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**FACTORS INFLUENCING WORKPLACE HAPPINESS AMONG GEN Z
EMPLOYEES**

By



**Thesis Submitted to
School of Business Management
Universiti Utara Malaysia
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for
the Master of Human Resource Management**



**Pusat Pengajian Pengurusan
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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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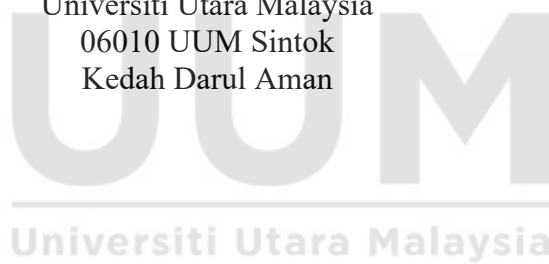
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship of five independent variables which are work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance towards the dependent variable which is workplace happiness amongst Gen Z employees, a new generation that has started their journey in the “work environment”. The data collected through digital survey questionnaires from 482 respondents using the snow ball convenient method. Self Determination Theory (SDT) is used as the underpinning theory to support this study. Results shown that there was significant positive relationship between transformational leadership, meaningful work and work life balance towards Gen Z’s happiness in the work place while no significant relationship was found for the remaining two independent variables; work autonomy and workplace friendship. This study helps organizations and employers to better understand Gen Z’s focus and needs in their work environment so as to ensure better attraction and employee retention.

Keywords: Work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, work life balance, workplace happiness,



ABSTRAK

Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan lima pembolehubah tidak bersandar iaitu autonomi kerja, kepimpinan transformasi, kerja yang bermakna, persahabatan di tempat kerja dan keseimbangan kehidupan kerja terhadap pembolehubah bersandar iaitu kegembiraan di tempat kerja dalam kalangan pekerja Gen Z, generasi baharu yang baru memulakan perjalanan dalam "persekitaran kerja". Data yang dikumpul melalui soal selidik tinjauan digital daripada 482 responden menggunakan kaedah *snow ball convenient*. Teori Penentuan Kendiri (SDT) digunakan sebagai teori asas bagi menyokong kajian ini. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan positif yang signifikan antara kepimpinan transformasi, kerja yang bermakna dan keseimbangan kehidupan kerja dengan kegembiraan Gen Z di tempat kerja manakala tiada hubungan yang signifikan diperolehi untuk dua pembolehubah tidak bersandar yang selebihnya; autonomi kerja dan persahabatan di tempat kerja. Kajian ini membantu organisasi dan majikan untuk lebih memahami fokus dan keperluan Gen Z di persekitaran kerja mereka untuk memastikan pengambilan dan pengekalan pekerja yang lebih baik.

Kata kunci: Autonomi kerja, kepimpinan transformasi, kerja yang bermakna, keseimbangan kehidupan kerja, kegembiraan di tempat kerja



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the name of Allah the Most Gracious and Most Merciful

All praises to Allah for the time given, for giving me the strength, knowledge, ability and opportunity to undertake this study and complete it satisfactorily.

My deepest gratitude and special thanks to my respected supervisors, Prof Madya Dr. Wan Shakizah binti Wan Mohd Noor and Prof Madya Dr. Mohd Faizal bin Mohd Isa, for the patience, trust and support in completing this research paper.

Highest appreciation and thank you very much to my Abah, Umami, Hawa, Hafiz, Ahmad, Fatin, Najah, Mujahid, Muiz, Umayr, Ulyaa and Fateh for the prayers, sacrifices, supports, caring & love. The completion of this research paper could not be possible without support from all of you.

I would like to express my gratitude to Puan Azlina binti Shahrom and Dr. Kasuma Satria bin Mat Jadi who has inspired and provide all the supports that I need in completing this research. Special thanks to all my friends and colleagues who has helped me through out my journey.

Abundantly love and thanks to:

Hefvihervina Rohayu & Shabiha Asmawi for the endless emotional encouragement, precious time and support. Truly appreciate it.

To all those who are coming, pass by, accidentally or incidentally, directly or indirectly contributing the laugh, tears, effort, support & love in making every page of this research paper meaningful. Thank you.

May Allah reward you, May Allah give you more blessing and goodness

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction.

This chapter consists of the study background, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, scope, significance of the study and definition of key terms and as well the organization of this research paper.

1.1 Background of study

Happiness is a simple term yet provides a deep meaning, attributed as positive emotions by psychologist (Rao, Lakshmi & Goswami, 2018) and used to define as living a good life (Gavin & Mason, 2004). It is a basic fundamental feeling required to ensure self-fulfilment of an individual. This feeling good will then be translated into behaviour and action, subsequently affects individual participation in an organization and community in a positive manner (Diener, 2000). Hence, it is everyone's aim and ultimate goal to be happy in life (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo & Mansfield, 2012; Fisher, 2010; Moccia, n.d.). In 2021, Malaysia had embarked on a Malaysia Happiness Index Survey with the aim to measure Malaysian Happiness. The survey and report, issued by the Department of Statistics, was developed based on the World Happiness Report, Human Development Index, OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being, Gross National Happiness (Bhutan GNH) and Happy Planet Index (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022).

The Malaysia Happiness Index Report 2021 indicated that the overall Malaysian score for happiness is 6.48 (Happy) out of 10 (Very Happy). Malaysia is at 79th ranking and

in comparison to Finland, scores of 7.842 and ranked as the world’s happiest country. Department of Statistics has analyze it further to component level. The result of analysis shows that “highest index score was the family component which was 7.23 (Happy), followed by religion and spiritual component; 7.21 (Happy) and health; 6.75 (Happy)”. Working life is ranked 7th out of 13th, and the score is 6.31 (Happy). The components evaluated are work life balance, relationship with employer, relationship with colleagues, right to speak, career advancement, workload and benefits of employment. (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022)

Table 1.1
Happiness Index Scores

Index Score	Category
0.00 – 2.00	Very Unhappy
2.01 – 4.00	Unhappy
4.01 – 6.00	Moderately happy
6.01 – 8.00	Happy
8.01 – 10.00	Very happy

Working life is important for an adult. Based on the Malaysian Department of Statistics, on average, Malaysians work 43.6 hours per week. Data shows from December 2013 until 2021, Malaysians spend an average of 46.3 hours per week working (Departments of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). This shows that a large part of an adult Malaysian life is work. In ensuring high productivity, it is important to know what makes Malaysian employees happy to work. Happiness is derived from 3 main factors; extrinsic, intrinsic and work life and it is a result of the workplace policies or practices (Rao et al., 2018).

Happiness in the workplace is significant in ensuring it to be translated into positive vibes and energy among employees. Collective positive energy derived from employees will result in organizational success. There is a broad consensus that happy employees are productive employees, notwithstanding the lack of a definite link between employee happiness and workplace productivity. As for Joo & Lee (2017), they believed that “happy individuals are likely to be more active, approachable, energetic, interested in their work, sympathetic to their colleagues, and persistent in the face of difficulties compared to unhappy employees” (Joo & Lee, 2017). Employees tend to be happier and healthier when they have a sense of purpose in their work environment. This will then create more productive employees over a long period of time as they will give their best in serving customers, clients or in producing any product. (Gavin & Mason, 2004).

The past two years have been challenging, not only for organizations or companies but also for employees due to Covid-19 pandemic worldwide. Most countries were on total lock down, have limited to almost no movement allowed and limited interaction. At this point, technology becomes important that links and connects people. During the pandemic, there were high mental health issues reported including anxiety and depression. Causes vary from unemployment, health issue, feeling isolated, and etc. This situation has also changed the way employees work, their mental health and it also affects employees emotions and happiness. Fast forward post 2 years of pandemic and in this uncertain times, organizations started to have a new generation of employees, a true digital native with allegedly the shortest attention span (Lanier, 2017) enjoys being creative, entrepreneurial and prefers to work independently

(Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018) known as Gen Z. With the new generation on board, the composition of workforce today comprises 4 different generations as published by Beresford Research (2019) and “Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Generation Y or Millennials (1981 – 1996) and Generation Z (1997 – 2012)” (Brunjes, 2022; Dimock, 2019).

Rampton (2017) explained the characteristics of the four different generations that are still active in employment. First, Baby Boomers, a generation that is recognised as dedicated in achieving goals, can be motivated through promotions, professional growth, and getting respects from others for their expertise. The second generation, Gen X values the room for them to develop themselves, options for decision making and mentoring relationships. Gen X able to work independently with minimal supervision and believes that promotions should not be determined on rank, age, or seniority but rather by competency. The third generation, Millennials on the other hand are open to work with any high paying employers in return for their skills possessed. For that reason, they are more opportunist and less loyal which is clearly different from the other two generations. Although salary seems as an important factor for this generation, their motivation for retention is also affected by good company’s culture, promptness in providing response or feedback, opportunities for ongoing learning and mentoring.

On top of that, this generation also looks for organization with collaboration opportunities, structure, stability, flexible schedules, time off and embracing the latest technology environment. Interestingly, the latest edition to the workforce, the Gen Z, are attracted to social rewards, meaningful work and accountabilities opportunity,

mentorship, and constant feedback. Similar to the millennials, they also look forward for flexible scheduling. This generation is also inspired by tangible benefits, including gaming achievements and the chance for them to further grow. They also demand transparency, structure and clear instructions. It is also interesting to discover that that 53 percent of Gen Z prefers interaction in person.

Labour Market Review in Quarter 1 2022 indicated that the number of new generation entering the workforce is growing. “Those in the age group between 25 to 34 years (Gen Y) made up the biggest composition of the labour force, comprising of 34.2 per cent. The labour force in the age group of 35 to 44 years (Gen X and Y) ranked second with 25.2 per cent, followed by 15 to 24 years; 16.9% (Gen Z) and 45 to 54 years; 16.2% (Gen X). The high increase in the labour force in Q1 2022 was the 15 to 24 years’ age group (Gen Z). This category recorded a rise of 113.1 thousand (4.3%) to register 2.74 million persons. In the meantime, the age group 55 to 64 years (Gen X and Baby Boomers) posted a reduction of 127.1 thousand persons (-9.4%) to 1.23 million persons. Lower number of labour force was also recorded by 45 to 54 years’ age group (Gen X), declined by 26.7 thousand (-1.0%) to 2.64 million persons” (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2022). Over time, Gen Z, coupled with Millennials, will dominate the workforce.

Based on the above, Gen Z as future leaders plays a significant role in companies, organization as well as nation building. Therefore, organizations and companies have to ensure workforce stability among its younger generation, to mould and shape them as leaders and successors. This study aims to analyse factors that makes Gen Z happy at the workplace which affects their retention. This chapter outlines the background of

the study on how the research is planned to be carried out. It explores on the problem statement, research questions, research objectives, scope and limitation of study, significance of study and definition of key terms.

1.2 Problem statement

Workplace happiness is a predetermined factor towards successfulness of an employee as well as organization. It is essential for employers to design and manage a workplace that enhances employee happiness because the concept of happiness is critical to organizational performance and productivity (Gavin & Mason, 2004; Rego & Cunha, 2008). Employees who are content are happier at home as well as at work; Additionally, they shift their happiness from their home to the workplace (Asiyabi & Mirabi, 2012). Therefore, it is important for an organization or employer to be vigilant on the factor that influences their employees' happiness at the workplace as it will also affects the organization stability.

Previous study by Fisher (2010), discussed the “very important question concerns what makes people happy, and why some people are happier than others. Generic answers are (1) something in the environment or circumstances of the person makes them happy; (2) something inside the person predisposes them to be more or less happy; (3) an interaction of person and situation creates happiness; and (4) volitional behaviors impact happiness. There is support for all of these having important implications for happiness” (Fisher, 2010). Based on this, we understand that a lot of factors contributed towards individual happiness. Workplace as the external factors becomes essential in determining the feeling of happiness for a person as individual

also as an employee. In this study, the focus would be on happiness for the new generation.

Maintaining organization stability is important. Today's organizations gain competitive advantage through their human resources by having the right talent internally. The good feeling that employees have also created a different atmosphere and spirit while working. Wesarat, Sharif & Majid (2015) highlighted that there is a possible close interrelation between an individual's work and life. It is time for organizations to relook and invest significant resources in fostering stability. More concerted effort required to ensure that organizations are able to bring stability to the forefront of the minds by focusing on individuals' employee's needs. Both employers and employees need to re-evaluate the contribution that they can make in return to what is gain from the other party to ensure a win-win employer-employee situation for both parties. This thought process is important as once the relationship is stressed or broken; it will affect the trust, motivation and retention of employees.

Gottschalk (2019) in Harvard Business Review findings discussed about organization stability, "When we hope to retain a valued employee or help them excel, we often look to factors outside of our own organizations such as external training, salary benchmarks, perks, or titles. However, it might be wise to look inward and first consider the psychological constructs that contribute to stability within the work environment. Identifying the issues that are preventing an employee from feeling psychologically supported at work will go a long way toward helping your most valued employees to move forward confidently and do their best work yet" (Gottschalk, 2019).

Talent Trends 2022 issued by Michael Page, a consultant company shows that 64 percents of respondents in Malaysia has shifted their priorities; prepared to forego a pay raise or promotion in exchange for a better work life balance, general wellbeing, and happiness. Deloitte Global's survey published in April 2022 indicated that 64 percent of millenials and Gen Z wish to quit their jobs within the next two years, in which 40 percent of them are Gen Z. The survey also indicated that 67 percent of this young generation are willing to leave their job even without another job. Surprisingly, 35 percent of them are from Gen Z (Deloitte, 2022). The result of this study which was conducted in 2021, is an alarming situation. These findings supports results shared in Talent Trends 2022 published by Michael Page; reveals that 82 percent Malaysian plans to resign in the next 6 months and as for Gen Z, 78 percent of them also plan to do the same. What makes this situation happen?

The conduct at the workplace has great influence in determining one's happiness (Gavin & Mason, 2004). The question now is about happiness for the talent within the new generation as this group of people who will be the successor and reason for organization success in the future. Employers find that the younger generational cohorts stay in a short time in a company due to their lack of motivation and becoming disengaged with their job, which results in a turnover (Pontefract, 2018, Diz, 2021). While Millennial and Gen Z share many similar qualities, Gen Z also introduces new behavioural pattern. As a result, leaders today must quickly learn on the right ways to manage this inexperienced young generation that has distinctive traits shaped by their limited experiences (Schroth, 2019).

To date, there is limited research on Gen Z and workplace as this generation has just entered the workforce for few years. However, the number of Gen Z in the workplace will increase significantly over time which makes this study relevant and important. Questions are now arising in a context in which understanding reasons for happiness for gen z is pointed out to be significant in ensuring their retention and subsequently create organization stability. It is still a question on what are the possible factors that may significantly influence gen Z happiness at the workplace by considering five variables which are “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance”. Therefore, this study aims to have further understanding on the elements that affect Gen Z’s happiness at their workplace.

1.3 Research Questions

Considering the above problems highlighted, below are five research questions identified in this study:

- a) Is there any significant relationship between work autonomy and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees?
- b) Is there any significant relationship between transformational leadership and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees?
- c) Is there any significant relationship between meaningful work and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees?
- d) Is there any significant relationship between workplace friendship and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees?
- e) Is there any significant relationship between work life balance and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees?

1.4 Research Objectives

In relation to the above, the following are the research objectives for this study:

- a) To examine significant relationship between work autonomy and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.
- b) To investigate significant relationship between transformational leadership and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.
- c) To examine significant relationship between meaningful work and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.
- d) To determine the significant relationship between workplace friendship and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.
- e) To identify significant relationship between work life balance and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of Study

This research is focusing on Gen Z employees who has started to work and be in employment for at least for six months based on the basis that probation period practice by Companies in Malaysia are generally within three to six months (Geyzel, 2021). This is also based on assumption that Gen Z population who pursued tertiary education starts their employment at the age of 23 years old. The working location for respondents are scattered across Malaysia.

1.6 Significance of Study

Policy makers and employers have the opportunity to benefit from this research as it provides insight on the retention efforts for Gen Z who are the leaders of future for an organization as well as for the nation. The technological advancement and social

interaction beyond boundaries that is built in as Gen Z character may have high influence in their commitment towards the work life. Their opportunities for employability also will not limit based on geographical area, hence, it is now a global competition among employers in recruitment and retention of the talent pool. Therefore, employers have no option but to be ready in accepting this generation as a huge group of this workforce that will be entering the workforce more and more over the years. For that reason, it is equally important for employers to relook at the current organization policies and practices to fit in the needs of Gen Z in ensuring their happiness at workplace. Once they are hired, they will be trained and for that, it is crucial to retain them as they are the gems in ensuring organizational succesfulness in a long run.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Table 1.1
Definition of Key Terms

Key Term	Definition
Workplace Happiness	“Happiness at the workplace refers to how satisfied people are with their work and lives” (Wesarat et al.,2015)
Gen Z	“Generation Z are the young generation, born in between 1997 and 2012” (Dimock, 2019). Certain researchers identified Gen Z as those who were born in 1995 and 2010. In the context of Malaysia, Generation Z were born in between 1997 and 2012.

Key Term	Definition
Meaningful work	“The realization of one’s potential and purpose where the passions, core values and strengths interact with work” (Lieff, 2009)
Work Autonomy	“Autonomy as the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying out” (Oldham, Hackman & Pearce, 1976).
Transformational Leadership	“Transformational leadership is defined as leadership behavior that transforms the norms and values of the employees, whereby the leader motivates the workers to perform beyond their own expectations” (Yukl, 1989)
Workplace Friendship	“Workplace friendships are defined as nonexclusive workplace relations that involve mutual trust, commitment, reciprocal liking and shared interests or values” (Berman, West & Richter, 2001)
Work Life Balance	Work Life Balance is the concept as employers working together with their staff to establish agreements that balance the demands of the business with the personal lives of the staff. (Barrera, 2007)

1.8 Organisation of the Thesis

There are five (5) chapters constructed for this research starting with the brief background and identification of the problem statement. It is followed by chapter two (2) that provides insights and in-depth understanding of the topic through literature review. This chapter also explains on the dependent and independent variables. Chapter three (3) focuses on research methodology discussion that is discusses in a great detail. The results of this study's findings are discussed in chapter four (4). It provides details on the reviewed data that was gathered which will be further explained in the discussion. Chapter five (5) discusses the conclusion of this study together with recommendations for additional future research direction.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

A comprehensive discussion through literature review is carried out in this chapter to justify the research problem. This research ultimate aim is to investigate the connection of five (5) factors that influences happiness at the workplace amongst Gen Z employees. The conceptual framework consists of independent variables; “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance” are introduced in the next section. Moreover, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is chosen as the underpinning theory that supports this research.

2.1 Definition and variables concepts

2.1.1 Gen Z and its characteristic

Gen Z is the techno savvy group were born into technology with limitless connection, hence they are the tactile learners, social media generation with constant connectivity (Baldonado, 2018; Dimock, 2019). This generation spends a lot of their time with digital gadgets, at least ten hours every day (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Rue, 2018) and has similar characteristics to millennials by being loyal, thoughtful, responsible and determined (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). They are also very focus on intrinsic rewards and motivators to be engaged, productive and successful (Adams, 2012; Diz, 2021). Comparing to millennials, Gen Z has a higher curiosity level and generally being adamant with their ideas regardless of age (Gabriel, Don, Vicshan, Jayang, & Wai, 2022), multi-talented, well networked, and high on promoting themselves (Tewari & Bhattacharyya, 2017).

Rue (2018) highlighted that Gen Z will be a challenging generation to be managed due to their borderless connectivity with limitless resources and information (Rue, 2018). As they have been in a fast environment, there is a tendency for Gen Z to be low in tolerance due to their high tech ability (Shatto & Erwin, 2016). With that, Sharma and Pandit (2020) suggested to focus on Gen Z's potential job satisfaction that is imperative to them. In career, Gen Z looks forward to be outshined through challenging tasks assigned and be rewarded. Besides that, they also look for flexibility in work, helpful seniors and mentors, open discussion and feedbacks. Gen Z also lives by clear objective, well defined target, wants to maintain good rapport with co-workers and build a friendly and lively environment. (Sharma & Pandit, 2020). In summary, Gen Z is a generation that looks for not only financial compensation and rewards, but more importantly meaningful work life which is consistent with employees' value system (Bremner and Carriere, 2011; Diz, 2021).

2.1.2 Workplace Happiness among Gen Z employees

Workplace happiness has high impact to an individual's life as the emotion is manifested through action. Happiness at the workplace refers to the satisfactory feeling of an individual with what they do and also their work. An individual's happiness are highly dependent on the happiness at workplace. This conclusion is derived as working adults spend more time in the workplace which on an average of eight to ten hours daily (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021; Tasnim, 2016).

As a result, this subject becomes essential discussion as "the idea of happiness is related to an individual's subjective well-being. Happy people are productive people

while those people who are unhappy may not pay full attention to any task”. (Wesarat et al., 2015). The ‘happy-productive worker hypothesis’ may be highly relatable to individual as the feeling of workplace contentment is closely associated to productivity. This concept means the happier an individual, the more productive they will be (Awada & Ismail, 2019; Fisher, 2010; Momparler, Carmona & Climent, 2011), hence, it is worth for organization to put more focus and work on improvement of workplace happiness. By feeling happy, this positive feelings will be trickled down and the same feeling will be felt by others (Kimura, 2016). Collectively, it becomes a positive impact to organization (Joo & Lee, 2017).

Researchers have put high interest in studying about happiness, optimism and positive character qualities in recent years (Moccia, n.d.). Focusing on Gen Z, the high curiosity (Sharma & Pandit, 2020) of digital native (Baldonado, 2018; Csobanka, 2016) are full of expectation generation, Gen Z has high capacity in enhancing an organization’s performance provided the company provides a platform for them to unleash their talents (Sharma & Pandit, 2020) and fulfil their needs (Baldonado, 2018). Therefore, one of the strategies might be to understand this generation and let them be themselves; (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018) but more importantly focusing to what makes them happy at work as this is the career goal of this new generation (Moccia, n.d.). By catering to their career goal, it provides an opportunity for organization to develop and retain this Gen Z for a longer period of time.

2.1.3 Work Autonomy

Gagne and Bhave (2011) defined work autonomy “as an individuals’ right or freedom in choosing to partake in things that they find interesting, exciting, and meaningful to them” (Gagné & Bhave, 2011; Yap and Badri, 2020). This variable is relatable to a theory introduced by Hackman and Oldham (1976) on Job Characteristic Model. There are five (5) fundamentals suggested in this model which are; “autonomy, feedback, skill variety, task identity and task significance”. All these dimensions have positive correlation towards the feeling of contentment in the job (Ali, Said, Yunus, Kader, Latif & Munap, 2014).

Saragih (2015) suggested that employee with autonomy will produce better performance. The statement is seconded by Ilyash, Yildirim, Capuk & Bozgul (2019) and employees are said to be more creative and able to improve capability (Ilyash et al., 2019). In addition to that, autonomous employees are also being regarded as the one with high job satisfaction (Ali et al., 2014) as this individual will have freedom in managing their work, able to add value in it through experiences (Ilyash et al., 2019). However, certain scholars shared the possible limitation for employees from being autonomous if they are expected to work in a team (Dee, Henkin, & Chen, 2000; Ilyash, Yildirim and Capuk, 2019). In gist, work autonomy has positive impact on individual performance and improve organizational commitment.

2.1.4 Transformational Leadership

There are two (2) functions associated with leadership which are influence and direction determination (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006; Abdullah, Ling & Ping, 2017). Further to that, Burns (1978) defined “transformational

leader” terms as “a person who seeks to satisfy higher needs and engages the full potential of the follower” (Kovjanic, Schuh, Jonas, Quaquebeke, Van & Van Dick , 2012). Transformational leaders are those who has forward looking characters. They will develop a common vision as an inspiration for others to move forward. This act becomes a catalyst for organization to be more innovative towards creation of new services and products. Mostafa, Ghasabeh, Soosay & Reaiche (2015); Yang, (2012); Nguni, Slegers & Denessen (2006); Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Bommer, (1996) discovered that organisational commitment is positively impacted by transformational leadership (Abdullah et al., 2017) and it was widely known as key factors for organizational success (Yukl, 2010; Kovjanic et al., 2012)).

Nguni et. al (2006) discovers that employee retention and commitment are directly impacted by leadership transformation (Abdullah et al., 2017). In addition, the leaders and leadership style play a major role in ensuring organization success (Malik, 2013) as leader’s positive moods could influence team performance directly (Chi, Chung & Tsai., 2011). Employees may become an organization's most valuable asset thanks to this crucial style of leadership in the modern global business climate. As a result, many organisations today still need leaders who can clearly communicate their vision, hold themselves to a high standard of performance, offer tailored support, and enjoy intellectual challenge. This is especially true in globalised markets where societies, talent, knowledge, skills, and culture are converging (Abdullah et al., 2017).

2.1.5 Meaningful Work

“Meaningful Work” as defined by Lieff (2009) is “the realization of one’s potential and purpose where the passions, core values and strengths interact with work” (Martela & Pessi, 2018) while Lips, Wright, and Dik (2016) defined “‘meaningful work’, ‘meaningfulness’, or ‘meaning in work’ as to the significance or value of work, which by definition has positive valence” (Allan, Batz-Barbarich, Sterling & Tay, 2019; Martela & Pessi, 2018) suggested three important elements of meaningful work which are significance, broader purpose and self-realization. These three elements are related to the intrinsic value and motivation of an individual (Martela & Pessi, 2018).

In a study by Fairlie (2011), it is a realization that meaningful work is under-represented and not being associated with many job models. In reality, meaningful work is important, highly related to work motivation and organizational psychology (Fairlie, 2011). This is also supported by Allan, Barbarich and Sterling (2019) that meaningful work largely correlates with work engagement, job satisfaction and commitment (Allan et al., 2019) and employees with fulfilling work life shows improved productivity, high performance and commitment to the job (Barsh, Cranson & Craske, 2008; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Herman & Gioia, 1998; Diz, 2021).

2.1.6 Workplace Friendship

In principle, workplace friendship as defined by Song (2005) differs from other types of friendship since it focuses on friendship at work (Lee & Ok, 2011). Grey & Sturdy (2007) highlighted that traditionally in past studies, academicians refrain from studying on workplace friendships due to the mixture of the workplace setting and the

personal bond that defines friendship to an individual (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). The various elements that is associated with workplace friendship increases productivity in the workplace. Additionally in a study by Nielsen, Jex, & Adams (2000), they stated that friendships are linked to a number of favourable attitudes and behaviours, including work satisfaction and performance. (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019).

However, despite all the positivity of workplace friendship mentioned, this relationship is also influenced by various external factors include education level, gender, and age (Awada & Ismail, 2019). There is also a noticeable challenges of workplace friendship that need to be taken care of such as “heightened informality, focus on nonwork identities, untailed self-disclosure, and visibility of others’ social interactions characterizing many social media sites” (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018). Thus, organizations should be able to identify the root causes of potential down side of workplace relationship in order to develop programmes and initiatives that help people to navigate a career that is more connected and borderless while maximising their connections (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018).

2.1.7 Work life balance

In this day of rapid globalisation and competition, it is crucial to maintain a healthy balance between one's personal and professional lives according to Sivatte, Gordon, Rojo, & Olmos, (2015) although it is not easy for many individuals (Tamunomiebi & Oyibo, 2020). The definition of work-life balance has been interpreted differently by several authors, hence there is no agreement on what it means. Barrera (2007) defined the concept as employers working together with their staff to establish agreements that balance the demands of the business with the personal lives of the staff. This definition

clearly indicates that both employer and employees share responsibilities in establishing balance between the work and life.

Nevertheless, there are also definition provided by other researchers for example, Kirchmeyer (2000) defined work life balance as “achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time and commitment to be well distributed across domains”. Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) also define it as “the extent to which an individual is engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role.” (Tamunomiebi & Oyibo, 2020)

Work life balance is crucial in ensuring that people are stable psychologically, emotionally, and at cognitive level, which supports organisational efficiency. Work-life conflict (defined as the inability to divide time between personal life and work life) has arisen as a result of the recent approach adopted by many organisations to reward long hours and organisational dedication. This leads to fatigues and stress among employees (Tamunomiebi & Oyibo, 2020). As for Muse, Harris, Giles & Field. (2008), work-life strategies are designed to ‘assist individual employees with numerous facets of lives, for example, responsibilities towards their family needs, career growth and general well-being’ (Lingard, Francis & Turner, 2012).

2.2 Previous study on variables

2.2.1 Relationship between Work Autonomy and Workplace Happiness

Research on work autonomy has been conducted for so long which shows the important of this variable. Breugh (1985) conducted his research and found that autonomy is an important variable. Based on his research, this factor has correlation

towards individual quality of work life and also productivity improvement. As for Saragih (2015), he suggested that employee who has the autonomy will produce better performance at their workplace as they perceive the freedom. Besides that, in a study by Yap and Badri (2020), work autonomy has been concluded as one of the significant predictors of workplace happiness. The focus of their study however is meant for Millennial Generation.

2.2.2 Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Workplace Happiness

The study related to transformational leadership is important as it carries high weightage. In a study by Patterson, Dannhauser & Stone (2007) highlighted that great leaders in top-tier organisations are enablers of organisational commitment, adaptability, and problem-solving. These organisations operate in cross-cultural situations and demand top management executives who can successfully manage human resources from varied cultural backgrounds and adapt to different environments. (Mostafa et al., 2015). The sentiments felt by employees about their leaders either positive or negative will provide impact to the productivity accordingly. Positive sentiments will be translated in a positive output (Awada & Ismail, 2019). Meanwhile, Yap & Badri (2020) in their study for millennials also recognised that transformational leadership has positive relationship towards the employee happiness.

2.2.3 Relationship between Meaningful Work and Workplace Happiness

Previous studies indicated that employees engaged in meaningful work life put more priority in the impact of meaningful work rather than compensation (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Diz, 2021). They show more willingness in giving, for example able

to work long hours without additional compensation, shows positive relationships with peers and leaders, and provide high quality work (Stegar, Dik & Duffy, 2012; Diz, 2021). Therefore, by developing deeper comprehension of “meaningful work”, it becomes a catalyst towards building high productivity organization and success (Martela & Pessi, 2018).

2.2.4 Relationship between Workplace Friendship and Workplace Happiness

The importance of workplace friendships to both individuals and companies has also been recognised by scholars. (Ingram and Zou, 2008, Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018). Fine (1986) highlighted friendships at work enhance resources and assistance that people may use to complete their tasks, lessen stress at work, and boost collaboration, communication, and energy (Lee & Ok, 2011). As for Hamilton (2007), he believes that employees who are friends at work frequently act altruistically by offering assistance, direction, advice, comments, recommendations, or knowledge on a variety of job-related issues to their coworkers. (Lee & Ok, 2011). Bader, Hashim, and Zaharim (2013) on the other hand emphasizes that good interpersonal interactions inspires and engages the staff. All these positive statements align to Yap & Badri (2020) which says that workplace friendship has positive results towards employees happiness.

2.2.5 Relationship between Worklife Balance and Workplace Happiness

In a study by Awada & Ismail (2019), it is highlighted that employees are at ease by knowing that they are having work life balance in which the time allocated for work and at home are sufficient (Awada & Ismail, 2019). By having organizational support, individuals' ability to have a work-life balance should result in improved workplace

engagement, dedication and better job performance. (Jaharuddin & Zainol, 2019). This shows that internal feelings of employee has contributed towards their positive feeling. The most recent study by Yap & Badri (2020) also supports that worklife balance is one of the factors that affects millenial employees' happiness at their workplace.

2.3 Hypotheses Development

The following hypotheses are generated to test the relationship between “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance” with “workplace happiness” focuses on Gen Z.

Table 2.1
Hypotheses Development

Hypotheses
<p>Work Autonomy and Workplace Happiness Hypothesis 1: There is a positive significant relationship between work autonomy and happiness in the workplace among Gen employees.</p>
<p>Transformational Leadership and Workplace Happiness Hypothesis 2: There is a positive significant relationship between transformational leadership and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.</p>
<p>Meaningful Work and Workplace Happiness Hypothesis 3: There is a positive significant relationship between meaningful work and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.</p>
<p>Workplace Friendship and Workplace Happiness Hypothesis 4: There is a positive significant relationship between workplace friemdship and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.</p>
<p>Work Life Balance and Workplace Happiness Hypothesis 5: There is a positive significant relationship between work life balance and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.</p>

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework proposed, is an adaptation of Person-Organization Fit Framework for Generation Z introduced by Graczyk-Kucharska and Erickson (2020). Based on the framework, an individual is deemed to as fit into an organization when he or she has the opportunity to provide individual contributions and this affects their inner feelings. In addition, the person-organization fit feeling is also influenced by organizational environment factors (Graczyk-Kucharska & Erickson, 2020). In this study, five combination of individual and organizational factors being integrated and tested which are “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance”. These variables are integrated with a theory introduced by Deci and Ryan (2020) that is Self Determination Theory

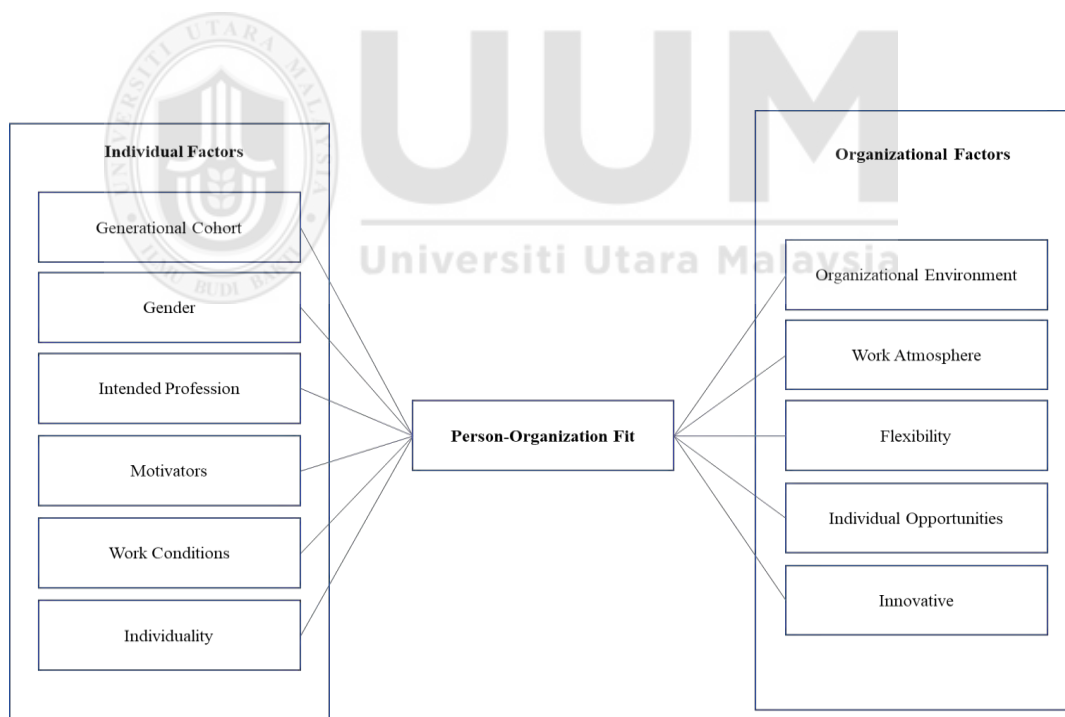


Figure 2.1: Person-Organization Fit Framework

Based on the above conceptual framework, this study focuses on happiness of Gen Z at the workplace as a result of being fit and accepted in an organization. This study is

inspired by the Person-Organization Fit Framework for Generation Z by Grazczyk-Kucharska and Erickson (2020). The framework is shown in Figure 2.2 below.

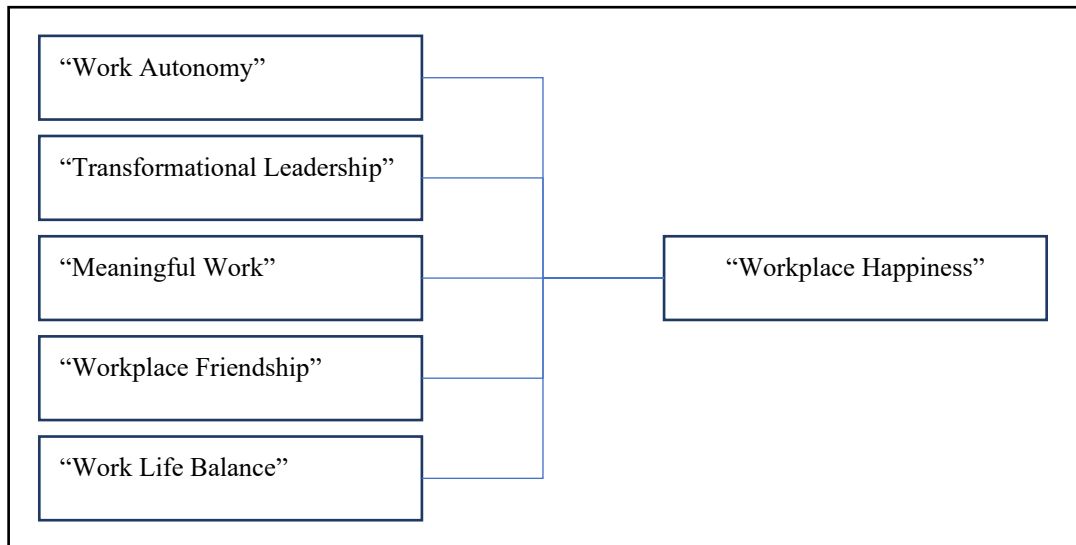


Figure 2.2: Framework of Study

2.5 Underpinning Theory

2.5.1 Self – Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a theory that is related to psychological of an individual and it affects human motivation. This theory explains three basic psychological needs in an individual, which are autonomy, competence and relatedness as shown in figure 2.3 below. These three basic needs are the fundamental and essential to human needs as it affects psychological health and well being. Once it is being fulfilled, it will “enhance intrinsic motivation, facilitates internalization of extrinsic motivation, supports the development of autonomous causality orientations, and strengthen intrinsic relative to extrinsic aspirations” (Deci and Ryan, 2015). This will then translated into a physical attributes and actions such as people shows the highest level of motivation, enhanced their performance and improved health (Deci & Ryan, 2015). The fulfilment of these psychological requirements also had a positive

impact on a variety of outcomes. It can be seen through performance, self-esteem, and dedication towards organisation. (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Kovjanic et al., 2012).

Based on the SDT, the five independent variables which are “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance” are categorised accordingly. Work autonomy and work life balance are categorised under ‘autonomy’, which means an individual needs to have control course of their lives. The other two variables which are transformational leadership and workplace friendship are categorised under ‘relatedness’ as it involves dealings and relationship with others. The last variable is meaningful work is categorised as ‘competence’. It means that an individual needs to have the feeling of being effective in dealing with environments. As a result, an individual will have satisfaction feelings once they are able to fulfill all the three components of psychological needs.

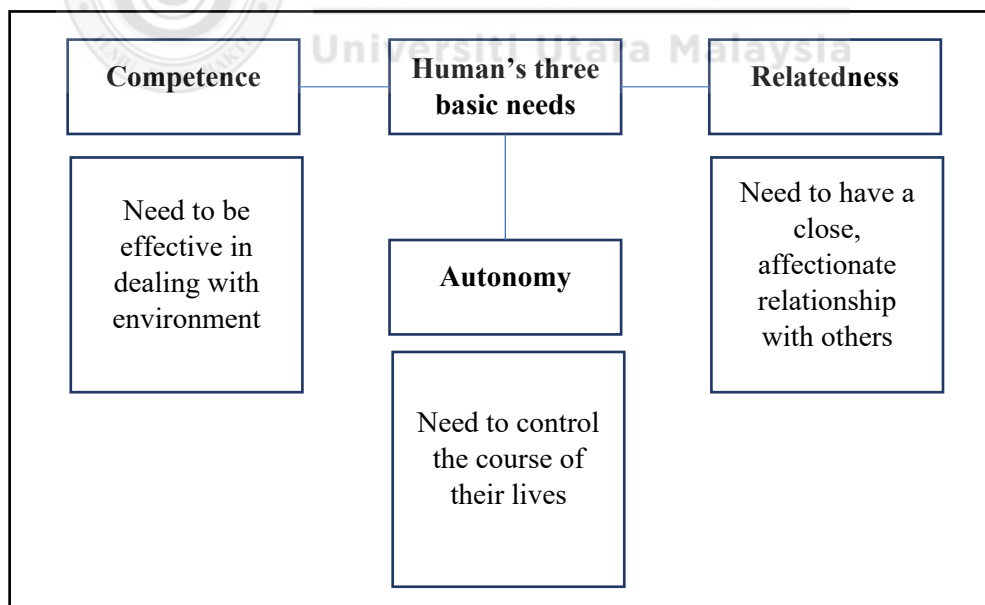


Figure 2.3: Self Determination Theory

2.6 Summary

In summary, this chapter provides background, insights and literature review based on previous researches. The explanation covers the independent variables which are “meaningful work, transformational leadership, work autonomy, workplace friendship and work life balance” as well as “workplace happiness” as the dependent variable. Additionally, the conceptual framework is further explained together with Self-Determination Theory, the underpinning theory that supports this research.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this research methodology, the aim is to further explain the overall approach of this study that focuses on relationship between five independent variables, which are “meaningful work, work autonomy, transformational leadership, workplace friendship and work life balance”. This study was conducted quantitatively and it used statistical instrument to analyse its data. Details of study’s conducted is outlined in this chapter accordingly.

3.1 Research Framework

Literature review in Chapter 2 has discussed about both independent and dependent variables in great detail. It is of the impression that the variables are connected through linear relationship as per figure 3.1 below.

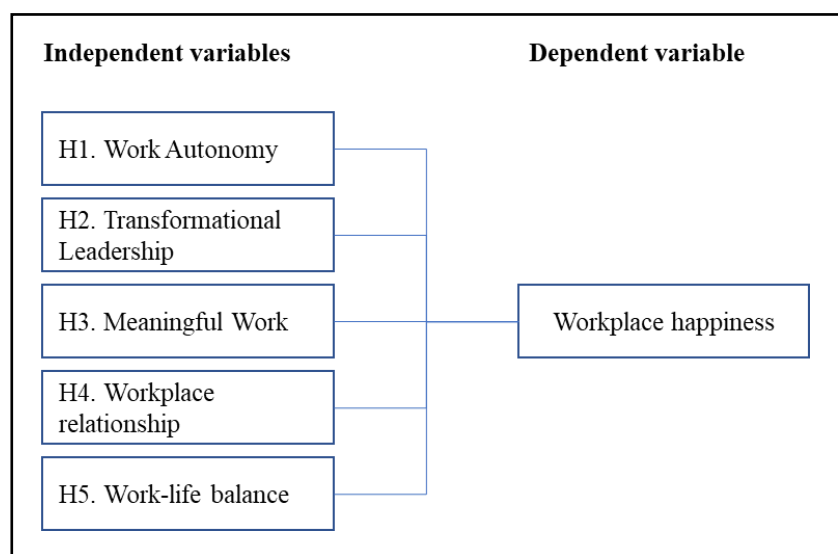


Figure 3.1 - Research Framework

3.2 Research Design

The research design is a comprehensive plan in acquiring, evaluating, and analysing data to address research objectives. Research design should also consider factors such as research methods (e.g: experiments, surveys, and case studies), research interference, study settings, data analysis methods (e.g: unit analysis), and temporal considerations (e.g: time frames). (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Hence, it is crucial to establish a research design that will include strategies for choosing the sources and types of data to address the problem statement, frameworks for figuring out how variables relate to one another, and strategies for analysing the data acquired using the following set of techniques. This procedure is essential to guarantee the authenticity and trustworthiness of the data used in the study.

3.2.1 Type of Study

The association between the independent variables “meaningful work, work autonomy, transformational leadership, workplace relationship and work life balance” and the dependent variable; “workplace happiness” is investigated through the study's quantitative design. In this research, descriptive study will be applied as this method is typically used to explore, describe, or relate the qualities of a person, event, or circumstances (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). A cross-sectional strategy will also be used to gather information in order to minimize delays.

3.2.2 Sources of Data

In the initial stage, a number of Gen Z population is gathered based on data issued by Department of Statistics Malaysia in Quarter 2022. Data from the samples determined will be gathered through distribution of questionnaires. These questionnaires will be

sent via an online platform to the targeted respondents, identified Gen Z employees in order to collect data from samples that will support this research objective.

3.2.3 Unit of Analysis

The individual unit of analysis used in this study means that each individual's data will be evaluated. For that reason, each Gen Z's employee response is representing one individual data.

3.2.4 Population of frame

Researchers are interested to study or examine the entire set of people, events or things of interest that make up as a population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The target population must be identified prior to sampling. This includes its components, borders, and timing (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In this research, total number of working Gen Z, those who are born from 1997 to 2012 in Malaysia are chosen as the population. Department of Statistics Malaysia through its Labour Market Review Q1 2022 published in April 2022 suggested that age range for working Gen Z will be in between 15 to 25 years old (15.6% for 15 to 24 years old).

3.2.5 Sample Size

Sample has been defined as the subset of the population which comprises some members selected from it (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). For the sample size selection, this will be based on the table produced by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) which conclude that the appropriate number of samples would be minimum of 384 respondents. This method is chosen over G*Power as the population has been identified based on the data issued by Department of Statistics Malaysia.

3.2.6 Sampling Technique

The sampling design used is snowball and convenient method. “Snowball technique requires primary data source nominating other potential data sources that will be able to participate in the research studies”. This technique was chosen due to the limited time available to complete this research with small range and aims for targeted workforce, which is specifically for Gen Z employees only (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016).

3.3 Questionnaire Design

There is a 3 sections in this questionnaire; Section 1 comprises of the respondents’ demographic data (Age, Employment Status and Work Experience). Section B is the questions related to dependent variables followed by Section C - G with five independent variables for this study.

Table 3.1
Questionnaires Design

Category	Item	No of Questions
Section A	Demographic (Age, Employment Status, Working Experiences)	3
Section B	Workplace Happiness	9
Section C	Work Autonomy	9
Section D	Transformational Leadership	7
Section E	Meaningful Work	10

Category	Item	No of Questions
Section F	Workplace friendship	6
Section G	Work Life Balance	4

3.4 Operational Definition

The concept and theory that has been explained has to be further defined to ensure it is well established. Below are the operational definitions and the items used to measure each of the variables are defined and explained as below:

3.4.1 Dependent Variable: Workplace Happiness

Workplace happiness, a dependant variable will be measured through the nine (9) items (Jeong, Kang & Choi, 2022). Five point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) will be provided to the respondents as their level of agreeableness.

Operational Definition

“Workplace happiness” is defined as the “degree to a positive feeling or emotion that satisfies individual job and organisation through positive experiences at work and predicts optimistically about the future”.

Table 3.2

Original Measurements and Adopted Measurements for Workplace Happiness

Variable	Original Measurements	Adopted Measurements
Workplace Happiness	1. I am satisfied with the job that I belong to	1. I am satisfied with the job that I belong to
	2. I am satisfied with the conditions of my job	2. I am satisfied with the conditions of my job
	3. My job is very helpful in realising the ideal of my life	3. My job is very helpful in realising the ideal of my life
	4. My working life was generally happy	4. My working life was generally happy
	5. My work life was generally enjoyable	5. My work life was generally enjoyable
	6. My work life was generally positive	6. My work life was generally positive
	7. My work life was generally unpleasant	7. My work life was generally unpleasant
	8. My work life was generally sad	8. My work life was generally sad
	9. My work life was generally upsetting	9. My work life was generally upsetting

Source: Jeong et al. (2022)

3.4.2 Independent Variable: “Work Autonomy”

“Work Autonomy” will be measured through the nine (9) items adopted from Breugh (1985) Five point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree) will be provided to the respondents as their level of agreeableness.

Operational Definition

“Work Autonomy” is defined as the “the authority which individuals have regarding the procedures/ method they utilise in going about their work”.

Table 3.3
Original Measurements and Adopted Measurements for Work Autonomy

Variable	Original Measurements	Adopted Measurements
Work Autonomy	1. I am allowed to decide how to go about getting my job done (the methods to use)	1. I am allowed to decide how to go about getting my job done (the methods to use)
	2. I am able to choose the way to go about my job (the procedures to utilise)	2. I am able to choose the way to go about my job (the procedures to utilise)
	3. I am free to choose the method(s) to use in carrying out my work	3. I am free to choose the method(s) to use in carrying out my work
	4. I have control over the scheduling of my work	4. I have control over the scheduling of my work
	5. I have some control over the sequencing of my work activities (when I do what)	5. I have some control over the sequencing of my work activities (when I do what)
	6. My job is such that I can decide when to do particular work activities	6. My job is such that I can decide when to do particular work activities
	7. My job allows me to modify the normal way we are evaluated so that I can emphasize some aspects of my job and play down others	7. My job allows me to modify the normal way we are evaluated so that I can emphasize some aspects of my job and play down others
	8. I am able to modify what my job objectives are (what I am supposed to accomplish)	8. I am able to modify what my job objectives are (what I am supposed to accomplish)
	9. I have some control over what I am supposed to accomplish (what my supervisor sees as my job objectives)	9. I have some control over what I am supposed to accomplish (what my supervisor sees as my job objectives)

Source: Breaugh (1985)

3.4.3 Independent Variable: “Transformational Leadership”

“Transformational leadership” will be measured through the seven (7) items through Global Transformational Leadership Scale (Carless et al., 2000). Five point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree) will be provided to the respondents as their level of agreeableness.

Operational Definition

“Transformational leadership” is operationally defined as the “degree to which the leader influences employee performance”.

Table 3.4

Original Measurements and Adapted Measurements for Transformational Leadership.

Variable	Original Measurements	Adapted Measurements
Transformational Leadership	1. Vision - Communicates a clear and positive vision of the future	1. My leader communicates a clear and positive vision of the future
	2. Staff Development - Treats staff as individuals, support and encourages their development	2. My leader treats staff as individuals, support and encourages their development
	3. Supportive Leadership - Gives encouragement and recognition to staff	3. My leader gives encouragement and recognition to staff
	4. Empowerment - Fosters trust, involvement and cooperation among team members	4. My leader fosters trust, involvement and cooperation among team members
	5. Innovative Thinking - Encourages thinking about problems in new ways and questions assumptions	5. My leader encourages thinking about problem in new ways and question assumptions
	6. Lead by Example - Is clear about his/her values and	6. My leader is clear about his/her values and practices what he/she preaches

Variable	Original Measurements	Adapted Measurements
	practices what he/ she preaches	
	7. Charisma - Instils pride and respect in others and inspires me by being highly competent	7. My leader instils pride and respect in others and inspire me by being highly competent, clear and positive vision of the future

Sources Adapted from: Carless et al (2000)

3.4.4 Independent Variable: “Meaningful work”

“Meaningful work” will be measured through ten (10) items adopted from “The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI)” by (Steger, Dik & Duffy, 2012). Five point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree) will be provided to the respondents as their level of agreeableness.

Operational Definition

“Meaningful Work” is defined as the “degree of work to mean something to an individual”.

Table 3.5

Original Measurements and Adopted Measurements for Meaningful Work

Variable	Original Measurements	Adopted Measurements
Meaningful Work	1. I have found a meaningful career	1. I have found a meaningful career
	2. I view my work as contributing to my personal growth	2. I view my work as contributing to my personal growth
	3. My work really makes no difference to the world	3. My work really makes no difference to the world
	4. I understand how my work contributes to my life’s meaning	4. I understand how my work contributes to my life’s meaning

Variable	Original Measurements	Adopted Measurements
	5. I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful	5. I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful
	6. I know my work makes a positive difference in the world	6. I know my work makes a positive difference in the world
	7. My work helps me better understand myself	7. My work helps me better understand myself
	8. I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose	8. I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose
	9. My work helps me make sense of the world around me	9. My work helps me make sense of the world around me
	10. The work I do serves a greater purpose	10. The work I do serves a greater purpose

Source: Steger et al. (2012)

3.4.5 Independent Variable: “Workplace Friendship”

“Workplace Friendship” will be measured through six (6) items adopted from “Workplace Friendship Scale” by Nielsen, Jex & Adams (2000). Five point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree) will be provided to the respondents as their level of agreeableness.

Operational Definition

“Workplace Friendship” is defined as “the degree to which an individual has the (a) opportunity of friendship, (b) the prevalence of friendship”.

Table 3.6

Original Measurements and Adopted Measurements for Workplace Friendship

Variable	Original Measurements	Adopted Measurements
Workplace Friendship	1. I have the opportunity to get to know my coworkers	1. I have the opportunity to get to know my coworkers
	2. I am able to work with my coworkers to collectively solve problems	2. I am able to work with my coworkers to collectively solve problems

Variable	Original Measurements	Adopted Measurements
	3. In my organisation, I have the chance to talk informally and visit with others	3. In my organisation, I have the chance to talk informally and visit with others
	4. Communication among employees is encouraged by my organisation	4. Communication among employees is encouraged by my organisation
	5. I have the opportunity to develop close friendship at my workplace	5. I have the opportunity to develop close friendship at my workplace
	6. Informal talk is tolerated by my organisation as long as the work is completed	6. Informal talk is tolerated by my organisation as long as the work is completed

Source: Nielsen et al. (2000)

3.4.6 Independent Variable: “Work life balance”

“Work life balance” will be measured through four (4) items adopted from “Work-Life Balance Measure” by Brough et al. (2014). Five point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree) will be provided to the respondents as their level of agreeableness.

Operational Definition

“Work life balance” is defined as “the degree of fulfilment in each of life's four spheres—work, family, friends, and oneself”

Table 3.7

Original Measurements and Adopted Measurements for Work life balance

Variable	Original Measurements	Adopted Measurements
Work life balance	1. I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities	I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities

2. I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities	I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities
3. I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right	I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right
4. Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced	Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced

Source: Brough et al. (2014)

3.5 Measurement of Variables/ Instrumentation

Sekaran and Bougie (2013) defined instrumentation as the process of collecting data from respondents using a set of questions that was produced or created. Questionnaires is well known as cost effective, quick response, easy data collection and easy to administer. Therefore, this method is acknowledged as having some benefits over other alternatives data collection technique (Bowling, 2002). The following items were used in the measurement:

Table 3.8
Measurement of instruments

Category	Instrument	Coding	Items
Section A Demographic	Self Developed	A1-A3	3 items
Section B Workplace Happiness	Adopted from: Jeong et al, (2022)	B1-B9	9 items
Section C Work Autonomy	Adopted from: Breaugh (1985)	C1-C9	9 items
Section D Transformational Leadership	Adapted from: Carless et al., (2000)	D1-D9	7 items
Section E Meaningful Work	Adopted from: Steger et al. (2012)	E1-E10	10 items

Section F Workplace friendship	Adopted from: Nielsen et al., (2000)	F1-F6	6 items
Section G Work life balance	Adopted from: Brough et al. (2014)	G1-G4	4 items

In the Section A, respondents will need to provide information related to their demographic which are age, employment status and work experience. There is 3 items in this section. The rest of sections uses “Five Point Likert Scales”. The distribution of ratings are 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral (neither agree nor disagree) that acts as a midpoint, followed by 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.

The “Five-Point Likert Scale” is used in the questionnaire design to give respondents the option to indicate how agreeable they are with each and every question. This design encourages more truthful answers from respondents, be more forthright, based on their viewpoint, belief, trait, or even an attitude they have displayed in the past and present (Neuman, 2000). The Google Form questionnaire was distributed via Whatsapp application and emails to the target respondents.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

There are a few ways of collecting data and information. Nowadays, questionnaires particularly the one used online platform becomes a choice as it has advantages as it is cheaper, faster and easier to be managed. On top of that, online platform has wider reach. In this research, distribution and retrieval of survey’s data from respondents will be done through self-administered approach on online platform. Data from identified respondents is collected through Google Form within 2 weeks as this is the

best approach for this study to ensure it accelerates the distribution and collection of responses regardless of location.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

A Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) is frequently used for questionnaires' related data analysis. In this research, SPSS software version 28 will be used for detail analysis of respondents' feedback. In the analysis, the focus will be to determine the frequency distribution, reliability analysis and regression analysis. In addition, descriptive and inferential analysis will be applied to the demographic population and the information acquired in the appropriate manner. The research findings will then be used to determine conclusion and suggestions for this study.

3.7.1 Pilot Test

In preparation of questionnaire construction, a pilot study was carried out. This pilot study aims to evaluate the instruments before distributing them to the entire study's participants. Before distributing the questionnaire to the targeted respondents, a pilot test is performed on the instruments. Scaled-down versions of bigger research projects, commonly known as feasibility studies, are called pilot studies. They entail pre-evaluating a certain research tool, such as a questionnaire or interview schedule. (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

Sekaran (2003) claims that a pilot study, also known as pretesting survey questions, is a test of the clarity and suitability of the questions intended to be included in a normal survey, employing a small sample size of respondents. For this particular research, pilot study was conducted and it has taken some process to going thru. A group of Gen

Z employees have been invited from AEON, a retail organization to participate in this pilot study. The questionnaires have been sent through to the employees at Human Resources Department of the Company.

The majority of the surveys questions were adopted. A direct link to the survey's websites as well as an introductory message have also been included in the email. The introduction message included all pertinent information, including the study's purpose, survey instructions, the researcher's contact information, the researcher's dissertation mentor, and a statement that the data collected would be used exclusively for research purposes and would be kept private and confidential. In addition, participants in the pilot project responded to the questionnaire by completing a web-based survey. The survey was completed by a total of 30 participants after the pilot study was concluded.

3.7.2 Reliability Test

Reliability statistics is “an indication of the stability and consistency with which the instrument that measures the concept and supports to assess the free error of measurement” (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The data was tested by using Cronbach’s Alpha. It is a reliable and coefficient test which investigates how the variables are positively correlated with other variables.

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), reliability test is applied to “ensure consistency in measurements across time and various items in the instrument”. The closer Cronbach’s alpha is to 1, the higher the internal reliability. In general, reliabilities less than .60 are considered as poor, those in the .70 range, acceptable and those over .80 is good (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Table 3.9 shows reliability coefficients result of pilot study. Pilot study has been conducted for all questions of Workplace Happiness, Work Autonomy, Transformational Leadership, Meaningful Work, Workplace friendship and Work life Balance. The reliability coefficients of all the variables were measured through Cronbach Alpha. In the result, Cronbach Alpha value of workplace happiness is .841 and categorized as a good result. Thus, it can be concluded by using 9 items in questionnaire, it can be used to measure workplace happiness amongst Gen Z employees.

Next, Cronbach Alpha value of work autonomy is 0.936 and it can be categorized as a very good of the result. Thus, it can be determined by using 9 items in questionnaires. The Cronbach Alpha value of transformational leadership is 0.971 and can be categorized as a very good of the result. Next, the Cronbach Alpha value of meaningful work is 0.887 and can be categorized as a good result. Thus, it can be concluded by using the 10 items in questionnaire. The Cronbach Alpha value of workplace friendship is 0.868 and it can be categorized as a good of the result. Thus, it can be concluded by using 6 items in questionnaire. The work life balance Cronbach Alpha is .465 for 4 items. As the result was categorised as poor, hence, the test was made again for Work Life Balance by eliminating 1 item, which is Question 2. With the 3 items left, Cronbach Alpha value increases to .800. Below is Table 3.9 shows summary of reliability coefficients to each variable measured using Cronbach Alpha.

Table 3.9
Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) of the scales for Pilot Test

Variable	No. of Items	Alpha N=30
“Workplace Happiness”	9	.841

“Work Autonomy”	9	.936
“Transformational Leadership”	7	.971
“Meaningful Work”	10	.887
“Workplace Friendship”	6	.868
“Work Life Balance”	4	.465

3.7.3 Frequency Distribution

The background of the respondents consists of organization primary business activity, number of people, the annual revenue of the organization, the number of years the companies have operated, and company involvement in Corporate Social Responsibility. This analysis produced demographic tables showing frequency counts and percentages of the value of individual variables. The techniques used to describe the frequency analysis was the frequency and percentage distribution.

3.7.4 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is conducted to address the main study objectives. The data are analysed with statistical tests to assess the relationship between independent variables and dependant variable. Moreover, the descriptive analysis serves as the foundation to determine the association between the independent and dependent variables in the study. In general, mean score less than 1.67 are considered as low, those in the 1.68 to 3.34, medium and those 3.35 to 5.00 is high.

3.7.5 Correlation Analysis

Correlation techniques helps in detecting the importance, solidity and the direction between the independent variables and the dependent variable. There will be four assumptions that relied before the analysis take place, which are scale of measurement,

normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. Essentially, the data must be interval or ratio in nature and the relationship between the variables are linear.

Based on Pallant (2016) correlation coefficient could range from -1.00 to 1.00 and the correlation value of 0 indicates that there is no relationship exists between the variables. The correlation value of 1.0 specified that the connection is existed with an optimal positive correlation, whereby the correlation of -1.0 showed that the connection is an optimal negative correlation. Correlation of ± 0.01 to ± 0.09 means that there is very low correlation, ± 0.10 to ± 0.29 represents low correlation, ± 0.30 to ± 0.49 indicates moderate correlation, ± 0.50 to ± 0.69 specified a high correlation and ± 0.70 or ± 1.00 showed a very high correlation.

3.7.6 Multiple Regressions Analysis

This study used multiple regressions analysis. This method is used for studies that has more than one independent variable. Multiple regression analysis helps in the determination of the most significant factors and also explains the variance in dependent variable.

Neuman (2000) highlighted two core functions in this analysis, that are calculating R-Squared and determining respective variables contribution. R-Squared will describe how dependent variable are affected by the independent variables. This result will further describe the nature, direction and connection of the independent and dependent variables.

3.8 Chapter Summary

Research design is crucial in every research as outlines in this chapter. The design includes the significant parts which is specific technique and data gathering approach. This quantitative study conducted also introduced details of questionnaires used, population and sampling method, instruments measurements and subsequently shared on the proposed analysis that will be used later in the findings in Chapter 4.



CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of five sections that discuss the results of this study. The first section introduces respondents' profiles with tabulated demographic data for total population. The next section shows the descriptive study results of the variables and its reliability analysis through Cronbach Alpha. Following that is the test for main hypothesis, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. The final section concludes the overall data analysis and findings.

4.1 Profile of the Respondents

This section consists of respondents' profiles that involves in the study. The population is Gen Z, born from 1997 to 2012 with full time employment in Malaysia. The age range for working Gen Z will be in between 15 to 25 years old (15.6% or 2.44 million for 15 to 24 years old) based on Labour Market Review Q1 2022, hence, based on Krejcie & Morgan (1970), the appropriate sample would be minimum of 384 respondents. There is total of 482 surveys answered by respondents in the month of August. Respondents are identified based on age, employment status and working experience. A summary of respondents' demographic is tabulated based on Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1
Summary of Respondents' Profile

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
15-25 years old	459	95.2
26 years old and above	23	4.8
Total	482	100.0

Employment Status		
Full Time Employment	437	90.7
Part Time Employment	30	6.2
Self-Employed	15	3.1
Total	482	100.0
<hr/>		
Working Experience		
6 months and more	403	83.6
Less than 6 months	79	16.4
Total	482	100.0
<hr/>		

Table 4.1 above shows the breakdown of respondents based on their age, employment status and working experiences. Out of 482 respondents that submitted the questionnaires survey, 459 or 95.2% of them is within the targeted age range which is 15-25 years old. The remaining 23 respondents or 4.8% is above 26 years old. As for the employment status, 437 or 90.7% respondents are in full employment, followed by 30 or 6.2% respondents working on part time basis. The remaining 15 or 3.1% respondents are self-employed. Finally, 403 or 83.6% of respondents are working for more than 6 months while remaining 79 or 16.4% has less than 6 months of working experiences.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

This section explains result of descriptive statistic for six variables involve in the study and the variables are “workplace happiness, work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance”.

Table 4.2
Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Workplace Happiness	1.00	5.00	3.6897	.78025
Work Autonomy	1.11	5.00	3.6591	.78908
Transformational Leadership	1.00	5.00	3.8400	1.00491
Meaningful Work	1.00	5.00	3.7357	.77715

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Workplace Friendship	1.00	5.00	4.0207	.78013
Work Life Balance	1.00	5.00	3.4108	.82378

The above Table 4.2 shows result of descriptive statistics analysis for all six variables which uses five-point likert scales measurement. The dependent variable, “workplace happiness” has minimum rating of 1.44 and maximum rating of 5.00. Standard deviation value for this variable is .78025 while mean is 3.6897. This means that mean value of workplace happiness is high.

The first independent variable “work autonomy” has minimum rating of 1.11 and maximum rating of 5.00. The value of standard deviation is .78908 while mean value is 3.6591. The mean value for work autonomy is categorised as moderate. The second independent variable is “transformational leadership” with minimum rating of 1.00 and the maximum rating is 5.00. The standard deviation value for transformational leadership is 1.00491 and mean value is 3.8400. This indicates that mean for transformational leadership is high. The third independent variable is “meaningful work”. The minimum rating for this variable is 1.00 and the maximum rating is 5.00 with standard deviation value of .77715 and mean is 3.7357. The mean for meaningful work is also high.

“Workplace friendship” is the fourth variable in this study. Based on the result, the lowest rating for this variable is 1.00 and the highest is 5.00. The standard deviation for this variable is .78013 and the mean value is 4.0207. This shows that mean for workplace friendship is high. The last independent variable is work life balance with minimum rating of 1.00 and maximum rating is 5.00. The standard deviation value

for this variable is .82378 and mean value is 3.4108. This implies that mean for work life balance is moderate.

4.3 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis conducted in this study with the aim to ensure its trustworthiness, consistency and stability. The reliability coefficients for all of the questions of “workplace happiness, work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance” are measured through Cronbach Alpha.

Table 4.3
Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) of the scales

Variable	No. of Items	Alpha N= 482
“Workplace Happiness”	9	.891
“Work Autonomy”	9	.923
“Transformational Leadership”	7	.973
“Meaningful Work”	10	.927
“Workplace Friendship”	6	.920
“Work Life Balance”	4	.722

A good value of reliability coefficients for questionnaires is supposed to be above 0.8. The reliability analysis’ findings are as per Table 4.3 above. Based on the above, five variables show high Cronbach Alpha which is workplace happiness with 0.891, work autonomy with .923, transformational leadership .973, meaningful work .927 and workplace friendship .920. The remaining one variable which is work life balance with 0.722. Although it is not as high as the rest, the reliability within range of .70 is still categorized as acceptable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

4.4 Inferential Statistics

The results of the inferential statistics of the study are discussed in this section. Inferential statistics explain to infer the relationship between two variables, differences in a variable among different subgroups and finally how several independent variables might explain the variance in a dependent variable (Sekaran, 2013). This section comprises of two subsections whereby the first part (4.5) reports the results of the Pearson correlation between the main variables of this study. The second part (4.6) accounts for the results of the multiple regressions which tests the hypothesis of the study.

4.5 Pearson Correlation

Correlation is a measurement about the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. There are three possible relationships existing between the two variables, such as positive linear correlation, negative linear correlation or no correlation at all (Fah & Hoon, 2009). Pearson correlation coefficient is used to examine the relationship that exists between the variables (independent and dependent variables) of the study. Moreover, Pearson correlation coefficient is used to investigate the relationship between the variables of the study (independent and dependent variables).

Table 4.4

Correlations among Workplace Happiness, Work Autonomy, Transformational Leadership, Meaningful Work, Workplace Friendship and Work Life Balance

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Workplace Happiness	1	-	-	-	-	-
2. Work Autonomy	.594**	1	-	-	-	-
3. Transformational Leadership	.677**	.607**	1	-	-	-

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Meaningful Work	.673**	.705**	.703**	1	-	-
5. Workplace Friendship	.499**	.567**	.538**	.620**	1	-
6. Work Life Balance	.637**	.542**	.529**	.514**	.445**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As illustrated in Table 4.4 above, workplace happiness has a significant positive relationship on all five independent variables which are work autonomy ($r = .594$, $p < 0.01$), transformational leadership ($r = .677$, $p < 0.01$), meaningful work ($r = .673$, $p < 0.01$), workplace friendship ($r = .499$, $p < 0.01$) and work life balance ($r = .637$, $p < 0.01$).

Secondly, work autonomy has a significant positive relationship with transformational leadership ($r = .607$, $p < 0.01$), meaningful work ($r = .705$, $p < 0.01$), workplace friendship ($r = .567$, $p < 0.01$) and work life balance ($r = .542$, $p < 0.01$).

The third relationship is transformational leadership. It was found that it has a significant positive relationship with meaningful work ($r = .703$, $p < 0.01$), workplace friendship ($r = .538$, $p < 0.01$) and work life balance ($r = .529$, $p < 0.01$).

The fourth independent variable meaningful work also have a positive significant relationship with workplace friendship ($r = .620$, $p < 0.01$) and work life balance ($r = .514$, $p < 0.01$).

The last relationship is in between workplace friendship and work life balance. It is noted that these two variables also have positive significant relationship with ($r = .445, p < 0.01$).

4.6 Multiple Regressions

This part presents the findings of the hypotheses test of the study. There were five hypotheses tested using multiple regressions analysis. This section tests the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable.

4.6.1 Relationship between Independent Variables and Dependant Variable

There were five hypotheses proposed to test the relationship between independent variables (IV); “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance” and workplace happiness as a dependent variable (DV). The following part is to test the relationship between IV; “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance” and workplace happiness as a dependent.

Table 4.6 shows the results of regression analysis for these hypotheses. The effects of independent variables; “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance” on the dependent variable; “workplace happiness” was evaluated through multiple regressions analysis. In the Table 4.6, the R square value is .610, which means 61% of variance that explained the dependent variable which is workplace happiness was accounted for by the IVs “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance” where the F value = 148.802 at $p < 0.01$. In addition, following is

the result found; work autonomy ($\beta = .059, p < 0.05$), transformational leadership, ($\beta = .285, p < 0.05$), meaningful work, ($\beta = .264, p < 0.05$) workplace friendship ($\beta = .009, p < 0.05$) and work life balance ($\beta = .314, p < 0.05$) were significant predictors of workplace happiness. Thus, the above findings support the hypothesis 2, hypothesis 3, and hypothesis 5. In contrast, hypothesis 1 and 4 are not supported.

Table 4.6

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis with Work Autonomy, Transformational Leadership, Meaningful Work, Workplace Friendship and Work Life Balance

Variable	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Work Autonomy	.058	.043	.059	1.355	.176
Transformational Leadership	.221	.033	.285	6.676	<.001
Meaningful Work	.265	.048	.264	5.470	<.001
Workplace Friendship	.009	.038	.009	.245	.807
Work Life Balance	.298	.034	.314	8.724	<.001

$R^2 = .610$, Adjusted $R^2 = .606$, $F = 148.802$, $p < 0.01$

4.7 Overall Hypotheses Results

Based on the multiple regression analysis conducted, results of the hypotheses are tabulated as Table 4.7 below:

Table 4.7:

Overall Hypotheses Results Table

Hypothesis	Regression Results	Decision
Hypothesis 1: There is a positive significant relationship between work autonomy and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees	$\beta = .059, p > 0.01$	Rejected
Hypothesis 2: There is a positive significant relationship between transformational leadership and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.	$\beta = .285, p < 0.01$	Accepted
Hypothesis 3: There is a positive significant relationship between meaningful work and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees	$\beta = .264, p < 0.01$	Accepted
Hypothesis 4: There is a positive significant relationship between workplace friendship and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.	$\beta = .009, p > 0.01$	Rejected
Hypothesis 5: There is a positive significant relationship between work life balance and happiness in the workplace among Gen Z employees.	$\beta = .314, p < 0.01$	Accepted

4.8 Summary of Chapter

The study's outcomes demonstrate that “workplace happiness” is significantly associated to “transformational leadership, meaningful work and work life balance” among Gen Z. This implies that greater “transformational leadership, meaningful work and work life balance” contribute towards higher workplace happiness. These three variables show positive relationship with “workplace happiness”.

In contrast to that, two variables in this study which are “work autonomy” and “workplace friendship” were found as has no significant relationship towards workplace happiness among Gen Z employees. These two variables may not be the main influence towards happiness of Gen Z at their workplace.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes findings of this study in four sections. The first section discusses the findings and it is followed by discussion related to objective of this research in the second section. Third section suggested on the contributions to the body of knowledge. The next section covers limitations of study and recommendations for future research. The overall study for this research is concluded in the final section.

5.1 Discussion

This study aims to examine the significance of relationship between workplace happiness with five variables that are “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance” amongst Gen Z employees. It is of interest to understand this new generation patterns, behavior and needs in the work environment as this group of people will dominate the workforce over the time. Based on the result from regression case analysis between independent variables; “work autonomy, transformational leadership, meaningful work, workplace friendship and work life balance” and dependent variable; “workplace happiness” amongst Gen Z shows five patterns.

Interestingly, three hypotheses are supported while remaining two are not supported. The first three patterns are; transformational leadership, meaningful work and work life balance have significant relationship towards workplace happiness amongst Gen Z employees. However, work autonomy and workplace friendship were found as

insignificant towards Gen Z employees happiness at their workplace. Workplace happiness as dependent variable and overall findings are discussed individually based on each of the research objectives.

Previous studies predict that employee happiness is build up through communication, friendship and compassion. Therefore, in promoting happiness, leaders are accountable in making sure availability of organization's clear vision and high awareness of sense of purpose amongst employees (Awada & Ismail, 2019). This, together with a balance work life will reduce the risk of employee turnover, increase willingness for active participation and improve work related involvement. In a happy workplace, employees like their work and do not feel overburdened by it. They then becomes more productive and able to achieve both employers' and their own personal goals (Januwarsono, 2015; Pangarso, Pradana, Widodo & Putera, 2016; Rahmi, 2019)

A workplace with the above characters has high impact towards employees' productivity (Awada & Ismail, 2019). Pawar (2008) concludes that happiness created by connection in the workplace which indirectly affects harmonious relationship amongst team members (Awada & Ismail, 2019). The setting designed in this study specifically for Gen Z and this plays a big role in the result of this study as it is a new cohort that just embarked into employment. As Gen Z is the latest addition that enters the workforce, the real impact of this cohort will only be able to be seen after a few years. Leaders in the organization needs to be ready and design the work environment to welcome more and more entrepreneurial-minded, loyal, inventive, determined with high desires employees (Bălan & Vreja, 2018).

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Work Autonomy and Workplace Happiness

The first objective of the study is to investigate the relationship between “work autonomy” and “workplace happiness” amongst Gen Z. The results show “workplace happiness” and the result reveals “work autonomy” has insignificant relationship among Gen Z employee. The possible explanation for work autonomy does not become the main factor that influence workplace happiness amongst Gen Z is due to minimal employment exposure of this generation. It is widely known that Covid-19 Pandemic has effect the world since end 2019 and it also influences how Gen Z perceives and anticipates their future careers as they are in the growth stage during this years (Varol & Kılınc, 2021).

In addition, the uncertainty caused by the pandemic causes disruption of working life, hence, Gen Z’s early career experiences will impact how they are at work (*Gen Z Is Not Millennial Plus Why They May Not Want to Work for You*, n.d.). It is noted that, generally there is huge gap between employers expectation and candidate’s employable competencies (Vijayakumar & Ramalingam, n.d.). The competency gap can be developed and improved over time (Pang, Wong, Leung & Coombes, 2019). With that in mind, this result should be interpreted very carefully as it may result from respondents’ limited experience with work reality; which resulted in low competency. However, Yap & Badri (2020) in their study for millennials show that work autonomy has significant relationship with workplace happiness (Yap & Badri, 2020).

This finding is also supported by Radel, Pelletier and Sarrazin (2013). They highlighted that an individual will only look for autonomy when they perceived that

they are highly competent the work. In contrast, employee may be disengaged or does not require autonomy when they perceive low competency (Radel, Pelletier & Sarrazin, 2013). As this generation face challenges due to pandemic, in the current, fiercely competitive global market, it is necessary to inspire Gen Z and prepare them for the work life. This is one of the ways that will help them to alleviate their concerns (Varol & Kılınc, 2021). The same study on this work autonomy may be undertaken again in the future research after some stability of Gen Z at work.

5.2.2 Transformational Leadership and Workplace Happiness

The second research objective is to determine the relationship between “transformational leadership” with “workplace happiness” for Gen Z. Result of the findings show that transformational leadership has significant relationship towards Gen Z happiness at their workplace. The result of this study was also concurred by Yap & Badri (2020). This finding is supported by Brousell (2015) who highlighted that “a reason for this could be that millennials are said to be employees who are driven by leaders who inspire others, and would be in an organisation that serves to create a positive impact in society” (Yap & Badri, 2020).

Leithwood, Begley & Cousins (1994) mentioned that individual and group organisational issues are resolved via transformational leadership; and this approach needs to be adopted to ensure attainment of organization goals (Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1994; Abdullah et al., 2017). This objective then supported by Gabriel et. al (2022), transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) does impact Gen Z's innovation behaviour and retention. In the same study, it is concluded that “this

effective leadership also increases employee loyalty, leading to employee retention as they are happy with their workplace environment. This will subsequently increase employee productivity which will result in increased revenue”. (Gabriel et al., 2022). Thus, it is evidence that transformational leadership influences workplace happiness amongst Gen Z.

5.2.3 Meaningful Work and Workplace Happiness

The third research objective is to determine the relationship between “meaningful work” with “workplace happiness” amongst Gen Z. Result of the findings show that meaningful work has significant relationship towards Gen Z happiness at their workplace. In a publication issued by Deloitte, it is apparent that Millennials and Gen Z particularly those in leadership roles are always critical by consistently evaluate values and purpose. These generations are more than willing to decline any jobs or tasks that is not aligned to it (Deloitte, 2022). Gen Z despite they are known as a willing generation, can be professionally committed so long as they like the work and it serves their purpose. In addition to this findings, it is noted that Gen Z’s personal growth is highly dependent on the work commitment, in which they tend to move on to a job which will serve this need better (Tewari, S., Bhattacharyya, 2017).

Having a meaningful job, one really enjoys is a vital factor for Gen Z’s motivation. Understanding what exactly makes a job meaningful and enjoyable for Generation Z is important also for better understanding of their future career patterns (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018). Therefore, employers and organizations have to ensure that this Gen Z to “have a meaningful job” or “do what they love”. (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018). Rahmi (2019) concludes that employees tend to be healthier and happier in the

workplace that is designed and managed meaningful work. In conclusion, meaningful work has positive influences towards workplace happiness amongst Gen Z.

5.2.4 Workplace Friendship and Workplace Happiness

The fourth research objective is to analyse the relationship between “workplace friendship” with “workplace happiness” amongst Gen Z. Interestingly, result of the findings show that workplace friendship has no significant relationship towards Gen Z happiness at their workplace, possibly due to the network that this generation already have is more global. Therefore, they do not perceive work- related network as important for their happiness. This is supported by the findings made by Rue (2018) that Gen Zs have likely already formed global online relationships as early as their tertiary education period (Rue, 2018), hence, workplace friendship is no longer determinant towards their happiness. In addition to that, based on research by Deloitte in their publication "*Gen Z Is Not Millennial Plus Why They May Not Want to Work for You*, n.d.", Gen Z grows up in a technology-based world and experiencing life during a pandemic can make someone feel isolated. Therefore, Gen Zs deprioritized teamwork and put more priority in critical thinking and problem-solving skills and because of that social skills are indicated as areas of development. To support that, Balan and Vreja (2018) in their research conclude that Gen Z has low social intelligence abilities. This situation happened as they are used to communicate with friends and other people mainly not face-to-face but through digital media. Therefore they are so caught in social-media environment and potentially lack in having natural, human, personal relations with others (Bălan & Vreja, 2018)

Previous research undertaken by Bader, Hashim, and Zaharim (2013) reported that the employees are motivated and engaged when positive interpersonal relationships are emphasized (Awada & Ismail, 2019). In addition to that, workplace friendships somehow are impactful and beneficial to some extent as those who are a part of a friendship enjoy some significant benefits and, at the same time, face some potential challenges associated in being professional and at the same time maintain that friendship (Zarankin & Kunkel, 2019). However, as this study focuses on the young generation who has networks beyond borders, this may be the reason as to why the workplace relationship does not influence workplace happiness. Mao (2006) also found that there is negative correlation between organizational level and “workplace friendship”. However, the research conducted by Mao focuses on those at higher organizational level. This group of people use does not require workplace friendship as they are focusing on distribution of work, hence, they require clear demarcation of role and do not need to exchange it through friendship (Yen, Chen & Yen, 2009). This study has the potential in producing different result if it is being done in the next few years, when the Gen Z has longer time in the work environment.

5.2.5 Work Life Balance and Workplace Happiness

The last research objective examines the relationship between “work life balance” with “workplace happiness” amongst Gen Z. The study found that “work life balance” has positive significant relationship towards Gen Z’s workplace happiness. This result is consistent with current practice. “Pay, feeling the workplace was detrimental to their mental health, and burnout are the top reasons millennials and Gen Zs left their employers over the last two years. But when it comes to what makes them choose an organization to work for good work or life balance and learning and development

opportunities are their top priorities” (Deloitte, 2022). Gen Z, the generation that expects freedom most of the time prefers flexible working hours and job schedules, as well as a shorter work week. This move is crucial as it enables good “work life balance” for them (Deloitte, 2022). By implementing this, it will foster good work environment and improve happiness amongst employees. It is supported by previous research by Yap and Badri (2020) as work life balance is said as “one of the three most significant predictors of happiness in the workplace among millennials” (Yap & Badri, 2020).

5.3 Implication of the Study

Findings of this study shows that transformational leadership, meaningful work and work life balance have significant relationship towards workplace happiness amongst Gen Z employees while work autonomy and workplace friendship were found as not significant towards Gen Z happiness at their workplace. The result of this study is useful towards practical and body of knowledge. With this study, despite the limit of the samples, researchers can use as a guidance to better understand the psychological processes Gen Z’s employees go through when they are exposed to different work contexts or environment. Given more time in the employment, factors that influences Gen Z’s happiness may change due to maturity of this employees.

Moreover, this study also has contribution for group of people such as government or policy makers, organizations and employers. This study provides insights on the important factors that need to be looked into in ensuring that organizations are able to execute four main goals of human resources; “attract, recruit, develop and retain” the Gen Z employees. As this study also covers a high population, another method of

probability sampling may be used in order to put higher weightage of the findings for employers and practitioners use.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The interpretations and generalisations of these findings may be affected by limitations in the study's design. The first limitation of the study is confined to snow ball and convenient method used. Questionnaires distributed may be received by respondents from the similar industry and character, hence, the results. Thus, the findings of this research could not represent diversified industries. If the study covers different industries, the result might be different. The second limitation is related to sample size. The samples may be limited to those who receive questionnaires through online only. Another restraint is data sample, while we managed to work with 482 respondents, the sample is still very small to make any sort of generalization. Thus, the research finding does not represent the overall functions of the organizations.

The third limitation is the targeted respondents, despite that their working experience are already more than six (6) months may have challenges in providing information related to real employment experience. This is because of the Covid-19 pandemic that hits the world in 2020 and 2021. The Gen Z group may have started their employment for quite some time but in reality, they have very limited experience due to limited interactions with colleagues at the workplace throughout the 2 years, hence, this may affect the findings of this study. The last limitation of the study is the research only use questionnaires. Thus, it is difficult for researchers to guarantee that respondents answered every question in full of honesty.

5.5 Recommendation for Future Research

Research on the happiness in the workplace is still limited and needs to be continuously study as there are a lot of external factors that potentially affect employees' responses and behavior such as employer's market or inflation. On top of that, future researchers also can be conducted using the same setting; for the same targeted group which is Gen Z, as they become more matured in the employment and have different focus and needs. Besides, future researchers may explore conducting the study by using same variables but focusing on specific industry. This will give more in depth knowledge on the characters and factors that influence workplace happiness.

In addition, it is advised that future research be carried out in a broader population where the researcher can collect the data. For this study, while we managed to work with 482 respondents, the sample is still very small to make any generalization. It is suggested for further validation to support conclusions from this study. By having more respondents, the study might be more accurate and firmer. The findings might differ and lead to a different conclusion.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research is conducted primarily with the aim to explore influential factors of workplace happiness amongst Gen Z. The findings show that “transformational leadership, meaningful work and work life balance” were significant predictors of workplace happiness. However, the other two factors which are “work autonomy and workplace friendship” does not influence the workplace happiness amongst Gen Z. This study was inspired by Person-Organization Fit

Framework that is focusing on specific generation or cohort; Gen Z and look into how best they are able to fit in employment. This study was also supported by Self-Determination Theory, a psychological theory that influence one's motivation. Based on the SDT, we are able to understand motivational factors for Gen Z to be happy and then successfully improve retention of talents.



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Appendix 1: Questionnaire



Dear Respondents,

I am inviting you to participate in this research by completing the following survey. The aim for this research is to determine factors that influence workplace happiness among Gen-Z. This questionnaire will require approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. This questionnaire will remain anonymous, and your response will be used for the academic research purpose only.

Thank you in advance, for your time and contribution to this research.

Sincerely,

Raihaan binti Abdul Rashid (826176)
Postgraduate Student,
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Section A: Respondents Detail

Kindly fill in the required information. All the information will be strictly confidential and only be used for academic purpose only. *Mark only one oval*

1. Age

- 15-25 years old
- 26 years old and above

2. Employment Status

- Full Time Employment
- Part Time Employment
- Self - Employed

3. Working Experience

- 6 months and more
- Less than 6 months

Section B: Workplace Happiness

This section measures your feeling or emotion that satisfies you through positive experiences at work and predicts optimistically about the future. Choose the score that nearest to you.

No	Items	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1	I am satisfied with the job that I belong to					
2	I am satisfied with the conditions of my job					
3	My job is very helpful in realising the ideal of my life					
4	My working life was generally happy					
5	My work life was generally enjoyable					
6	My work life was generally positive					

No	Items	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
7	My work life was generally unpleasant					
8	My work life was generally sad					
9	My work life was generally upsetting					

Section C: Work Autonomy

This section measures your flexibility in choosing method/ procedures in doing your work

No	Items	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1	I am allowed to decide how to go about getting my job done (the methods to use)					
2	I am able to choose the way to go about my job (the procedures to utilise)					
3	I am free to choose the method(s) to use in carrying out my work					
4	I have control over the scheduling of my work					
5	I have some control over the sequencing of my work activities (when I do what)					
6	My job is such that I can decide when to do particular work activities					
7	My job allows me to modify the normal way we are evaluated so that I can emphasize some aspects of my job and play down others					
8	I am able to modify what my job objectives are (what I am supposed to accomplish)					

No	Items	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
9	I have some control over what I am supposed to accomplish (what my supervisor sees as my job objectives)					

Section D: Transformational Leadership

This section measures leader's influence towards your performance

No	Items	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1	My leader communicates a clear and positive vision of the future					
2	My leader treats staff as individuals, support and encourages their development					
3	My leader gives encouragement and recognition to staff					
4	My leader fosters trust, involvement and cooperation among team members					
5	My leader encourages thinking about problem in new ways and question assumptions					
6	My leader is clear about his/her values and practices what he/she preaches					
7	My leader instils pride and respect in others and inspire me by being highly competent, clear and positive vision of the future					

Section E: Meaningful Work

This section measures the degree of work to mean something to you.

No	Items	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1	I have found a meaningful career					
2	I view my work as contributing to my personal growth					
3	My work really makes no difference to the world					
4	I understand how my work contributes to my life's meaning					
5	I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful					
6	I know my work makes a positive difference in the world					
7	My work helps me better understand myself					
8	I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose					
9	My work helps me make sense of the world around me					
10	The work I do serves a greater purpose					

Section F: Workplace Friendship

This section measures your (a) opportunity of friendship, (b) the prevalence of friendship

No	Items	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1	I have the opportunity to get to know my co-workers					
2	I am able to work with my coworkers to collectively solve problems					
3	In my organisation, I have the chance to talk informally and visit with others					
4	Communication among employees is encouraged by my organisation					
5	I have the opportunity to develop close friendship at my workplace					
6	Informal talk is tolerated by my organisation as long as the work is completed					

Section G: Work Life Balance

This section measures your meaningful achievement and enjoyment in each of the four quadrants of life-work, family, friends and self.

No	Items	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1	I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities					
2	I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities					

No	Items	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
3	I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right					
4	Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced					



Appendix B: SPSS Data Analysis

Frequencies

[DataSet1] C:\Users\USER\Desktop\Final Thesis.sav

Statistics

		Age	Employment Status	Work Experience
N	Valid	482	482	482
	Missing	0	0	0

Frequency Table

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15 - 25 years old	459	95.2	95.2	95.2
	26 years old and above	23	4.8	4.8	100.0
Total		482	100.0	100.0	

Employment Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Full Time Employment	437	90.7	90.7	90.7
	Part Time Employment	30	6.2	6.2	96.9
	Self- Employed	15	3.1	3.1	100.0
Total		482	100.0	100.0	

Work Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	6 months and more	403	83.6	83.6	83.6
	Less than 6 months	79	16.4	16.4	100.0
Total		482	100.0	100.0	

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
WH	482	1.44	5.00	3.6897	.78025
WA	482	1.11	5.00	3.6591	.78908
TL	482	1.00	5.00	3.8400	1.00491
MW	482	1.00	5.00	3.7357	.77715
WF	482	1.00	5.00	4.0207	.78013
WL	482	1.00	5.00	3.4108	.82378
Valid N (listwise)	482				



UUM
Universiti Utara Malaysia

Reliability

Scale: Workplace Happiness

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	482	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	482	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.891	9

Reliability

Scale: Work Autonomy

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	482	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	482	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.923	9

Reliability

Scale: Workplace Friendship

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	482	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	482	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.920	6

Reliability

Scale: Work Life Balance

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	482	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	482	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.722	4

Reliability

Scale: Transformational Leadership

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	482	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	482	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.973	7

Reliability

Scale: Meaningful Work

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	482	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	482	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.927	10

Correlations

		WH	WA	TL	MW	WF	WL
WH	Pearson Correlation	1	.594**	.677**	.673**	.499**	.637**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	482	482	482	482	482	482
WA	Pearson Correlation	.594**	1	.607**	.705**	.567**	.542**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	482	482	482	482	482	482
TL	Pearson Correlation	.677**	.607**	1	.703**	.538**	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	482	482	482	482	482	482
MW	Pearson Correlation	.673**	.705**	.703**	1	.620**	.514**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	482	482	482	482	482	482
WF	Pearson Correlation	.499**	.567**	.538**	.620**	1	.445**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	482	482	482	482	482	482
WL	Pearson Correlation	.637**	.542**	.529**	.514**	.445**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	482	482	482	482	482	482

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	WL, WF, TL, WA, MW ^b		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: WH

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.781 ^a	.610	.606	.48992

a. Predictors: (Constant), WL, WF, TL, WA, MW

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Sig.
1	Regression	178.580	5	35.716	.14
	Residual	114.251	476	.240	
	Total	292.830	481		

a. Dependent Variable: WH

b. Predictors: (Constant), WL, WF, TL, WA, MW

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.586	.131		4.454	<.001
	WA	.058	.043	.059	1.355	.176
	TL	.221	.033	.285	6.676	<.001
	MW	.265	.048	.264	5.470	<.001
	WF	.009	.038	.009	.245	.807
	WL	.298	.034	.314	8.724	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: WH

