this study, more than 70% of respondents said that a good employer is flexible, goal-oriented, and invests in employee education (Pulevska-Ivanovska et al., 2017). Bulgaria's Gen Z also put great emphasis on work-life balance since they have limited skills in coping with stress, which makes them easily lose their inner balance (Karaivanova & Klein, 2019).

In regards to Kosovo, data on Gen Z can be drawn only from studies that focus on the youth or labor market and present age groups who belong to Gen Z. Fetoshi presents an increase in reported work-life balance among respondents, a significant portion of whom are from Generation Z in Kosovo, attributing this improvement to the flexibility of creating their own schedules and underscoring the positive impact of remote work (2019). This trend, particularly evident among younger workers, reflects a shift in work preferences in the post-pandemic era, favoring a blend of remote and in-person work arrangements. Furthermore, Gen Z in Kosovo favors a combination of remote and in-person work, particularly the model that combines more online work and less in-person time (Fetoshi, 2019).

Methodology

The aim of this study is to investigate the perspective of Kosovo's Generation Z population toward work-life balance. It specifically looks at their preferences for remote work, flexibility, and compromising work-life balance with other work-related aspects. The research is conducted from the perspective of the Gen Z, who are the focus of this study and it uses primary and secondary data.

Primary Data

Survey

The core data for this study was primarily collected through a survey. The survey, focusing on Generation Z individuals, sought their perspectives on balancing work and personal

life, examining factors like the option for remote work, the level of flexibility in their roles, and their readiness to prioritize work-life balance alongside other work-related factors. In crafting the survey questions, previous research, and most notably studies by Fetoshi, 2021; Robertson, 2023; and Sanchez-Hernandez et al., 2019, served as a reference. The survey itself (See Appendix 2) was shared widely on various social media channels, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, and was also posted in active groups on these platforms that boast a large membership base. Employing a convenience sampling approach, the survey collected responses from 174 participants (n=174), all aged between 18 and 27, thus falling within the Gen Z demographic. The survey was made available in both English and Albanian, giving respondents the liberty to choose their preferred language for response. The collected data was then analyzed using the Microsoft Excel platform.

Focus Group Discussions

Following the survey, two (2) focus group discussions were held to gather more in depth qualitative data on the attitudes of Generation Z toward work-life balance. These discussions included participants from various backgrounds within the Gen Z cohort. Each focus group consisted of 8 participants and the discussion was held in-person. The subjects addressed in the focus groups closely mirrored those in the survey and adhered to the same sequence of discussion topics. All focus groups discussions were conducted by the author of this study following a Focus Group Guide (See Appendix 2) that designed for this study. The discussions lasted around one hour and were audio recorded whenever it was more convenient than taking notes. The groups include a mix of backgrounds, with a notable representation from the education sector and a blend of students and full-time employees across rural and urban settings. Appendix 3 shows the detailed composition of these focus groups (See Appendix 3).

Secondary Data

Reports from global companies on Gen Z have been a reference point for obtaining statistics in the introduction and background information sections, alongside data from the Agency of Statistics of Kosovo. A conceptual framework and a comprehensive literature review were done on the concept of work-life balance and Generation Z through various academic sources for a foundational understanding. The conceptual framework explains the key concepts

while the literature review focuses on the general findings from the existing studies in the field of Generation Z and work-life balance.

Ethical Aspect of Research

The methodology of this research was significantly influenced by participating in the workshops organized at RIT Kosovo "Applied Research Methods and Ethical Practices" as part of an Erasmus+ supported project. The workshops underscored the importance of maintaining ethical standards in research. The focus was on understanding various research methodologies and ethical considerations crucial in conducting research, particularly in the context of gathering primary data. Therefore, these workshops provided a foundational understanding of how to design and implement research in an ethical and methodologically sound manner, which has been applied in this study.

Results and Analysis

Survey Results

Demographics

The survey was conducted with 174 Kosovar Gen Z (n=174) in Kosovo. All respondents fall into the 18-27 age group, belonging to the Generation Z cohort. The majority of the respondents were females, comprising 64.4% (See Figure 1). In terms of ethnicity, the breakdown shows the vast majority of Albanian descent, with minimal representation from other ethnicities (See Appendix 4, Figure A). The majority of the respondents live in urban areas, indicating a concentration of sample in urban settings (See Figure 2).

Figure 1. Gender

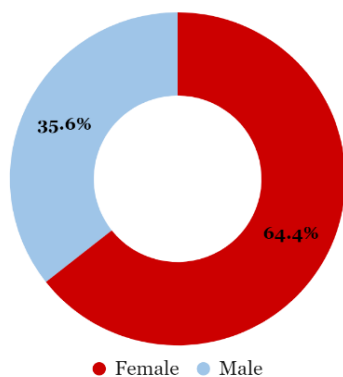
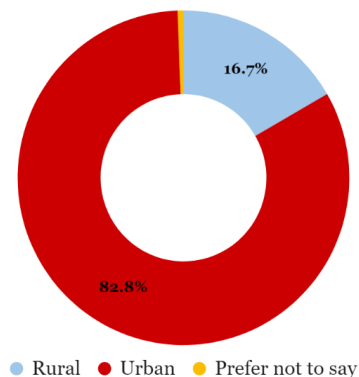


Figure 2. Location



Regarding birth order, there is a slight dominance of first-born children, followed by youngest and middle children (See Appendix 4, Figure B) In terms of education, most of the respondents are currently pursuing or have completed a bachelor's degree, with some currently pursuing or completed a Master's degree (See Figure 3). The majority of the respondents are engaged in full-time jobs, followed by the unemployed and part-time workers as the next dominant statuses, and a smaller fraction being self-employed (See Figure 4).

Figure 3. Education level

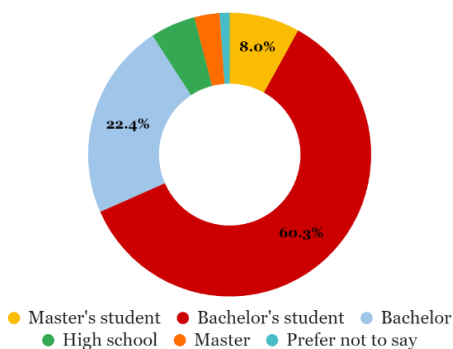
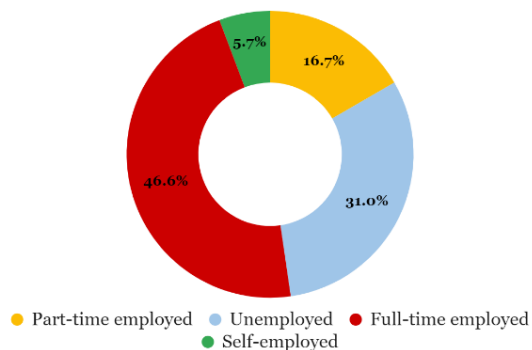
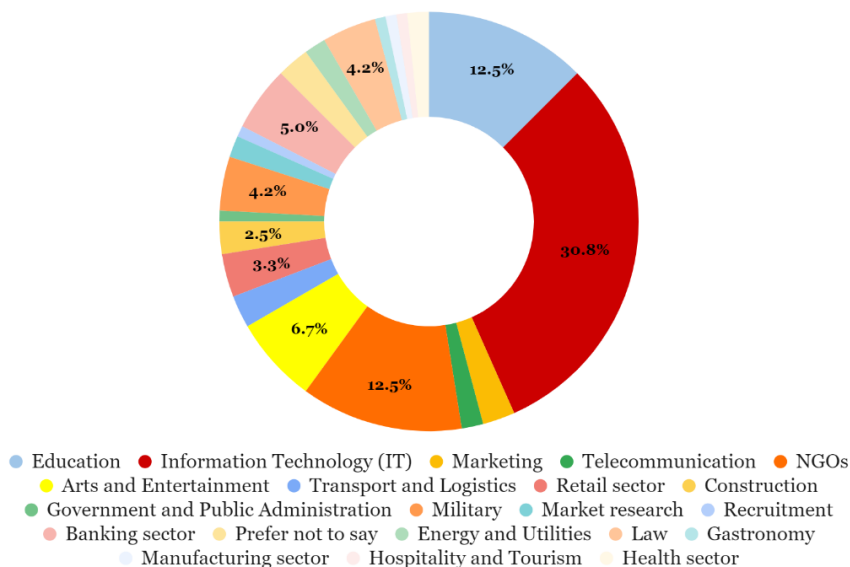


Figure 4. Employment status



Employment sectors are diverse, with information technology, education, and marketing being the most represented fields (See Figure 5).

Figure 5. Employment Sectors



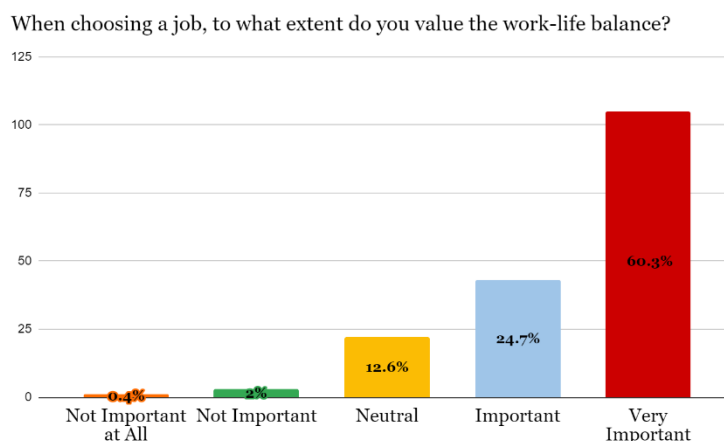
In sum, the charts above show that the respondents from this survey are predominantly women, from urban areas, well-educated, and employed. This data suggests that there is significant representation of technology-related and education fields, which could indicate possible trends in employment preferences or opportunities. The latter was also suggested in focus group discussions, where participants from the IT sector argued that their industry is Gen Z's favorite since it provides more employment opportunities and higher salaries (2023).

Overall findings from the survey and focus group discussions

Many findings on work-life balance from this survey align with existing research in foreign countries; however, this survey brings new insights on the Kosovar Gen Z, reflecting the cultural and socio-economic context. In addition to the survey findings, the insights gained from the focus group discussions provide valuable context on factors that might have impacted Kosovar Gen Z's perspective toward work-life balance. When choosing a job, Kosovar Gen Z highly value work-life balance, as indicated by their responses when asked on the extent to which they value it. As seen in Figure 6, 60.3% of respondents perceive work-life balance as very important, followed by 24.7% who see it as important, and 12.6% who remain neutral about its importance. The emphasis Kosovar Gen Z places on work-life balance mirrors findings from similar studies in different contexts. For instance, the Deloitte Global 2023 Gen Z and Millennial Survey highlighted that globally, both Gen Z and Millennials view work/life balance as a critical factor when choosing an employer, underscoring a universal trend across younger generations valuing this balance highly (Deloitte, 2023). These similar findings suggest that despite cultural and socio-economic differences, the importance of work-life balance remains a consistent priority among Gen Z, further validated by the insights from our focus group discussions that provided deeper context into the Kosovar perspective.

Focus group participants also value work-life balance highly and they complement these results by providing their reasons behind this perception (2023). Specifically, focus group participants emphasize the importance of work-life balance because they aim at maintaining their physical and mental health, alongside relationships with family and friends (Focus Groups, 2023). However, conversations within the focus groups reflect differences among Gen Z, as suggested by the existing research of Leslie et al., where some Gen Z do not value work-life balance as expected (Focus Groups, 2023).

Figure 6. Importance of WLB when choosing a job



“I do not understand how a 22-year-old would prioritize going out with family and friends instead of working hard to achieve his or her dreams. 20s are for grinding and making your dreams come true, not for prioritizing relationships and interests. Of course, when I turn 30+ years old I will consider balancing my work and personal life, but as of right now, I am all about work.” (Participant C, Focus Group 2)

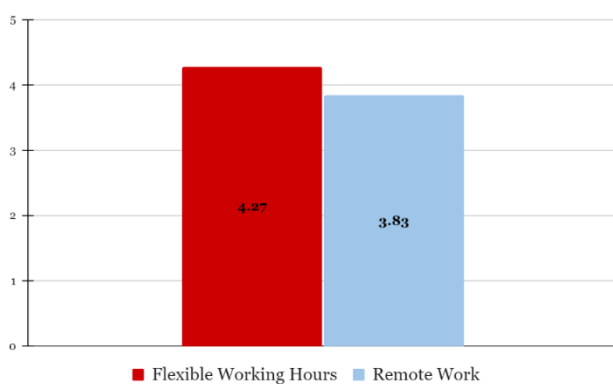
In the survey, there was a final optional open-ended question where respondents could add their recommendation to local companies to better suit their work-life balance preferences; these comments provide insights that could be used to analyze the motives behind some of the results (See Appendix 1).

“Remember that work-life balance is a personal preference, and what works for me may not work for someone else. I need to consider my own priorities, needs, and preferences when evaluating potential employers.” (Respondent, Survey)

The respondent’s comment above, as discussed among the focus group participants, suggests that what individual X considers as a balance between work and personal life might be totally different to what individual Y does (2023). So, for the purpose of creating common ground during the later questions, they collectively agreed to understand work-life balance as “having enough time for your family, friends, and yourself, while also being productive at work” (Focus Groups, 2023).

Kosovar Gen Z favor more flexible working hours than remote work options (See Figure 7). They were asked, in two separate questions, to provide the extent to which they value flexible working hours and remote work when considering a job. The flexible working hours were highly valued with most responses being as “very important” and a mean of 4.27, while remote work’s mean was 3.83. These results are in line with existing literature, namely, with the Sanchez-Hernandez et al., where flexible working hours are more important to Gen Z than remote work (2019).

Figure 7. Flexible working hours & remote work

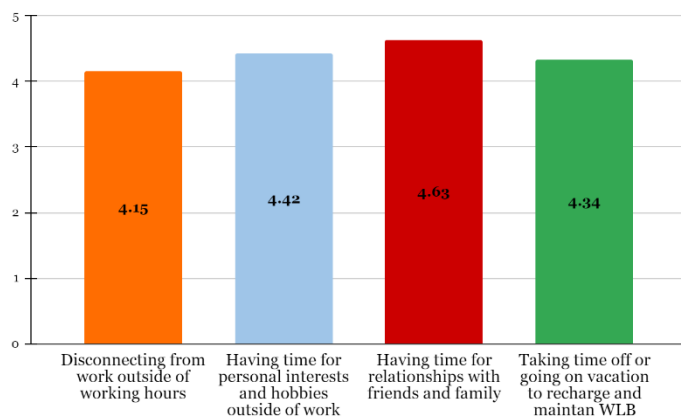


Focus group participants who value flexible working hours more than remote work claim that flexible working hours offer more autonomy in managing their personal and work tasks, while also offering a sense of belonging to a community that in-person work provides (2023). Flexible working hours may be

valued by focus group participants more than remote work due to the autonomy they provide in managing personal and work tasks, coupled with the community and connection that in-person interactions foster. Literature suggests that such preferences might be rooted in the human need for autonomy and relatedness, as outlined by Ryan and Deci in their Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of these needs in enhancing personal well-being and job satisfaction (Ryan and Deci, 2000). On the other hand, those who favor remote work to flexible working hours suggest that remote work is a better option since it lowers the commuting or renting costs, especially highlighted by those residing in rural areas (Focus Groups, 2023).

There were several questions in regards to the importance Gen Z puts to aspects of work-life balance using Likert scale (See Appendix 1). Figure 8 shows a summary of the results using the means of respondent’s answers, which vary from 5 “very important” to 1 “not important at all.” The possibility of having time for relationships with friends and family was highly valued, with a mean of 4.63, followed by the possibility of having time for personal interests and hobbies outside work.

Figure 8. Means of different factors when choosing a job



Moreover, taking time off or going on vacation to recharge was also valued by Gen Z, at a mean of 4.34. Finally, the possibility to disconnect from work outside of working hours is important to Gen Z at a mean of 4.15. Since Gen Z in Kosovo are raised in a culture where there is a lot of emphasis in the relationship with family

members, they also used to spend a lot of time preserving such relationships (Focus Group, 2023). Moreover, technology has enabled Kosovar Gen Z to get exposed to global trends, thus impacting their preference for personal interests, hobbies, vacation (Focus Group, 2023). The development of technology and work-related digital tools prevents workers to disconnect from work outside of working hours, since for many jobs, you can perform work-related activities at any time, from anywhere (Focus Groups, 2023). The phenomenon of increasingly blurred lines between work and personal life, exacerbated by advancements in digital and connectivity tools, has intensified over the past two decades, especially affecting Generation Z (Frey, 2019). For Generations X and Y, the intrusion of work into personal life was less pronounced, as digital connectivity and mobile technology were in their nascent stages during their formative work years, allowing for clearer boundaries between work and leisure (Prensky, 2001; Twenge, 2017).

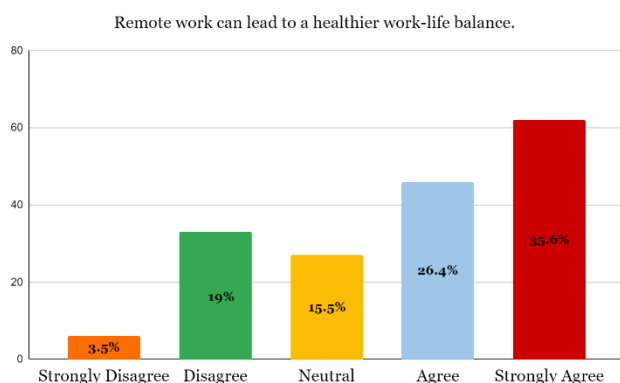
“I receive many messages from my student’s parents that must be answered promptly even outside working hours, which makes it impossible to balance work and personal life. So, disconnecting from work outside of working hours is a privilege for me personally, but so is for many of my colleagues.” (Participant A, Focus Group 1)

The perceived impact of remote work on work-life balance on the respondents provides some mixed results. When asked on the extent to which they think that remote work can lead to a healthier work-life balance, the majority of the respondents agreed on the positive impact of remote work, while 22.5% think that it has a negative impact on work-life balance (See Figure 9).

To Gen Z, working remotely affects work-life balance positively in the sense that people stay at home and spend time with family members during breaks (Focus Groups, 2023). However, working from home makes it harder to maintain boundaries between work and personal life, which makes it difficult to disconnect from work outside of working hours (Focus Groups, 2023).

“I love working remotely since it saves the time I use to get ready to go to work, and also the time it takes to go to the office. When working remotely, I sleep about one hour more since I do not wear any makeup or dress up, which affects positively my work-life balance.” (Participant G, Focus Group 2)

Figure 9. Remote work’s impact on WLB



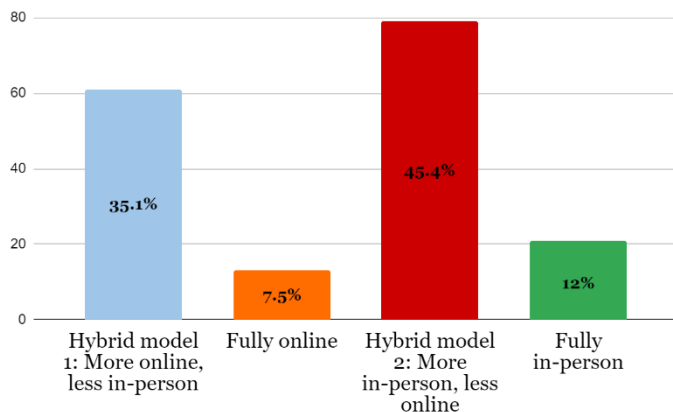
Overall, the results suggest that Generation Z in Kosovo prefers a hybrid working model where they are required to work more in-person and less online, contrary to the popular belief that the .Com Generation prefers to work online or mainly online. This inclination towards in-person work could reflect the cultural

emphasis on community and socialization common in collectivist societies, where face-to-face interactions are valued for maintaining social bonds. Collectivist cultures, like that of Kosovo, often prioritize group harmony and interpersonal relationships, influencing a preference for work environments that facilitate direct social engagement (Hofstede, 2001).

Figure 10 shows the preference of Gen Z when presented with 4 working models, where hybrid model 2 with more work in-person and less online is the most preferred one (45.4%), followed by hybrid model 2, with more online, less in-person (35.1%), then by a fully in-person model (12%) and fully online (7.5%). On the other hand, Fetoshi’s findings in 2021 on the same question show that respondents 18-24 years old (Gen Z) preferred the hybrid model 1, with more online work than in-person (2021). This difference could perhaps be attributed to the fact that Fetoshi’s study was conducted during the pandemic when there was much enthusiasm on

working online, but now some Gen Z do not seem to like working online anymore due to lack of face to face interaction (Focus Group, 2023).

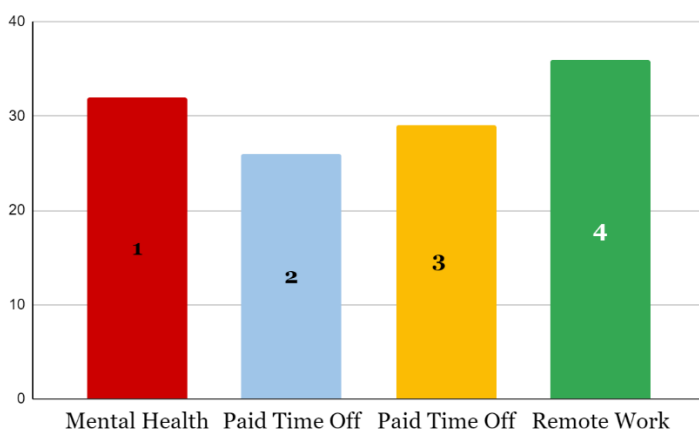
Figure 10. Preferred work model



However, the survey shows that COVID-19 positively influenced Gen Z's perspective on remote work as a viable option for their future career (See Appendix 4, Figure C). The rise of remote work has indeed changed the job market significantly, making geographical location less relevant for many jobs. Companies are

now able to hire talent from anywhere in the world, which opens up a wealth of opportunities for job seekers, including youth in Kosovo. This shift towards remote work, supported by technological advancements and a change in work culture, has been recognized for its potential to provide more opportunities, particularly in economies where remote work is feasible for a significant portion of the workforce (JOBYODA, 2023).

Figure 11. Aspects of work-life balance



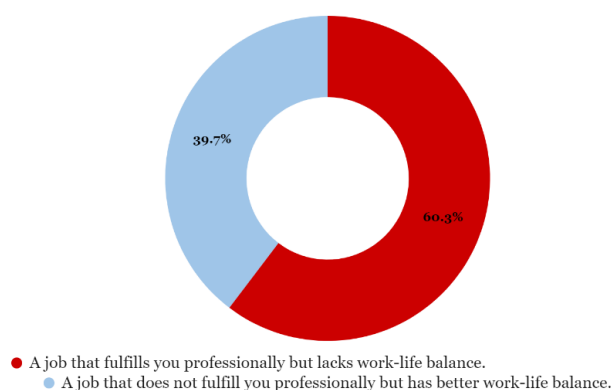
The first section of the survey was concluded with a question where respondents had to rank, based on importance, the four aspects of work-life balance, namely flexible working hours, remote work options, vacation and sick leave, and mental health (See Appendix 1). The results show that the most important

aspect of work-life balance to Gen Z was mental health, followed by paid time off occupying the second and third place, and the fourth aspect, namely the least important in the rank, was remote work (See Figure 11). The survey's findings that Kosovar Gen Z values mental health as the most

important aspect of work-life balance, followed by paid time off, reflect a broader generational shift towards prioritizing mental well-being and personal time. This is consistent with the global Gen Z characteristics that emphasize mental health and well-being, partly as a response to the challenges of the Great Resignation and the pandemic's impact on work environments (Robertson, 2023).

To get a better understanding of Gen Z's perspective on work-life balance and how willing they are to sacrifice it for other job-related aspects, three hypothetical questions have been asked to them. The results show that, a total of 60.3% of Gen Z in Kosovo would sacrifice their work-life balance for a job that fulfills them professionally (See Figure 12). The result (60.3% of Gen Z in Kosovo willing to sacrifice work-life balance for professional fulfillment) stands in contrast with global findings showing that 71% of the Gen Z would accept lower pay for meaningful work (Monster, 2023) highlights a nuanced view of job value among this generation. While the global trend suggests a strong preference for meaningful work, the specific context in Kosovo indicates a more complex prioritization, where professional fulfillment still outweighs work-life balance, but perhaps not to the extent it outweighs WLB globally. This difference could reflect regional economic, cultural, or social factors influencing Gen Z's career choices in Kosovo.

Figure 12. Professional fulfilment v. work-life balance

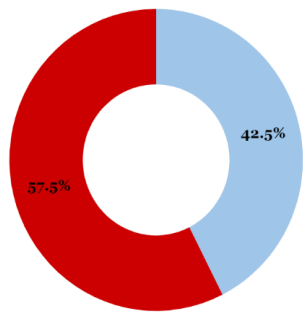


Furthermore, work-life balance would be sacrificed even when Gen Z are offered job security and high salaries (See Figure 13 and 14). From the three hypothetical scenarios, Gen Z shows their readiness to sacrifice work-life balance the most when offered a secure workplace; in other words, job security matters more than work-life balance. On the other

hand, Gen Z in Kosovo would sacrifice work-life balance the least when it comes to salaries, meaning that although salaries show to be more important than work-life balance, their importance in relation to work-life balance is lower than that of job security and professional fulfillment. Prioritization of job security and salary over work-life balance could reflect the

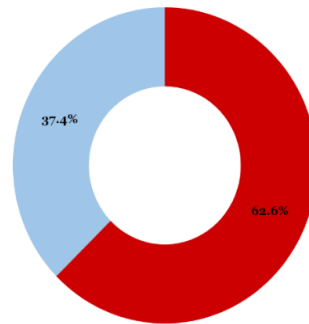
region's specific socio-economic conditions. While Gen Z globally values meaningful work and flexibility, often over traditional compensation (Deloitte, 2023), the unique historical and economic setting of Kosovo might drive its youth to prioritize job stability. This local context, coupled with collective cultural values that might favor stable employment due to the country's recent volatile history, underscores the nuanced perspectives of Gen Z in Kosovo. Such regional influences highlight the complexity of generational trends, where global characteristics may take different forms based on local socio-economic and cultural factors.

Figure 13. Salary v. work-life balance



● A job that offers a lower salary but has better work-life balance.
 ● A job that offers a higher salary but lacks work-life balance.

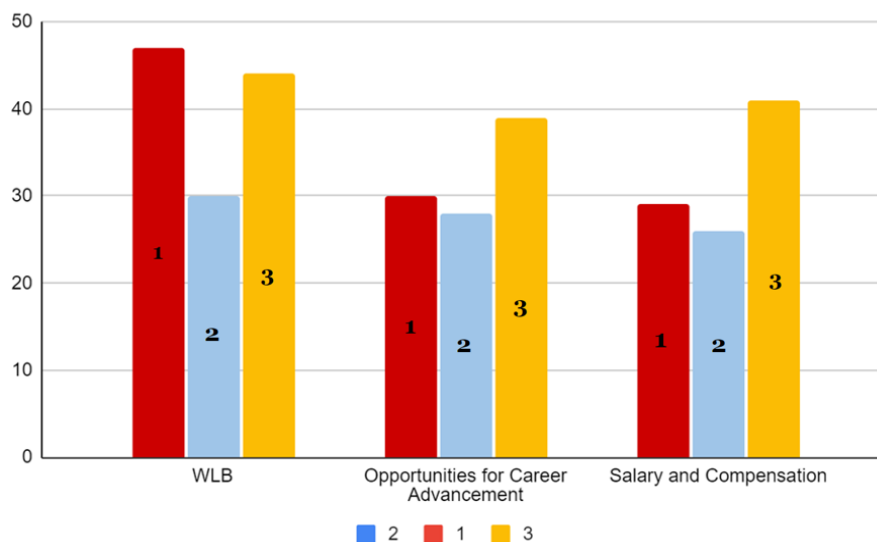
Figure 14. Job security v. work-life balance



● A job that offers a secure workplace but lacks work-life balance.
 ● A job that does not offer a secure workplace but has better work-life balance.

Finally, when asked to rank the three most important factors when choosing a job, “work-life balance”, “opportunities for career advancement”, and “salary and compensation” were the three most voted factors among the nine listed in the question (See Figure 15 and Appendix 1). The colors represent the level of importance and the results provide an interesting picture.

Figure 15. Top three most important aspects when choosing a job

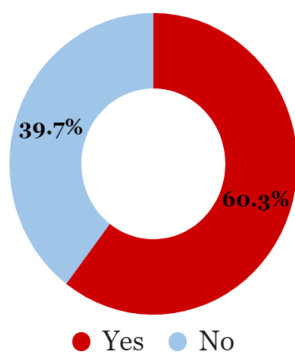


The results show that the same factor, namely work-life balance, is rated as the first, second, and third most important factor, meaning that the respondents are divided on the importance of this factor when choosing a job. Nevertheless, since the vast majority of respondents chose the three above-mentioned factors as the most important factors when choosing a job, it is clear that Gen Z in Kosovo prefer companies which offer balance between work and personal life, career advancement opportunities, and high salaries.

Gen Z prioritizes the factors they look for in a company based on their current needs, and this is reflected in the survey results (Focus Groups, 2023). Participant F, H, and D from the second focus group discussion suggest that because they are in the beginning of their career, choosing a company that helps them pave the way to success for the future is crucial (2023). Moreover, participants from the IT industry emphasize the importance of in-house development and trainings from companies as crucial when choosing a future employer since they must keep up with the new trends and technologies in order to remain attractive in the market. In regards to work-life balance, participants B, E and F from the first focus group claim that they were not brought up in a community where career was not the most important thing in life and that life was more than one's job, therefore, they feel that they were raised to understand the importance of work-life balance better (2023).

“I was raised in an environment where a girl's biggest achievement was considered to get married to a ‘good’ man and adapt to her role as a housewife, raise children, and keep the family together. This undoubtedly has influenced the way I, and many other girls, perceive the role of work and a successful career in a woman's life – a secondary role.” (Participant E, Focus Group 1)

Figure 16. Declining a job offer in seeking a work-life balance



When asked if they have ever turned down a job offer because it was not in line with their expectations for work-life balance, 60.3% of respondents said yes, while 39.7% claim to not have done that (See Figure 16). This result is in accordance with Robertson's finding that Gen Z will not stay in a company which does not meet their work-life balance expectations (2023). This trend highlights a global Gen Z

characteristic of valuing personal well-being and balance, further emphasizing the need for employers to adapt to these evolving expectations.

The last question in the questionnaire was optional and open ended, where respondents provided recommendations to local companies for adapting better policies regarding work-life balance. The majority of the responses required more flexibility and remote working options because they feel that if a job could be performed online, then they should be offered the option to work from home. Moreover, if employees finish all tasks delegated to them for the day, they should be able to leave and be paid fully, since the focus of companies should be productivity and efficiency; and the only way to achieve it is to offer a balance between work and personal life to its employees. It is surprising to see that there is a significant number of responses that have highlighted the need to respect the law on labor, which all companies are already obliged to obey to.

“To offer more flexible work hours, more happy hours, more retreats and fun stuff to keep employees happier and in long term.” (Respondent, Survey)

“When it's possible for work to be done remotely/online, give employees the option to work from home. Often times companies choose to keep the employees in office, despite knowing that doing the work online does not negatively affect the outcome, oftentimes it is quite the opposite, it improves performance. Catering to employee's needs (within a reasonable extent) would make a better and more productive work environment and produce better results.” (Respondent, Survey)

“Understand that we are working in a very fast changing world, and those changes need to be reflected in our work environment as well.” (Respondent, Survey)

Despite the majority of the comments being in support of work-life balance, some respondents suggested that companies do not have to always suit the work-life balance of employees, again, showing their divided perspectives on this topic.

“[...] brute force them, make them work for a while as hard as possible until some income is generated for both sides then make this flexibility as u have mentioned, have time for everything” (Respondent, Survey)

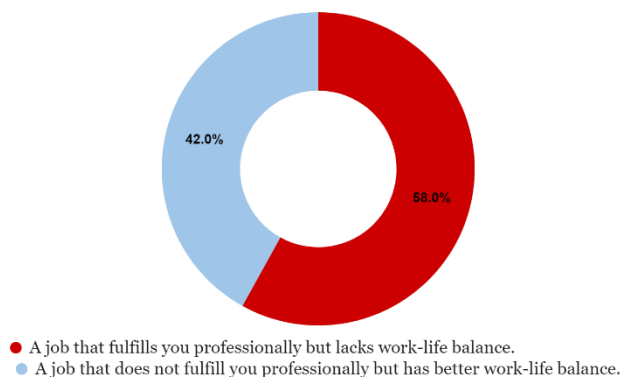
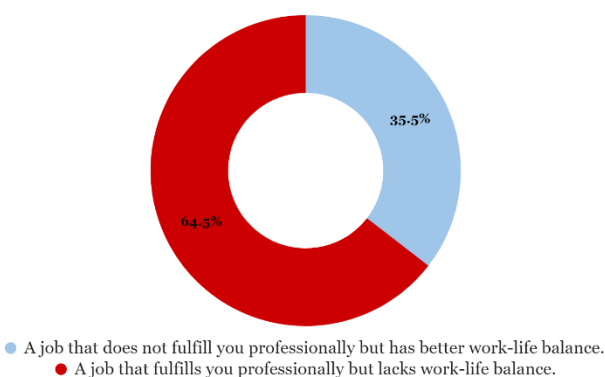
"In my opinion, our generation is worrying about the wrong things. Previous generations built this world we are living in from nothing. For us to complain about work-life balance, mental health, and other matters to this extent is a ridiculous thought. Instead of entertaining those thoughts, ideas, or discussions, we should simply work." (Respondent, Survey)

In line with the final question survey responses, the discussion in the focus groups revolves around the need of Gen Z for more flexibility and remote working options, as well as paid time off to better adjust the balance between work and personal life (2023). Focus group participants have also highlighted the differences between Kosovar Gen Z and those of EU and USA because of the socioeconomic factors that has affected their perspective of everything, not only that of work-life balance (2023)

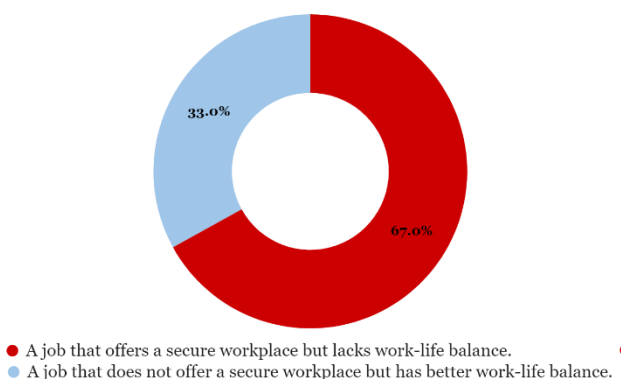
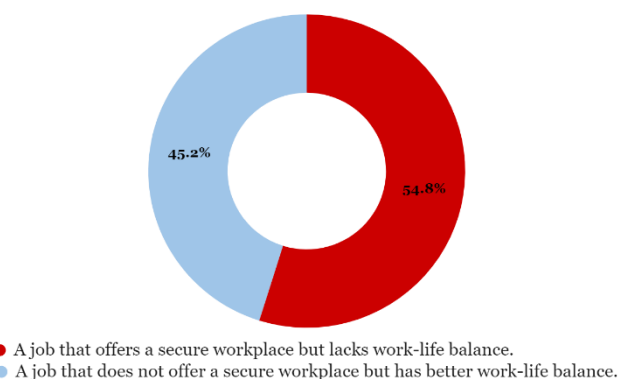
"We cannot have similar views with Gen Z abroad because we dealt with things that other Gen Z saw only in TV. We were raised in the aftermath of a recent war in a country that is yet to be recognized by all states and organizations, and we were restricted travelling because of visas. So, if we are similar to other Gen Z it's probably because of technology." (Participant D, Focus Group 2)

Differences in findings based on gender, location, and industry

In regards to gender, overall, there are significant differences among the perspective of female and male Gen Z toward work-life balance (Survey, 2023). In the first question, asking them to express work-life balance's importance, men have scored a higher mean than women, supporting the findings of Lašáková et al. that men put greater emphasis on work-life balance (2023). Nevertheless, in the hypothetical question which asks to sacrifice work-life balance, both genders favor professional fulfillment over work-life balance, however, women would sacrifice work-life balance less than men would do by 6.5% (See Figures 17 and 18). These differences could be attributed to the societal expectations of women and the role they are supposed to have in society (Focus Groups, 2023).

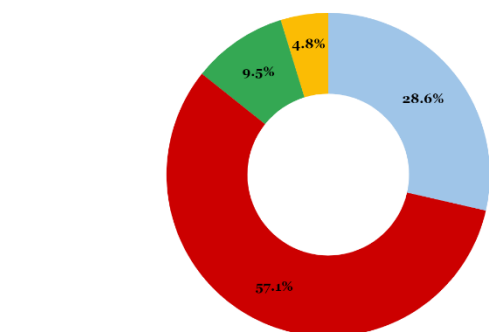
Figure 17. Professional fulfillment v. WLB (female)**Figure 18.** Professional fulfillment v. WLB (male)

Results also show a gender difference when it comes to sacrificing work-life balance for job security. Both genders are willing to sacrifice work-life balance for job security, however, women are more likely to do so by 12.2% more than men would (See Figures 19 and 20). Female participants in the focus group discussion have also highlighted the difficulties and challenges that women go through to find a job, which impacts their perception of job security since they are not given the same opportunities as men (2023).

Figure 19. Job security v. WLB (female)**Figure 20.** Job security v. WLB (male)

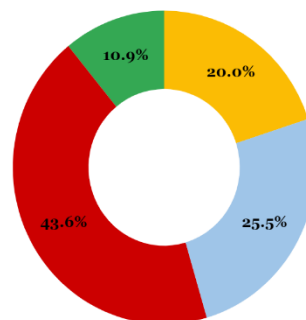
Another difference is shown in the top three most important factors when choosing a job. While both genders rated work-life balance, career advancement opportunities, and salary and compensation as the most important ones, the most important factor to men was career advancement opportunities, followed by work-life balance. To women, the most important factor was work-life balance, followed by career advancement opportunities.

Figure 21.

Figure 21. Preferred working model (rural)

● Hybrid model 1: More online, less in-person

● Hybrid model 2: More in-person, less online ● Fully online ● Fully in-person

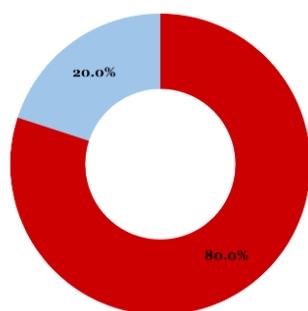
Figure 22. Preferred working model (urban)

● Fully in-person

● Hybrid model 1: More online, less in-person

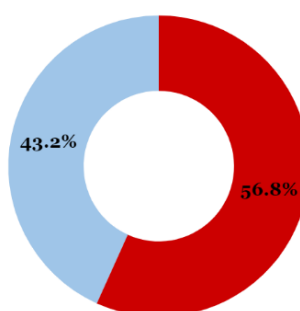
● Hybrid model 2: More in-person, less online ● Fully online

In regards to location, the results show no significant differences in the perspective of work-life balance and the factors affecting it. However, there are some differences in preference for a fully in-person job model by respondents residing in urban areas (See Figure 21 and 22). Preference for fully in-person jobs by those living in urban settings was also shown in the focus group discussions, while those in rural areas claim that fully in-person jobs present increased monetary costs to them (2023).

Figure 23. Job security v. WLB (education)

● A job that offers a secure workplace but lacks work-life balance.

● A job that does not offer a secure workplace but has better work-life balance.

Figure 24. Job security v. WLB (IT)

● A job that offers a secure workplace but lacks work-life balance.

● A job that does not offer a secure workplace but has better work-life balance.

In regards to the working sector, the two dominant industries were analyzed, namely, Information Technology (IT) and Education, where significant differences were shown. Gen Z in the education sector show willingness to sacrifice work-life balance more than those in the IT sector (See Figures 23 and 24). Of those working in the education sector, 80% would have chosen a job that offers a secure workplace but lacks work-life balance, whereas only 56.8% of those in the IT sector would have chosen this option. This difference could be attributed to the fact that with the skills and knowledge in the IT industry, Gen Z can find a new job

comparatively easier than in the education sector. (Focus Groups, 2023). The contrast in job mobility between the IT and education sectors is sharpened by the IT industry's rapid technological evolution and a labor market increasingly favoring flexible, skilled labor. This dynamism, underscored by OECD and Wasterman's findings, contrasts with the static nature of the education sector, hampered by regulatory and budgetary constraints that inhibit mobility (2019; 2023). This flexibility inherent in IT work could influence Gen Z's expectations and choices, aligning with findings that highlight the importance of work flexibility for this generation (Deloitte, 2021).

A total of 66.7% of Gen Z employees in the education sector prefer jobs that would offer higher salaries but lack work-life balance while the percentage of those in IT who would prefer jobs that would offer higher salary but lack work-life balance is lower at 48.6%; 51.4% of Gen Z in the IT industry would choose a job with a lower salary but a better work-life balance (See Figures 25 and 26). Even if Gen Z in the IT sector work for lower salaries, that would not make a huge difference in their lifestyle since the salaries in this sector are quite high (Focus Groups, 2023). However, due to the low salaries in the education sector, a decrease in salary would impact their lifestyle, thus salaries are prioritized over work-life balance (Focus Groups, 2023).

Figure 25. Salary v. WLB (education)

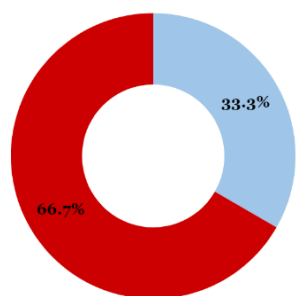
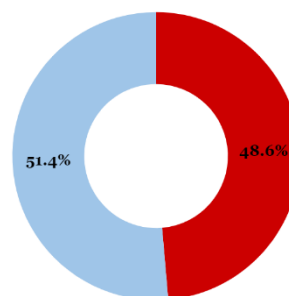


Figure 26. Salary v. WLB (IT)



- A job that offers a lower salary but has better work-life balance.
- A job that offers a higher salary but lacks work-life balance.
- A job that offers a higher salary but lacks work-life balance.
- A job that offers a lower salary but has better work-life balance.

Limitations

One limitation of the research is related to the nature of convenience sampling through online surveys. And since the survey is conducted online, it skews toward Gen Z who are more

digitally literate and engaged in social media, potentially leaving out portions of Gen Z with less access or proficiency with digital tools.

Another important aspect to be mentioned is that based on the demographics of the survey respondents, there are significantly more women who took part in the survey than men. Similarly, there is little representation of rural Gen Z in the survey. The number of respondents, 174, is another limitation since it indicates a low response rate for the whole Kosovar Gen Z population. Regarding the focus group discussions, the dynamics within the group, the lack of anonymity within the group, and the peer pressure could have influenced the responses of participants. Future researchers are recommended to consider the limitations of this study when conducting further research.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Considering the preferences of Generation Z in Kosovo, employers are advised to take the necessary measures to retain Gen Z talent. It is recommended that companies start adopting hybrid work arrangements since such models accommodate the preferences of Gen Z for flexibility and remote work. Moreover, employers are suggested to offer roles that provide a sense of meaning and provide a clear path for career advancement, aligning with Gen Z's desire for job fulfillment and success. Additionally, companies are advised to start providing mental health support and create an organizational culture that prioritizes employee well-being. In the long term, it is in the best interest of companies to enhance productivity, and that is achieved by offering the necessary opportunities for employees to balance work and personal life.

For Gen Z in Kosovo, it is vital to foster an understanding of personal work-life balance needs and effectively articulate these to employers. This cohort should strive for a balanced approach, aligning their work-life balance aspirations with organizational goals and expectations. In addition, this cohort is advised to seek training for enhancing digital and interpersonal skills, preparing them for a hybrid work environment.

Beyond the organizational level, other stakeholders play a crucial role in shaping a conducive environment for Gen Z. Educational institutions, for instance, are recommended to tailor their curricula and guidance services to equip students with the digital and interpersonal skills necessary for thriving in hybrid work settings. This preparation is not only about technical

proficiency but also about nurturing adaptability, critical thinking, and collaborative abilities. Moreover, at the policymaking level, it is of utmost importance to reconsider labor law to better reflect the evolving work paradigms, including flexible work hours, remote work provisions, and mental health safeguards in the workplace. These legislative updates should aim to protect workers' rights while accommodating the flexibility that modern work demands.

The findings of this capstone project provide an overview of the perspective of Kosovar Generation Z toward work-life balance. The secondary data sources provide an overview of Generation Z, ranging from their broad characteristics to their views on the balance between work and personal life, flexibility, remote work, and mental health. This generational cohort is shaped by unique socio-economic disruptions, including 9/11 and its aftermath, 2008's financial crisis, rapid technological advancement, and lastly the COVID-19 pandemic. The existing literature highlights Gen Z's preference for flexible work arrangements, including hybrid models where remote and in-person work is combined.

The data from the survey and focus group discussions confirm that work-life balance is an important factor for Kosovar Gen Z when choosing a job. This generation highly values time for personal interests, hobbies, family, and friends, which expresses their desire for a balance between work and personal fulfillment. Moreover, the possibility of having flexible working hours is more important than the possibility to work remotely to Kosovar Gen Z. This preference for flexible working hours suggests a need for autonomy for managing personal and work tasks. In regard to remote work, the findings present a nuanced perspective toward it due to challenges it poses in maintaining clear boundaries between work and personal life. Nevertheless, the benefits of remote work include reduced commuting and renting costs as well as better sleep, which were more emphasized by Gen Z living in rural areas. Despite being perceived as digital natives, Kosovar Gen Z, do not seem to want to work fully online and mostly prefer a hybrid model with a combination of more in-person work and less online work. The preference for this hybrid model suggests that Generation Z in Kosovo values direct social interactions with co-workers provided in physical workspaces.

On specific questions in the survey, differences based on gender, location, and sector were expressed. The survey highlighted gender differences in attitudes towards work-life balance, with women showing a greater inclination towards job security, valuing it more than

men. Additionally, when ranking priorities, men favored career advancement while women placed a higher emphasis on work-life balance. Gen Z living in urban areas expressed more preference toward fully in person jobs than those living in rural areas. Notable differences were noticed in regards to industries, where employees in the education sector favored job security over work-life balance more than IT employees did. Moreover, in terms of the salaries, IT employees would choose to work in companies that offer lower salaries but enable better work-life balance, whereas employees in the education sector would choose the opposite.

The insights from this capstone project shed light on the complex attitudes of Kosovar Generation Z towards work-life balance. While globally Generation Z is known for prioritizing flexible work arrangements and a strong emphasis on work-life balance, the findings reveal a readiness among Kosovar Gen Z to negotiate these preferences for certain benefits. A significant portion of respondents are open to sacrificing work-life balance for jobs that offer greater professional fulfillment, job security, or high salary. This inclination suggests a pragmatic approach where job stability and career growth sometimes outweigh the ideal work-life balance. Such tendencies are less pronounced in Western studies, indicating regional distinctions possibly influenced by Kosovo's unique socio-economic background.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form and Questionnaire

Study Title: Generation Z's Perspective on Work-Life Balance: Case of Kosovo

Researcher: Lorinë Bajrami, RIT Kosovo

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)

Certificate of Consent (your consent to participate)

Part I: Information Sheet

I am Lorinë Bajrami, a student at RIT Kosovo, and I am conducting this research as part of my capstone project, which examines Gen Z's attitude toward work-life balance in Kosovo. This consent form provides important information about the survey you are invited to participate in. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are encouraged to read the following information before deciding whether to participate.

The purpose of this research is to examine the attitudes of Generation Z individuals from different backgrounds in Kosovo toward work-life balance. The findings from this survey may be beneficial to companies in developing job-related policies to better adapt Generation Z as well as other stakeholders in Kosovo's labor market.

This research involves the completion of an online questionnaire, which consists of 27 questions. These questions include Likert scale, multiple-choice and one optional open question. The completion of this survey will take approximately 5 minutes.

Generation Z's adult members from various socioeconomic backgrounds are invited to participate in this survey. Gen Z includes people born between 1996 and 2010, but you have to be 18 years old to participate in this survey.

Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and there are no risks associated with participating in this survey. There are no reimbursements for participating in this study. Your responses will be anonymous; all information collected will be kept confidential and used for academic purposes only.

The findings will be publicly available on the RIT Library as a capstone project, but will not include any identifiable information.

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the survey at any point without penalty.

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey or your participation, please contact Lorinë Bajrami at lb9911@rit.edu.

Part II: Certificate of Consent

Certificate of Consent

I am between the ages of 18 - 27 and I have read and understood the information provided above.

I consent voluntarily to participate in this study by completing this online questionnaire. All data will be kept confidential and used for academic purposes only.

- Yes
- No

Demographics:

Q1. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

Q2. Birth order:

- First-born
- Middle child
- Youngest
- Only child
- Prefer not to say

Q3. Ethnicity

- Albanian
- Serb
- Turk
- Gorani
- Roma
- Ashkali
- Egyptian
- Bosnian
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

Q4. Location:

- Urban
- Rural
- Prefer not to say

Q5. Highest level of education:

- No formal education
- Elementary school
- High school
- Bachelor's student
- Bachelor
- Master's student
- Master
- PhD student
- PhD
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

Q6. Employment status:

- Full-time employed
- Part-time employed
- Unemployed
- Self-employed
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

Q7. The sector you work in:

- Information Technology (IT)
- Education
- Health sector
- Banking sector
- Manufacturing sector
- Retail sector
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Government and Public Administration
- Arts and Entertainment
- NGOs
- Agriculture and Farming
- Construction Telecommunication Energy and Utilities
- Transport and Logistics
- Gastronomy
- Not applicable to me (unemployed)

- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

Questions on work-life balance:

Q8. When choosing a job, to what extent do you value the work-life balance?

1. Not important at all
2. Not important
3. Neutral
4. Important
5. Very important

Q9. When choosing a job, to what extent do you value the option of flexible working hours?

1. Not important at all
2. Not important
3. Neutral
4. Important
5. Very important

Q10. When choosing a job, to what extent do you value the possibility to disconnect from work outside of our working hours?

1. Not important at all
2. Not important
3. Neutral
4. Important
5. Very important

Q11. When choosing a job, to what extent do you value the possibility of having time for your personal interests and hobbies outside of work?

1. Not important at all
2. Not important
3. Neutral
4. Important
5. Very important

Q12. When choosing a job, to what extent do you value the possibility of having time for your relationships with family and friends?

1. Not important at all
2. Not important
3. Neutral
4. Important
5. Very important

Q13. When choosing a job, to what extent do you value the option of taking time off or going on vacation to recharge and maintain work-life balance?

1. Not important at all
2. Not important
3. Neutral
4. Important
5. Very important

Q14. When choosing a job, to what extent do you value the availability of remote work?

1. Not important at all
2. Not important
3. Neutral
4. Important
5. Very important

Q15. If you could choose, which working model would you prefer?

- Fully online
- Hybrid model 1: More online, less in-person
- Hybrid model 2: More in person, less online
- Fully in person

Q16. To what extent do you agree with the statement: “Remote work can lead to a healthier work-life balance.”

1. Extreme Likely
2. Likely
3. Neutral
4. Not Likely
5. Not Likely At All

Q17. To what extent do you agree with the statement: “The COVID-19 pandemic has positively influenced my perception of remote work as a viable option for my future career.”

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Q18. To what extent do you agree with the statement: “A good work-life balance positively affects my mental health.”

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Q19. On a scale from 1 to 5, how much does balancing work and life make you more productive at work?

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Q20. Which aspects of work-life balance below are most important to you? Please rank with 1=the most important, 4=the least important: you cannot rate more than one aspect with the same value/number:

	1	2	3	4
Flexible work hours	x	x	x	x
Remote work options	x	x	x	x
Paid time off (vacation, sick leave)	x	x	x	x
Mental health	x	x	x	x

Perceived importance of work-life balance related to other work factors:

Q21. When choosing a job, which of the options is more preferable to you?

- A job that fulfills you professionally but lacks work-life balance.
- A job that does not fulfill you professionally but has better work-life balance.

Q22. When choosing a job, which of the options is more preferable to you?

- A job that offers a secure workplace but lacks work-life balance.
- A job that does not offer a secure workplace but has better work-life balance.

Q23. When choosing a job, which of the options is more preferable to you?

- A job that offers a higher salary but lacks work-life balance.
- A job that offers a lower salary but has better work-life balance.

Q24. When choosing a job, which are the **top THREE** most important factors to you?

Please rate the most important factor with 1 and continue rating the other two in order of importance.

	1	2	3
Work-life balance	x	x	x
Human rights and ethical practices/treatment	x	x	x
Environmental sustainability	x	x	x
Mental health and well-being support	x	x	x
Opportunities for career advancement	x	x	x
Job security	x	x	x
Salary and compensation	x	x	x
Diversity and inclusion	x	x	x
Company's philanthropic efforts	x	x	x

Concluding questions:

Q25. To what extent do you feel that your generation (Gen Z) values work-life balance differently compared to older generation (e.g., Baby Boomers or Gen X)?

1. We value work-life balance much less than older generations.
2. We value work-life balance less than older generations.
3. We value work-life balance same as older generations.
4. We value work-life balance more than older generations.
5. We value work-life balance much more than older generations.

Q26. Have you ever turned down a job offer because it did not align with your expectation for work-life balance?

- Yes
- No

Q27. What is your recommendation for local companies to suit your work-life balance preferences? (You don't need to answer this question.)

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form and Focus Group Discussion Guide

Study Title: Generation Z's Perspective on Work-Life Balance: Case of Kosovo

Researcher: Lorinë Bajrami, RIT Kosovo

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)

Certificate of Consent (your consent to participate)

Part I: Information Sheet

I am Lorinë Bajrami, a student at RIT Kosovo, and I am conducting this research as part of my capstone project, which examines Gen Z's attitude toward work-life balance in Kosovo. This consent form provides important information about the focus group discussion you are invited to participate in. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are encouraged to read the following information before deciding whether to participate. Gen Z includes people born between 1996 and 2010, but you have to be 18 years old to participate in this focus group discussion.

The purpose of this research is to examine the attitudes of Generation Z individuals from different backgrounds in Kosovo toward work-life balance. The findings from this research may be beneficial to companies in developing job-related policies to better adapt Generation Z as well as other stakeholders in Kosovo's labor market.

This research involves the participation in a focus group discussion with 7 other participants with similar experiences. You will be asked to provide your insights on work-life balance and discuss the results of the survey on Gen Z's perspective of work-life balance in Kosovo. This discussion will be guided by Lorine Bajrami.

The group discussion will start with the focus group discussion leader, making sure that you are comfortable. The discussion will take place in the Library of Gjilan. The entire discussion will be recorded in meeting minutes, but no-one will be identified by name in the minutes. When notetaking becomes difficult, some parts of the discussion might be audio recorded for the purposes of taking precise notes. The information is confidential, and no one else except for the researcher will have access to the minutes. The minutes will be destroyed after 100 days, while the audio recordings will be destroyed upon finalizing the meeting minutes, after 3 days.

Participation in this group discussion is entirely voluntary and there are no risks associated with participating in this discussion. There are no reimbursements for participating in this study. All information collected will be kept confidential from our side and used for academic purposes only. We will ask you and others in the group not to talk to people outside the group about what was said in the group. We will, in other words, ask each of you to keep what was said in the group confidential. You should know, however, that we cannot stop or prevent participants who were in the group from sharing things that should be confidential.

The findings will be publicly available on the RIT Library as a capstone project, but will not include any identifiable information.

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the discussion at any point without penalty.

Part II: Certificate of Consent

Certificate of Consent

I am between the ages of 18 - 27 and I have read and understood the information provided above. I have read the information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

Focus Group Discussion Guide:

Welcoming and thanking participants for agreeing to participate.

Reading the terms and conditions and allowing participants to ask questions before starting the discussion.

Asking the participants these questions (maybe merging some question based on need), providing them the results of the survey, and asking their opinion on the findings:

Can you briefly describe what work-life balance means to you?

How important is having flexible working hours to you and why?

In your opinion, does having flexible work hours impact your productivity and job satisfaction? How so?

What are your thoughts on remote work? Do you find it more beneficial or challenging compared to in-person work?

Can you share any experiences where remote work significantly impacted your work-life balance, either positively or negatively?

Do you prefer a hybrid work model that includes both in-person and online work? If so, what balance of in-person vs. online work do you find ideal?

How do you think the socio-economic context of Kosovo influences your work-life balance compared to what you observe or know about other countries?

Are there any specific challenges you face in achieving work-life balance in Kosovo's current job market?

Have you noticed any differences in work-life balance preferences among your peers based on gender, location (urban vs. rural), or industry sector?

How do these differences manifest in your personal or professional circles?

Looking ahead, what changes or improvements would you like to see in workplaces in Kosovo to better support work-life balance for Generation Z?

How do you envision the future of work for your generation, considering the current trends and your own expectations?

Thank participants for their participation.

Appendix 3: Focus Group Members

Focus Group 1: 8 members

Participant A – Female, student at a private university in Kosovo, rural.

Participant B – Female, part-time employee in the retail sector, as well as student in a public university, urban.

Participant C – Male, full-time employee in the banking sector, rural.

Participant D – Male, full-time worker in the education sector, urban.

Participant E – Female, full-time employee in the education sector, rural.

Participant F – Female, student at a private university, urban.

Participant G – Male, full-time worker in the construction sector, rural.

Participant H – Male, part-time employee in the gastronomy sector, rural.

Focus Group 2: 8 members

Participant A – Male, full-time employee in the IT sector, rural.

Participant B – Female, full-time worker in the education sector, urban.

Participant C – Male, full-time employee in the construction sector, urban.

Participant D – Male, full-time employee in the IT sector, urban.

Participant E – Male, full-time employee in the arts sector, rural.

Participant F – Female, student at a private university in Kosovo, urban.

Participant G – Female, full-time employee in the IT sector, as well as student in a private university, urban.

Participant H – Female, full-time employee in the education sector, rural.

Appendix 4: Additional Figures

Figure A. Ethnicity

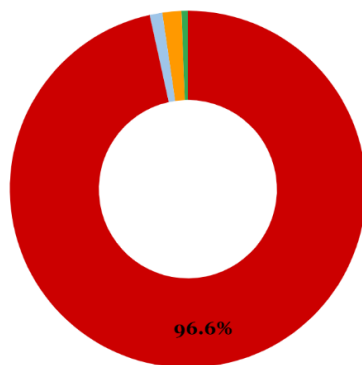
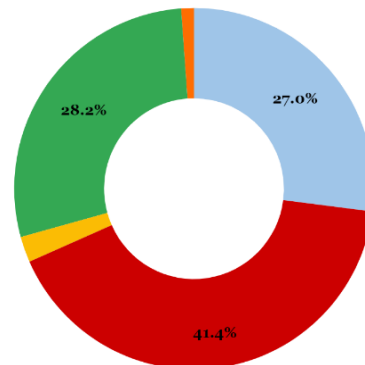


Figure B. Birth Order



● Albanian ● Turk ● Kosovar ● Bosnian ● Middle child ● First-born ● Only child ● Youngest ● Prefer not to say

Figure C. COVID-19's influence on remote work as a viable career option