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Determinant Factors of Job Satisfaction in Generation Z Informal Workers

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ABSTRACT

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Job Autonomy, Work Life Balance, Work-Social Support, Work Motivation, Job Satisfaction.

This study examines the effect of job autonomy, work-life balance, and work-social support on job satisfaction with work motivation as a mediator in informal workers of generation Z in Semarang. The sampling of this study used purposive sampling and data collection techniques with questionnaires for 235 informal workers belonging to Generation Z. Data analysis used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results of this study reveal that job autonomy and work-social support directly and indirectly affect job satisfaction, with work motivation as a mediator. Meanwhile, work-life balance and work motivation directly affect job satisfaction. Work-social support has the most significant effect on work motivation and job satisfaction. This study reveals the importance of building meaningful relationships in the work environment of Generation Z to create a harmonious balance.

INTRODUCTION

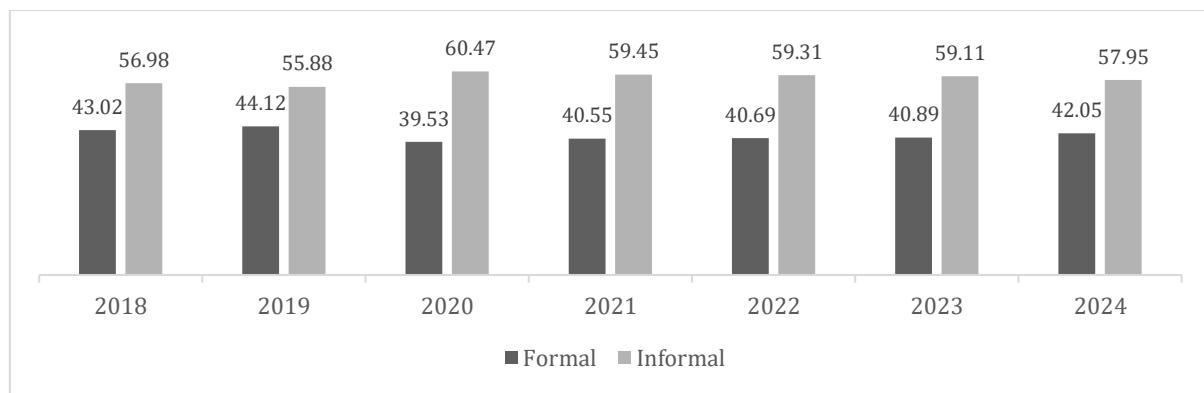
The contemporary labor force is predominantly Generation Z, aged 13 to 28 years (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021). This generation has a strong affinity for technology. They value openness, autonomy, and flexibility in their work (Hinduan et al., 2020; Putri, 2024). These attributes help them adapt quickly and thrive in dynamic work environments. Their extensive access to digital information increases their literacy and awareness compared to earlier generations. Empirical studies show Generation Z pursues careers that align with their personal passions. This preference has been linked to variations in work-related stress levels (Octavia & Sari, 2024).

Generation Z is known for their technological competence. This aligns closely with ongoing digital transformation in business (Bhore & Tapas, 2023). Many from this

generation take part in digital business and entrepreneurship. However, some of these activities on online platforms face regulatory discrepancies. They operate in legally ambiguous spaces, sometimes within the informal economy (Prasetyo, 2022). Generation Z's passion for work, need for time flexibility, and productivity focus often lead them to the informal sector. These conditions are more easily realized in informal work (Aulia et al., 2024; Mărginean, 2021). Informal workers include freelancers, short-term workers, those earning below the statutory minimum wage, employees in unregistered businesses, and those without formal contracts or labor protection (Hapsari et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, the proportion of informal workers remains substantially higher than that of formal employees, as illustrated in Figure 1. Notably, the share of informal employment increased significantly in 2020, largely due to the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation prompted many individuals to seek alternative income sources within the informal sector rather than depending on formal employment. From 2021 to 2023, this trend persisted, with informal employment continuing to dominate Indonesia's labor market. Furthermore, the rising incidence of layoffs has created additional challenges for Generation Z, compelling them to navigate increasingly uncertain employment landscapes.

Figure 1. Percentage of Formal and Informal Workers in Indonesia



Source: Badan Pusat Statistik (2025)

Generation Z workers exhibit advanced technological proficiency, value work-life balance, and favor horizontal organizational structures (Lazar et al., 2023). These attributes enable them to participate actively in decision-making processes. Such characteristics are closely linked to greater job autonomy, which significantly

influences employee well-being and performance at both individual and collective levels (Jermier & Michaels, 2001). Job autonomy enhances cognitive and emotional engagement, thereby improving productivity and job satisfaction (Lu et al., 2017). It also fosters innovative work behavior (Ardy & Fajriantyi, 2019), consistent with the nature of Generation Z, who prefer flexibility and are highly familiar with technology. Consequently, creativity and innovation-oriented behavior are critical in driving organizational growth.

Moreover, Generation Z places strong emphasis on work-life balance and tends to seek workplaces that offer enjoyment and opportunities for social interaction during working hours (Lev, 2022). Empirical evidence indicates that maintaining balance between work and personal life leads to higher job satisfaction (Sangeetha, 2023). This reflects the intrinsic motivation typical of Generation Z employees, who strive to integrate personal well-being with professional responsibilities, collaborate effectively, and continuously explore new knowledge and skills. As a result, they are better equipped to adapt to dynamic environments that demand flexibility and resilience. The informal work pattern aligns with the preferences of Generation Z, providing autonomy and flexibility. However, informal employment often entails income instability and limited sustainability compared with formal jobs.

Against this background, the present study examines the effects of job autonomy, work-life balance, and work-social support on job satisfaction, with work motivation serving as a mediating variable among informal Generation Z workers in Semarang, Indonesia. Semarang was selected as the research site because it is the largest city in Central Java Province and ranks among the top eight cities in Indonesia in terms of Gross Regional Domestic Product (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). The city's expanding service sector also offers substantial opportunities for informal Generation Z workers, particularly in creative service roles such as graphic design, content creation, copywriting, and talent management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

The intrinsic motivation framework of Generation Z workers is most appropriately explained through the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Salvadorinho et al. (2024) proposed an extension of SDT specifically applicable to understanding Generation Z workers, identifying six motivational factors: autonomy, competence, relatedness, purpose, flow state, and achievement. According to SDT, employees can optimize their functioning in the workplace when three basic psychological needs are fulfilled – autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy refers to individuals' freedom to act in accordance with their internalized values and their ability to have a voice and involvement in their work (Hu et al., 2024). Such engagement enables employees to achieve competence, enhances motivation to expand their skills, and fosters mastery over their work environment. Relatedness, on the other hand, represents the desire to establish meaningful connections with coworkers (Olafsen & Deci, 2020).

Generation Z emphasizes the importance of meaningful work that aligns with both personal and organizational values. Achieving such alignment requires a harmonious balance among motivational factors, as well as the integration of individual traits with external demands to prevent mental health issues or burnout (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018). The achievement factor highlights the human need for fulfillment, consistent with the Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG) theory, and resonates with the self-esteem component of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Caulton, 2012). Fulfilling higher-order needs – particularly self-esteem and self-actualization – is essential within organizational contexts. Therefore, the six factors identified by Salvadorinho et al. (2024) – autonomy, competence, relatedness, purpose, flow state, and achievement – represent an integrated interpretation of SDT that aligns with the intrinsic motivational characteristics of Generation Z workers.

Hypothesis Development

Job Autonomy, Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Job autonomy is a crucial factor influencing work motivation, as it empowers employees to make independent decisions and manage their tasks autonomously, thereby enhancing intrinsic motivation and engagement (Hu et al., 2024; Pursio et al., 2024). The implementation of job autonomy within organizational structures can mediate the positive relationship between an initiative-oriented climate and innovative behavior, which subsequently affects both work motivation and job satisfaction (Hassi et al., 2025). Similarly, Perera et al. (2024) found that job autonomy, social connections, and technological access significantly influence the motivation of gig economy workers. Intrinsic motivation is particularly enhanced through job autonomy, as it allows individuals to exercise control over their work processes in alignment with their personal values and interests (Kusik et al., 2024). Employees with higher levels of job autonomy tend to exhibit greater intrinsic motivation, which serves as a stronger determinant of work engagement compared to other factors. Autonomy fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to higher levels of intrinsic motivation and engagement (Park, 2023). Moreover, job autonomy significantly impacts intrinsic motivation, which in turn drives job satisfaction. Employees who experience greater autonomy in scheduling, decision-making, and work methods report higher satisfaction levels. This suggests that enhancing job autonomy can positively affect work motivation by fostering empowerment and fulfillment in one's role (Zychova et al., 2024).

H1: Job autonomy has a positive and significant effect on work motivation

H4: Job autonomy has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction

H8: Work motivation mediates the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction

Work Life Balance, Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Work-life balance represents a critical factor influencing both work motivation and job satisfaction, reflecting the equilibrium between professional responsibilities

and personal life (Rashmi & Kataria, 2023). Maintaining such balance fosters psychological well-being and enhances employees' intrinsic motivation to perform effectively. Empirical evidence demonstrates that work-life balance significantly promotes work engagement, which is closely associated with motivation (Dewi & Rozana, 2024). This balance is shaped by organizational flexibility, workload management, supportive policies, and family conditions (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018). Organizations that implement flexible work arrangements—such as remote work and adjustable schedules—tend to strengthen employees' perceived balance between work and personal life. For instance, findings from telemarketing employees indicate that the ability to maintain work-life balance enhances work motivation, which subsequently increases job satisfaction (Palumbo et al., 2022). Consistent with these findings, work-life balance has been found to exert a positive effect on job satisfaction (Aruldoss et al., 2021). Moreover, motivated employees are more likely to experience satisfaction in their roles, highlighting motivation's mediating role in this relationship (Iwanto et al., 2024). Work-life balance also directly enhances organizational pride, further contributing to job satisfaction (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016).

H2: *Work-Life Balance has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation*

H5: *Work-Life Balance has a positive and significant effect on Job Satisfaction*

H9: *Work Motivation mediates the relationship between Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction*

Work-Social Support, Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Work-social support refers to the emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance employees receive from supervisors, colleagues, and the organization. Such support plays a crucial role in enhancing both work motivation and job satisfaction (Yousaf et al., 2020). Employees tend to experience higher satisfaction when they receive encouragement from coworkers and supervisors, particularly through training opportunities and skill development initiatives (Talebzadeh & Karatepe, 2020). Supervisory support—such as listening to conflicts, encouraging learning, and communicating strategic goals—signals that employees are regarded as strategic partners within the organization (Gordon et al., 2019). Similarly, coworker assistance

in handling work-related challenges fosters a sense of belonging and emotional security, thereby enhancing job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2017).

Recent evidence also indicates that work-social support has a significant positive relationship with work motivation. Among working students, for instance, social support was found to substantially enhance motivation (Faturrohman et al., 2025). Managerial support remains one of the most consistent predictors of motivation and employee retention (Ahlstedt et al., 2024). In addition, both supervisory and coworker support contribute significantly to employees' motivational states (Etzel et al., 2024). Organizational, supervisory, and peer support have also been shown to positively influence motivation to improve work through learning (MTIWL), with organizational support exerting the strongest effect (Ng, 2017).

H3: Work-Social Support has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation

H6: Work-Social Support has a positive and significant effect on Job Satisfaction

H10: Work Motivation mediates the relationship between Work-Social Support and Job Satisfaction

Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction

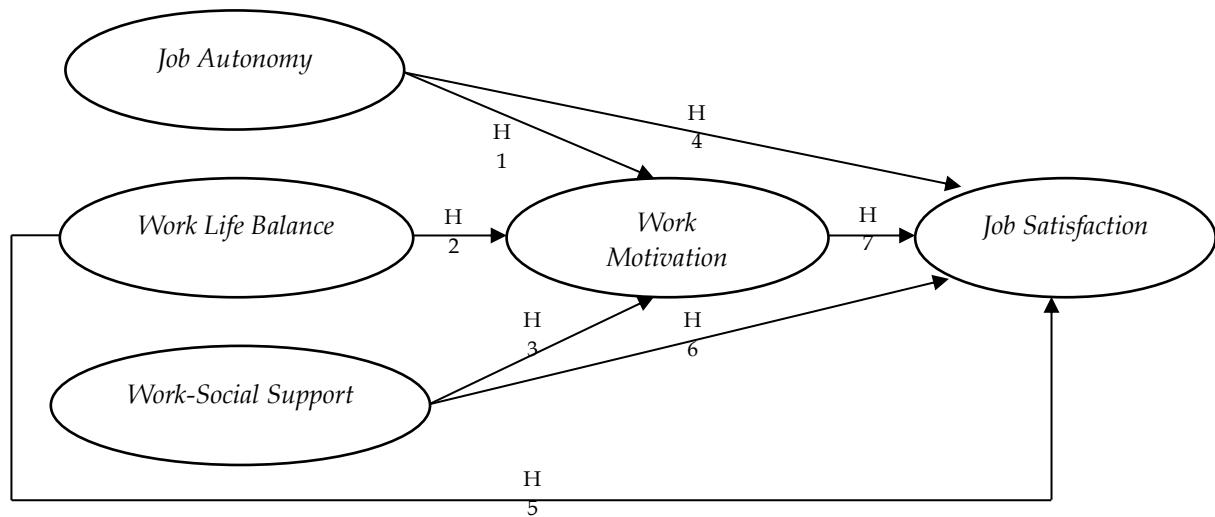
Work motivation is defined as a set of internal and external forces that initiate work-related behavior and determine its form, direction, intensity, and persistence (Colaco & Loi, 2019). The intensity dimension reflects how vigorously individuals strive toward organizational goals, whereas persistence captures how long such effort is maintained over time. Motivation functions as a driving force that enhances employees' enthusiasm and commitment to their work, thereby fostering a sense of accomplishment and job satisfaction (Valk & Yousif, 2023). Job satisfaction, in turn, represents a positive emotional state resulting from a cognitive and affective evaluation of one's job, reflecting the fulfillment of personal needs, goals, and values (Sobaih & Hasanein, 2020). Empirical studies have consistently confirmed the significant positive relationship between work motivation and job satisfaction (Anjel et al., 2024); (Maulana et al., 2024).

H7: Work Motivation has a positive and significant effect on Job Satisfaction

Conceptual Framework

Based on the synthesis of previous studies and theoretical foundations discussed above, the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 2 was developed to guide the empirical investigation of the proposed relationships.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework



METHODS

Sample and Data Collection

This study focuses on Generation Z workers engaged in informal employment in Semarang City, Indonesia. The classification of informal workers follows the criteria established by Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), including self-employed individuals, casual laborers, freelance workers, and unpaid family workers. The target population consists of Generation Z individuals, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012 (Hinduan et al., 2020), corresponding to the current age range of 13 to 28 years – most of whom are active participants in the labor force.

A purposive sampling technique, which is a type of non-probability sampling, was employed in this study. This method allows the researcher to deliberately select respondents who are considered representative of the target population (Hair et al., 2019). The inclusion criteria required respondents to be Generation Z workers who have been engaged in their current informal occupation for at least one year, ensuring that the job constitutes a primary and sustained source of activity. Data were collected

using structured questionnaires administered through both online and offline methods between September 2024 and February 2025. The dual-mode distribution was intended to enhance response accuracy and comprehension of survey items across diverse respondent groups.

Measurement of Variables

Respondents assessed their level of agreement with the questionnaire items using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Each construct was measured using items adapted from well-established scales developed in previous studies. Job Autonomy was measured using items developed by Patterson et al. (2005) which include statements such as the ability to utilize necessary resources to perform tasks, managerial trust to make decisions without prior approval, and autonomy in individual decision-making. Work-Life Balance was assessed using items from Hayman (2005) which have been widely adopted in subsequent studies. The items capture aspects such as having sufficient time for recreational activities, the ability to complete work within regular hours without overtime, adequate time for family and friends, and access to social benefits provided by the organization. Work-Social Support was measured based on Hammer et al. (2004) encompassing two dimensions: supervisor support and coworker support. Work Motivation was measured using items developed by Björklund et al. (2013), including statements such as feeling stimulated by job tasks, being motivated to work, frequently experiencing a strong desire to perform, and spending less time at work when possible. Job Satisfaction was assessed using the scale by Macdonald & MacIntyre (1997), which includes items such as receiving recognition for good work, feeling close to colleagues, being happy to work in the organization, feeling secure in the job, having trust in management, fully utilizing one's talents and skills, and overall job enjoyment. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a method suitable for testing complex models with relatively small sample sizes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Out of 235 valid responses, the majority were male (52.77%), while female respondents accounted for 47.23%. In terms of educational background, most participants held an undergraduate degree (71.91%), followed by graduate degree holders (14.47%), diploma graduates (8.94%), and senior high school graduates (4.68%). The respondents represented 11 different types of informal occupations, with the largest proportion being content creators (22.98%), followed by photographers/videographers (13.62%). This distribution aligns with the current employment trends and professional preferences among Generation Z workers. Furthermore, the classification of respondents was verified to ensure that all participants were engaged in informal employment sectors.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Demographic Aspect	N	(%)
Gender		
Male	124	52.77
Female	111	47.23
Education Level		
Senior High School/Vocational	11	4.68
Diploma	21	8.94
Undergraduate	169	71.91
Postgraduate	34	14.47
Type of Occupation		
Content Creator	54	22,98
Freelance Designer	13	5,53
Copywriting	12	5,11
Freelance Programmer	21	8,94
Virtual Assistant	23	9,79
Fotografer/Videografer	32	13,62
Freelance Musician	16	6,81
Makeup Artist	9	3,83
Freelance Courier	11	4,68
Event Crew	23	9,79
Social Media Admin	21	8,94

Source: Authors' Data Processing (2025)

Measurement Model

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed as an appropriate analytical method to examine the complex relationships among multiple independent, dependent, and mediating variables (Hair et al., 2019). The path modeling process comprises two main stages: the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The measurement model was assessed based on three key criteria: internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Table 2 presents the factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs, which collectively illustrate the internal consistency and convergent validity of the measurement model.

As shown in Table 2, all items demonstrated factor loadings above 0.50, while both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values exceeded the 0.70 threshold, indicating that each construct achieved satisfactory internal consistency and reliability (Hair et al., 2019). Convergent validity was evaluated through the average variance extracted (AVE), which measures the proportion of variance explained by each construct relative to measurement error. AVE values were greater than 0.50, confirming that each construct explains at least 50% of the variance in its indicators (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Indicator	Construct	Factor Loading	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	CR
Job Autonomy (JA)			0.662	0.745	0.854
Organizational support	JA1	0.873			
Organizational trust	JA2	0.801			
Freedom in decision-making	JA3	0.801			
Work Life Balance (WLB)			0.705	0.930	0.943
Having adequate time for vacations	WLB1	0.757			
No overtime due to efficient working hours	WLB2	0.792			
Having time with family and friends	WLB3	0.825			
Appreciation of the company's social contributions	WLB4	0.723			
Work-Social Support (WSS)			0.601	0.780	0.857
Supervisor's emotional support	WSS1	0.874			
Supervisor's task-related support	WSS2	0.880			
Coworkers' emotional support	WSS3	0.872			
Sense of acceptance in the workplace	WSS4	0.846			
Empathy among coworkers	WSS5	0.826			
Support during difficult times	WSS6	0.807			
Feeling comfortable among colleagues	WSS7	0.764			
Work Motivation (WM)			0.656	0.868	0.905
Stimulation from work tasks	WM1	0.828			
Enthusiasm for work	WM2	0.770			
Willingness to work	WM3	0.827			
Work time preference	WM4	0.862			
Achievement drive	WM5	0.756			
Job Satisfaction (JS)			0.628	0.901	0.922
Recognition and appreciation	JS1	0.862			
Social closeness with colleagues	JS2	0.834			
Organizational pride	JS3	0.762			
Job security	JS4	0.796			
Managerial support	JS5	0.740			
Utilization of personal skills	JS6	0.732			
Enjoyment of work	JS7	0.814			

Source: Authors' Data Processing (2025)

Table 3 presents the results of the discriminant validity assessment, which aims to ensure that each construct in the model is empirically distinct and does not overlap with others. The Fornell-Larcker criterion was applied to evaluate discriminant

validity, where the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct should exceed its correlations with other constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). The results indicate that the square roots of the AVE values range from 0.775 to 0.840, all of which are higher than the inter-construct correlations. This finding confirms that each construct demonstrates adequate discriminant validity, implying that the indicators of a construct explain that construct better than they explain others.

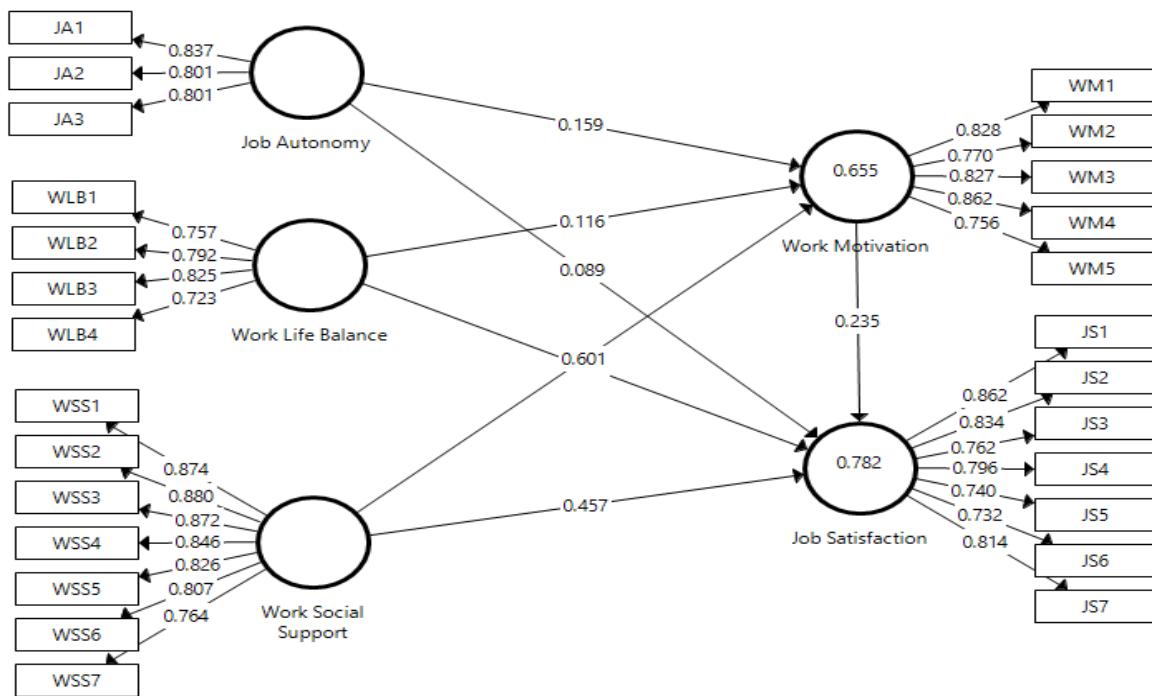
Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Latent Variables	JA	JS	WLB	WM	WSS
Job Autonomy	0.813				
Job Satisfaction	0.662	0.793			
Work Life Balance	0.731	0.779	0.775		
Work Motivation	0.620	0.787	0.701	0.810	
Work-Social Support	0.627	0.749	0.770	0.791	0.840

Source: Authors' Data Processing (2025)

Structural Model

The structural model (inner model) was employed to examine the hypothesized relationships among the latent constructs. This stage assesses the strength of the relationships (β coefficients) and their statistical significance (p -values) for each hypothesized path (Hair et al., 2017). Additionally, the model's explanatory power is evaluated through the coefficient of determination (R^2), which indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous variables explained by the exogenous variables. R^2 values range from 0 to 1, with higher values signifying stronger explanatory capability (Shmueli et al., 2016). The results of the structural model assessment are illustrated in Figure 3, which depicts the magnitude and direction of the relationships among the constructs in the proposed framework.

Figure 3. Structural Equation Model

Source: Authors' Data Processing (2025)

Table 4 presents the results of the coefficient of determination (R^2). The R^2 value for Work Motivation is 0.655, indicating that 65.5% of the variance in work motivation is explained by the independent variables – Job Autonomy, Work-Life Balance, and Work-Social Support. Meanwhile, the R^2 value for Job Satisfaction is 0.782, suggesting that 78.2% of the variance in job satisfaction is accounted for by the same set of predictors. These results demonstrate that the model exhibits a substantial explanatory power, indicating that the selected variables adequately explain the variability in both work motivation and job satisfaction among informal Generation Z workers.

Table 4. R-Square Value

	R^2	R^2 Adjusted
Work Motivation	0.655	0.650
Job Satisfaction	0.782	0.778

Source: Authors' Data Processing (2025)

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the statistical significance of the relationships among the constructs within the model. Following the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2019), a relationship is considered statistically significant when the t -

statistic exceeds 1.96 for a two-tailed test at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Similarly, a p -value less than 0.05 indicates a significant association between the variables. The results of the hypothesis testing, including the estimated path coefficients, t -statistics, and p -values, are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of Hypothesis Testing (Direct and Indirect Paths)

Hypothesis	Relationship	β (path)	t -value	p -values	Results
H1	JA → WM	0.159	3.056	0.002	Accepted
H2	WLB → WM	0.116	1.564	0.118	Rejected
H3	WSS → WM	0.601	8.986	0.000	Accepted
H4	JA → JS	0.089	1.762	0.079	Rejected
H5	WLB → JS	0.192	3.092	0.002	Accepted
H6	WSS → JS	0.457	7.032	0.000	Accepted
H7	WM → JS	0.235	3.999	0.000	Accepted
H8	JA → WM → JS	0.037	2.637	0.009	Accepted
H9	WLB → WM → JS	0.027	1.342	0.180	Rejected
H10	WSS → WM → JS	0.141	3.855	0.000	Accepted

Catatan: Level of significance $p < 0.05$

Source: Authors' Data Processing (2025)

The findings of this study reveal that job autonomy and work-social support exert both direct and indirect effects on job satisfaction through the mediation of work motivation, while work-life balance demonstrates a direct influence on job satisfaction. The direct impact of job autonomy on work motivation suggests that freedom in managing work responsibilities fosters higher levels of intrinsic motivation (Park, 2023; Perera et al., 2024). Consistent with the self-determination theory proposed by Deci & Ryan (2000), job autonomy enables employees to fulfill intrinsic work values such as self-actualization and achievement, thereby enhancing intrinsic work motivation. These findings underscore the importance of autonomy among Generation Z informal workers, who tend to value flexibility and self-direction in their professional roles. The significant relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction highlights the crucial role of balancing professional and personal life in enhancing employee well-being. This result supports prior studies by Aruldoss et al. (2021); Palumbo et al. (2022), which identified work-life balance as a key predictor of job satisfaction. However, the present findings indicate that work-life balance, while essential for satisfaction, does not necessarily translate into increased work

motivation. This suggests that maintaining balance may fulfill emotional and psychological well-being rather than directly stimulating motivational drive.

The study further reveals that work-social support exerts the strongest influence on both work motivation and job satisfaction, emphasizing the relational dimension as a key factor in shaping employees' social identity within the workplace. Individuals who perceive strong support from colleagues and supervisors are more likely to identify themselves with their organization, thereby enhancing their motivation and overall job satisfaction. This finding aligns with Yousaf et al. (2020), who highlighted that work-social support fosters higher motivation and satisfaction among employees. Moreover, social support at work contributes to personal and professional development, as employees feel encouraged to engage in self-improvement and skill-enhancement initiatives. This study contributes to the understanding of organizational behavior by demonstrating the importance of social-relational factors within the dynamic and flexible context of Generation Z informal workers. The external validity of the findings is strengthened by the diverse range of occupations represented in the sample. Nonetheless, caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to organizations with markedly different work cultures or social structures.

The findings of this study affirm that work-social support and job autonomy contribute more significantly to the development of intrinsic motivation, as they provide individuals with a sense of control and emotional support in their work. This aligns with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Ryan & Deci (2000) and its recent extension by Salvadorinho et al. (2024), which emphasize that intrinsic motivation plays a central role in enhancing job satisfaction. SDT highlights the importance of relatedness—building meaningful connections with colleagues—as a mechanism that fosters psychological well-being and mitigates risks of burnout and mental health issues. However, the study reveals that work-life balance does not directly fulfill this aspect among informal Generation Z workers. These workers may not prioritize work-life balance when basic economic needs remain unmet, suggesting that economic vulnerability continues to shape their motivational orientation. This is consistent with (Hapsari et al., 2023), who reported that informal workers often earn

below the standard income level.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that work-social support exerts the strongest influence on job satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through work motivation. Job autonomy also demonstrates a positive effect on work motivation, which subsequently enhances job satisfaction. Conversely, work-life balance has a direct but statistically insignificant relationship with work motivation, although it remains a predictor of job satisfaction. These findings suggest that, for Generation Z informal workers, social support in the workplace and autonomy play a more pivotal role in fostering intrinsic motivation than work-life balance. This underscores the importance of relational and autonomy-driven factors in sustaining motivation and satisfaction among workers operating in flexible and less structured employment contexts.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), particularly the autonomy and relatedness dimensions, in explaining the formation of intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction within the informal employment context. It extends the applicability of SDT to informal workers who operate under flexible and non-traditional work arrangements, demonstrating that intrinsic motivation can still emerge in the absence of formal organizational structures.

Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for digital platform managers, small business owners, and labor policymakers. Enhancing work motivation and satisfaction among Generation Z informal workers can be achieved by fostering job autonomy and creating socially supportive work environments. Capacity-building programs based on peer communities, informal mentoring systems, and non-hierarchical work management approaches may serve as effective strategies to enhance productivity and well-being among informal workers. For policymakers, it is crucial to integrate relational and psychological aspects into informal labor regulations, particularly through policies that strengthen social protection and psychological support mechanisms for this growing workforce segment.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although data were collected from respondents representing diverse informal occupations, most participants were Generation Z workers engaged in digital-based professions such as content creation. This concentration limits the generalizability of the findings to other informal sectors that may exhibit different working conditions and psychosocial dynamics. Moreover, the present study did not account for external factors that may also influence work motivation and job satisfaction, such as income levels, working hours, access to social security, or physical work environment conditions.

Future research should further investigate why work-life balance does not significantly contribute to motivation and job satisfaction among informal Generation Z workers. Qualitative approaches are recommended to deepen understanding of how these workers perceive the meaning of work-life balance within informal and flexible employment contexts. Additionally, cross-sectoral and cross-cultural studies would provide a more comprehensive perspective and enhance the generalizability of these findings.

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