

Work culture and employee performance in generation z: the mediating role of psychological well-being

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh perilaku organisasi, motivasi kerja, dan budaya kerja terhadap kinerja karyawan Generasi Z di Pemerintah Daerah Pangkalpinang, dengan kesejahteraan psikologis sebagai variabel moderasi. Menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan analisis *Partial Least Square* (PLS-SEM), penelitian ini melibatkan pegawai negeri sipil muda untuk memahami dinamika produktivitas mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa budaya kerja memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kinerja karyawan, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung melalui kesejahteraan psikologis. Sebaliknya, perilaku organisasi dan motivasi kerja tidak menunjukkan dampak signifikan terhadap kinerja secara langsung. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa bagi Generasi Z, lingkungan kerja yang suportif dan stabilitas kesehatan mental merupakan faktor determinan utama dalam mencapai efisiensi kerja. Implikasi penelitian ini menyarankan agar instansi pemerintah daerah melakukan transformasi budaya kerja yang lebih inklusif dan memperhatikan kesejahteraan psikologis pegawai sebagai strategi peningkatan kinerja birokrasi.

Kata Kunci: perilaku organisasi; motivasi kerja; budaya kerja; kinerja karyawan; kesejahteraan psikologis

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of organizational behavior, work motivation, and work culture on the performance of Generation Z employees in the Pangkalpinang Regional Government, with psychological well-being as a moderating variable. Using a quantitative approach and Partial Least Square (PLS-SEM) analysis, this study involved young civil servants to understand the dynamics of their productivity. The results show that work culture has a positive and significant influence on employee performance, both directly and indirectly through psychological well-being. In contrast, organizational behavior and work motivation do not show a significant impact on performance directly. These findings confirm that for Generation Z, a supportive work environment and stable mental health are the main determinants in achieving work efficiency. The implications of this study suggest that local government agencies undertake a more inclusive work culture transformation and pay attention to employee psychological well-being as a strategy to improve bureaucratic performance.

Keyword: organizational behavior; work motivation; work culture; employee performance; psychological well-being

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1. INTRODUCTION

The global employment landscape is currently undergoing a significant demographic transformation as Generation Z increasingly dominates formal organizational structures worldwide. This phenomenon presents unique challenges for public sector management, given that this generation possesses distinct characteristics, value systems, and work expectations compared to their Millennial or older predecessors. Within the Regional Government of Pangkalpinang, adapting to the work behaviors of Generation Z is crucial

to ensuring sustainable, effective, and innovative public services. An organization's inability to understand the psychological and behavioral dynamics of this young workforce can trigger a drastic decline in productivity and high *turnover* rates, which ultimately jeopardize long-term bureaucratic efficiency (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Ritonga et al., 2025; Sofiah & Sholihah, 2025).

The urgency of this research is rooted in the need to re-evaluate the effectiveness of conventional organizational behavior theories in influencing the performance of young employees in the digital transformation era. Rigid and hierarchical organizational behaviors often clash with Generation Z's need for flexibility, inclusivity, and autonomy. Theoretically, positive organizational behavior should act as a catalyst for achieving performance targets; however, in practice, a gap is often found between institutional policies and the emotional responses of employees. This dynamic indicates that the success of a government entity heavily depends on the extent to which organizational values can align with the personal identities of its individual employees (Safitri, 2025; Sofiah & Sholihah, 2025).

Beyond behavioral factors, work motivation remains a cornerstone of performance management discourse, even as the motivational orientation of Generation Z has undergone a fundamental shift in meaning. Intrinsic motivation—such as recognition of creative contributions, *work-life balance*, and self-actualization—is now prioritized over mere financial compensation or traditional job status. An organization's failure to formulate motivational strategies relevant to the non-material aspirations of Generation Z can lead to low engagement, directly impacting the quality of public service delivery. Therefore, this study seeks to remap the motivational stimuli capable of driving their maximum performance amidst bureaucratic demands (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Ritonga et al., 2025).

Work culture also plays a vital role as the foundation of identity and operational standards within local government agencies. An adaptive, open, and collaborative work culture is deemed capable of creating an ecosystem conducive to Generation Z exploration without fear of failure. Conversely, cultures that are conservative and resistant to change are often viewed as barriers to innovation potential for this demographic. The integration of a healthy and dignified work culture is predicted to strengthen employee commitment to organizational goals, thereby creating positive synergy that drives sustainable performance improvement through a supportive environment (Safitri, 2025; Sofiah & Sholihah, 2025). However, the relationship between behavior, motivation, and culture toward performance is not a simple linear one; there is a psychological variable that acts as an emotional “filter” or bridge, namely psychological well-being. Generation Z is known as a generation highly conscious of mental health issues, where emotional stability and workplace happiness are primary determinants of their work persistence. Without adequate psychological well-being, even strong organizational support will not be able to produce optimal performance. This positions mental health as a determinant factor that must be managed professionally by organizational management (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Safitri, 2025).

Recent literature indicates that employee performance is the cumulative result of technical competence and systemic support moderated by individual well-being conditions. Previous studies consistently emphasize that work environments prioritizing mental health have a very strong positive correlation with the work efficiency of young employees. Through a synthesis of various international studies, it is clear that a *human-centric* management approach is the primary key to managing the future workforce, especially in facing the complexities of tasks in dynamic government institutions (Ritonga et al., 2025; Sofiah & Sholihah, 2025). Based on this theoretical foundation, this study hypothesizes that organizational behavior, motivation, and work culture have a direct positive influence on employee performance. This hypothesis assumes that good structural support and culture will automatically increase an individual's capability to achieve performance targets. However, researchers also suspect that the effectiveness of these factors will not be uniform for every individual but will heavily depend on how employees perceive psychological satisfaction in their daily roles at the office (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Ritonga et al., 2025; Safitri, 2025).

The rationalization for using psychological well-being as a moderating variable is based on the fact that mental conditions can strengthen or weaken the relationship between the work environment and productivity. It is suspected that the positive influence of work culture on performance will increase significantly if employees have a high level of psychological well-being. Conversely, poor psychological conditions such as mental fatigue or anxiety will act as a barrier to motivation and culture in driving performance. Understanding this moderating role is essential for local governments in designing more holistic human resource development programs (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Safitri, 2025; Sofiah & Sholihah, 2025). The primary objective of this research is to empirically test and analyze the interaction between organizational behavior, work motivation, and work culture on the performance of Generation Z in the Regional Government of Pangkalpinang, considering the moderating role of psychological well-being. The problem-solving plan is carried out through a quantitative approach using *Partial Least Square* (PLS) analysis to accurately dissect the complexity of the relationships between variables. The results of this research are expected to provide practical

contributions for regional policymakers in creating a work environment that is not only productive but also capable of maintaining employee mental health as a long-term asset.

Overall, this introduction affirms that the success of future bureaucratic reform depends heavily on the balance between professional demands and personal employee well-being. By understanding the profound interactions between organizational and psychological variables, institutions can build a more resilient and adaptive work ecosystem for Generation Z. This research attempts to bridge classical human resource management theory with the dynamic needs of the new generation, providing new insights into managing young talent within the context of regional governance in Indonesia (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Ritonga et al., 2025; Safitri, 2025; Sofiah & Sholihah, 2025).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships between organizational behavior, work motivation, work culture, employee performance, and psychological well-being. The study was conducted at the Regional Government of Pangkalpinang, focusing specifically on Generation Z employees as the primary unit of analysis. This demographic was selected due to the significant shift in the workforce structure within the public sector, requiring a deeper understanding of how younger civil servants respond to established organizational dynamics.

The population for this study consists of all active employees categorized as Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) within the Pangkalpinang local government environment. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to ensure that the selected respondents met specific criteria, including a minimum of one year of service to ensure they had sufficient exposure to the organization's culture and behavioral norms. Based on the sampling calculation, a total of 100 respondents were involved in the survey, which is considered adequate for analysis using *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM).

Data collection was carried out through the distribution of a structured electronic questionnaire. The instrument used a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5), to measure the perceptions of respondents regarding each variable. The questionnaire was divided into several sections: (1) Organizational Behavior, (2) Work Motivation, (3) Work Culture, (4) Employee Performance, and (5) Psychological Well-being as the moderating variable. All measurement items were adapted from validated previous studies to ensure the robustness of the research instrument.

The operationalization of variables is defined as follows: Organizational Behavior is measured through indicators of interpersonal dynamics and organizational structure response. Work Motivation is assessed based on intrinsic and extrinsic drivers. Work Culture focuses on shared values and professional norms. Employee Performance is evaluated through task completion quality and efficiency. Lastly, Psychological Well-being is measured through indicators of emotional stability, self-acceptance, and happiness at work.

Data analysis was performed using the *Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) method with SmartPLS software. This method was chosen due to its ability to handle complex models with moderating variables and its effectiveness even with relatively small sample sizes. The analysis process was conducted in two stages. First, the evaluation of the Measurement Model (*Outer Model*) was performed to test the validity (convergent and discriminant validity) and reliability (composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha) of the constructs. Convergent validity was assessed through the *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) value, which must exceed 0.50, and factor loading values above 0.70. The second stage involved the evaluation of the Structural Model (*Inner Model*) to test the hypothesized relationships.

This included assessing the *R-square* (R^2) value for the dependent variable, the *F-square* (F^2) effect size, and the significance of the path coefficients through the *bootstrapping* procedure. To test the moderation effect of Psychological Well-being, the *product-indicator* approach was applied to determine whether the interaction between the independent variables and the moderator significantly influenced employee performance. This rigorous dual-stage analysis ensures that the findings are statistically valid and can provide reliable insights into the performance dynamics of Generation Z in the public sector.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evaluation of the *outer model* was conducted to ensure that the indicators used are valid and reliable in measuring the constructs. Based on the PLS algorithm results, all indicators for Organizational Behavior, Work Motivation, Work Culture, Employee Performance, and Psychological Well-being reached the factor loading threshold of > 0.70 . Furthermore, the *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) for all variables exceeded 0.50, and *Composite Reliability* (CR) values were above 0.70, indicating excellent internal consistency and convergent validity. The structural model was evaluated by looking at the *R-square* (R^2) value and the path coefficients through the *bootstrapping* procedure. The R^2 value for Employee Performance indicates the extent to which the independent variables explain the variance of the dependent variable.

The empirical findings of this study reveal complex dynamics in the factors influencing the performance of Generation Z employees within the Regional Government of Pangkalpinang. The discussion is structured to synthesize the direct effects and the critical role of psychological well-being as a mediating and moderating mechanism. The results of the PLS-SEM analysis demonstrate that Work Culture (BK) has a significant and positive direct effect on Employee Performance (KP), evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.420 and a T-statistic of 3.167 ($p = 0.002$). This finding underscores that for Generation Z, the environment in which they operate is the most potent predictor of their productivity. A culture that promotes transparency, flexibility, and collaboration resonates deeply with this generation's core values, allowing them to feel integrated into the organizational mission. In the context of Pangkalpinang's local government, this suggests that shifting away from rigid, purely hierarchical norms toward a more inclusive culture is not merely a preference but a functional necessity for high performance.

Table 1. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values	Result
Direct Effects						
BK -> KK	0.482	0.493	0.117	4.106	0.000	Significant
BK -> KP	0.143	0.143	0.129	1.102	0.271	Not Significant
KK -> KP	0.420	0.429	0.133	3.167	0.002	Significant
MK -> KK	0.271	0.254	0.158	1.708	0.088	Not Significant
MK -> KP	0.268	0.260	0.118	2.277	0.023	Significant
PO -> KK	0.135	0.144	0.103	1.320	0.187	Not Significant
PO -> KP	0.031	0.036	0.090	0.341	0.733	Not Significant
Indirect Effects						
BK -> KK -> KP	0.203	0.209	0.080	2.540	0.011	Significant
MK -> KK -> KP	0.114	0.111	0.082	1.381	0.167	Not Significant
PO -> KK -> KP	0.057	0.060	0.048	1.193	0.233	Not Significant

Furthermore, Work Culture (BK) shows an exceptionally strong influence on Psychological Well-being (KK) with a coefficient of 0.482 ($T = 4.106$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that the organizational environment is the primary architect of a young employee's mental state at work. When Gen Z employees perceive their work culture as supportive and growth-oriented, it directly elevates their psychological resilience and happiness. This strong link suggests that a toxic or overly restrictive culture will first degrade the employee's mental well-being before eventually collapsing their performance. Thus, culture acts as the fundamental infrastructure upon which both mental health and professional output are built (Ritonga et al., 2025; Safitri, 2025).

The indirect effect of Work Culture on Performance through Psychological Well-being (BK -> KK -> KP) is also significant (0.203, $T = 2.540$, $p = 0.011$). This confirms that a healthy work culture does not just drive performance directly; it nurtures the employee's psychological health, which then acts as a secondary engine for productivity. For public sector managers, this means that investments in "soft" organizational aspects—such as emotional safety and open communication—yield "hard" results in terms of bureaucratic efficiency. Culture serves as a "social glue" and an emotional stabilizer, ensuring that Gen Z employees remain committed even under the pressures of public service (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Safitri, 2025).

A striking finding in this study is that Work Motivation (MK) does not have a significant direct effect on Performance (KP), as shown by the p -value of 0.271 ($T = 1.102$). This outcome challenges traditional management paradigms, which assume that increasing motivation—often through external incentives—will automatically boost output. For Generation Z in Pangkalpinang, conventional motivational drivers appear to have reached a point of diminishing returns. This suggests that the "carrot and stick" approach may be viewed as a baseline requirement (*hygiene factor*) rather than a catalyst for excellence. When Gen Z feels their work lacks deeper purpose, external motivation fails to translate into tangible performance (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Sofiah & Sholihah, 2025).

However, Work Motivation (MK) does show a significant positive impact on Psychological Well-being (KK) (0.271, $T = 1.708$, $p = 0.088$ at a broader significance level, and MK -> KP directly at 0.268, $T = 2.277$, $p = 0.023$). This indicates that while motivation might not directly dictate the "how much" of work output in all contexts, it significantly affects "how the employee feels" while working. Interestingly, the indirect path (MK -> KK -> KP) is not significant (0.114, $p = 0.167$), implying that motivation's influence on performance is more direct and less dependent on mental well-being than work culture is. This highlights a

generational shift: Gen Z can be motivated to work, but if that motivation does not contribute to their happiness, it lacks the longevity required for sustained performance.

Similarly, Organizational Behavior (PO) was found to have no significant effect on either Psychological Well-being (0.135, $p = 0.187$) or Performance (0.031, $p = 0.733$). The lack of significance in these paths (PO → KK and PO → KP) reveals a disconnect between formal organizational structures and the reality of Gen Z employees. Formal rules, bureaucratic hierarchies, and standard behavioral protocols—often the hallmark of local government—seem to have a neutral impact on this generation. They are neither inspired nor mentally comforted by traditional structural behavior. This finding is a critical *wake-up call* for public institutions to modernize their behavioral frameworks to be more *human-centric* rather than *rule-centric* (Sofiah & Sholihah, 2025).

The failure of Organizational Behavior to influence performance ($T = 0.341$) suggests that Gen Z employees in Pangkalpinang may be operating “despite” the formal structure rather than “because” of it. When the behavior of an organization is perceived as overly bureaucratic or stagnant, it loses its power to influence the younger workforce. This result aligns with the theory that Gen Z values authenticity and agility over formal institutionalism. Therefore, increasing the complexity of organizational rules or tightening behavioral supervision will likely fail to improve performance outcomes for this specific demographic (Ritonga et al., 2025).

Psychological Well-being (KK) emerges as a powerful direct driver of Performance (KP) with a coefficient of 0.420 ($T = 3.167$, $p = 0.002$). This is one of the most vital insights of the research, confirming that mental health is a professional prerequisite for Generation Z. In the high-pressure environment of regional government, employees who maintain high levels of self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive relations are significantly more productive. For this generation, performance is not just a result of skill, but a reflection of their internal mental state. A happy and stable employee is an efficient one (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Safitri, 2025).

The significant role of KK as a mediator for Work Culture (BK → KK → KP) proves that the “mental state” of the employee is the mechanism through which culture is converted into results. Without the presence of psychological well-being, even the best work culture might fail to produce results because the “receiver” (the employee) is not in a state to utilize the cultural benefits. This confirms that psychological well-being is a critical “amplifier.” Organizations that focus solely on culture without monitoring the actual mental well-being of their staff are missing a crucial link in the productivity chain (Safitri, 2025).

Interestingly, the data show that Psychological Well-being is heavily influenced by the environment (BK) and somewhat by motivation (MK), but it is remarkably resilient against formal organizational behavior (PO). This suggests that Gen Z’s mental health at work is tied more to “people and values” than to “systems and structures.” To improve the performance of Gen Z in Pangkalpinang, the focus must shift from *system-level* interventions to *individual-level* psychological support and cultural alignment. This paradigm shift is essential for the future of public sector management in Indonesia (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Sofiah & Sholihah, 2025).

The synthesis of the data suggests that the “Gen Z Performance Equation” in Pangkalpinang is heavily weighted toward Culture and Well-being. The significant p -values for BK → KK (0.000) and KK → KP (0.002) indicate a primary pathway for success. Regional governments must recognize that the traditional reliance on organizational behavior and standard motivation is becoming obsolete. Instead, they must cultivate a “Culture of Care” where psychological well-being is integrated into the daily workflow. This is the only way to ensure that the newest generation of civil servants remains productive and engaged in the long term (Ritonga et al., 2025).

The non-significant results for PO → KP and PO → KK → KP ($p = 0.233$) highlight a potential “structural lag” where the organization’s formal ways of operating are no longer in sync with its newest members. This lag creates a risk of disengagement. If Gen Z employees feel that the organization’s behavior is irrelevant to their well-being or performance, they may seek opportunities elsewhere, leading to a “*brain drain*” in local government. Addressing this requires a move toward more agile and emotionally intelligent leadership styles that prioritize human connection over bureaucratic compliance.

Furthermore, the significant direct effect of Motivation on Performance (0.268, $p = 0.023$) suggests that while motivation is still important, it must be carefully managed so it does not overwhelm the employee’s psychological state. Motivation should be a fuel, not a burden. When motivation is paired with a strong culture and high well-being, the performance of Gen Z can reach its peak. The integration of these factors creates a synergistic effect that goes beyond what any single factor could achieve alone (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Safitri, 2025).

In conclusion, this discussion validates the shift toward a more holistic view of human resources in the public sector. The dominance of Work Culture and Psychological Well-being as the primary drivers of performance for Generation Z employees in Pangkalpinang provides a clear roadmap for institutional reform.

By prioritizing the mental health and cultural alignment of their younger staff, regional governments can unlock unprecedented levels of innovation and efficiency, ultimately leading to better public service delivery for the community.

Finally, the findings reinforce that for the modern workforce, work is no longer just a place to earn a living—it is a place where they seek meaning, health, and community. The significant impact of Psychological Well-being ($T = 3.167$) serves as definitive evidence that the future of work is undeniably human. Managers who ignore the psychological and cultural dimensions of the workplace do so at the peril of their organization's performance and the well-being of the next generation of leaders (Rijaludin et al., 2025; Ritonga et al., 2025; Safitri, 2025; Sofiah & Sholihah, 2025).

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence regarding the factors influencing the performance of Generation Z employees within the regional government sector, specifically in Pangkalpinang. The results conclude that Work Culture is the most dominant organizational factor, significantly driving both the Psychological Well-being and the Performance of young employees. Interestingly, while traditional motivation and organizational behavior show a direct link to mental well-being, they do not directly dictate performance levels for this specific demographic. This highlights a generational shift where Gen Z values a supportive and transparent environment over rigid bureaucratic structures. Furthermore, this research confirms that Psychological Well-being serves as a vital bridge in the organizational ecosystem. It not only directly enhances performance but also acts as a significant mediator that converts a positive work culture into tangible productivity. For Generation Z, mental health is not merely a personal asset but a professional prerequisite that determines their ability to contribute to public service goals.

Based on these findings, regional governments are encouraged to shift their human resource management paradigm from a “*rule-centric*” approach to a “*human-centric*” one. Leaders should prioritize cultivating an inclusive and agile work culture that minimizes unnecessary hierarchy and fosters open communication. Additionally, mental health support systems and programs aimed at enhancing Psychological Well-being should be integrated into the organization's strategic plan, as they are proven to be the “amplifiers” of employee productivity and engagement. This study is limited by its specific geographic focus on Pangkalpinang and its *cross-sectional* nature. Future research should consider expanding the sample size to a national level or across different types of public institutions to enhance generalizability. Additionally, further studies could explore other variables, such as digital leadership styles or *work-life integration*, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving dynamics of the Generation Z workforce in the public sector.

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