

The influence of organisational behaviour, inclusive work environment, and career development on the performance of gen z employees with work engagement as a moderating variable

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh perilaku organisasi, lingkungan kerja inklusif, dan pengembangan karier terhadap kinerja karyawan *Gen Z* di Indonesia, dengan menempatkan keterlibatan kerja sebagai variabel antara. Mengingat dominasi *Gen Z* dalam angkatan kerja modern, pemahaman terhadap faktor-faktor yang memicu produktivitas mereka menjadi sangat krusial. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif eksplanatori dengan teknik survei melalui kuesioner kepada 111 responden karyawan *Gen Z*. Data dianalisis menggunakan *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) berbasis *Partial Least Squares* (PLS) untuk menguji hubungan struktural antarvariabel serta efek moderasi dan mediasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan kerja inklusif merupakan pendorong paling signifikan terhadap keterlibatan kerja, yang kemudian berdampak positif terhadap peningkatan kinerja karyawan. Pengembangan karier memberikan pengaruh positif, namun dalam skala yang lebih kecil. Sebaliknya, perilaku organisasi tidak menunjukkan pengaruh signifikan terhadap keterlibatan kerja maupun kinerja dalam konteks responden penelitian ini. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa keterlibatan kerja merupakan variabel kunci yang mentransformasikan sumber daya organisasi menjadi kinerja yang nyata. Oleh karena itu, organisasi disarankan untuk memprioritaskan penciptaan iklim kerja yang inklusif guna mengoptimalkan potensi karyawan muda.

Kata Kunci: perilaku organisasi; lingkungan kerja inklusif; pengembangan karier; kinerja karyawan; keterlibatan kerja

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of organizational behavior, inclusive work environment, and career development on the performance of Gen Z employees in Indonesia, with work engagement as an intervening variable. Given Gen Z's dominance in the modern workforce, understanding the factors that drive their productivity is crucial. The research method used was a quantitative explanatory method with a survey technique through a questionnaire to 111 Gen Z employee respondents. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) to test the structural relationships between variables as well as the moderating and mediating effects. The results show that an inclusive work environment is the most significant driver of work engagement, which then has a positive impact on improving employee performance. Career development has a positive effect, but on a smaller scale. In contrast, organizational behavior does not show a significant influence on work engagement or performance in the context of this study's respondents. These findings confirm that work engagement is a key variable that transforms organizational resources into tangible performance. Therefore, organizations are advised to prioritize the creation of an inclusive work climate to optimize the potential of young employees.

Keyword: organizational behavior; inclusive work environment; career development; employee performance; work engagement

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an era of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), organisations worldwide face significant challenges in maintaining optimal performance. The shift in work paradigms driven by digital transformation requires business entities to become increasingly adaptive in managing human resources. Employee performance is no longer merely the result of top-down instructions, but rather a complex outcome shaped by interactions among organisational culture, physical and psychological work environments, and individual career prospects. Failure to manage these dimensions effectively often leads to declining productivity, which directly threatens organisational competitiveness in the global market.

One of the most prominent phenomena in the contemporary labour market is the growing dominance of Generation Z, which is gradually replacing previous generations in the workforce. Born between 1997 and 2012, this generation exhibits distinct work values, prioritising meaningful work, work–life balance, and inclusivity. Empirical evidence indicates that Generation Z demonstrates lower retention rates when workplace expectations are unmet. Consequently, understanding the specific drivers of performance for this generation is essential to ensure the sustainability of future talent management strategies.

Organisational behaviour (OB) serves as a foundational element in shaping workplace dynamics. However, recent studies have identified a disconnect between formal organisational policies and employee perceptions. Although organisational behaviour is theoretically intended to enhance effectiveness, several studies suggest that, in the absence of emotional involvement, such policies are often perceived merely as bureaucratic constraints (Stirpe et al., 2022). This perspective is reinforced by Rayani et al. (2024), who argue that organisational behaviour does not consistently predict performance outcomes when situational and psychological factors are overlooked by management.

Beyond organisational behaviour, the creation of an inclusive work environment has emerged as a central standard in contemporary management practices. Inclusivity extends beyond demographic diversity to encompass employees' perceptions of being valued and psychologically safe to contribute. K et al. (2023) emphasise that an inclusive organisational climate is positively associated with productive employee behaviour. For Generation Z, discriminatory or non-transparent work environments substantially diminish motivation, underscoring the urgency of fostering inclusive workplaces to maintain performance stability (Onsardi & Kulsum, 2025).

Career development remains another critical determinant of employee motivation and performance. Employees who perceive clear opportunities for growth tend to demonstrate higher organisational commitment. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of career development initiatives largely depends on how employees experience them in daily work contexts. Kania et al. (2024) contend that while career development strongly influences performance, its impact is contingent upon employees' psychological involvement in the process. Without such involvement, career advancement promises or training programmes may fail to generate meaningful short-term performance improvements.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyse and empirically examine the influence of organisational behaviour, inclusive work environments, and career development on employee performance among Generation Z in Indonesia. In addition to investigating direct relationships, this study specifically evaluates the role of work engagement as an intermediate variable, functioning both as a mediator and a moderator in strengthening or weakening the effects of organisational factors on individual performance. Practically, this research seeks to offer strategic recommendations for organisations in designing adaptive human resource management policies that optimise the potential and retention of young workers within an inclusive and competitive labour market.

The urgency of this research lies in identifying the critical linkage between organisational factors and individual performance outcomes, namely work engagement. Work engagement extends beyond job satisfaction to encompass psychological energy, dedication, and absorption in work tasks (Sattar et al., 2015). A recurring organisational challenge is that, despite well-designed career development programmes and supportive environments, employee engagement often remains low, resulting in performance outcomes that fall short of expectations. This condition highlights the importance of positioning work engagement as either a mediating or moderating variable in this relationship.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative model, which simultaneously examines organisational behaviour, inclusive work environments, and career development within a single analytical framework, with a specific focus on Generation Z in Indonesia. Previous studies have largely investigated these variables in isolation or within the context of the millennial workforce. By applying a mediation and moderation approach to work engagement, this study contributes a novel perspective on how the psychological characteristics of Generation Z function as a catalyst between organisational policies and performance outcomes (Stirpe et al., 2022).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs an explanatory quantitative approach aimed at examining the causal relationships between organisational behaviour, inclusive work environment, and career development on employee performance, with work engagement serving as a moderating variable. Data were collected using a survey method through the distribution of questionnaires, both online and offline, to respondents. The population of this study consisted of Generation Z employees aged 18–28 years who were employed in various modern industrial sectors in Indonesia, including technology, professional services, retail, and creative industries.

The sampling technique applied was purposive sampling, with the primary criterion that respondents must be active employees within the Generation Z age range. A total of 111 respondents were included in the sample, which was considered sufficient to meet the minimum requirements for multivariate analysis and appropriate for structural model testing. The research instrument utilised a five-point Likert scale (1–5), with each variable measured using theoretical indicators adapted from prior studies, encompassing organisational behaviour (X_1), inclusive work environment (X_2), career development (X_3), employee performance (Y), and work engagement (Z).

Prior to the main analysis, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurement instruments. Subsequently, data analysis was performed using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach with SmartPLS software. The SEM analysis consisted of two primary stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to assess indicator validity and reliability, and evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to examine the significance of the relationships among variables as well as the moderating effect of work engagement.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The bootstrapping test results reveal meaningful dynamics between organisational factors and work engagement among Generation Z employees. An inclusive work environment emerged as the most dominant predictor of work engagement, with a path coefficient (β) of 0.392. This finding indicates that when Gen Z employees feel valued and experience fairness and psychological safety in their workplace, their enthusiasm and dedication to work increase substantially. In contrast, organisational behaviour exhibited a positive but weak influence on work engagement ($\beta = 0.111$), while career development demonstrated a very small effect ($\beta = 0.080$). These results suggest that, for Generation Z, a sense of belonging and psychological security plays a far more critical role in shaping daily work engagement than formal organisational rules or long-term career promises alone.

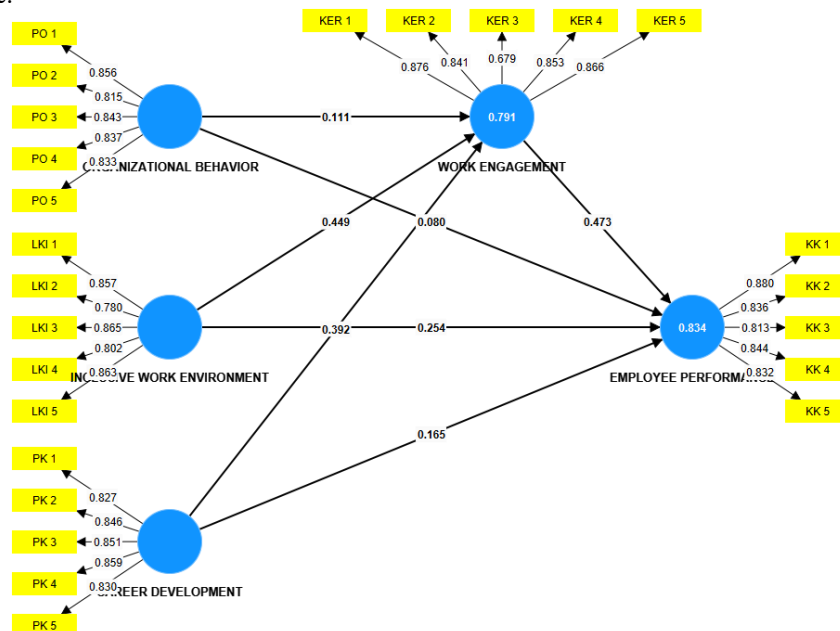


Figure 1. Bootstrapping Test Results

With respect to employee performance, work engagement was confirmed as a crucial determinant, exerting a strong and significant direct influence on performance outcomes. This finding validates the argument that emotional and cognitive engagement constitute the primary drivers of productivity among Generation Z employees. Conversely, organisational behaviour did not demonstrate a significant effect on either work engagement or employee performance. This result reinforces the notion that administrative or procedural organisational strategies are insufficient to enhance performance if they fail to address employees' psychological needs through inclusivity and meaningful engagement.

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Although mediation is referenced in the research framework, the structural findings emphasise that work engagement functions as a key bridging mechanism linking organisational factors to performance. The bootstrapping results confirm that work engagement strengthens the positive effects of inclusive work environments and career development on employee performance. Without sufficient engagement—characterised by enthusiasm, focus, and dedication—even well-designed organisational systems and resources are unlikely to translate into optimal performance outcomes.

The relationship between career development and employee performance yielded a coefficient of 0.165 with a p-value of 0.285, indicating a non-significant effect. This suggests that career development initiatives alone have not been able to directly enhance employee performance. From a theoretical perspective, Human Capital Theory explains that the benefits of skill development and training often require time to materialise and must be supported by an environment that enables the application of newly acquired competencies. Supporting this argument, Rejiseger et al. (2017) found that career development only significantly influences performance when employees are given real opportunities to utilise their enhanced skills. Accordingly, the findings of this study imply that career development primarily influences motivational and psychological aspects rather than immediate performance outcomes.

In contrast, the relationship between career development and work engagement showed a strong and significant effect, with a coefficient of 0.392 and a p-value of 0.000. This result indicates that career development plays a vital role in fostering employee engagement. This finding aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2017), which posits that engagement increases when employees' psychological needs for growth, competence, and autonomy are fulfilled. Empirical studies by Breevaart & Bakker (2018) and Jia-Jun & Hua-Ming (2022) further support this conclusion, demonstrating that clear career opportunities enhance enthusiasm, dedication, and work-related energy. Thus, career development represents a critical predictor in building sustainable work engagement.

A. Direct Effects Analysis

Table 1. Path Coefficient

| | Original sample (O) | Sample mean (M) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T statistics ((O/STDEV)) | P values |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Career development -> employee performance | 0.165 | 0.158 | 0.154 | 1.070 | 0.285 |
| Career development -> work engagement | 0.392 | 0.380 | 0.094 | 4.187 | 0.000 |
| Inclusive work environment -> employee performance | 0.254 | 0.258 | 0.108 | 2.355 | 0.019 |
| Inclusive work environment -> work engagement | 0.449 | 0.441 | 0.127 | 3.528 | 0.000 |
| Organizational behavior -> employee performance | 0.080 | 0.116 | 0.128 | 0.629 | 0.530 |
| Organizational behavior -> work engagement | 0.111 | 0.130 | 0.165 | 0.674 | 0.501 |
| Work engagement -> employee performance | 0.473 | 0.441 | 0.155 | 3.061 | 0.002 |

The results demonstrate that an inclusive work environment has a significant direct influence on employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.254 and a p-value of 0.019. This finding provides empirical evidence that organisations capable of fostering an ecosystem that values diversity, ensures psychological safety, and eliminates discriminatory practices are more likely to achieve optimal performance outcomes. Employees operating in inclusive environments tend to experience fewer psychological barriers, enabling them to allocate their cognitive and physical resources more effectively toward task completion.

This relationship is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which posits that workplace interactions are governed by reciprocity. When organisations provide fair and inclusive treatment, employees feel a moral obligation to reciprocate through enhanced performance, loyalty, and discretionary effort. Consequently, inclusivity should be viewed not merely as an ethical concern, but as a strategic organisational asset that directly contributes to operational efficiency.

The positive impact of inclusivity is further supported by studies conducted by Abdulkareem et al. (2025) and Seku & Andriyani (2023), which demonstrate that inclusive climates stimulate creativity and the execution of complex tasks. Environments that embrace diverse perspectives reduce fear of negative judgement, thereby encouraging innovation and collaboration. These findings confirm that organisations prioritising inclusivity gain a competitive advantage in productivity over those maintaining rigid or exclusionary cultures.

Furthermore, the inclusive work environment exhibited a strong and significant effect on work engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.449 and a p-value of 0.000. This substantial coefficient highlights inclusivity as a key driver of enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption in work. Inclusive environments foster

psychological security, allowing employees to engage fully—both emotionally and cognitively—without fear of exclusion or bias.

This phenomenon is well explained by Psychological Safety Theory (Edmondson, 2019), which asserts that psychological safety is a prerequisite for risk-taking, initiative, and active collaboration. In line with this perspective, Qodariah (2019) argue that inclusivity strengthens employees' sense of belonging. When individuals genuinely feel part of their organisation, they exhibit sustained engagement, which is essential for navigating dynamic and competitive business environments.

B. Insignificant Role of Organisational Behaviour

In contrast, organisational behaviour showed no significant effect on employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.080 and a p-value of 0.530. These results indicate that existing organisational policies or formal work cultures have not directly influenced performance outcomes. One plausible explanation is that organisational behaviour practices remain largely administrative and have not been effectively internalised into employees' daily work activities, thereby failing to generate tangible performance improvements.

Robbins and Judge (2020) suggest that organisational behaviour is often foundational in nature, exerting its influence on performance indirectly through mediating variables such as motivation or job satisfaction. This view is supported by Stirpe et al. (2022), who argue that organisational behaviour significantly affects performance only when reinforced by transformational leadership capable of translating values into concrete actions. Without effective communication and leadership, organisational behaviour risks becoming symbolic rather than operational.

Similarly, no significant relationship was found between organisational behaviour and work engagement ($\beta = 0.111$; $p = 0.501$). According to Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, work engagement emerges when employees perceive sufficient and functional job resources. In this study, organisational behaviour may not yet be perceived as a practical resource that supports employees' work, thereby limiting its ability to stimulate engagement.

Sattar et al. (2015) further note that the relationship between organisational behaviour and engagement is highly contingent upon emotional factors, particularly trust in management. When such trust is weak, even well-designed organisational policies are unlikely to foster engagement. These findings underscore the need for organisations to critically reassess how organisational values are communicated and enacted, ensuring they function as genuine psychological motivators rather than formalities.

C. Mediating Effects of Work Engagement

Table 2. Indirect Effect Test Results

| | Original sample (O) | Sample mean (M) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T statistics (O/STDEV) | P values |
|--|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Career development -> work engagement -> employee performance | 0.185 | 0.171 | 0.081 | 2.301 | 0.021 |
| Inclusive work environment -> work engagement -> employee performance | 0.212 | 0.205 | 0.109 | 1.956 | 0.051 |
| Organizational behavior -> work engagement -> employee performance | 0.053 | 0.040 | 0.066 | 0.795 | 0.427 |

The indirect effect analysis provides deeper insight into the mechanisms linking organisational factors to performance. The most significant mediation pathway was observed between career development and employee performance through work engagement ($\beta = 0.185$; $T = 2.301$; $p = 0.021$). This result confirms that career development initiatives influence performance primarily by enhancing employees' psychological attachment and enthusiasm for their work. Career development thus acts as an emotional catalyst, transforming future-oriented opportunities into present-day engagement, which ultimately drives performance.

The mediation pathway involving the inclusive work environment yielded a T-statistic of 1.956 and a p-value of 0.051, indicating marginal significance. While this result suggests that inclusivity has strong potential to enhance performance through work engagement, the effect may require more stable organisational conditions or a larger sample size to achieve consistent statistical significance. Nevertheless, the positive direction of this relationship indicates that sustained efforts to foster inclusivity are likely to strengthen engagement and performance over time.

Conversely, organisational behaviour did not demonstrate a significant indirect effect on performance through work engagement ($T = 0.795$; $p = 0.427$). This finding confirms that, within the scope of this study, organisational behaviour has not functioned as an effective bridge linking organisational structures to employee performance via engagement.

Overall, career development emerged as the most stable and effective strategy for enhancing performance through work engagement. While inclusivity shows strong potential that warrants continued investment, organisational behaviour requires substantial re-evaluation to better address employees' psychological needs. Organisations are therefore encouraged to prioritise tangible career growth initiatives as

a central mechanism for building engagement and sustaining high performance among Generation Z employees.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the primary driver of employee performance among Generation Z lies in organisations' ability to foster work engagement through an inclusive work environment. The findings demonstrate that an inclusive work environment exerts the strongest and most significant influence on work engagement compared to other organisational factors examined. This confirms that, for Generation Z employees, a sense of belonging, fairness, and psychological safety in the workplace constitutes the fundamental basis for generating enthusiasm and dedication, which ultimately translates into higher individual performance.

Conversely, the study reveals distinctive dynamics concerning organisational behaviour and career development. Although both variables are theoretically recognised as core pillars of human resource management, organisational behaviour did not exhibit a significant influence on either work engagement or employee performance within the context of this study. Meanwhile, career development showed a positive but relatively modest effect. These findings suggest that formal and administrative organisational policies alone are insufficient to enhance employee outcomes unless they are accompanied by approaches that address emotional needs and encourage active involvement in daily work activities. For Generation Z, engagement-driven experiences appear to be more impactful than abstract organisational structures or long-term career assurances.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, although the sample size meets the minimum requirements for multivariate statistical analysis, it remains limited in fully capturing the diversity of Generation Z employees across Indonesia's extensive and heterogeneous industrial landscape. Second, the inclusion of multiple modern industry sectors—such as technology, retail, and creative industries—introduces potential variation in organisational dynamics, which may affect the consistency of the findings. Therefore, caution is required when generalising the results across all industry types. Third, this study relied solely on self-reported questionnaire data, which may introduce response bias, as respondents could provide socially desirable answers rather than reflecting objective workplace conditions.

Based on these limitations, several directions for future research are recommended. First, future studies should consider incorporating additional variables that are more closely aligned with Generation Z's lifestyle and values, such as work-life balance, transformational leadership, and flexible work arrangements (e.g., remote or hybrid working). Second, the adoption of qualitative or mixed-methods approaches is strongly encouraged. In-depth interviews or focus group discussions could provide richer insights into the underlying reasons why organisational behaviour did not demonstrate a significant effect in this study. Finally, comparative studies across different industries—for example, contrasting creative industries with manufacturing sectors—would be valuable in identifying whether Generation Z employees respond differently to inclusivity initiatives and career development programmes across varying organisational contexts.

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