

BUILDING RESILIENT EDUCATORS: EXPLORING HOW EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND WORK READINESS DRIVE WORK ENGAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE AMONG GEN Z TEACHERS IN SURABAYA

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Abstract: *The regeneration of educators through the massive recruitment of Generation Z teachers as State Civil Apparatus presents a critical challenge in maintaining the quality of learning, where the gap between individual readiness and the rigid bureaucratic ecosystem has the potential to create a systemic performance crisis. This study develops an integrative model that examines the effect of Work Readiness on Employee Performance with Employee Experience and Work Engagement as parallel mediating variables in Generation Z ASN teachers. This quantitative study involved 233 Generation Z ASN teachers in the Surabaya City Education Office who were selected through a total sampling technique (census). Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). All seven research hypotheses were accepted with statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Work Readiness was shown to have the strongest influence on Work Engagement (T-Statistic 22.172), while also having a significant effect on performance both directly and indirectly through the mediation of Employee Experience and Work Engagement. These findings underscore the urgency for the Education Office to adopt strategic human capital management investing in employee readiness, experiential workplace design, and engagement-centered leadership to optimize workforce productivity, reduce turnover costs, and achieve sustainable organizational competitiveness.*

Keywords: Employee Experience, Employee Performance, Generation Z Teachers, Work Engagement, Work Readiness

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the public sector is facing an existential challenge in maintaining educational quality amidst a wave of technological disruption and unprecedented demographic shifts in the workforce. This emerging phenomenon indicates a wide gap between public expectations for a high-tech curriculum and the reality of educational institutions' readiness to transition from senior teachers to younger

teachers, or Generation Z ([Dacholfany et al. 2024](#); [Wang and Wang 2023](#)). This crisis is not simply a matter of regeneration, but rather a critical situation where the system's inability to manage leadership transitions has the potential to create a systemic risk of declining learning quality. If the performance stability of young teachers is not maintained, society will face the long-term burden of a "lost generation" due to the failure of optimal mentoring during this digital

transition ([Burić and Moe 2020](#); [Wang and Wang 2023](#)). The urgency of understanding the unique characteristics of Generation Z is crucial, considering that they are the first generation to grow up as digital natives, with high technological fluency but also bringing new expectations and vulnerabilities to the work environment ([Walton 2025](#); [Lang and Jones 2025](#)). Indonesia, as a global benchmark for education, faces increasingly complex challenges with the massive recruitment of Civil Servants (ASN) from among Gen Z.

The government is aggressively promoting digital transformation through various platforms such as e-performance and e-learning, but unfortunately, this transformation often only touches on administrative aspects without considering the psychological and "humanistic" aspects of its users ([Du and Qu 2024](#)). This alarming trend is visually substantiated in Figure 1, which illustrates the distribution of stress levels among young teachers.

Data shows that although Gen Z has superior digital literacy ([Sudrajat et al. 2024](#)) with this generation comprising 27.94% of Indonesia's population and 79.5% being active digital users ([Badan Pusat Statistik 2020](#);

[Deloitte 2023](#)) the level of work stress among young teachers remains alarmingly high due to bureaucratic complexity and administrative burdens that are considered anachronistic ([Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi 2023](#); [World Bank 2021](#)). This paradox is visually substantiated by field data, which reveals that a full 100% of young teachers experience work-related stress, with 50% falling into the moderate category and another 50% suffering from severe stress ([Syafitri et al. 2024](#)). Field research indicates that young teachers in Indonesia tend to feel alienated in the rigid school bureaucracy system, which directly erodes their professional motivation ([Dacholfany et al. 2024](#); [Wang and Wang 2023](#)). The primary driver of this alienation is quantified by the fact that over 70% of teachers' working hours are consumed by administrative and bureaucratic tasks, leaving a mere 30% for actual teaching and educating activities ([Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia 2024](#)). The mismatch between their digital competencies and these bureaucratic administrative realities creates a culture shock in the workplace, where technology, which should be a solution, risks becoming an additional burden as it clashes with rigid, hierarchical systems ([Voss et al. 2023](#)).



Figure 1. Gen Z Teacher Stress Crisis

Source: Processed data, 2026

The national consequences of this systemic failure are already manifesting critically; Indonesia currently faces a stark teacher shortage of 150,095 positions, despite a national demand for 1.2 million ASN teachers, while simultaneously, Gen Z's interest in becoming elementary school teachers has plummeted to only 11% ([Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi 2024](#)). Therefore, ensuring the performance of Gen Z teachers is no longer simply an internal school management issue, but rather a social investment that determines the nation's competitiveness on the global stage ([Caballero, Álvarez-González, and López-Miguens 2020](#); [Dacholfany et al. 2024](#)).

Regarding "professional vulnerability" in young teachers, there are at least three main pillars that interact with each other and become the source of the problem. First, a positive employee experience is crucial for Gen Z, who crave an inclusive, supportive, and meaningful work environment; failure to provide this experience will drastically reduce organizational commitment ([Wang and Wang 2023](#); [Al-Kurdi et al. 2020](#)). This is compounded by the fact that only a small percentage of Gen Z perceives a strong Person-Organization (P-O) fit, indicating a significant gap between expectations and reality ([Trowbridge 2025](#)). Second Work readiness, both mentally and administratively, is a serious obstacle for new teachers. Recent studies have revealed that nearly half of new graduates feel unprepared to apply for jobs in their field, and the perception gap between educators and students regarding this work readiness is wide ([Coacci 2025](#)). These new teachers are often surprised by the social pressures and complex dynamics of the educational environment, which were not fully reflected during their studies ([Caballero, Álvarez-González, and López-Miguens 2020](#); [Burić and Moe 2020](#)). This unpreparedness leads to low work morale and high levels of workplace anxiety ([Lang and Jones 2025](#)). Third Low work engagement, where teachers simply

perform tasks mechanically without emotional enthusiasm ([Burić and Moe 2020](#); [Dacholfany et al. 2024](#)). Without strong engagement, digital transformation in education will never be achieved, as high performance only comes from individuals who feel professionally and emotionally valued ([Dacholfany et al. 2024](#); [Wang and Wang 2023](#)). Research in Indonesia also confirms that work stress and turnover intention are real issues among Gen Z teachers, with resilience being a crucial moderating factor ([Lubis 2024](#)).

The general problem underlying this research is the central paradox in talent management within the civil service sector, particularly within the Department of Education. This paradox is characterized by a severe imbalance: technology is perceived as the ultimate solution to all educational challenges, yet in practice, it becomes an additional burden due to its rigid, bureaucratic implementation ([Voss et al. 2023](#)). This phenomenon creates what scholars term "techno-stress" a condition where teachers experience anxiety, fatigue, and resistance when forced to adopt technologies that are poorly integrated with their pedagogical workflows ([Tarafdar, Cooper, and Stich 2019](#); [Sakyte-Statnicke and Statnickis 2025](#)). In large cities like Surabaya, young teachers are often trapped in a rigid seniority work culture, which actually hinders their creativity and idealism ([Bakker and de Vries 2021](#)). Real-world phenomena show symptoms of early burnout and professional isolation among Gen Z teachers. This systemic problem triggers low levels of engagement, where teachers no longer feel meaningful in their work, but rather merely fulfill administrative obligations ([Du and Qu 2024](#); [Wang and Wang, 2023](#)). Crucially, the distinction between techno-stress and techno-work engagement lies in the individual's adaptive capacity. Techno-stress emerges when teachers feel overwhelmed by technological demands that exceed their coping resources. Conversely, techno-work engagement occurs when teachers perceive technology as a

meaningful tool that enhances their professional capabilities and supports their pedagogical creativity ([Sakyte-Statnicke and Statnickis 2025](#)). This is where Work Readiness plays a decisive role. Generation Z teachers who possess high levels of digital self-efficacy, technological adaptability, and problem-solving flexibility are better equipped to transform potential techno-stress into productive techno-work engagement. Specifically, three readiness elements are critical: (1) digital competence the ability to master new educational platforms quickly; (2) cognitive flexibility the capacity to adapt teaching strategies to technological constraints; and (3) emotional resilience the psychological strength to persist despite technological frustrations ([Okolie and Onajite 2021](#); [Tan, Lee, and Wong 2024](#)). These readiness elements enable young teachers to view technology not as an administrative burden, but as an enabler of innovative pedagogy, thereby converting technological demands into opportunities for professional growth and meaningful engagement. The urgent need underlying this research is to find the intersection between Work Readiness and Employee Experience. A common problem is that even if a young teacher has mature technical readiness from college, their performance will still decline if their daily experiences at school are marked by intergenerational conflict and a lack of organizational support ([Voss et al. 2023](#); [Caballero et al. 2020](#)). Therefore, understanding how work readiness buffers the negative effects of techno-stress and facilitates techno-work engagement is essential for building resilient Gen Z educators in Surabaya's education system. Current literature on Human Resource (HR) management in education tends to remain stuck in a traditional paradigm that views teachers as static administrative objects. For example, many studies in local contexts emphasize organizational commitment as a key determinant of performance and retention intentions ([Kemala et al. 2023](#)). However, it can be critically argued that for Generation Z,

commitment is no longer born of blind loyalty to an institution, but rather the result of a transparent and reciprocal exchange of values. A study by [Yovita and Setia \(2024\)](#) makes an important contribution by demonstrating the role of employee experience on performance through the mediation of job satisfaction. However, there is a conceptual weakness in that job satisfaction is often passive; a teacher who is satisfied with facilities does not necessarily have a proactive drive to innovate. This is further deepened by [Sungailė, Vveinhardt, and Bendaravičienė \(2024\)](#) who link experience with engagement. The problem is that both studies are partial and unable to explain why teachers with positive work experiences still fail to achieve peak performance when faced with complex bureaucratic pressures. Another study in Malaysia showed a mediating effect of employee readiness to change in the relationship between training and performance, but the context was still general and did not specifically touch on the psychological dynamics of Gen Z teachers in Indonesia ([Fazlina 2016](#)).

Based on an evaluation of the latest global literature, at least two major research gaps were identified. First, most current models neglect the critical interaction between individual and organizational characteristics. This gap is particularly significant given that prior studies within this journal have demonstrated that human resource management practices including recruitment, selection, training, and performance appraisal play a pivotal role in shaping organizational performance outcomes ([Septiningtyas and Nurwanti 2018](#)). However, these studies predominantly examine organizational-level factors while overlooking the individual-level psychological attributes that determine how employees actually translate these HR practices into sustained performance. Research by [Sungailė, Vveinhardt, and Bendaravičienė \(2024\)](#) suggests that external organizational factors alone are insufficient to explain performance variations, revealing a critical yet often overlooked variable Work

Readiness wherein teachers with adequate employee experience may still experience performance failure if they lack mental preparedness and professional competence. Second, there is an ongoing debate regarding whether employee experience directly influences performance or whether its effect must pass through a psychological bridge. [Vereb et al. \(2024\)](#) demonstrate that in rigid public sector environments, this direct influence is often weak, suggesting the presence of intervening mechanisms. This intervening mechanism is further supported by empirical evidence from this journal, which confirms that job involvement (or work engagement) significantly influences employee performance, even when other factors such as transformational leadership and organizational culture do not show direct effects ([Gulo 2018](#)). Consequently, Work Engagement emerges as a crucial mediating variable that can mitigate the negative impact of bureaucratic constraints on Generation Z teacher performance, bridging the gap between individual readiness and organizational support.

The novelty of this research for business and management lies in its systematic integration of two distinct yet complementary strategic variables: Work Readiness (representing the individual's human capital, psychological preparedness, and competency stock) and Employee Experience (representing the organization's HR policies, workplace ecosystem, and supportive culture). Rather than examining these variables in isolation as most prior studies have done this research proposes an integrative model that positions Work Engagement as the mediating mechanism through which both individual readiness and organizational support translate into superior Employee Performance. From a strategic management perspective, this dual-pathway framework provides public sector leaders with a clear, evidence-based strategy to optimize workforce productivity and talent retention. Organizations must simultaneously invest in pre-employment readiness programs, which build

human capital before entry, and design humane, engaging workplace experiences that activate that capital through organizational support. This combined approach has been widely proven effective in private corporations but remains largely overlooked in public bureaucracy. The framework offers a measurable return on human capital investment by enabling education institutions to reduce turnover costs, enhance employee productivity, and build sustainable competitive advantage in the public service labor market. By bridging the gap between private-sector HRM practices and public-sector administrative realities, this study contributes a practical management blueprint for transforming compliance-driven bureaucracies into performance-driven, talent-centric organizations.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is grounded in an integrative theoretical framework that combines the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model ([Bakker and Demerouti 2017](#)), Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory ([Hobfoll 2018](#)), Self-Determination Theory (SDT) ([McAnally and Hagger 2024](#)), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) ([Bandura 2018](#)), Human Capital Theory ([Delery and Roumpi 2017](#)), Social Exchange Theory ([Cropanzano et al. 2017](#)), and the concepts of techno-stress and techno-work engagement ([Tarafdar, Cooper, and Stich 2019](#); [Sakyte-Statnicke and Statnickis 2025](#)). The JD-R model posits that job and personal resources trigger a motivational process leading to work engagement and subsequent performance. COR theory complements this by suggesting that individuals strive to protect and accumulate resources (e.g., competencies, self-efficacy), and resource-rich individuals are more capable of investing energy into their roles. SDT explains how contextual experiences fulfilling basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) foster intrinsic motivation. SCT emphasizes the role of self-efficacy beliefs in determining behavioral outcomes. Human Capital Theory provides an economic

foundation, asserting that investments in individuals' knowledge, skills, and competencies directly enhance their productive capacity and task execution. In the context of this study, work readiness represents a form of human capital that equips Generation Z teachers with the pedagogical competence, technological adaptability, and emotional intelligence necessary to perform effectively in the educational bureaucracy. This theory explains why individuals with higher work readiness demonstrate superior performance outcomes, both directly and through their ability to leverage organizational resources. Social Exchange Theory enriches the framework by explaining how social relationships governed by perceived obligations and reciprocity influence employee behavior. When organizations provide supportive leadership, inclusive culture, and meaningful work experiences, employees reciprocate with increased commitment, engagement, and performance. In this study, Social Exchange Theory explains why a positive Employee Experience fosters reciprocal behaviors such as higher work engagement and improved performance among Generation Z teachers, who value transparent and reciprocal exchanges of values. Finally, the concepts of techno-stress and techno-work engagement are integrated to address the technological challenges and opportunities specific to Generation Z teachers in the digital era. Techno-stress emerges when employees feel overwhelmed by technological demands exceeding their coping resources, leading to anxiety, fatigue, and resistance. Conversely, techno-work engagement occurs when employees perceive technology as a meaningful tool that enhances their professional capabilities and supports their pedagogical creativity. As digital natives, Generation Z teachers possess high digital literacy, but their ability to transform techno-stress into techno-work engagement depends on their work readiness particularly digital self-efficacy, cognitive flexibility, and emotional resilience. These technological

concepts are integrated within the broader JD-R framework to explain how work readiness enables young teachers to navigate bureaucratic digital systems productively. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens to explain how work readiness and employee experience interact with work engagement to influence performance among Generation Z teachers in the context of educational bureaucracy and digital transformation.

Work Readiness and Employee Performance

Work readiness is defined as the extent to which individuals possess the attributes, skills, and attitudes that prepare them for success in a professional work environment ([Okolie and Onajite 2021](#)). This construct goes beyond mere mastery of technical knowledge to encompass emotional maturity, interpersonal skills, and adaptability, enabling graduates to transition smoothly from academia to the workforce ([Jackson and Tomlinson 2020](#)). In the context of the teaching profession, work readiness encompasses pedagogical competence, technological adaptability, emotional intelligence in classroom management, and communication skills with various stakeholders ([Tan, Lee, and Wong 2024](#)).

Theoretically, the positive influence of work readiness on employee performance is firmly anchored in Human Capital Theory [Delery and Roumpi \(2017\)](#) which argues that investments in individual competencies and knowledge directly enhance productive capacity and task execution. Additionally, Social Cognitive Theory ([Bandura 2018](#)) posits that individuals with high self-efficacy a core component of work readiness are more likely to set challenging goals, persist in the face of difficulties, and ultimately achieve superior performance. Empirically, various studies have confirmed that work readiness has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. [Sungailė, Bendaravičienė, and Vveinhardt \(2024\)](#), in their study of millennials and Gen Z,

demonstrated that work readiness is the strongest predictor of performance, even surpassing the influence of formal company-organized training programs. In the educational context, [Suryani et al. \(2024\)](#) found that Generation Z teachers with high levels of work readiness demonstrated greater teaching effectiveness, particularly in integrating technology into learning and adapting to rapid curriculum changes. This consistent finding is reinforced by research by [Potgieter & Coetzee \(2022\)](#), who reported that work readiness was positively correlated not only with task performance but also with contextual performance, such as peer-helping behavior and self-development initiatives. However, academic discourse also notes more complex nuances. Several studies have found that the effect of work readiness on performance is not always direct, but rather mediated by psychological variables such as self-efficacy and work engagement ([Gupta, Shaheen, and Das 2022; Coetzee and Potgieter 2021](#)). Despite these nuances, the direct positive link remains robust. Based on the consistency of the theoretical foundation (Human Capital Theory and SCT) and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₁: Work readiness has a positive effect on employee performance.

Work Readiness and Employee Experience

Employee experience is defined as the holistic perception of an individual's journey within an organization, shaped by interactions with the physical workspace, technology, and organizational culture ([Morgan 2017](#)). The relationship between work readiness and employee experience can be explained through Self-Determination Theory ([McAnally and Haggar 2024](#)). Individuals with high work readiness are better equipped to navigate workplace challenges, which facilitates the satisfaction of their basic psychological needs for competence (feeling effective in tasks) and autonomy (having control over their work). When

these needs are met, employees perceive their work environment more positively, leading to a favorable overall employee experience.

Furthermore, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory ([Hobfoll 2018](#)) suggests that work-ready individuals possess a reservoir of personal resources (e.g., skills, resilience, self-efficacy) that enable them to effectively manage job demands. This resource-rich state prevents resource depletion and reduces negative experiences such as burnout and alienation, thereby fostering a more positive and fulfilling work experience. While direct empirical studies specifically linking work readiness to employee experience are still emerging, research on analogous constructs indicates that personal competencies significantly influence how employees perceive their workplace. For instance, [Wang and Wang \(2023\)](#) found that young teachers with higher adaptability reported more positive organizational experiences. Thus, based on the theoretical reasoning derived from SDT and COR theory, this study proposes:

H₂: Work readiness has a positive effect on employee experience.

Work Readiness and Work Engagement

The concept of work readiness has evolved as a multidimensional construct essential for understanding contemporary workforce dynamics. Work readiness refers to the extent to which an individual possesses the competencies, personal attributes, and character traits necessary to successfully adapt and contribute to the work environment ([Okolie and Onajite 2021](#)). On the other hand, work engagement is defined as a positive, satisfying, and work-related state of mind characterized by three main dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption ([Schaufeli \(2017\)](#)). The relationship between work readiness and work engagement can be theoretically explained through the motivational process of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model ([Bakker and Demerouti 2017](#)).

According to this model, personal resources such as self-efficacy, resilience, and competence (which are key facets of work readiness) directly fuel the motivational pathway that leads to higher work engagement. Individuals with high work readiness perceive job demands as manageable challenges rather than threatening burdens because they believe in their ability to cope. This positive appraisal, rooted in Social Cognitive Theory ([Bandura 2018](#)), generates intrinsic motivation, encouraging individuals to invest their full physical, cognitive, and emotional energy into their work roles. From a COR theory perspective ([Hobfoll 2018](#)), work-ready employees have a surplus of personal resources, which they can strategically invest to gain additional resources (e.g., social support, recognition), creating a positive gain spiral that enhances engagement. Empirical support for this positive relationship can be traced from studies that examine similar constructs. For example, [Karatepe and Olugbade \(2016\)](#) in the hospitality industry found that personal resources, a core component of work readiness, are significantly related to increased employee work engagement. Although some studies ([Bakker and Demerouti, 2017](#)) examined the inverse direction (engagement to readiness), they implicitly confirm a strong reciprocal correlation. Therefore, grounded in the JD-R model, SCT, and COR theory, this study hypothesizes:

H₃: Work readiness has a positive effect on work engagement.

Employee Experience and Employee Performance

Employee experience encompasses the totality of interactions, perceptions, and feelings an employee accumulates throughout their tenure with an organization ([Morgan 2017](#)). A positive employee experience is characterized by supportive leadership, inclusive culture, meaningful work, and adequate technological and physical resources. The influence of employee experience on performance is

strongly supported by Self-Determination Theory ([McAnally and Hagger 2024](#)). When the work environment satisfies the basic psychological needs for autonomy (feeling in control), competence (feeling effective), and relatedness (feeling connected to others), employees naturally exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation, which translates directly into enhanced task performance, creativity, and organizational citizenship behavior. Additionally, the JD-R Model ([Bakker and Demerouti 2017](#)) categorizes positive work experiences (such as social support, performance feedback, and skill variety) as job resources. These resources not only buffer the negative impact of job demands but also stimulate the motivational process, leading to better performance outcomes. Empirically, studies have confirmed that positive employee experiences predict higher productivity, lower absenteeism, and greater retention ([Minkyung, Lee, and Kim 2022](#)). In the specific context of teaching, [Wang and Wang \(2023\)](#) found that young teachers who report supportive school climates and positive administrative interactions demonstrate superior instructional quality. Therefore, synthesizing SDT and the JD-R model with empirical evidence, this study proposes:

H₄: Employee experience has a positive effect on employee performance.

Work Engagement and Employee Performance

The relationship between work engagement and employee performance is one of the most well-established in the organizational behavior literature. Theoretically, the JD-R Model ([Bakker and Demerouti 2017](#)) explicitly positions work engagement as the core of the motivational process. Engaged employees experience high levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption, which directly drive them to go above and beyond in their roles. Social Cognitive Theory ([Bandura 2018](#)) complements this by suggesting that engaged employees exhibit higher task-specific self-efficacy, which

enhances their performance capabilities. Employees who are emotionally and cognitively engaged demonstrate higher task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and greater creativity ([Mazzetti et al. 2023](#)). In the teaching profession, [Burić and Moe \(2020\)](#) demonstrated that teacher enthusiasm, a tangible manifestation of work engagement, directly impacts instructional quality, classroom management skills, and emotional support for students.

[Bakker and de Vries \(2021\)](#) in a longitudinal study of Finnish teachers, demonstrated that work engagement not only predicts current performance but also reduces turnover intention and improves future occupational health. A recent meta-analysis by [Mazzetti, Robledo, Vignoli, and Topa \(2023\)](#) confirmed that work engagement consistently predicts task and contextual performance across sectors, cultures, and research methodologies. Thus, rooted firmly in JD-R and SCT theoretical frameworks:

H₅: Work engagement has a positive effect on employee performance.

The Role of Work Engagement as a Strategic Mediator

The integration of the above relationship framework leads to the proposition that work engagement mediates the influence of work readiness and employee experience on employee performance. The JD-R Model ([Bakker and Demerouti 2017](#)) provides the most compelling theoretical rationale for this mediation, as it posits a motivational pathway where job and personal resources (work readiness) and job resources embedded in the environment (employee experience) predict performance through the mediating mechanism of work engagement. In other words, resources do not directly produce performance; rather, they foster a state of engagement, which in turn yields positive outcomes.

The interaction between these resources could mitigate teacher's admin

workload in the way that personal resources (Work Readiness) enable teachers to perceive job demand such as rigid bureaucratic and administrative tasks as manageable challenges rather than threatening burdens. Teachers with high readiness possess "digital self-efficacy" and "problem-solving flexibility" that allow them to transform potential techno-stress into productive engagement. At the same time, the job resources provided through a positive Employee Experience act as a buffer against the negative impacts of job demands. For instance, supportive leadership and inclusive culture provide the energy required to handle administrative complexities without experiencing resource depletion or burnout.

From a COR theory perspective ([Hobfoll 2018](#)), work-ready individuals possess personal resources that allow them to build and sustain engagement, which then serves as the active mechanism preventing resource loss and promoting performance gains. Similarly, positive employee experiences provide contextual resources (e.g., support, autonomy) that enable the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (as per SDT), which fosters engagement, which then manifests as superior performance. Empirically, [Bakker and Demerouti \(2017\)](#) demonstrated in a daily longitudinal study that autonomy and social support (core aspects of employee experience) increase daily work engagement, which in turn predicts task performance on the same day. [Sungailė, Vveinhardt, and Bendaravičienė \(2024\)](#) confirmed that work engagement mediates the relationship between work readiness and employee performance. Individuals who are work-ready are more quickly emotionally engaged with their work, and this engagement explains why they perform better, not solely due to their technical skills. Similarly, [Yovita and Setia \(2024\)](#) consistently found that work engagement mediates the influence of work experience on performance. [Mazzetti et al. \(2023\)](#), in their meta-analysis, concluded that work engagement is the most robust mediator in the relationship between job resources and

performance. Based on this robust theoretical synthesis (JD-R, COR, SDT) and empirical evidence, the following mediation hypotheses are formulated:

H₆: Work engagement mediates the effect of work readiness on employee performance.

H₇: Employee experience mediates the effect of work readiness on employee performance.

METHOD

The target population in this study is all Generation Z teachers who hold the status of State Civil Apparatus (ASN) and work in the Surabaya City Education Office. The classification of Generation Z refers to the widely accepted definition from the Pew Research Center, as proposed by [Dimock \(2019\)](#), namely individuals born between 1997 and 2012. Thus, at the time of data collection, respondents were aged between 19 and 27 years, which represents the early career stage of this generational cohort.

The target population was deliberately limited to Generation Z civil servant (ASN) teachers in Surabaya, based on three specific criteria. First, respondents were selected from the Generation Z cohort defined by birth years between 1997 and 2012 ([Dimock 2019](#)) placing them in the 19–27 age range. Second, respondents held active civil servant status under the Surabaya City Education Office. Third, to ensure respondents had experienced actual workload demands and stability, a minimum tenure of six months was required, encompassing a comprehensive range of service durations across four categories: 6 months–1 year, >1–3 years, >3–5 years, and >6 years. This variation in tenure is theoretically relevant as it reflects distinct stages of workplace adjustment, wherein work readiness and employee experience can differentially impact conditions and performance ([Sungailé, Vveinhardt, and Bendaravičienė 2024](#)).

The sampling technique employed was a total sampling technique (census). The sampling frame was obtained from personnel data from the Surabaya City Education Office, which lists all Generation Z ASN teachers, their contact information, and work units. To anticipate the potential for non-response rates and incomplete questionnaires, this study distributed questionnaires to the entire population of 300 teachers. Of these, 247 questionnaires were returned and processed (yielding a response rate of 82.3%). After a rigorous data screening process to check for completeness, consistency of responses, and identification of univariate outliers, 233 valid responses were obtained and were ready for further analysis.

The final sample size of 233 respondents substantially exceeds all minimum requirements recommended by various sampling methods. This sample size far exceeds the recommendations of [Hair et al. \(2017\)](#), (30 respondents), [Kock and Hadaya \(2018\)](#), (155 respondents) meets the recommendation of [Hair et al. \(2019\)](#) who suggested a minimum sample size of 200 for stability of SEM-PLS estimates. Therefore, the obtained sample size is considered very adequate and meets the requirements for high statistical power to test the research hypotheses. In this study, the Performance variable is measured using 12 indicators adapted from the research of [Tan et al. \(2024\)](#). Furthermore, to measure Work Engagement, 8 indicators developed by [Schaufeli \(2017\)](#) are used. The Employee Experience variable is measured through 10 indicators adopted from the thinking framework of ([Morgan 2017; Minkyung, Lee, and Kim 2022](#)) Finally, for the Work Readiness variable, the instrument used consists of 10 indicators sourced from the research of [Okolie and Onajite \(2021\)](#) The complete research indicators are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Indicators

Variable	Code	Indicator Item	Source
Employee Experience	EX.1	My workplace provides various workspaces such as conference rooms, collaboration rooms, open spaces, and a canteen.	Morgan (2017); Minkyung, Lee, and Kim (2022)
	EX.2	I can be proud of my workplace to my family and friends.	
	EX.3	My workplace provides a room where I can relax.	
	EX.4	My work environment provides a flexible working atmosphere.	
	EX.5	My workplace supports cultural diversity.	
	EX.6	My workplace provides opportunities for employee development.	
	EX.7	Employee mental health is highly regarded in my workplace.	
	EX.8	The technology system in my office is easy to use.	
	EX.9	The technology in my workplace is up-to-date (not outdated).	
	EX.10	My workplace makes it easy for employees to use the available technology.	
Employee Performance	EP.1	I often complete my work well.	Tan et al. (2024)
	EP.2	I always strive to improve the quality of my work over time.	
	EP.3	I feel responsible for my work.	
	EP.4	I often try to find creative ways to solve problems that arise.	
	EP.5	I like to take initiative in my work.	
	EP.6	I can cooperate well.	
	EP.7	My supervisor does not doubt the quality of my work.	
	EP.8	Complaints from others regarding my performance are low.	
	EP.9	I work well for the progress of my workplace.	
	EP.10	I am able to complete work on time.	
	EP.11	The work given to me was quite a lot.	
	EP.12	My supervisor provides direction on the tasks assigned to me.	
Work Engagement	WE.1	I feel full of energy when I am working.	Schaufeli (2017)
	WE.2	I feel like going to work as soon as I wake up in the morning.	
	WE.3	When I am at work, I feel enthusiastic.	
	WE.4	I feel excited about my work.	
	WE.5	I can be motivated by my work.	

Variable	Code	Indicator Item	Source
Work Readiness	WE.6	I feel happy when I work seriously.	Okolie and Onajite (2021)
	WE.7	I often get engrossed in my work.	
	WE.8	The work I do makes me feel proud.	
	WR.1	I am able to work in a team.	
	WR.2	I am interested in the position (job) I applied for.	
	WR.3	I am very enthusiastic about learning as much knowledge as I have not yet mastered.	
	WR.4	I can't wait to explore my work.	
	WR.5	I am willing to start working from the bottom.	
	WR.6	I have competence in the digital field.	
	WR.7	I am able to work on several tasks at the same time.	
	WR.8	I am able to adapt easily to new situations.	
	WR.9	I am always detailed in doing every job.	
	WR.10	I respect my colleagues.	

Source: Adapted from [Morgan \(2017\)](#); [Minkyung, Lee, and Kim \(2022\)](#); [Tan et al. \(2024\)](#); [Schaufeli \(2017\)](#); [Okolie and Onajite \(2021\)](#).

RESULTS

The research questionnaire was distributed to the entire population of 300 teachers, yielding 233 valid responses for analysis. The data were analyzed using the SEM-PLS method with the assistance of

SmartPLS 3.0. Outer model evaluation was conducted through convergent validity and composite reliability tests. The demographic profile of the 233 respondents is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Response Data

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Man	40	17.2%
Woman	193	82.8%
Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
19-23 Years	9	3.9%
24-27 Years	224	96.1%
Education	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Bachelor's/ Postgraduate degree	233	100%
Length of work	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
6 months up to 1 year	83	35.6%
>1 to 3 years	18	7.7%
>3 to 5 years	52	22.3%
>6 years	80	34.3%
Amount	233	100%

Source: Processed data, 2026

Table 3. Convergent Validity Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Conclusion
Employee Experience	EX.1	0.548	Valid
	EX.2	0.650	Valid
	EX.3	0.559	Valid
	EX.4	0.696	Valid
	EX.5	0.704	Valid
	EX.6	0.745	Valid
	EX.7	0.708	Valid
	EX.8	0.752	Valid
	EX.9	0.789	Valid
	EX.10	0.828	Valid
Employee Performance	EP.1	0.747	Valid
	EP.2	0.787	Valid
	EP.3	0.789	Valid
	EP.4	0.783	Valid
	EP.5	0.698	Valid
	EP.6	0.800	Valid
	EP.7	0.637	Valid
	EP.9	0.813	Valid
	EP.10	0.780	Valid
	EP.12	0.611	Valid
Engagement	WE.1	0.842	Valid
	WE.2	0.834	Valid
	WE.3	0.893	Valid
	WE.4	0.914	Valid
	WE.5	0.888	Valid
	WE.6	0.838	Valid
	WE.8	0.773	Valid
	WR.1	0.822	Valid
Work Readiness	WR.2	0.773	Valid
	WR.3	0.804	Valid
	WR.4	0.758	Valid
	WR.5	0.685	Valid
	WR.6	0.696	Valid
	WR.7	0.572	Valid
	WR.8	0.756	Valid
	WR.9	0.731	Valid
	WR.10	0.675	Valid

Source: Primary data processed, 2026

The results presented in Table 3 show that all indicators of the four research variables are declared valid. This is based on the loading factor values, which are all above 0.50. In factor

analysis, the loading factor value represents the strength of the correlation between an indicator and the construct (variable) it measures. An indicator is considered to have a significant and

valid contribution in measuring a latent variable if its loading factor value meets the recommended minimum limit. Research methodologists have established a threshold (cut-off value) for loading factors as a validity criterion. According to [Hair et al. \(2017\)](#), a loading factor value of 0.30 is considered to meet the minimum level, 0.40 is considered more important, and 0.50 or greater is considered to have great practical significance, establishing a minimum threshold of 0.5 for factor loading values to support the assumption of convergent validity. In practice, this value of 0.5 is a commonly used limit to support the assumption of convergent validity. In practice, this value of 0.5 is a commonly used limit, as seen in the table of principal component analysis criteria which requires the loading value to be higher than 0.5. Thus, all indicators in this study, with a value range from 0.548 to 0.914, have exceeded the minimum standard of 0.50 recommended by experts, so that these indicators are declared valid and suitable for use to measure the variables of Employee Experience, Employee Performance, Engagement, and Work Readiness.

Based on the validity test results table presented, there are indicators that were eliminated from the measurement model because their loading factor values did not meet the required threshold. Before the final analysis was conducted, an initial evaluation of the measurement model showed that several

indicators in the Employee Performance variable, namely EP.8, EP.11, and WE.7, were not included in the results table. [Hair et al. \(2019\)](#) recommend that indicators with loading factor values below 0.50 should be considered for removal from the model because they are considered unable to adequately measure their latent constructs, especially in confirmatory research. Thus, indicators EP.8, EP.11, and WE.7 were eliminated because they had loading factor values below the specified minimum limit. After the elimination process, all remaining indicators showed loading factor values above 0.50 to 0.90 and were declared valid. This confirms that the questionnaire items used in this study have met the requirements for convergent validity and are worthy of inclusion in further analysis ([Hair et al. 2017](#)).

The next step is to assess the discriminant validity between constructs in this study, using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) approach. Based on the criteria recommended by [Becker et al. \(2023\)](#), discriminant validity is considered problematic if the HTMT value exceeds the threshold of 0.90. The results of the analysis in Table 4 show that all HTMT values are below or exactly at the maximum limit of 0.90. The highest value was found in the correlation between Work Readiness and Employee performance at ($r = 0.875$), while the lowest value was in the correlation between Work Readiness and Employee experience at $r = 0.375$).

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Employee experience	Employee performance	Engagement	Work readiness
Employee experience	1			
Employee performance	0.694	1		
Engagement	0.620	0.791	1	
Work readiness	0.569	0.875	0.778	1

Source: Processed data, 2026

With no values found that exceed the threshold of 0.90, it can be concluded that all constructs in this research model, namely Employee Experience, Employee Performance, Engagement, and Work Readiness, have met the requirements for discriminant validity. This confirms that each construct is empirically different and measures a unique concept from one another.

Given that all HTMT coefficients remain below the recommended threshold of 0.90 (Becker et al. 2023), the results confirm that all constructs in this research model Employee Experience, Employee Performance, Work Engagement, and Work Readiness possess satisfactory discriminant validity. This empirical evidence indicates that each construct is theoretically distinct and measures a unique conceptual domain, with no excessive overlap

among constructs that would compromise their distinctiveness. Additionally, these findings are consistent with and reinforce the previously established reliability and convergent validity assessments, as evidenced by Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.70, alongside Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.50. Taken together, these results affirm that the measurement model exhibits robust psychometric properties, thereby justifying its suitability for structural model estimation and subsequent hypothesis testing. The conceptual framework illustrating the hypothesized relationships among Work Readiness, Employee Experience, Work Engagement, and Employee Performance is presented in Figure 2.

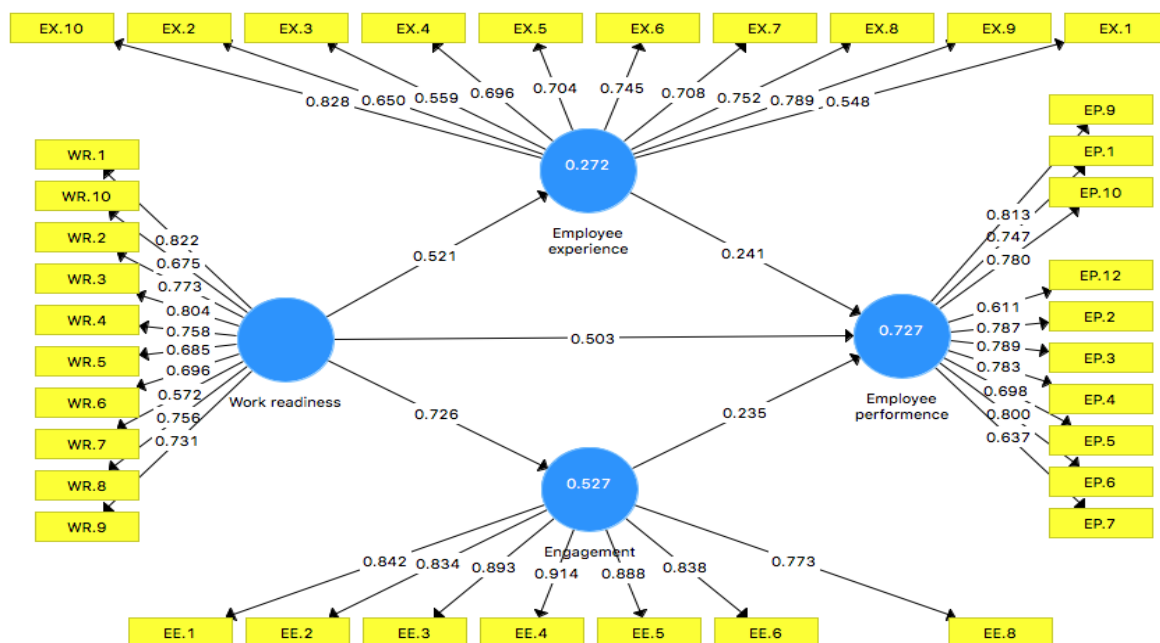


Figure 2. Conceptual Research
Source: Processed data, 2026

Table 5. Composite Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	Composite Reliability
Employee experience	0.884	0.595	0.906
Employee performance	0.911	0.559	0.926
Engagement	0.939	0.732	0.950
Work readiness	0.902	0.534	0.919

Source: Primary data processed, 2026

Table 5 presents the results of the composite reliability test, which aims to evaluate the internal consistency of the research instruments. This analysis uses three main measures: Cronbach's Alpha (α), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (ρ_c). Based on standards recommended in the literature, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values must be above 0.70 to indicate satisfactory reliability ([Hair et al. 2019](#); [DeVellis and Thorpe 2021](#)), while the AVE value must exceed 0.50 to meet the requirements for convergent validity ([Fornell and Larcker 1981](#)). The analysis results show that all variables in this study have Cronbach's Alpha values above the threshold of 0.70, with values ranging from $\alpha = 0.884$ (Employee Experience) to $\alpha = 0.939$ (Work Engagement). This indicates that all instruments have good internal consistency. Furthermore, the Composite Reliability values for all variables also

exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70, even exceeding 0.90, with values of $\rho_c = 0.906$ (Employee Experience), $\rho_c = 0.926$ (Employee Performance), $\rho_c = 0.950$ (Work Engagement), and $\rho_c = 0.919$ (Work Readiness). These high Composite Reliability values indicate that the indicators in each construct consistently measure the same concept ([Hair et al. 2019](#)). In terms of convergent validity, all variables demonstrated AVE values above 0.50. The Work Engagement variable recorded the highest AVE of 0.732, while Work Readiness had the lowest value but still exceeded the threshold, at 0.534. Having met all the recommended criteria for reliability and convergent validity, it can be concluded that all constructs in this study demonstrate adequate psychometric properties ([Ab Hamid et al. 2017](#); [Hair et al. 2019](#)). This confirms that the instruments are consistent and effectively measure each respective variable.

Table 6. Confidence Intervals (CI) Bias Corrected

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Bias	2.5%	97.5%
Employee experience → Employee performance	0.241	0.244	0.003	0.128	0.331
Engagement → Employee performance	0.235	0.234	-0.001	0.115	0.370
Work readiness → Employee experience	0.521	0.531	0.010	0.429	0.599
Work readiness → Employee performance	0.503	0.502	-0.001	0.380	0.607
Work readiness → Engagement	0.726	0.729	0.003	0.647	0.780

Source: Primary data processed, 2026

Table 6 presents the results of the parameter stability test using the Bias-Corrected Bootstrap procedure with 5,000 resamples. This test aims to ensure the robustness of the direct path estimates against violations of the data normality assumption ([Hair et al. 2017](#)). Based on established criteria, an effect is considered statistically significant if the 95% confidence interval (CI) does not include zero. The analysis results indicate that all tested direct paths (H_1 – H_5) have CI ranges entirely above zero. These findings confirm that Work Readiness exerts the strongest direct influence on Work Engagement ($\beta = 0.726$; 95% CI: 0.647–0.780), followed by its influence on Employee Experience ($\beta = 0.521$; 95% CI: 0.429–0.599) and Employee Performance ($\beta = 0.503$; 95% CI: 0.380–0.607). Meanwhile, both Employee Experience ($\beta =$

0.241; 95% CI: 0.128–0.331) and Work Engagement ($\beta = 0.235$; 95% CI: 0.115–0.370) are consistently shown to drive improvements in the performance of Generation Z teachers. The bias values are also very small, ranging from -0.001 to 0.010; this indicates that the resulting bootstrap estimates are stable and do not exhibit significant deviation ([Kock \(2015\)](#)). Thus, it can be concluded that these bootstrap confidence interval test results reinforce the findings of the previous hypothesis tests and confirm that the proposed structural model possesses robust resilience against violations of the normal distribution assumption. The statistical testing results for all direct and indirect hypotheses, including their T-statistics and significance levels (p-values), are reported in Table 7.

Table 7. Hypothesis Test Results (Path Analysis)

Hypothesis	Relationship between Variables	T-Statistic	P-Values	Significance	Result
H_1	Work readiness → Employee performance	8.473	0.000	Significant	Accepted
H_2	Work readiness → Employee experience	11.509	0.000	Significant	Accepted
H_3	Work readiness → Engagement	22.172	0.000	Significant	Accepted
H_4	Employee experience → Employee performance	4.738	0.000	Significant	Accepted
H_5	Engagement → Employee performance	3.613	0.000	Significant	Accepted
H_6	Work readiness → Engagement → Employee performance	3.579	0.000	Significant	Accepted
H_7	Work readiness → Employee experience → Employee performance	4.524	0.000	Significant	Accepted

Source: Primary data processed, 2026

Hypothesis 1 (H₁): Work Readiness → Employee Performance (Significant)

The results of the first hypothesis test indicate that Work Readiness has a positive and significant influence on Employee Performance with a T-Statistic value of 8.473 (P-Values 0.000). This finding confirms that the higher a teacher's level of work readiness encompassing mental preparedness, professional competence, and adaptability the higher their performance as an educator. For ASN Gen Z teachers, this readiness serves as a crucial foundation. Those who enter the educational bureaucracy with thorough preparation adapt more quickly to curriculum demands and school administration, while also demonstrating greater confidence in implementing innovative teaching methods. This aligns with [Paetsch and Franz \(2025\)](#), who found that novice teachers with high readiness profiles reported significantly greater self-efficacy and lower emotional exhaustion key indicators of optimal performance capacity. Such readiness enables teachers to focus on meaningful student interactions and achieve learning objectives. Given that Work Readiness has a strong direct effect on Employee Performance (T-Statistic 8.473) and is the strongest predictor of Work Engagement (T-Statistic 22.172), these findings carry profound implications for Teacher Training Institutions (LPTK). Currently, most pre-service curricula in Indonesia emphasize pedagogical content knowledge and teaching methodologies, yet largely overlook two critical dimensions: 'emotional maturity' the capacity for stress regulation, empathy, and managing professional conflicts without burnout and 'bureaucratic adaptability' the ability to navigate rigid administrative systems, hierarchical protocols, and policy changes without losing professional idealism. To address this gap, LPTKs should integrate simulation-based training exposing pre-service teachers to authentic bureaucratic challenges, case studies of intergenerational conflicts, and resilience-building modules. Such curriculum innovation would better equip prospective Generation Z teachers to translate

academic readiness into sustained performance amid the complex sociopolitical realities of Indonesian public schools.

Hypothesis 2 (H₂): Work Readiness → Employee Experience (Significant)

The second hypothesis proves that Work Readiness has a significant effect on Employee Experience with a T-Statistic value of 11.509 (P-Values 0.000). This means that a teacher's perception of their experience working in a school, from interactions with colleagues, support from superiors, to available facilities, is largely determined by how prepared they are internally. Gen Z teachers who have high work readiness tend to interpret challenges and support in their work environment more positively. They are less easily surprised by bureaucratic complexity and are better able to find the resources they need to create a satisfying work experience. Conversely, teachers with low readiness may perceive the same environment as stressful and unsupportive. Phenomenological research by [Stockton \(2025\)](#) in Illinois confirms this by showing that to retain young teachers, schools need to actively create an innovative and supportive environment, which is essentially an effort to shape a positive Employee Experience that aligns with their readiness expectations.

Hypothesis 3 (H₃): Work Readiness → Work Engagement (Significant)

The third hypothesis with the highest T-Statistic, namely 22.172 (P-Values 0.000), shows a very strong relationship between Work Readiness and Work Engagement. This means that work readiness is the main predictor of how emotionally and cognitively engaged a teacher is with their work. Gen Z teachers who are work-ready will show higher vigor, dedication, and absorption in teaching. They feel positively challenged by their work, not burdened. This finding is supported by research by [Sakyte-Statnicke and Statnickis \(2025\)](#) who introduced the concept of techno-work engagement. Their

study proved that the more prepared a teacher is in using technology, the higher their technology engagement. For Gen Z who grew up with technology, this readiness is a natural asset that, if honed, will make them more involved and enthusiastic in the digital-rich teaching and learning process.

Hypothesis 4 (H₄): Employee Experience → Employee Performance (Significant)

The results of the fourth hypothesis confirm the important role of the work environment with a T-Statistic value of 4.738 (P-Values 0.000), where a positive Employee Experience has a direct impact on increasing Employee Performance. This is a strong message for the Education Office that teacher performance is not only born from within the teacher, but is also greatly influenced by the surrounding ecosystem. When Gen Z teachers experience a humane work experience, feel supported by their superiors, have a work-life balance, and see opportunities for career development, they will be motivated to give their best performance. This is consistent with [Kaur and Randhawa's \(2024\)](#) research on public school teachers, which proves that perceived support from supervisors (perceived supervisor support) and work-life balance have a significant impact on positive teacher outcomes. This positive experience becomes the energy that drives teachers to be more productive and innovative.

Hypothesis 5 (H₅): Engagement → Employee Performance (Significant)

The fifth hypothesis shows that Work Engagement is an independent performance driver, with a significant influence on Employee Performance (T-Statistic 3.613, P-Values 0.000). Engaged teachers do not work solely because of administrative obligations, but rather because of internal drive and a sense of belonging to the profession. They devote full attention to student development and teaching quality. Research by [Fauzi et al. \(2025\)](#)

specifically examined Gen Z teachers in Indonesia and found that employee engagement has a positive and significant influence on intention to stay (the desire to stay) with a very strong coefficient. Although the focus is on retention, the same logic applies to performance: teachers who are emotionally attached to their school will perform better and are committed to making maximum contributions.

Hypothesis 6 (H₆): Work Readiness → Engagement → Employee Performance (Significant Mediation)

This hypothesis (T-Statistic 3.579, P-Values 0.000) completes the model by proving that Work Engagement also acts as a significant mediator. This means that teachers' work readiness will encourage increased work engagement, which in turn will improve their performance. For Gen Z teachers, their readiness (for example, in terms of technology or pedagogy) will make their work feel more meaningful and engaging. This engagement then transforms potential into concrete actions in the form of superior performance. Research by [Madhavedi, Kumar, and Hoo \(2025\)](#) interestingly found that despite their limited professional experience, Gen Z actually reported higher engagement and job satisfaction when they had positive perceptions of career development and leadership communication. This indicates that when their readiness is valued and guided (through engagement), their performance can surpass that of previous generations. This is supported by a long-term study showing that investments in job enrichment, which increases engagement, can effectively reduce turnover intentions and ultimately retain the best teachers. Conclusion Overall, these seven accepted hypotheses empirically construct a strong narrative: optimal performance of Gen Z ASN teachers is the result of a synergistic interaction between individual internal readiness (work readiness) and the quality of the external environment (employee experience), which is activated by psychological attachment (work

engagement). These findings not only validate the research model but also provide a clear roadmap for the Education Office to transform into a user-centric organization, where young teachers are not only treated as apparatus, but also as talents who need to be prepared, supported, and empowered.

Hypothesis 7 (H₇): Work Readiness → Employee Experience → Employee Performance (Significant Mediation)

Acceptance of mediation hypothesis 7 (T-Statistic 4.524, P-Values 0.000) provides a richer understanding of the performance achievement mechanism. These results indicate that Work Readiness not only has a direct effect on performance, but also has an indirect effect through increased Employee Experience. In other words, a teacher's work readiness will have an optimal impact on performance when he or she is able to create or utilize positive work experiences. Gen Z teachers who are ready to work will proactively build good relationships (with students and colleagues) and appreciate organizational support, which then spurs their performance. Findings from a phenomenological study by a study at [\(Lawhorn 2024\)](#), reinforce this, by revealing that Gen Z teachers highly value workplace relationships, including interactions with older generations and the need to be recognized as professionals. These positive relational experiences are the bridge that connects their internal readiness to actual performance in the classroom.

Based on the results of data analysis in this study, Work Readiness is proven to be the most influential variable on the performance of Generation Z ASN Teachers in Surabaya compared to Employee Experience and Work Engagement. This conclusion is supported by strong empirical evidence from statistical test results, where Work Readiness shows a very significant direct effect on Employee Performance with a T-Statistic value of 8.473 ($p < 0.000$). This value far exceeds the direct effect of Employee Experience which only reaches a

T-Statistic of 4.738 or Work Engagement with a T-Statistic of 3.613 on performance. In SEM-PLS analysis, the higher the T-Statistic value indicates the stronger the influence of a variable, so the dominance of Work Readiness cannot be ignored [\(Hair et al. 2019\)](#).

Since work readiness is the most influential variable on performance through its direct and indirect pathways, beside academic preparation, it is important to consider that Teacher Training Institutions (LPTK) must urgently reorient their curricula to address the gap between academic theory and the rigid administrative reality of the field. LPTKs should implement specific training focused on stress regulation, empathy, and professional conflict management to prevent early-career burnout, LPTKs should integrate simulation-based training that exposes students to authentic bureaucratic challenges, such as navigating hierarchical protocols and rigid administrative systems.

The most striking of this finding is the influence of Work Readiness on Work Engagement which reaches a T-Statistic value of 22.172, making it the highest number in the entire research model. This indicates that work readiness is a major predictor of how emotionally and cognitively engaged a Generation Z teacher is with their work. As stated by [Sakyte-Statnicke and Statnickis \(2025\)](#), teachers' readiness to use technology significantly increases their technology engagement. Furthermore, Work Readiness has also been shown to have the ability to mediate itself through double pathways, namely a direct influence with a T-Statistic of 8.473, an indirect influence through Employee Experience with a T-Statistic of 4.524, and an indirect influence through Work Engagement with a T-Statistic of 3.579. The total influence of Work Readiness on performance from these three pathways accumulatively far exceeds the contribution of other variables, which confirms that Work Readiness functions as the root cause that drives the entire performance achievement mechanism.

General Discussion: The Predominant Role of Work Readiness and Theoretical Synthesis

Work Readiness is the most influential variable in this model, as evidenced by its multiple significant pathways: direct effect on Employee Performance (T-Statistic 8.473), indirect effect through Employee Experience (T-Statistic 4.524), and indirect effect through Work Engagement (T-Statistic 3.579). This cumulative influence, rooted in its nature as a dispositional or innate individual variable encompassing mental readiness, professional competence, emotional maturity, and adaptability ([Okolie and Onajite 2021](#)), confirms Work Readiness as the fundamental driver of the performance mechanism. For Generation Z teachers just entering the world of educational bureaucracy, this readiness is the initial capital that determines how they will respond to the work environment. [Paetsch and Franz \(2025\)](#) in their study of novice teachers identified that teachers with a high teaching readiness profile reported significantly greater self-efficacy and lower emotional exhaustion. In other words, teachers who are ready to work have a strong psychological foundation to face professional challenges. Generation Z teachers who have high work readiness tend to interpret challenges and support in their work environment more positively, as evidenced by H_2 , which was significant with a T-Statistic of 11.509. They are less easily surprised by bureaucratic complexity and are better able to find the resources they need to create a satisfying work experience. Conversely, teachers with low readiness may perceive the same environment as oppressive and unsupportive, a phenomenon that [Dacholfany et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Wang and Wang \(2023\)](#) refer to as cultural shock in the workplace, where the mismatch between competencies and bureaucratic realities creates a cultural shock that erodes professional motivation. The relationship between Work Readiness and Work Engagement through the perspective of the Job Demands-Resources

Model shows that individuals with high work readiness perceive job demands as challenges that can be overcome, rather than as threatening burdens ([Bakker and Demerouti 2017](#)).

Work-ready Generation Z teachers will demonstrate greater vigor, dedication, and self-absorption in teaching. They feel positively challenged by their work, rather than burdened, a condition [Schaufeli \(2017\)](#) defined as work engagement. What distinguishes Work Readiness from the other two variables is its ability to create a chain effect through mediation. Work readiness not only has a direct impact but also creates a positive work experience where work-ready teachers proactively build good relationships and appreciate organizational support, which then spurs their performance. Phenomenological research at ([Lawhorn 2024](#)), revealed that Generation Z teachers highly value relationships in the workplace, including interactions with older generations and the need for recognition as professionals. Furthermore, their readiness, for example in technology or pedagogy, will make work feel more meaningful and engaging, which then transforms potential into concrete actions in the form of superior performance. The unique characteristics of Generation Z as the first generation to grow up as digital natives further reinforce the importance of Work Readiness. They have high technological fluency but also bring new expectations and vulnerabilities to the work environment ([Walton 2025](#); [Lang and Jones 2025](#)).

[Sudrajat et al. \(2024\)](#) emphasized that despite Generation Z's superior digital literacy, work stress levels among young teachers remain high due to bureaucratic complexity. This is where work readiness acts as a buffer or dampener for the negative impacts of bureaucracy, by bridging the gap between superior digital literacy and rigid administrative systems, between expectations of flexibility and traditional hierarchical structures, and between the need for equal collaboration and a culture of seniority. [Sungailè, Vveinhardt, and](#)

[Bendaravičienė \(2024\)](#) in their study of millennials and Generation Z demonstrated that work readiness is the strongest predictor of performance, even surpassing the influence of formal company-organized training programs. These findings indicate that investing in developing work readiness attributes during education has substantial long-term impacts. [Potgieter and Coetzee \(2022\)](#) also reported that work readiness is positively correlated not only with task performance but also with contextual performance such as peer-helping behavior and self-development initiatives. Thus, the dominant influence of Work Readiness has important implications for the Education Office to reorient recruitment by not only assessing academic qualifications, but also conducting a comprehensive assessment of the mental readiness, emotional maturity, and adaptability of prospective Generation Z teachers, as well as designing a transformative induction program and building partnerships with Education Personnel Education Institutions to develop work readiness from the pre-service education period.

CONCLUSION

Based on a comprehensive discussion of the seven hypotheses tested, it can be concluded that the optimal performance of Generation Z ASN teachers is the result of the accumulation of hierarchical and interrelated psychological and organizational processes. Specifically, Work Readiness is proven to be a fundamental foundation that not only contributes directly to improved performance (H₁), but also acts as a catalyst that forms a positive perception of the work environment (Employee Experience) in H₂ and generates emotional attachment (Work Engagement) in H₃. These findings confirm that investing in preparing the mental readiness, professional competence, and adaptability of young teachers is an initial strategic step that cannot be ignored.

Furthermore, this study revealed that the influence of internal readiness does not

stand alone. A positive Employee Experience characterized by superior support, work-life balance, and healthy interpersonal relationships was proven to significantly drive performance improvement (H₄). Similarly, high Work Engagement, reflected in teacher enthusiasm and dedication, was an independent and significant driver of performance (H₅). The most substantive finding of this finding is the proven mediating role of these two variables. Work Readiness achieves its maximum impact on performance when it is able to create a positive work experience (H₇) and when it successfully activates teachers' psychological engagement (H₆).

Thus, the theoretical and practical contribution of this study is to validate an integral model in which performance is not solely a function of individual competency, but rather the result of a synergy between internal readiness (Work Readiness), the quality of a humane work ecosystem (Employee Experience), and actualized psychological energy (Work Engagement). For the Department of Education, this conclusion underscores the urgency of transforming from mere administrative managers to experience architects capable of preparing, supporting, and empowering young talent. This holistic approach is key to preventing brain drain and realizing an education bureaucracy that is not only efficient, but also attractive and humane for the nation's future generations.

The practical contribution of this study is to provide guidance for government agencies, particularly the Department of Education, to transform from traditional compliance-based management to User-Centric HRM, which is more adaptive to the needs of young talent. This study also adapts the Employee Experience concept, prevalent in high-tech companies, to the public school bureaucracy. This cross-disciplinary approach aims to create an attractive work environment to prevent the loss of top talent (brain drain) from the public education sector ([Suryani, Watt, and Richardson](#)

2024; Zolak Poljasevic, Gričnik, and Sarotar Zizek 2025). To operationalize this transformation, this study offers two concrete recommendations for the Department of Education. First, implementing Reverse Mentoring programs can effectively dismantle the rigid seniority culture that often stifles young teachers' creativity and idealism. In this model, Generation Z teachers who possess superior digital literacy and fresh pedagogical perspectives are paired with senior teachers to exchange knowledge and skills. While junior teachers share insights on technology integration and contemporary teaching approaches, senior mentors provide guidance on classroom management and navigating organizational dynamics. This bi-directional learning approach not only empowers young teachers by validating their competencies but also fosters intergenerational collaboration and mutual respect, gradually breaking down hierarchical barriers that have historically marginalized the voices of novice educators.

Second, the Department of Education must urgently redesign its administrative burden by moving beyond superficial digitization. Current e-performance and e-learning platforms often merely replicate manual bureaucratic processes in digital formats, inadvertently creating "techno-stress" rather than alleviating workload. Instead, the Department should conduct a comprehensive audit of administrative tasks to identify redundancies and eliminate non-essential reporting requirements. Technology should be redesigned to serve teachers' pedagogical needs such as automated lesson planning tools, intelligent grading systems, and streamlined communication

platforms rather than functioning primarily as surveillance and compliance mechanisms. By transforming technology from an administrative burden into a genuine pedagogical enabler, the Department can reduce techno-stress while simultaneously enhancing teacher productivity and work engagement. This study assumes that the key to solving Employee Performance problems in the education bureaucracy is to "humanize" its work ecosystem. The solution offered is not simply administrative digitization, but rather creating synergy between teacher Work Readiness and a supportive Employee Experience achieved through reverse mentoring and burden redesign which will ultimately activate Work Engagement to achieve optimal performance.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. The authors explicitly acknowledge that the limited number of respondents (233 teachers) and the focus on Generation Z civil servant teachers in Surabaya City may affect the generalizability of the results to other regions or public sectors. Furthermore, the recommendation to use a qualitative approach in the future indicates that the current quantitative method may not be able to capture the emotional dynamics of teachers in depth. Implicitly, this study also has other limitations, such as the cross-sectional design that cannot prove causal relationships, the potential for common method bias because all data comes from the same source (self-report questionnaires), the subjective nature of performance measurement, and the failure to consider external contextual factors such as government policies that can also influence teacher performance.

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