

# Workplace Happiness and Retention Strategies for Generation Z in Jakarta Startups

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## ABSTRACT

**Employee retention**, especially among Generation Z, is a major difficulty for startup businesses in today's quickly changing workplace. The decision to stay with an organization is heavily influenced by this generational cohort's strong values for job autonomy, organizational fairness, and general job satisfaction. With a focus on startup workers situated in Jakarta's Special Capital Region, this study examines the relationship between job autonomy and organizational justice and employee retention, utilizing workplace happiness as a mediating variable. A **quantitative research** methodology was used to gather information from 308 permanent non-managerial employees. **The results** show that job autonomy and organizational justice both significantly improve employee retention, and that these associations are mediated by workplace satisfaction. In order to improve retention among Generation Z talent, these findings have practical ramifications for startups, highlighting the significance of establishing fair workplace policies, encouraging individual autonomy, and developing a pleasant corporate climate that supports employee well-being.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Retaining Generation Z workers those born between 1997 and 2012 has become a crucial challenge for businesses in the age of digital change. This group, which now makes up about 27.94% of Indonesia's population, places a high emphasis on workplace principles like justice, flexibility, and openness [1]. Because of this, companies who don't meet these standards frequently have high turnover rates, which rose to 38.39% in the previous year [2]. This problem is especially noticeable in Jakarta's startup ecosystem, which is known as Indonesia's innovation powerhouse and is home to over 500 active firms [3, 4]. While the dynamic and entrepreneurial nature of startups tends to attract Generation Z talent, the high-pressure environment and focus on rapid growth frequently undermine employee well-being, particularly in terms of perceived organizational justice and job autonomy, thereby contributing to persistent retention challenges [5].

This study integrates organizational justice, job autonomy, and workplace happiness to explore the factors influencing Generation Z employee retention within Jakarta's rapidly evolving startup ecosystem [6]. Unlike prior research that generally investigates these constructs in traditional corporate or Western contexts, this

study highlights how fairness and autonomy operate uniquely in Indonesia's innovation-driven, high-pressure startup culture [7, 8]. By focusing on Jakarta—Southeast Asia's emerging digital hub—this research not only extends organizational behavior theory to a non-Western setting but also provides a novel contribution to understanding how local socio-economic and cultural factors shape Gen Z's workplace engagement and retention dynamics [9]. The results of this study enrich the human resource management literature, help companies design policies to improve retention, reduce turnover, and competitiveness, and harness the potential of Generation Z to drive innovation and economic growth, which also contributes to the development of the startup ecosystem in Indonesia in the digital era [10].

Organizational justice, encompassing distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, refers to employees' perceptions of fairness in resource distribution, procedures, and interpersonal interactions. Prior studies have found that [11] organizational justice enhances job satisfaction and employee commitment, reducing turnover rates. While further evidence indicates [12] that organizational justice contributes to employee happiness, a crucial factor in retention. This study measures organizational justice to assess its impact on the happiness and loyalty of Generation Z employees in startups [13]. Job autonomy refers to the extent to which employees have freedom in determining how, when and how they work [14]. High autonomy increases employees' engagement and control over their work. [15] found a positive relationship between job autonomy and employee happiness, while [16] showed that job autonomy increases psychological belonging which affects retention. In this study, job autonomy is expected to influence employee retention both directly and through workplace happiness.

Employee retention refers to an organization's ability to keep employees long-term by fostering a supportive and motivating work environment [17]. [8] highlighted that organizational justice and employee happiness can improve retention. Additionally, [18] emphasized that career development support and work flexibility are crucial factors in retaining employees. This research identifies employee retention as the dependent variable influenced by organizational justice, work autonomy, and workplace happiness, particularly among Generation Z employees in startups [19]. What makes this context unique is the intersection of Jakarta's fast-growing startup ecosystem, high digital adoption, and Gen Z's value-driven career mindset—creating an environment distinct from traditional organizations in both structure and motivation [20]. The study thus contributes not merely by geographic focus but by demonstrating how fairness and autonomy operate within fluid, innovation-driven startup cultures in Southeast Asia's leading urban economy marked by a young workforce, high entrepreneurial activity, and unique cultural and socioeconomic conditions. This study examines the intersection of Generation Z's workplace expectations and Jakarta's startup ecosystem, providing insights into how organizational justice and job autonomy operate within non-Western, high-growth startup environments [21–23].

Happiness at work, a positive emotional state employees experience in their work environment, boosts productivity, engagement, and loyalty. [15] found that it mediates the relationship between work flexibility and employee retention. [24] identified organizational justice and work autonomy as key drivers of employee happiness. This study uses happiness at work as a mediating variable to explore how organizational justice and job autonomy can indirectly improve Generation Z employee retention in startups [25, 26]. A model is a representation of reality that describes the main elements and the relationships between these elements. In this study, the model is visualized to facilitate understanding. This study involves two independent variables: Organizational Justice and Job Autonomy, with Workplace Happiness as the mediating variable and Employee Retention as the dependent variable [27]. This study aims to analyze how organizational justice and job autonomy can improve workplace happiness and employee retention in a Jakarta startup company [28].

## 2. HYPOTHESIS

Employee retention, influenced by job satisfaction and engagement, refers to an organization's ability to keep long-term employees [29]. Organizational justice, which encompasses employee perceptions of decision-making, rewards, and workplace interactions, plays a crucial role in retention [30]. Research indicates that organizational justice positively impacts employee retention. [31] found that employees who perceive fairness are more likely to stay, while [32] noted that organizational justice reduces employee exit intentions. The dimensions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice significantly affect retention [33].

**H1: There is a positive and significant influence between organizational justice and employee retention among Gen Z employees working in startup companies in Jakarta.**

Job autonomy plays a crucial role in improving employee retention, especially within the startup ecosystem in Jakarta. It refers to the freedom employees have in organizing their tasks, procedures, and responsibilities [28]. Research shows that high levels of autonomy significantly influence employees' decisions to stay with the company. [34] revealed that reduced autonomy can lead to feelings of failure and decreased performance, increasing the likelihood of employees, particularly senior management, leaving the company. Findings from [35] also support that providing adequate autonomy reduces employees' desire to find another job. Employees who feel they have control over their work tend to feel more valued and attached to the company. Other research indicates that positive relationships between managers and employees, combined with granting autonomy, effectively increase employee loyalty [36]. Overall, greater work autonomy not only creates flexibility but also fosters empowerment, ultimately contributing to increased employee retention.

**H2: There is a positive and significant effect of job autonomy on employee retention on Gen Z employees who work in startup companies in Jakarta.**

Fairness in organizations is an important element in creating happiness at work. Research by [37] shows that fairness increases competitiveness and employee happiness, especially in companies with a supportive work culture. [8] found that justice in organizations has a significant effect on happiness, with a  $\beta$  coefficient of 0.883 ( $p = 0.01$ ). The meta-analysis of [38] also emphasized the role of justice in increasing employee happiness. [39] stated that fairness affects self-esteem and job satisfaction, which are important for happiness.

**H3: There is a positive and significant influence between organizational justice and happiness at work on Gen Z employees who work in startup companies in Jakarta.**

Job autonomy significantly enhances workplace happiness. [40] demonstrated a positive relationship between job autonomy and work happiness, with a correlation coefficient of 0.378. Job autonomy provides employees with freedom, boosting satisfaction and emotional well-being. Further research by [41, 42] confirmed that job autonomy is linked to job satisfaction and positive work experiences, increasing happiness.

**H4: There is a positive and significant influence of job autonomy on happiness at work on Gen Z employees who work in startup companies in Jakarta.**

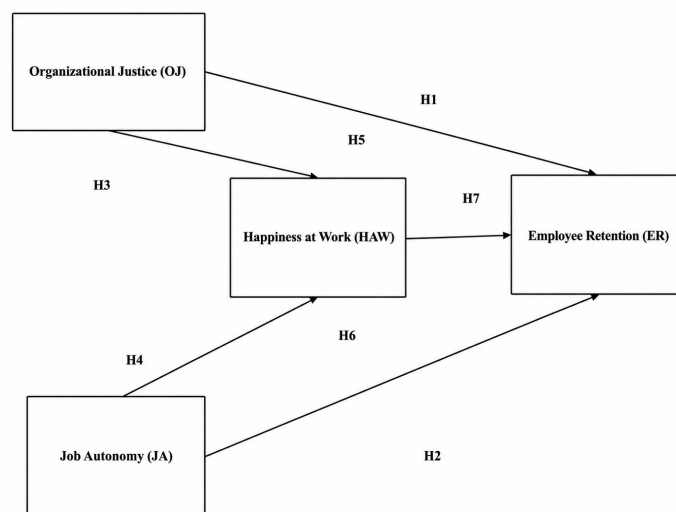


Figure 1. Research Model

Organizational justice significantly influences employee retention by mediating workplace happiness. Research indicates that fair treatment enhances employee satisfaction and happiness. [28, 38] confirmed that organizational justice underpins employee happiness and strengthens commitment to stay. Additionally, work autonomy affects retention through happiness, as found by [43], showing a positive correlation between work autonomy and happiness. [15] also noted that workplace happiness mediates the relationship between work autonomy and employee retention. These findings suggest that organizational justice and work autonomy significantly impact employee retention through workplace happiness.

**H5: There is a positive and significant influence between organizational justice on employee retention with the mediation of happiness at work on Gen Z employees who work in startup companies in Jakarta.**

**H6: There is a positive and significant effect of job autonomy on employee retention with the mediation of happiness at work on Gen Z employees who work in startup companies in Jakarta.**

Happiness in the workplace is important to improve employee retention. Research by [13] shows that happy employees are more likely to be loyal and stay in the company. A work environment that supports happiness reinforces loyalty, reducing the risk of losing top talent. Further research confirms the positive correlation between happiness and retention, especially in the IT industry, with happy employees more attached to the company and lower turnover rates [15, 41]. Happiness at work contributes greatly to employee loyalty and retention.

**H7: There is a positive and significant influence of happiness at work on employee retention among Gen Z employees working in startup companies in Jakarta.**

### 3. METHOD

This quantitative study examines the relationships between organizational justice, work autonomy, and employee retention, with workplace happiness as a mediating variable, focusing on Gen Z employees at startups in Jakarta. Data were collected via an online survey conducted from March to May 2025. The survey assessed organizational justice and work autonomy (independent variables), employee retention (dependent variable), and workplace happiness (mediating variable). The goal is to identify the influence of these variables and provide practical insights for improving employee retention in the startup industry [44].

This study collected primary data through an online survey of Gen Z employees at startup companies in the Jakarta Special Region, using a questionnaire distributed via LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter to leverage Gen Z's social media activity. The five-point Likert scale measured respondents' opinions on the research variables. Secondary data came from a literature review of relevant journals, articles, books, and publications. The study initially targeted 185 Gen Z employees in non-managerial positions at startups in Jakarta. However, due to high response rates during online distribution, the final dataset consisted of 308 valid responses after data cleaning. This increase strengthens statistical reliability and generalizability of findings, as recommended by [31]. The sample included employees aged 18 to 27 working in fintech, ed-tech, healthtech, e-commerce, agritech, and logistics sectors [45].

In the initial stage, a pretest was conducted to test the effectiveness and reliability of the questionnaire by involving 50 respondents from technology companies in the Special Region of Jakarta. This pretest aims to test the feasibility of the instrument used in the main research. The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The pretest results determined whether the questionnaire needs to be revised or is ready to be used in the main data collection. The reliability test ensures questionnaire consistency using Cronbach's Alpha, with a value above 0.6 indicating reliability. Both pretest and main test data were assessed to confirm consistent and reliable results, ensuring valid measurements. Following these tests, the study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) approach to analyze variable relationships. PLS-SEM measures construct relationships and explains variance in the dependent variable. SmartPLS 4 was utilized to estimate the outer and inner models. Tests include path coefficient, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), and effect size ( $F^2$ ) to evaluate the strength and influence of variable relationships.

### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of questionnaires to 308 respondents revealed that 196 individuals were male, representing a percentage ratio. On the other hand, 112 people made up the percentage of female respondents. 26-year-olds made up the majority of the study's responses. Of the 218 respondents who completed the questionnaire, the majority held a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. Education technology is the company sector with the largest percentage in this study, with 138 responses, according to the results of distributing questionnaires to 308 startup employees in the Special Region of Jakarta. With 36 employees, the financial technology industry is the next most dominant firm sector. Additionally, the e-commerce industry, which employs 32 people, is rated third. Respondents were also asked about their length of service in the organization. According to the requirements of the study sample, which stipulates that respondents are permanent employees with a minimum service time of one year, these characteristics are used as data to determine the percentage of the number based on the length of service of respondents. The tested measurement model is shown in Figure 2.

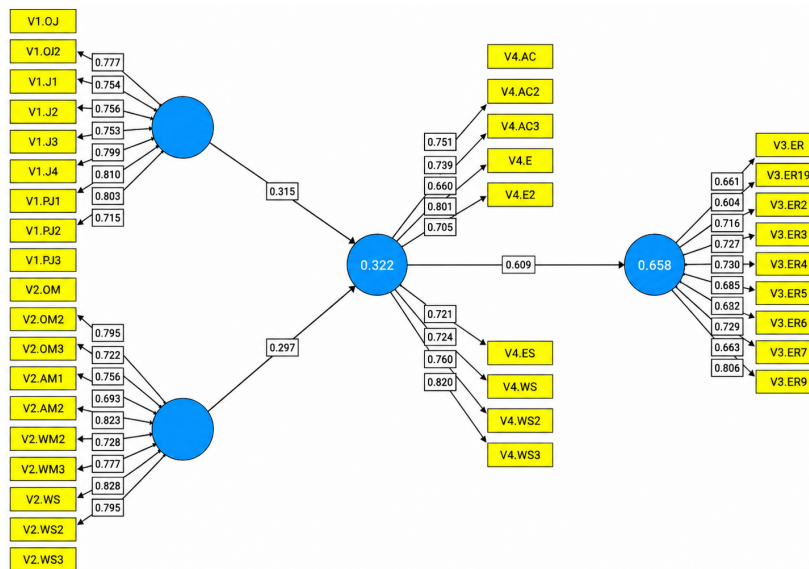


Figure 2. Measurement Model (Outer Model)

4.1. Outer Model

The initial step in analyzing the measurement model (outer model) involves testing validity through convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity measures the extent of the relationship between latent variables and their indicators, while discriminant validity ensures each indicator accurately corresponds to its respective variable. Convergent validity confirms indicators reflect latent variables, while discriminant validity confirms indicators only represent their variables. All indicators are valid with outer loading > 0.600 and AVE ≥ 0.500. AVE values for organizational justice, job autonomy, employee retention, and happiness at work exceed 0.500, indicating good validity and accurate measurement of concepts. The discriminant validity test, using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) method with a value < 0.90, shows that the HTMT values for construct relationships meet the criteria, validating all indicators. This high discriminant validity ensures accurate measurement of each construct without overlap, providing a strong foundation for research analysis and conclusions.

Reliability tests using composite reliability show values above 0.700 for all variables, namely Organizational Justice (0.917), Job Autonomy (0.926), Employee Retention (0.914), and Happiness at Work (0.918), in accordance with the standards of [5]. These results confirm that all constructions have excellent internal consistency, making the research instruments reliable and the data results stable and trustworthy. With high validity and reliability, this model is able to accurately measure concepts, supporting the research conclusions [43].

4.2. Inner Model

Structural model analysis (inner model) connects research variables and tests hypotheses through the coefficient of determination (*R*), effect size (*F*), and predictive relevance (*Q*) tests. A high *R* value indicates the model’s ability to explain the dependent variable, *F* assesses the relative influence of independent variables, and a positive *Q* indicates the predictive relevance of the model. These results ensure that the research model can explain the relationship between variables well.

In this study, it was found that the *R*<sup>2</sup> value for the employee retention variable is 0.653, meaning 65.3% of the variation in employee retention can be explained by organizational justice and job autonomy, while the remaining 34.7% is influenced by other factors. Similarly, the *R*<sup>2</sup> value for the happiness at work variable is 0.315, indicating that 31.5% of its variation is explained by these two variables. These results demonstrate that the research model effectively explains the variance of the dependent variables, particularly employee retention.

The F-Square test measures the impact of independent variables on dependent ones in the model.

Findings show that employee Happiness significantly affects Employee Retention (ER) with an  $F$  value of 0.912. Job Autonomy (JA) and Organizational Justice (OJ) have smaller impacts on ER and HAW, with  $F$  values of 0.013, 0.018, 0.063, and 0.071, respectively. Despite their weaker contributions, JA and OJ remain significant. Management strategies should prioritize enhancing employee happiness to improve retention and productivity.

The next step in building the structural model is to evaluate it using the predictive relevance test with the Q-Square value. A  $Q$  value above 0 indicates good predictive validity. Analysis results show  $Q$  values of 0.330 for ER and 0.174 for Happiness at Work (HAW), both indicating moderate predictive relevance. While the model can moderately predict endogenous variables, prediction accuracy can be improved by refining indicators or the model structure.

Path coefficients measure the strength and significance of relationships between constructs. Path coefficient values range from -1 to +1, with values closer to +1 indicating a strong positive relationship. The significance of relationships is tested with a t-statistic  $> 1.96$  and p-values  $< 0.05$ , indicating significant relationships.

**Original Sample, T-Statistic dan P-Value**

	<b>Original Sample (O)</b>	<b>T-statistic (&gt;1.96)</b>	<b>P-values (&lt;0.05)</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
OJ → ER	0.118	2.020	0.043	Accepted
JA → ER	0.100	2.158	0.031	Accepted
OJ → HAW	0.315	3.792	0.000	Accepted
JA → HAW	0.297	3.655	0.000	Accepted
OJ → HAW → ER	0.214	3.573	0.000	Accepted
JA → HAW → ER	0.201	3.491	0.000	Accepted
HAW → ER	0.679	13.395	0.000	Accepted

The results of this study showed that work autonomy and employee retention (Original Sample = 0.100, T-Statistics = 2.158, P-Values = 0.031) and organizational justice and employee retention (Original Sample = 0.118, T-Statistics = 2.020, P-Values = 0.043) were positively and significantly correlated. While job autonomy has a lesser impact, it boosts employees' sense of responsibility and happiness, while organizational fairness fosters a sense of value that increases employee loyalty. Furthermore, the association between these two factors and employee retention is strengthened by job satisfaction, which serves as a mediator (Original Sample for organizational justice = 0.315, for work autonomy = 0.297). These results underline how crucial it is to establish an equitable and autonomy-promoting workplace in order to boost worker satisfaction and loyalty.

According to the analysis, there is potential for improvement since the dimensions of work practices and work schedule have the lowest mean values. Companies could invest in improving work practices by integrating management technology like Trello or Asana, which can expedite job management and boost productivity, and by offering focused training programs like Coursera. Additionally, companies are advised to adopt structured, data-driven management systems rather than relying solely on general tools. For instance, implementing continuous feedback loops and performance dashboards tailored to startup agility can foster perceived fairness and autonomy. Platforms like Lattice, 15Five, or custom KPI-tracking systems can generate actionable insights from employee behavior data, making managerial interventions more evidence-based. Because they feel more empowered and appreciated, workers who participate in scheduling decision-making procedures not only increase productivity but also experience greater levels of job satisfaction [5].

It is clear that Job autonomy and organizational justice are essential elements influencing employee commitment, since they account for 65.3% of employee retention. Businesses can think about implementing data analytics-based performance evaluation solutions, like Lattice or 15Five, which provide instant feedback and real-time performance tracking. By adding gamification components, these systems can guarantee that performance reviews are impartial, open, and interesting. Organizations may increase employee retention in a more creative and dynamic way and build greater long-term employee loyalty by creating an atmosphere that values individual autonomy and encourages fairness [22].

Companies are urged to invest in extensive training programs, leadership development, and mentorship activities, as job autonomy and organizational fairness account for 31.5% of workplace satisfaction.

Employees are more likely to feel appreciated and supported in their positions when clear career development pathways and growth opportunities are provided. These initiatives have the potential to greatly increase worker happiness, foster enduring loyalty, and strengthen dedication to the company. These kinds of programs are essential for creating a happy workplace and making sure that workers stay inspired, involved, and committed to the organization's long-term objectives. Rather than relying only on general tools, startups should implement structured feedback loops, flexible task allocation, and participative decision-making practices. These recommendations are tailored specifically for early-stage Jakarta-based startups with Gen Z employees.

## 5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings, startup leaders in Jakarta need to view workplace happiness as an essential strategy for retaining Generation Z employees. The results indicate that fairness in organizational policies and autonomy in work arrangements can strengthen employees' willingness to stay, especially when these factors create a more positive and supportive work environment. Therefore, startups should build transparent reward systems, provide flexible task management, involve employees in decision-making, and offer consistent feedback that makes employees feel trusted and valued. Clear career development pathways, mentoring programs, and supportive leadership practices are also important to improve employees' sense of belonging and long-term commitment. By integrating fairness, autonomy, and employee well-being into daily human resource practices, startups can reduce turnover risk and develop a more sustainable retention strategy for Generation Z talent in the competitive digital business environment.


## 6. CONCLUSION


This study sheds light on a number of important aspects affecting Gen Z workers' retention in Jakarta startup businesses. First, it was discovered that job autonomy and organizational justice both greatly improved employee retention, with the latter also influencing greater levels of job satisfaction. Notably, job satisfaction was found to be an important mediator, enhancing the effect of job autonomy and organizational fairness on retention. These results imply that giving workers more autonomy over their job and establishing equitable, open organizational procedures should be top priorities for new businesses in Jakarta. Additionally, increasing retention rates among Generation Z employees requires creating a happy work atmosphere.

In a cutthroat startup environment, these elements are essential to maintaining an engaged, motivated, and committed workforce. While this study focuses on Jakarta's startup ecosystem, its insights hold potential relevance for other regions and industries across Indonesia. The demonstrated role of organizational justice and job autonomy in fostering workplace happiness and retention may similarly apply to sectors like manufacturing, creative industries, or higher education—where Gen Z professionals are increasingly represented. Expanding this research to other urban centers such as Bandung, Surabaya, or Yogyakarta would help validate the generalizability of these findings and reveal how regional work cultures influence employee engagement and retention. To learn more about the long-term effects of job autonomy and organizational justice, researchers can employ a longitudinal method and include moderating factors like organizational culture or work-life balance. It is also advised to conduct in-depth interviews with Generation Z workers in order to add more profound insights to the quantitative findings.

## 7. DECLARATIONS

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### 7.2. Author Contributions

Conceptualization: AP; Methodology: ES; Software: MR; Validation: SP and MR; Formal Analysis: MR and ES; Investigation: ES; Resources: AP; Data Curation: MR; Writing Original Draft Preparation: AP

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and ES; Writing Review and Editing: MR and AP; Visualization: SP and AP. All authors, MR, SP, ES, and AP, have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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### 7.5. Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest, known competing financial interests, or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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