



**THE INFLUENCE OF WORK MOTIVATION AND JOB STRESS ON JOB
SATISFACTION OF ENTRY LEVEL START-UP EMPLOYEES****Ridho Bayu Nugroho¹****IPB University, Bogor, Indonesia**ridhobayu@apps.ipb.ac.id**Pudji Muljono²****IPB University, Bogor, Indonesia**pudjim@apps.ipb.ac.id**Furqon Syarief Hidayatilloh³****IPB University, Bogor, Indonesia**furqonhi@apps.ipb.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of work motivation and job stress on job satisfaction among entry-level employees in start-up companies. This phenomenon is particularly relevant given the dynamic nature of start-up work environments and the dominance of Generation Z in the workforce structure. Data were collected through questionnaires administered to 271 respondents working in the start-up sector and analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method. The results indicate that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction, while job stress has a significant negative effect. Simultaneously, both variables contribute significantly to job satisfaction, with an R^2 value of 0.925. These findings highlight that creating a work environment that fosters motivation while minimizing stress is essential to enhancing job satisfaction, particularly among Generation Z employees. This study provides theoretical implications for the development of human resource management research and practical recommendations for managing employees in competitive and adaptive start-up work environments.

Keywords: Work Motivation, Job Stress, Job Satisfaction, Start-Up, Generation Z, SEM-PLS



INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, globalization and advances in information technology have brought significant changes to various sectors, including the world of work. Globalization can be defined as the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence between economies, societies, and cultures around the world. This phenomenon is driven by rapid developments in technology, transportation, and communication, which have drastically reduced geographical barriers and strengthened global integration. According to a report by the World Economic Forum (2023), the value of global trade has increased more than tenfold since 1950, with around 90% of the world's total goods traded through a highly connected global logistics network. This shows that innovation and technology have accelerated global economic growth and created closer relationships between countries.

Rapid advances in information and communication technology (ICT) are also a crucial factor in increasing business efficiency and opening up new job opportunities. According to a report from the International Telecommunications Union (2022), by the end of 2021, the number of global internet users had reached more than 4.9 billion people, up from 4.1 billion in 2019. This increase shows the rapid adoption of digital technology in various countries, including Indonesia. Hussain et al. (2021) also emphasized that business digitalization increases operational efficiency, expands market access, and opens up opportunities for more innovative business models. For example, companies can leverage data analytics to improve decision-making, and use cloud technology to reduce infrastructure costs.

In Indonesia, this phenomenon is reflected in the development of start-up companies that utilize digital technology to provide innovative services. Based on a report from Startup Ranking (2022), Indonesia is ranked fifth in the world in terms of the number of start-ups, namely more than 2,300 start-ups. This statement is reinforced by Dzulvawan and Pramana (2022) who stated that the e-commerce and fintech sectors are the most dominant sectors, with a number of start-ups successfully achieving unicorn status in Indonesia. Some of them are Gojek, Tokopedia, Ruangguru, Halodoc, LinkAja, and Tanihub. For example, Gojek, which was founded in 2010, has grown into a super-app that provides more than 20 services on one platform, from transportation to financial services. In 2021, Tokopedia merged with Gojek to form GoTo Group, which is one of the largest technology companies in Southeast Asia with a gross transaction value of more than 28 billion US dollars (GoTo Group, 2021). In addition, other sectors



such as edutech and healthtech also show promising developments, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic which accelerated the adoption of technology in these sectors (Yusuf & Aprianingsih, 2022).

Startups are known to have a dynamic work structure, a relaxed work culture, and a flat hierarchy. These characteristics appeal to the younger generation, especially Generation Z, who grew up amidst the rapid development of technology. Generation Z is known to have a high level of adaptability to the digital work environment and is expected to make up 27% of the total global workforce by 2025 (Sali, 2023). This generation, born between 1997 and 2013, has a dynamic character, prefers experiential learning, and is interested in exploring different professional roles and work cultures (Anh Do et al., 2023). Startups are considered an attractive work environment because they offer flexibility and opportunities for employees to actively participate and be recognized for their contributions (Perilus, 2020). This flexible work culture also encourages creativity and innovation, which are much needed in company development. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z is not afraid to question company norms, especially regarding time commitments. They prefer autonomy in setting work schedules and appreciate workplaces that provide freedom and support for self-development (Anh Do et al., 2023). Chillakuri (2020) also emphasized that Generation Z tends not to hesitate to change jobs if another company offers better salaries and work flexibility.

However, behind the flexibility and dynamics, work motivation in entry-level employees in startups is often a problem. Low work motivation can be seen from various indicators such as low discipline, delays in completing tasks, and poor customer service. This condition is often triggered by a mismatch between company expectations and employee expectations, which ultimately lowers work enthusiasm and performance. This imbalance can cause employees to feel underappreciated or not recognized for their contributions.

In addition, startups generally face unique challenges such as unstable work structures and rapid change. Entry-level employees are often faced with multitasking demands with ever-growing responsibilities, while career paths and promotion opportunities are not always clear. This can lead to decreased motivation because employees feel they do not have a clear path to self-development. Research by Alkandi et al. (2023) emphasizes that work motivation is very important because it has a direct impact on productivity and quality of work results. Motivated employees are not only more productive but also more active in finding solutions and innovating. However, this ideal condition has not



been widely achieved in the startup environment. Job satisfaction is important for both employees and companies because it can foster a sense of comfort, increase productivity, and improve work attitudes (Suwatno & Priansa, 2018). The 2023 Asia Pacific Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) shows that 75% of workers in Indonesia are satisfied with their jobs, this figure exceeds the Asia Pacific average of 57%, placing Indonesia in second place after Thailand (Salsabila, 2023).

In addition to material factors such as salary and benefits, work motivation is also influenced by psychological and emotional aspects. A work environment that supports physical and mental well-being can significantly increase motivation. Shahzad et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of creating an inclusive work culture and providing emotional support, especially in a startup environment full of pressure and uncertainty. This support can be in the form of open communication, space for employees to express their opinions, and appreciation for individual and team achievements.

On the other hand, work stress is also a significant issue in the startup environment. Employees are often faced with high workloads, unrealistic demands, and lack of appreciation from superiors. The imbalance between workload and rewards received can cause stress, which has a negative impact on physical and mental health, and even increases absenteeism (Vanchapo, 2020). Although stress can increase productivity to some extent, excessive stress actually reduces job satisfaction and hinders the achievement of company goals. This is in line with Hasibuan's opinion (2016) which states that work stress is a condition of tension that affects a person's emotions, thoughts, and health, and has a negative impact on performance.

Based on the above description, it is important to further examine how work motivation and work stress affect job satisfaction, especially among entry-level startup employees. This phenomenon is relevant considering the dynamic and stressful working conditions, as well as high expectations for employees in entry-level positions. A deeper understanding of the influence of these two variables is expected to help startup companies in developing more effective strategies to improve employee well-being and overall organizational productivity.

Therefore, this study is entitled “The Influence of Work Motivation and Work Stress on Job Satisfaction of Entry-Level Start-up Employees”, with the aim of empirically examining the relationship between two important variables—work motivation and work stress—with the level of employee job satisfaction in a startup environment.

Based on the background that has been described, the formulation of the problem in this study is focused on three main things, namely: does work motivation affect the job satisfaction of entry-level start-up employees; does work stress affect the job satisfaction of entry-level start-up employees; and do work motivation and work stress simultaneously affect the job satisfaction of entry-level start-up employees.

In line with the formulation of the problem, the purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of work motivation on the job satisfaction of entry-level start-up employees, analyze the effect of work stress on the job satisfaction of entry-level start-up employees, and analyze the effect of work motivation and work stress simultaneously on the job satisfaction of entry-level start-up employees.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is based on a framework that connects independent variables, namely work motivation and work stress, with the dependent variable, namely job satisfaction. This framework is built on relevant theories and contains the assumption that work motivation is estimated to have a positive influence on job satisfaction, while work stress is estimated to have a negative influence. The relationship between these variables is formulated in the form of a hypothesis that is tested empirically through a quantitative approach. Visually, the relationship between the variables in this study is depicted in the form of a framework to show the direction and pattern of the relationship to be analyzed.

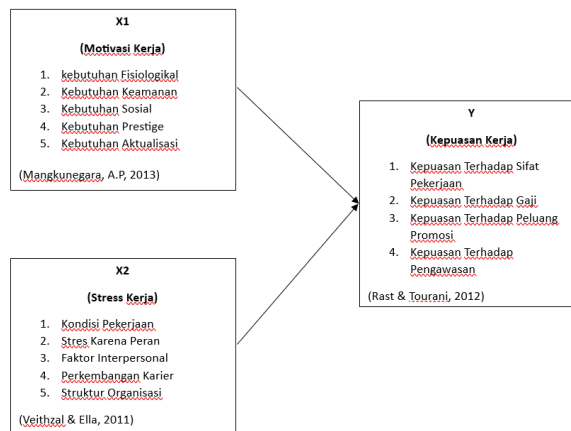


Figure 1.
Research Framework

Each variable in this study is defined operationally to facilitate the measurement and data collection process. The work motivation variable (X1) is



measured based on five main indicators, namely physiological needs, security, social, prestige, and self-actualization. Meanwhile, work stress (X2) is measured through four indicators, namely workload, role clarity, social support, and career development. The job satisfaction variable (Y) is measured based on indicators of satisfaction with the work environment, recognition, workload balance, and career development opportunities. All of these indicators are assessed using a five-point Likert scale, which allows respondents to provide assessments from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The type of data used in this study is primary data, which is obtained directly from respondents through the distribution of questionnaires. Primary data was collected from entry-level employees working in start-up companies in Indonesia. In addition, secondary data is also used as a complement and is obtained from various sources such as scientific journals, previous research reports, academic articles, and official statistical data relevant to the focus of the study. To obtain primary data, a questionnaire method was used with a non-probability sampling technique of the purposive sampling type. This technique is used because respondents are selected based on certain criteria that are relevant to the objectives of the study, namely entry-level employees who have work experience between six months and three years in a startup work environment. These criteria are set so that the data obtained truly represents the population to be studied and is in accordance with the context of the study.

The data analysis technique in this study uses a quantitative approach with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method, which is part of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This method was chosen because it is able to handle the complexity of the relationship between latent variables and is suitable for research with a sample size that is not too large. The analysis was carried out through several stages, starting from testing the reliability and validity of the instrument to ensure that the measuring instrument used is reliable and appropriate. Furthermore, an outer model test was carried out to assess the measurement model, as well as an inner model to test the relationship between constructs and hypotheses that have been formulated previously. With this approach, it is hoped that the study can provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of work motivation and work stress on job satisfaction of entry-level employees in startup companies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To provide a clear picture of the relationship between variables in this research model, the following section presents a path diagram. This diagram illustrates the structure of the causal relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables tested in the study, while also facilitating understanding of the flow of influence analyzed through the PLS-SEM method.

In the initial testing of the model, it was found that the indicators KK9 and KK10 in the Job Satisfaction variable did not meet the validity and significance criteria. Therefore, both indicators were eliminated, and then the model was retested to obtain more valid and reliable results. The following path diagram shows the final model after the process of eliminating indicators and retesting.

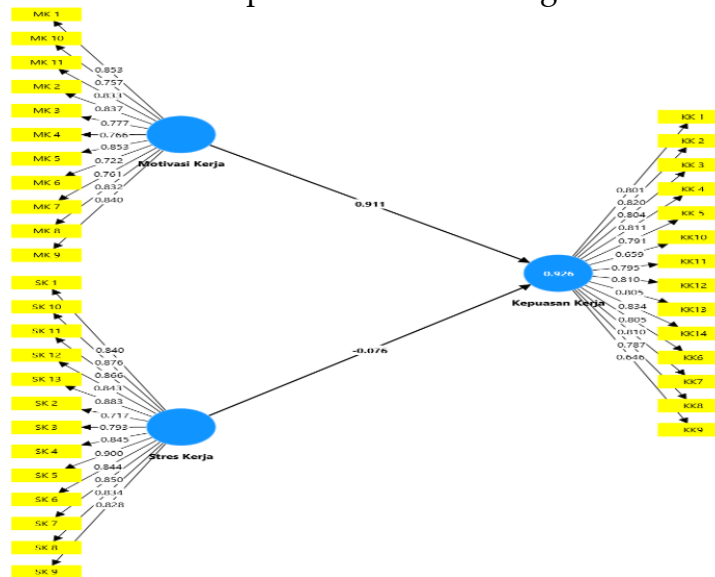


Diagram 1.

Initial Path Diagram of the Model

Source: SmartPLS V.04 data processing, 2025

After eliminating the KK9 and KK10 indicators in the Job Satisfaction variable that did not meet the validity criteria, a second test was conducted. The results of the retest showed that all remaining indicators were valid and met the statistical requirements. The following path diagram illustrates the final model based on the results of the second test.

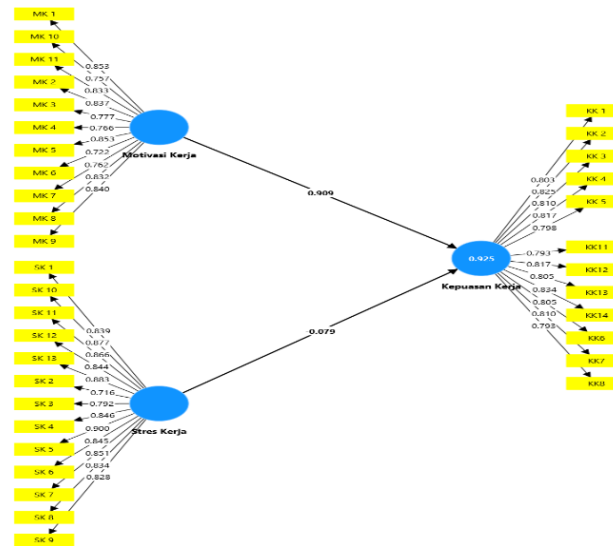


Diagram 2.

Initial Path Diagram of the Model

Source: SmartPLS V.04 data processing, 2025

To find out how much the independent variable contributes to the dependent variable, a determination coefficient (R^2) test is carried out which shows the proportion of the dependent variable variance that can be explained by the independent variable in the model; the higher the R^2 value, the better the model's ability to explain the variation. In addition, the evaluation of the PLS-SEM model also uses predictive relevance (Q^2) which is assessed using the blindfolding technique through the formula $Q^2 = 1 - (SSE / SSO)$, where the model is said to be relevant if $Q^2 > 0$, indicating the model's predictive ability to endogenous variables. As a complement, the effect size (f^2) is also measured to assess the magnitude of the contribution of each independent variable to the variance of the dependent variable locally, with a higher f^2 value indicating a greater influence when the variable is removed from the model.

Table 1.

Determination Coefficient Test

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Job Satisfaction	0.925	0.925

Source: SmartPLS V.04 data processing, 2025

The R-square value of 0.925 indicates that 92.5% of the variation of the Job Satisfaction variable can be explained by the independent variables, namely Work Motivation and Work Stress, in this model. The remaining 7.5% is explained by other factors outside the research model. Based on Chin's criteria (1998), an R^2



value of 0.67 or more is included in the strong category, so it can be concluded that this model has very good predictive power for the Job Satisfaction variable.

Table 2.

Predictive Relevance Test			
	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Job satisfaction	2676.000	1072.237	0.599
Work motivation	2453.000	2453.000	0.000
Job Stress	2899.000	2899.000	0.000

Source: SmartPLS V.04 data processing, 2025

The results of the predictive relevance (Q²) test show that the Job Satisfaction variable has a Q² value of 0.599, which means that the model has good predictive ability and is relevant for this variable because the Q² value is greater than zero. On the other hand, the Work Motivation and Job Stress variables have a Q² value of 0.000, which indicates that the model does not predict these variables. This is reasonable because both are independent variables in the model and are not influenced by other variables. Thus, this model is effective in predicting Job Satisfaction, but not for independent variables.

Table 3.

Predictive Relevance Test			
No.	Relationship Between Variables	f ² value	Effect Size Category
1	Work motivation → Job satisfaction	6.402	Big
2	Job Stress → Job satisfaction	0.048	Small

Source: SmartPLS V.04 data processing, 2025

Information:

- f² ≥ 0.35 : Big
- 0.15 ≤ f² < 0.35 : Currently
- 0.02 ≤ f² < 0.15 : Small
- f² < 0.02 : Not significant

Source: Cohen (1988)

Based on the results of the analysis using SmartPLS, the effect size (f²) value for the influence of Work Motivation on Job Satisfaction was 6,402. This value is far above the threshold for the large category according to Cohen (1988), which is 0.35, indicating that the influence of Work Motivation on Job Satisfaction is included in the very large category. This indicates that increasing employee work motivation can significantly increase their level of job satisfaction. Thus, Work Motivation is a dominant factor in explaining variations in Job Satisfaction in this model. Meanwhile, the effect size (f²) value for the influence of Work Stress on



Job Satisfaction is 0.048, which, according to Cohen's criteria, is included in the small category (0.02 - 0.14). This means that although Work Stress has an influence on Job Satisfaction, its contribution is relatively small compared to the influence of Work Motivation. Thus, the influence of Work Stress on Job Satisfaction in this study is considered less strong, but it is still relevant to note, especially in the context of stress management in the work environment, so as not to interfere with overall job satisfaction.

The path coefficient significance test is conducted to determine the magnitude and direction of influence between variables in the structural model. This test also aims to assess whether the relationship between variables is statistically significant, as indicated by the t-statistic and p-value. The test results are presented in the following table:

Table 4.
Path Coefficient Test

No	Relationship Between Variables	Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value	Direction of Influence
1	Work Motivation→Job Satisfaction	0.909	44,742	0.000	Significant positive and strong
2	Job Stress→Job Satisfaction	-0.079	3,083	0.002	Significant negative and weak

Source: SmartPLS V.04 data processing, 2025

The results of the path coefficient test show that the relationship between Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction has a coefficient value of 0.909 with a t-statistic value of 44.742 and a p-value of 0.000. This shows that the influence is very significant and strongly positive, which means that the higher the work motivation, the higher the level of job satisfaction. Meanwhile, the relationship between Work Stress and Job Satisfaction has a coefficient value of -0.079, with a t-statistic of 3.083 and a p-value of 0.002. Although the direction of the influence is negative, this relationship remains significant, although the level of influence is relatively weak. This means that the higher the work stress felt, the level of job satisfaction tends to decrease, although the influence is not as large as the influence of work motivation. Based on the path coefficient table, the regression coefficient values are obtained as follows:



Table 5.
Regression Coefficient Test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	St. deviation	T statistics	P values
Work Motivation -> Job Satisfaction	0.909	0.909	0.020	44,742	0.000
Job Stress -> Job Satisfaction	-0.079	-0.079	0.026	3,083	0.002

Source: SmartPLS V.04 data processing, 2025

Based on the results of the SEM-PLS model analysis, a regression equation was obtained that shows the relationship between the variables of Work Motivation and Work Stress on Job Satisfaction. The path coefficient for Work Motivation is 0.909 with a t-statistic value of 44.742 and a p-value of 0.000, which indicates a positive and very significant effect on Job Satisfaction. This means that the higher the Work Motivation, the employee's Job Satisfaction tends to increase significantly. Conversely, Work Stress has a path coefficient of -0.079 with a t-statistic value of 3.083 and a p-value of 0.002, which indicates a negative but significant effect on Job Satisfaction. This means that an increase in the level of Work Stress tends to significantly decrease employee Job Satisfaction. Thus, Work Motivation plays a role as the main factor that increases Job Satisfaction, while Work Stress has the opposite effect.

Table 6.
Partial t-test

Track	O (Coefficient)	T Statistics	P Values	Significance
Work motivation → Job satisfaction	0.909	44,742	0.000	Significant
Job Stress → Job satisfaction	-0.079	3,083	0.002	Significant

Source: SmartPLS V.04 data processing, 2025

Based on the results of the partial significance test (t-test) through SEM-PLS analysis, it is known that work motivation has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction of entry-level start-up employees with a path coefficient value of 0.909, a T-statistic value of 44.742, and a p-value of 0.000 (below 0.05). This shows that the higher the work motivation, the higher the job satisfaction felt by employees. Thus, hypothesis H1 is accepted. Meanwhile, work stress has a



significant negative effect on job satisfaction, indicated by a coefficient value of -0.079, T T-statistic of 3.083, and a p-value of 0.002. This means that the higher the level of work stress, the lower the level of employee job satisfaction. Therefore, hypothesis H2 is also accepted.

Table 7.
Fit Model

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.043	0.043
d_ULS	1,260	1,260
d_G	1,034	1,034
Chi-square	1162.717	1162.717
NFI	0.856	0.856

Source: SmartPLS V.04 data processing, 2025

Based on the Fit Summary results, the estimated SEM-PLS model shows a good fit with the data. The SRMR value of 0.043, which is below the threshold of 0.08, indicates that the difference between the model covariance matrix and the observation data is very small, so that the model can be accepted statistically. In addition, the NFI value of 0.856, which is close to the ideal value of 1 indicates that the model has explained the data quite well and has a high level of fit. The Chi-square value of 1162.717, along with other indices such as d_ULS and d_G, further supports the suitability of the model for use. Thus, it can be concluded that simultaneously, work motivation and work stress have a significant effect on job satisfaction of entry-level start-up employees, so that hypothesis H3 is accepted.

Table 8.
Inferential Determination Coefficient

Dependent Variable	R-square	R-square Adjusted
Job satisfaction	0.925	0.925

Source: SmartPLS V.04 data processing, 2025

Based on the results of the determination coefficient test, the R² value was obtained as 0.925 for the Job Satisfaction variable, which means that 92.5% of the variation in Job Satisfaction can be explained by two independent variables, namely Work Motivation and Work Stress. Meanwhile, the remaining 7.5% is explained by other factors outside this research model. Based on the classification criteria proposed by Chin (1998), the R² value above 0.67 is included in the strong category, so this model has very good predictive ability. Thus, it can be concluded that simultaneously, the independent variables used in this study have a large



contribution in explaining the dependent variable, and support the hypothesis H3 that Work Motivation and Work Stress together have a significant effect on Job Satisfaction of entry-level employees in start-up companies.

Work Motivation in Generation Z in Startup Companies

The descriptive results of the study show that the average work motivation of respondents is in the high category (mean > 4). This finding indicates that Generation Z who work in startups have a strong work drive, both from intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. This high motivation reflects the suitability between the personal values of Generation Z and the characteristics of a dynamic, flexible, and innovation-based startup work environment.

Referring to Herzberg's two-factor theory (1959), work motivation is classified into two types, namely motivator factors (driving factors) such as achievement, recognition, job content, and responsibility; and hygiene factors (maintenance factors) such as salary, company policies, supervision, and working conditions. The results of this study indicate that Generation Z tends to respond positively to motivator factors, especially to aspects that give meaning and contribution to their work. A work environment that allows for self-development, autonomy, and involvement in decision-making is a significant trigger for work enthusiasm for this generation.

Furthermore, flexible working hours and opportunities for professional development are key drivers for Generation Z to remain productive. This is in line with the findings of Putri and Rahardja (2020), who highlighted that Generation Z highly values work-life balance, continuous career development opportunities, and a collaborative and supportive work culture—which are the hallmarks of today's startups.

In addition, the Deloitte Global Millennial and Gen Z Survey 2022 report confirms that Generation Z places a high value on workplaces that pay attention to mental health issues, provide space to voice social values, and support personal growth. This shows a paradigm shift in the world of work, where the meaningfulness of work is becoming more important than just financial compensation. In this context, startups seem to be more adaptive in creating a work climate that suits Generation Z's preferences, thus encouraging high levels of work motivation.

Overall, these findings reflect that to retain and maximize the potential of Generation Z in the workplace, organizations need to focus on creating an environment that supports self-actualization, engagement, and work-life balance. This also presents a challenge and opportunity for HR management to design



motivation strategies that are more personalized, value-based, and oriented towards long-term growth.

Job Stress Level

Research data shows that the average level of work stress of respondents is in the low to moderate category (mean between 2.19 - 2.72). This finding indicates that the work environment in start-up companies tends not to create significant work pressure, especially for Generation Z, who are the majority of today's young workforce. This low level of stress can be an indicator that the characteristics of work in start-ups, which are known to be flexible, adaptive, and minimal bureaucracy, are able to create a more comfortable and friendly work atmosphere for employees.

According to the work stress theory proposed by Robbins & Judge (2017), workplace stress can arise from three main sources: individual factors (such as personality, personal life demands), organizational factors (such as workload, organizational structure, role conflict), and environmental factors (such as economic or social uncertainty). In the context of start-ups, a more egalitarian work culture, flexible time, and a more informal work approach seem to be successful in reducing stress from organizational and environmental factors. Employees are given space to express themselves, experiment, and be actively involved in the decision-making process, thereby increasing their sense of control and job satisfaction.

These results are in line with the findings of Gading et al. (2021), which stated that work flexibility, autonomy, and non-hierarchical communication patterns in start-ups significantly reduce stress levels, especially in young workers who value more freedom in working and seek meaning in their work. In fact, a work atmosphere that resembles a community or family often makes employees feel more emotionally and socially connected, which is also a protective factor against stress.

However, it should be noted that low stress levels do not mean that they are free from psychological risks. Maslach & Leiter (2016), in their burnout theory, remind us that hidden pressures, especially those related to high expectations of performance, excessive multitasking, and lack of boundaries between work and personal life (especially in flexible work systems), can trigger burnout in the long term. This phenomenon is often not detected early on because of its accumulative and psychological nature.

Therefore, even though the start-up work environment exhibits characteristics that support mental health, it is important for organizations to



continue to pay attention to balanced workloads, social support in the workplace, and healthy work time management. Organizational interventions such as stress management training, setting break times, and strengthening communication between teams can be effective preventive strategies to maintain sustainable productivity without compromising employee well-being.

High Level of Job Satisfaction

The research findings show that the majority of respondents have a high level of job satisfaction, indicating a positive relationship between working conditions in start-up companies and feelings of satisfaction with work. This is in line with the definition of job satisfaction according to Locke (1976), which states that job satisfaction is a positive emotional state that arises from a person's assessment of their work, including the extent to which the work fulfills important values for the individual.

High job satisfaction among Generation Z in the start-up environment is likely the result of high work motivation and low stress levels, as discussed earlier. A flexible work culture that is open to innovation and encourages active participation from all team members plays a major role in creating a work atmosphere that supports the fulfillment of the psychological needs of the younger generation, such as the need for self-actualization, recognition, and meaning in work. In other words, an adaptive work environment and egalitarian social relations provide space for Generation Z to feel appreciated, heard, and have a real contribution to the development of the organization.

In addition, startups often provide opportunities for rapid learning and development, whether through direct involvement in projects, informal mentoring, or access to new challenges that stimulate professional growth. This aspect is very relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z, who value work experience as a means of long-term learning and development, rather than merely a routine or administrative obligation.

This finding is supported by the study by Nursaid et al. (2021), which states that a collaborative work environment, open communication, and opportunities for self-development are the main determining factors in creating job satisfaction, especially among the younger generation. In the context of start-up companies, fluid cross-functional work patterns and minimal hierarchical distance allow for a healthy interaction process and encourage a high sense of belonging.

However, it is important to note that high levels of job satisfaction do not mean the absence of challenges. Companies still need to maintain the sustainability of this satisfaction by continuing to innovate in creating career



development programs, providing constructive feedback, and creating a fair and transparent reward system. Such efforts will ensure that job satisfaction is not just temporary, but becomes part of the organization's long-term strategy in retaining and empowering young talent.

Relationship Between Variables (SEM-PLS Results)

Structural model testing (inner model) using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method was conducted to see the relationship between latent variables in this study, namely: work motivation, work stress, and job satisfaction in entry-level start-up employees. Based on the test results, the following findings were obtained:

**Table 9.
Hypothesis Test Results**

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	Test Results	Information
H1	Work motivation has a significant positive influence on the job satisfaction of entry-level start-up employees.	Accepted	There is a significant positive influence between work motivation and job satisfaction.
H2	Job stress has a significant negative effect on job satisfaction of entry level start-up employees.	Accepted	There is a significant negative influence between work stress and job satisfaction.
H3	Work motivation and work stress simultaneously have a significant effect on job satisfaction of entry level start-up employees.	Accepted	There is a significant negative influence between work motivation and work stress.

Based on the results of the analysis using the Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method, it was found that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction with a coefficient of 0.909 ($p < 0.001$), while work stress influential negative significant on job satisfaction with a coefficient of -0.079 ($p = 0.002$). Simultaneously, work motivation and work stress have a significant influence on job satisfaction, with a determination coefficient



(R^2) value of 0.925 indicating that 92.5% of the variation in job satisfaction can be explained by these two variables. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of 0.043 and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) of 0.856 indicate that the model used in this study is feasible and has a good level of fit.

The results of the study also show that work motivation in Generation Z employees working in start-up companies is relatively high, with an average score above 4 on the Likert scale. This indicates that the characteristics of a dynamic, flexible, and collaborative start-up work environment are able to facilitate the needs psychological Generation Z, especially in terms of motivators such as recognition, responsibility, self-actualization, and career development opportunities. This generation responds positively to a work environment that supports work-life balance and direct involvement in the work process.

Meanwhile, the level of work stress is in the low to moderate category, indicating that the work culture in start-up companies is relatively comfortable and low-pressure. This is due to the lack of hierarchy, a more humanistic work approach, and flexibility in carrying out tasks. However, management still needs to implement preventive stress management strategies in order to avoid the accumulation of pressure that can lead to the risk of burnout, especially since flexible work systems are often not accompanied by clear working time limits.

The level of job satisfaction of entry-level employees is also relatively high, as a result of a combination of strong motivation and relatively low stress levels. A start-up work environment that supports self-development, opens up a two-way communication space, and provides opportunities for active participation in the work process has been shown to contribute positively to job satisfaction. However, this satisfaction must be maintained sustainably through a clear career development program, a fair reward system, and the formation of an organizational culture that is responsive to the needs of the younger generation.

Based on the results of the hypothesis test, all of the research hypotheses were accepted. The first hypothesis (H1) shows that work motivation has a positive and significant on job satisfaction of entry-level start-up employees. The second hypothesis (H2) states that job stress has a negative and significant effect on job satisfaction. Meanwhile, the third hypothesis (H3) confirms that work motivation and job stress simultaneously have a significant effect on job satisfaction. This finding emphasizes the importance of creating a work environment that can encourage motivation while minimizing stress, in order to increase employee satisfaction and productivity, especially generation Z who are the dominant population in today's workforce.



CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis carried out using the Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach, it can be concluded that work motivation has a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction of entry-level employees in start-up companies. The higher the level of motivation possessed by employees, the higher the level of job satisfaction they feel. These findings indicate that elements such as the meaning of work, recognition, career development opportunities, and work-life balance are important aspects in shaping job satisfaction among young employees.

In addition, work stress has been shown to have a significant negative effect on job satisfaction. Employees who experience higher levels of stress tend to have lower levels of job satisfaction. Although the level of stress in the context of this study is categorized as low to moderate, the negative impact is still significant and is an important concern for startup management. This shows that work stress, no matter how small, can reduce work enthusiasm and impact overall productivity.

Simultaneously, work motivation and work stress contribute significantly to job satisfaction. The combination of internal drive from within the employee and external pressure from the work environment together determine how satisfied the employee is with his/her job. Therefore, it is important for start-up companies to create a work environment that can increase employee motivation while minimizing sources of stress in the workplace. This approach has proven effective in creating employees who are not only satisfied, but also productive and committed.

In addition, the findings of this study also highlight the importance of paying attention to the characteristics of Generation Z as the dominant group in this study. This generation highly values flexibility, meaning in work, and growth opportunities. Therefore, human resource management strategies in start-up companies need to be adjusted to the values and expectations of Generation Z to create a positive work experience and increase employee retention in the long term.

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