

THE EFFECT OF COMPETENCE ON JOB READINESS WITH WORK MOTIVATION AS A MEDIATOR: A STUDY ON GENERATION Z IN JABODETABEK

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ABSTRACT

Generation Z, also known as the post-millennial generation is the pioneering generation to grow up in an era heavily influenced by technology. This study aims to explore the effect of competence on job readiness, with work motivation as a mediating variable among Generation Z in the Jabodetabek area. A quantitative approach was used, involving a survey of 180 respondents selected through probability sampling with a simple random method. The data were obtained using questionnaires and analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with a Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach. The results show that both competence and work motivation have a positive and significant impact on job readiness. Furthermore, competence has a positive and significant effect on job readiness through work motivation as a mediator. This study is motivated by the low level of job readiness in Indonesia due to skill mismatches, largely influenced by the rapid technological advancements affecting Generation Z. The findings offer important insights for companies in developing more effective recruitment and training strategies to improve job readiness among Generation Z.

Keywords: Competence, Work Motivation, Job Readiness

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia ranks as the fourth most populous country in the world, driven by its very high population growth rate. A large portion of this group has already become part of the workforce, which significantly contributes to advancing the nation's economic development and social progress (BPS, 2024). The growth of the workforce is influenced by several factors, one of which is the entrance of Generation Z, who have just reached working age and are now entering the labor market (Schroth, 2019). Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is the first generation to grow up in the midst of rapid technological advancements, making them highly connected to the digital world and equipped with advanced technological skills compared to previous generations (Dimock, 2019).

However, despite the increase in the workforce, the challenge faced is the low level of work readiness, which is largely caused by the mismatch between the skills individuals possess and the skills needed by the labor market, a phenomenon known as skill mismatch (Jejak Fakta, 2024). This skill mismatch has become a significant issue, as many workers are stuck in jobs that do not align with their competencies or expertise. Work readiness itself is influenced by various factors, one of which is the competency of individuals. Competency includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to function effectively in the workplace, which is crucial for adapting to the evolving demands of jobs (Setyadi et al., 2021).

One factor that can influence job readiness is competency. Good competency not only improves an individual's ability to perform tasks effectively but also plays a crucial role in boosting their self-confidence when facing workplace challenges (Pratiwi et al., 2023).

Individuals with adequate competency tend to be more capable of handling complex tasks and adapting to the dynamics of the workplace. High competency allows individuals to adjust more quickly to changes and meet the demands of the work environment (Saputra et al., 2023). Therefore, strong competency not only enhances job performance but also provides greater self-confidence, making individuals feel more prepared and capable of overcoming challenges in the workplace.

However, competence alone is not sufficient to ensure job readiness. Another important factor that strengthens the correlation between competence and job readiness is work motivation. Motivation serves as a driver or impetus for someone to achieve their goals, enabling them to have the energy to perform their tasks without external coercion (Tirtowaluyo & Turangan, 2022). Work motivation also acts as a mediator that links an individual's competence with a higher level of work readiness. In other words, the competence possessed by an individual will be more effective in enhancing work readiness when supported by strong work motivation. Individuals with good competence, combined with high motivation, are better equipped to face workplace challenges, adapt to changes, and achieve better performance (Vijande et al., 2021).

In conclusion, competency serves as a crucial factor in determining work readiness, while work motivation functions as a mediating element that enhances the connection between competency and job readiness. Good competency provides individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to work effectively and efficiently, while also boosting their confidence in facing various challenges and job demands. Meanwhile, high work motivation acts as a driving force that encourages individuals to put in more effort, stay focused on achieving their goals, and continually improve their performance.

When an individual's work motivation is high, the competencies they possess will be more effectively utilized, significantly contributing to their work readiness and ability to adjust to the continuously evolving needs of the workplace. Therefore, competency and work motivation are closely interrelated and should be developed in tandem, allowing individuals to be better prepared and more confident in facing the challenges of the workforce, especially in an era of rapid technological advancements and digital transformation.

This research seeks to analyze the impact of competence on job readiness and explore how work motivation strengthens this connection, enabling individuals to be better prepared to face the challenges of the workforce amidst digital transformation and the ever-evolving dynamics of the labor market.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory offers a crucial framework for understanding how individuals self-regulate and drive themselves in relation to job readiness. According to this theory, job readiness is not only influenced by the technical skills an individual possesses but also by internal aspects like self-efficacy and self-regulation.

Self-efficacy, or an individual's confidence in their capacity to succeed, plays a crucial role in enhancing competence. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more confident in using their skills to face workplace challenges. This confidence motivates them to continuously learn and improve their abilities to adapt to changes and job demands. In the context of this research, competencies, both technical and soft skills, become more effective in improving job readiness when individuals have high self-efficacy in their own capabilities.

Additionally, self-regulation, or the ability to control one's behavior, emotions, and cognitive processes, plays a key role in job readiness. In this research, self-regulation helps individuals set goals, plan the steps needed to achieve them, and stay motivated even when facing difficulties or setbacks. Those who can self-regulate are better equipped to deal with the dynamic nature of the workforce, as they are able to adapt to changes and challenges.

Work motivation acts as a linking factor that strengthens the relationship between competence and job readiness. Individuals who are internally motivated, driven by a strong belief in their abilities and clear goals, are more likely to work hard to enhance their competencies and be prepared to face the challenges of the workforce. In this context, motivation is not only a driver but also a mediator that ensures the competencies individuals possess are effectively utilized in enhancing job readiness.

Therefore, this research model suggests that job readiness is influenced not only by technical skills but also by motivation and an individual's belief in their ability to succeed. It emphasizes that competence, self-efficacy, and self-regulation are interconnected and play a role in ensuring individuals are better prepared to adapt and succeed in the ever-evolving workforce. Based on this theoretical understanding and existing evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Competence has a positive effect on job readiness of Generation Z in Jabodetabek.

Competence is a crucial factor that significantly influences an individual's job readiness, as it refers to a person's ability to effectively perform tasks or duties based on the combination of relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes required in the given work context (Utami & Raharjo, 2020). According to research by Innab et al. (2024), competence has a significant positive impact on job readiness, as individuals with higher levels of competence are better prepared to face challenges in the workforce. Therefore, the technical skills and knowledge a person possesses, as part of their overall competence, play a vital role in preparing individuals to be ready and successful in entering an increasingly complex and dynamic work environment.

H2: Work motivation has a positive effect on job readiness of Generation Z in Jabodetabek.

Work motivation is crucial in enhancing job readiness, as it serves as an internal drive that pushes individuals to achieve their goals and deliver their best performance without relying on external stimuli (Rismawati et al., 2022). In addition to influencing job readiness, work motivation is also a key factor in shaping an individual's behavior and performance. Individuals with high levels of work motivation tend to be more proactive in preparing themselves to meet the demands of the workforce. Furthermore, job readiness is closely linked to an individual's level of mental maturity, where strong work motivation can help them overcome psychological challenges, set priorities, and remain focused on achieving their goals (Sidiq et al., 2022). Therefore, work motivation acts as a primary driving force that prepares individuals not only technically but also mentally and emotionally to enter the workforce with confidence. This leads to the hypothesis:

H3: Competence has a positive effect on work motivation of Generation Z in Jabodetabek.

Competence, which encompasses an individual's abilities, skills, and knowledge, not only impacts performance but also drives the level of work motivation. A study by Kurniawan et al. (2021) revealed that an increase in competence can significantly enhance work motivation. This indicates that individuals who feel more competent in their roles tend to have a stronger drive to perform better. Additionally, Zubaidah et al. (2021) supported these findings by

demonstrating a significant relationship between the two variables, emphasizing that competence is an important role in fostering work motivation.

H4: Competence has a positive effect on job readiness with work motivation as a mediator for Generation Z in Jabodetabek.

These variables are interrelated in a complex way, as supported by previous research. According to Pratiwi and Rini (2023), competence has a positive and significant effect on job readiness. Meanwhile, a study by Fauzan et al. (2023) examined the impact of motivation and found it to have a significant direct effect on job readiness. The results of this research indicate that competence plays a crucial role in enhancing job readiness, with motivation serving as a mediator. High motivation to enter the workforce acts as a linking factor, encouraging individuals to become more prepared and strive to secure jobs that align with their skills (Puji, 2020).

For empirical analysis, these variables are measured using specific indicators. Job readiness is generally assessed through logical and objective considerations, critical attitudes, environmental adaptability, areas of expertise, and the ability to collaborate (Fauzan et al., 2023). Competence is evaluated based on factors such as knowledge, understanding, skills, motives, and self-concept (Pratiwi & Rini, 2023). Meanwhile, work motivation includes the goal of entering the workforce, job values, achievement targets, and personal drive (Indrawati et al., 2023).

This study seeks to contribute by analyzing the connections between competence, work motivation, and job readiness in the digital era. By exploring these connections, the research will not only test the existing hypotheses but also provide insights to help enhance job readiness through the development of relevant competencies and motivation.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive design to examine the impact of competence and work motivation on job readiness among Generation Z students in the Greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek). The target population consists of Generation Z students who are currently in at least their fifth semester, aged 17–27 years. Data were collected using a convenience sampling method with questionnaire, with a total sample of 180 respondents, determined based on relevant sampling guidelines. A structured questionnaire with a Likert scale (1–5) was distributed online to measure respondents' levels of agreement regarding statements related to competence, work motivation, and job readiness.

Competence was measured through indicators such as knowledge, understanding, and skills (Pratiwi & Rini, 2023). Work motivation included aspects such as interest in entering the workforce, task value, goal achievement, and internal drive (Indrawati et al., 2023). Job readiness was evaluated based on logical reasoning, critical thinking, environmental adaptability, and expertise (Fauzan et al., 2023).

Data processing was conducted with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS version 4.0.9.4, including validity tests (convergent and discriminant validity) and reliability tests (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability). After validation, the inner model analysis was performed to test hypotheses using path coefficients and significance tests at a 5% significance level.

The findings of this study offer an in-depth insight into the direct and mediated relationships between competence, work motivation, and job readiness, aligning with the research objectives.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study reveals that most respondents are Generation Z individuals residing in the Greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek), aged between 17 and 27 years, who have completed at least their fifth semester in higher education. The majority of respondents are students from Tarumanagara University, with most currently in their seventh semester. Factors influencing respondents' job readiness include competence and work motivation, with motivation often identified as a key driving factor that enhances job readiness in this study.

The analysis of the assessment model shows that all constructs demonstrate excellent validity and reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.5, confirming convergent validity. Additionally, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs are above 0.7, indicating high internal consistency (Table 1). Based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds its correlation with other constructs, confirming discriminant validity (Table 2). All indicator loading factors exceed 0.7, further validating that the indicators reliably represent their respective constructs: competence, work motivation, and job readiness (Table 3). Overall, these findings confirm that the measurement model is both accurate and reliable.

Table 1. Average Variance Extracted Analysis

	Cronbach's alpha	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Job Readiness	0.876	0.729
Competence	0.795	0.619
Work Motivation	0.891	0.753

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker Analysis

	Job Readiness	Competence	Work Motivation
Job Readiness	0.854		
Competence	0.754	0.787	
Work Motivation	0.840	0.768	0.868

Table 3. Loading Factor Analysis

	Job Readiness	Competence	Work Motivation
K1		0.811	
K2		0.797	
K3		0.735	
K4		0.802	
KK1	0.868		
KK2	0.859		
KK3	0.822		
KK4	0.864		
MK2			0.858
MK3			0.885
MK4			0.874
MK1			0.854

The inner model measurement analysis was conducted using the R-Square (R^2) test, effect size (f^2) test, path coefficient analysis, and hypothesis testing.

Table 4. As presented in Table 4, the R-Square (R^2) value indicates that the job readiness variable has an R-Square value of 0.734, or 73.4%. This indicates that 73.4% of the variance in job readiness can be accounted for by the independent variables in this research model. This result demonstrates that the model has a strong ability to explain the factors influencing job readiness, categorizing it as having a high level of impact. Meanwhile, the work motivation variable has an R-Square value of 0.589, or 58.9%, meaning that 58.9% of the variance in work motivation can be accounted for by the independent variables in the model. This value falls within the moderate category, suggesting that while the independent variables contribute significantly to work motivation, other external factors not included in the model also play a role.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Job Readiness	0.734	0.731
Work Motivation	0.589	0.587

The results of the f-square measurement analysis (**Table 5**) show that competence has a small direct impact on job readiness (f-square = 0.109), but it contributes significantly to work motivation (f-square = 1.436). On the other hand, work motivation has a significant effect on job readiness (f-square = 0.625). These findings emphasize the important role of motivation as a mediator, where competence not only influences job readiness directly but also plays a role through enhancing work motivation. Overall, this suggests that developing competencies is more effective when focused on boosting employee motivation, which in turn increases their job readiness.

Table 5. Effect Size Analysis

	f-square	Result
Competence -> Job Readiness	0.109	Small effect
Competence -> Work Motivation	1.436	Large effect
Work Motivation -> Job Readiness	0.625	Large effect

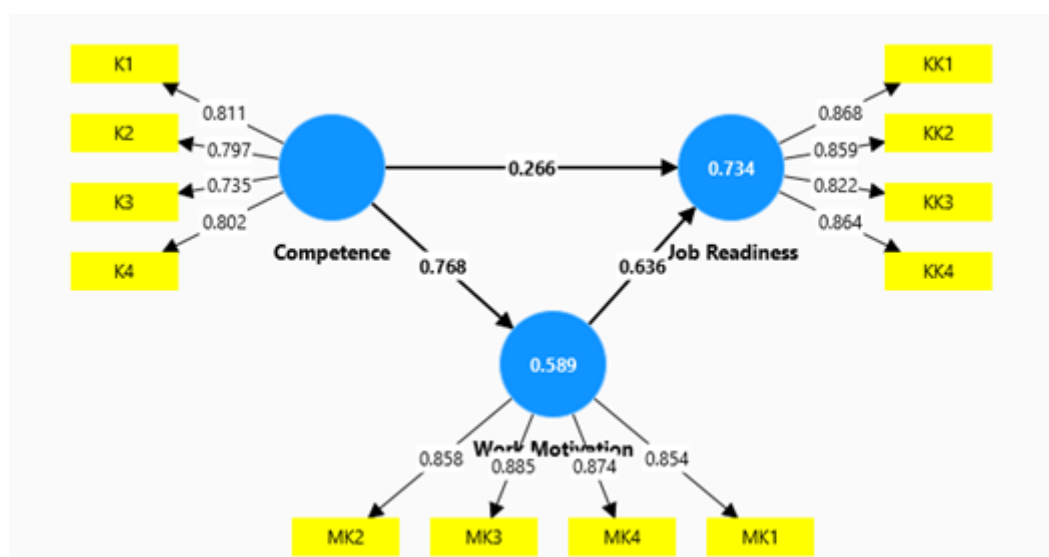


Figure 1. Path Coefficient

Table 6. Hypotheses Testing

	Original sample (O)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Competence → Job Readiness	0.266	3.279	0.001
Competence → Work Motivation	0.768	15.167	0.000
Work Motivation → Job Readiness	0.636	7.117	0.000
Competence → Work Motivation → Job Readiness	0.488	6.553	0.000

The analysis results in **Figure 1.** and **Table 6.,** show that competence has a significant direct effect on job readiness with a path coefficient of 0.266 (t-statistics 3.279; p-value 0.001), although its impact is relatively small. Competence also has a highly significant effect on work motivation with a path coefficient of 0.768 (t-statistics 15.167; p-value 0.000), indicating a large impact. Additionally, work motivation has a significant effect on job readiness with a path coefficient of 0.636 (t-statistics 7.117; p-value 0.000), emphasizing that work motivation is a crucial factor in job readiness.

The mediating effect of work motivation between competence and job readiness is also significant, with a path coefficient of 0.488 (t-statistics 6.553; p-value 0.000). This suggests that the effect of competence on job readiness becomes more effective when mediated through work motivation. Therefore, organizations should focus on enhancing employee motivation to maximize job readiness, as this mediation significantly strengthens the overall impact.

This study investigates the relationship between competence, work motivation, and job readiness among Generation Z employees in the Jabodetabek area. The findings reveal that both competence and work motivation have a significant positive impact on job readiness. Competence, which includes relevant skills and knowledge for the job, was shown to enhance job readiness, while work motivation drives individuals to be more engaged and enthusiastic about their work. These findings provide valuable insights for organizations to focus on developing employees' competencies and empowering their work motivation, especially for Generation Z, which has high expectations for career growth and personal development. This implies that to enhance job readiness, organizations must tackle both factors at the same time to establish a conducive workplace that promotes the growth and development of young employees.

The analysis of the first hypothesis test in this study indicates a positive and significant effect of competence on work readiness. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Innab et al. (2024), which revealed that competence has a strong and direct positive influence on work readiness. However, in this study, the effect of competence on work readiness was found to be smaller compared to the findings of the aforementioned research. This suggests that while competence is a crucial factor in work readiness, its influence may not be as dominant as expected, and other factors, such as work motivation, may play a more significant role in enhancing work readiness. This highlights the need to consider multiple factors that collectively contribute to preparing individuals for the workforce.

The analysis of the second hypothesis in the research demonstrates that work motivation has a positive and substantial impact on work readiness. This finding is consistent with the statement made by Vilyisia and Turangan (2024), who asserted that the motivation to enter the workforce positively impacts students' work readiness. The results of this study further reveal that increasing work motivation contributes to enhancing work readiness, as evidenced by the substantial f^2 effect size. This effect size suggests that work motivation plays a crucial and

dominant role in influencing work readiness, highlighting the importance of fostering strong intrinsic motivators and personal drive in preparing individuals for their professional roles. Given this, organizations aiming to improve work readiness should focus on creating an environment that boosts motivation, offering opportunities for personal growth and skill development, which can ultimately enhance overall work readiness.

The evaluation of the third hypothesis in this study shows that competence has a positive and meaningful impact on work motivation. This finding aligns with the research carried out by Amrulah and DS (2018), which found that competence has a positive and significant effect on work motivation, indicating a moderate relationship between the two. This research supports the notion that the higher the level of competence, the greater the work motivation. In other words, competence plays an important role in encouraging individuals to be more motivated in achieving their work goals. Therefore, developing employees' competencies can enhance work motivation, which in turn contributes to improved performance and productivity.

Finally, the analysis of the fourth hypothesis test shows that an increase in work motivation, influenced by competence, contributes to an increase in job readiness. This finding is consistent with research by Puji (2020), which states that high motivation to enter the workforce acts as a driving factor that encourages students to be more prepared and work hard to secure jobs in their chosen field. With strong support from competence and motivation, job readiness can be improved. In this study, the relationship between work motivation and job readiness was also statistically significant. Although the impact was not as pronounced as the direct effect of competence on work motivation, work motivation still plays an essential role in improving job readiness. The mediation analysis shows partial mediation.

This study offers important perspectives on the elements that affect job readiness among Generation Z. The findings indicate that competence and work motivation have a significant impact on job readiness. Higher competence can enhance work motivation, which, in turn, contributes to better job readiness. Therefore, organizations should focus on developing competence and empowering work motivation to improve job readiness among Generation Z employees.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

According to the findings of the tests conducted in this study, which include outer model testing (validity and reliability tests) and inner model testing, covering data assumption analysis and data analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn: Competence has a positive and significant impact on work readiness among Generation Z in the Jabodetabek area. Furthermore, work motivation also positively and significantly influences work readiness for Generation Z in the region. Competence has a positive and significant impact on work motivation, which subsequently enhances job readiness, with work motivation serving as a mediating factor.

However, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the variables used in this research are limited to three independent variables—competence, work motivation—and one dependent variable, which is work readiness. Second, the study only covers Generation Z residing in the Jabodetabek area, so the findings may not fully represent the conditions of Generation Z in other regions. Third, this study uses a non-probability sampling method, meaning the findings cannot be generalized to the entire Generation Z population, and the distribution of respondents is uneven, with most respondents coming from

Jakarta and only a small portion from Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. Fourth, the data collection was conducted quantitatively, which means the study focused too much on numbers and statistics, limiting its ability to explore context or background in depth.

For future research focusing on job readiness, it is recommended to explore additional variables that were not included in this study to offer a more complete understanding of the factors influencing job readiness. Moreover, future studies should consider expanding the sample population area, such as including Generation Z from outside Jabodetabek or even other generations. It is also suggested to use alternative research methods to achieve a more balanced distribution of respondents across different areas. Finally, qualitative research methods could complement this study to allow for a deeper investigation into the phenomena under study.

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