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The Influence of Compensation on Employee Retention and Job Satisfaction as Mediating Variables in Generation Z.

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Abstract: *This study investigates how salary influences work satisfaction and retention among Generation Z employees in Surabaya, using job satisfaction as a mediator. The study uses an explanatory quantitative method to address high turnover rates, which are connected to wage discontent and limited career advancement. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 80 respondents, which were then analyzed with multiple linear regression, t-tests, and Sobel tests. The results reveal that salary has a favorable and considerable impact on both work satisfaction and retention. Job satisfaction has a favorable influence on retention and serves as a mediator between salary and retention. Finally, greater remuneration increases job happiness, which enhances Generation Z employee retention, emphasizing the need of competitive and equitable pay practices.*

Keyword: *Compensation, Job Satisfaction, Employee Retention, Generation Z.*

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this research is to investigate how compensation and job satisfaction effect Generation Z employee retention. According to empirical studies, compensation has a favorable and statistically significant impact on employee retention. Implementing a comprehensive compensation structure that includes basic salary, allowances, incentives, and benefits enhances the organization's appeal as an employer while decreasing employee turnover intentions. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that compensation significantly impacts the enhancement of job satisfaction. A remuneration scheme perceived as equitable elevates job satisfaction levels, fosters a conducive work environment, and functions as an employee motivator. Conversely, job satisfaction also exhibits a positive correlation with retention. Elements including a supportive workplace atmosphere, constructive interpersonal relations, and opportunities for professional development have been established to fortify employee loyalty. Notably, work satisfaction acts as a moderating element in the association between salary and retention. As a result, salary influences retention not just directly, but also

indirectly, through its favorable impact on job satisfaction. The synergy between competitive pay methods and greater job satisfaction is a crucial driver of long-term retention of Generation Z workforce members and provides enterprises with a sustainable competitive edge.

METHODS

Types of research

This study employs a quantitative explanatory approach to analyze the causal relationship between pay, work happiness, and employee retention among Surabaya's Generation Z. This methodology was chosen because it is appropriate for systematically studying both direct and indirect effects between the important variables, and it is implemented using a variety of statistical analysis tools.

Population and sample

This research focuses on Surabaya's Generation Z demographic, which includes people born between 1997 and 2012. Purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, was used to choose an 80-person sample. Certain inclusion criteria were used to choose the sample, such as active Generation Z worker status with at least six months of employment. The number of samples utilized was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, which was deemed sufficient and representative.

Data source

This study, conducted in Surabaya in 2025, employed a closed-ended questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1 to 5 to analyze the influence of pay and work satisfaction on employee retention. Compensation was operationalized into two dimensions: financial (base pay, wages, bonuses, allowances, benefits, and facilities) and non-financial (training opportunities, competency development, promotions, vacation, and transportation). The job satisfaction variable was measured using aspects such as type of work, income level, promotion opportunities, quality of supervision, and dynamics of relationships with colleagues. Employee retention is measured using factors such as job attractiveness, working relationship quality, remuneration system fairness, and management support. All indicators used in these variables refer to theoretical foundations and findings from previous studies.

Data analysis techniques

The empirical data obtained in this investigation were subjected to a series of comprehensive and methodical statistical procedures. The analytical sequence was meticulously designed to ensure both precision in data processing and the veracity of the research outcomes. The initial stage of the analytical process involved the implementation of validity and reliability assessments to evaluate the psychometric properties and measurement accuracy of the research instruments. These diagnostic tests were essential for establishing the foundational credibility and consistency of the measurement tools prior to subsequent hypothesis testing, thereby safeguarding the overall integrity of the methodological approach. Instrument validity indicates the measurement instrument's ability to measure the target construct, whereas reliability assures that the measurement results are consistent. In the next phase, classical assumptions were verified to ensure that the statistical model was appropriate. The statistical assumptions tested included the normal distribution of the data, homoscedasticity, and the absence of multicollinearity between the independent variables. Meeting these statistical conditions is critical to the reliability of the regression analysis results. The study hypotheses were tested at the last step of the analysis. The Sobel test was used to determine the statistical significance of the mediation effect of the mediator variables. This test assesses if the intervening variables have a statistically significant mediation effect on the independent and dependent variables. All data analysis were carried out using IBM SPSS

Statistics version 27. This program was chosen for its ability to analyze data accurately and efficiently, as well as its complete statistical analysis methods for the social sciences. The usage of this software ensures analytical rigor while also increasing the validity and trustworthiness of study findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Instrument Test Results

Table 1. Validity Test Results

Item	Calculated R	R Table	Validity
X1	0.463	0.22	Yes
X2	0.379	0.22	Yes
X3	0.595	0.22	Yes
X4	0.542	0.22	Yes
X5	0.401	0.22	Yes
X6	0.501	0.22	Yes
X7	0.447	0.22	Yes
X8	0.47	0.22	Yes
X9	0.429	0.22	Yes
X10	0.428	0.22	Yes
X11	0.358	0.22	Yes
X12	0.532	0.22	Yes
Z1	0.383	0.22	Yes
Z2	0.415	0.22	Yes
Z3	0.363	0.22	Yes
Z4	0.369	0.22	Yes
Z5	0.253	0.22	Yes
Z6	0.296	0.22	Yes
Z7	0.452	0.22	Yes
Z8	0.513	0.22	Yes
Z9	0.495	0.22	Yes
Z10	0.494	0.22	Yes
Y1	0.457	0.22	Yes
Y2	0.47	0.22	Yes
Y3	0.455	0.22	Yes
Y4	0.55	0.22	Yes
Y5	0.365	0.22	Yes
Y6	0.501	0.22	Yes
Y7	0.484	0.22	Yes
Y8	0.589	0.22	Yes

Source : Processed Primary Data, 2025

Based on a thorough examination of the validity data reported in Table 1, it can be determined that all indicators reflecting the study variables fulfill the stipulated validity standards. This confirmation is based on the correlation coefficient (r) of each indicator, which is consistently above the table value of 0.22. In accordance with the necessary standards and testing processes, all indicators assessing compensation, work satisfaction, and staff retention have been verified legitimate. This means that these indicators are accurate enough to represent and quantify the important theoretical constructs, ensuring the trustworthiness of the data analysis and conclusions generated from the research findings.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Cut of Value	Reliability
Compensation (X)	0.667	0.6	RELIABLE
Job Satisfaction (Z)	0.631	0.6	RELIABLE
Employee Retention (Y)	0.636	0.6	RELIABLE

Source : Processed Primary Data, 2025

Following a careful evaluation of the reliability test results in Table 2, it is reasonable to conclude that all research variables consistently have Cronbach's alpha values larger than the minimum of 0.60. Achieving coefficients above this threshold indicates that the measurement instrument used has sufficient internal consistency. As a result, it can be firmly said that all incades comprising the variables compensation, work satisfaction, and employee retention satisfy the reliability standards. This means that the research instruments for these three variables have been shown to be dependable and capable of producing correct results. Based on empirical findings, these three variables meet the criteria for statistical reliability and are therefore suitable as measurement instruments for this study and future research. In other words, the developed instruments ensure the stability and consistency of the measurement results when reapplied to populations with relative characteristics.

Classical Assumption Test Results

Table 3. Normality Test Results

	Residual Coefficient	Parameter	Normality
Test Statistic	0.078	0.05	Yes
Asymp. Sig. (2 Tailed)	0,200	0.05	Yes

Source : Processed Primary Data, 2025

According to the statistical data shown in Table 3, the statistical test value was determined to be 0.078. This number is the outcome of statistical calculations made using standard testing protocols. A normality test was then run on the study data to ensure that the assumption of normal distribution, which is required for parametric analysis, was fulfilled. The normality test yielded a significant value (p-value) of 0.200. This significance value was then compared to the previously set alpha level of 0.05. The comparison found that the significance value (0.200) was statistically greater than the alpha value (0.05), stating that there was insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis of a normal distribution. This result confirmed that the research data statistically met the assumption of normality. Fulfilling this normality assumption has significant methodological implications, as it allows researchers to apply more powerful and robust parametric statistical analysis techniques. This feasibility ensures high validity of the resulting statistical conclusions and adequate interpretation of the research findings. Furthermore, fulfilling the normality assumption strengthens the reliability of the research conclusions drawn from the data analysis and thus contributes to the scientific soundness of the overall research findings.

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test Results

Model	Collinearity Statistics		Parameter		Multicollinearity
	Tolerance	VIF.	Tolerance	VIF.	
Compensation (X)	0.809	1.237	0.10	10	Not Occur
Job Satisfaction (Z)	0.809	1.237	0.10	10	Not Occur

Source : Processed Primary Data, 2025

According to a thorough examination of the results reported in Table 4, the research data reveal no symptoms of multicollinearity. This finding is based on an evaluation of two major statistical indicators: the variance inflation factor (VIF) and the tolerance value for each independent variable (remuneration (X) and job satisfaction (Z)). The computation reveals that the VIF for both independent variables is 1.237. This value is well below the maximum tolerance limit of 10 and indicates the absence of multicollinearity. On the other hand, the tolerance value for both variables is 0.809 – a value significantly above the minimum limit of 0.1. When the two diagnostic criteria ($VIF < 10$ and $tolerance > 0.1$) are met, the study model's independent variables show no significant connection. Thus, the assumption of non-multicollinearity is met, and the regression model used can be used for further analysis.

Table 5. Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Variable	Significance	Parameter	Heteroscedasticity
Compensation (X)	0.145	0.05	Not Occur
Job Satisfaction (Z)	0.051	0.05	Not Occur

Source : Processed Primary Data, 2025

The statistical analysis results shown in Table 5 allow us to assess the presence or absence of heteroscedasticity in the study data. A significant value of 0.145 was obtained when testing the compensation variable (X). The significance level was compared to the previously specified critical significance threshold ($\alpha = 0.05$). The comparison findings show that the variable X has a statistically significant value above the critical value ($0.145 > 0.05$). This suggests that there is insufficient statistical evidence for heteroscedasticity in the compensation variable. The job satisfaction variable (Z) was tested, and the significance level was 0.051. Although the computed value is numerically close to the critical threshold, it is statistically significant above the 0.05 level. Based on the applicable statistical test criteria, the variable job satisfaction also fulfills the assumption of homoscedasticity. A comprehensive evaluation of the two independent variables confirmed that the regression model used did not violate the assumption of homoscedasticity. Conformance with the homoscedasticity assumption has important implications for the validity of the regression model. By fulfilling this fundamental assumption, the developed regression model can be considered robust and reliable. The parameter estimates obtained by the model meet statistical reliability standards, allowing the results of the regression analysis to be interpreted with a high degree of confidence. Furthermore, this finding strengthens the validity of the research conclusions drawn from the data analysis, ensures that the results are not biased by heteroscedasticity issues, and provides a solid foundation for further interpretations and empirically sound decisions.

Table 6. Multiple Linear Regression Test Results

Model	Coefficient	Significance	<i>Parameter</i> Significance	Significance
c (X against Y)	0.337	0.001	0.05	Yes
a (X against Z)	0.319	0.001	0.05	Yes
b (Z against Y)	0.393	0.001	0.05	Yes
c' (X against Y through Z)	0.211	0.006	0.05	Yes

Source : Processed Primary Data, 2025

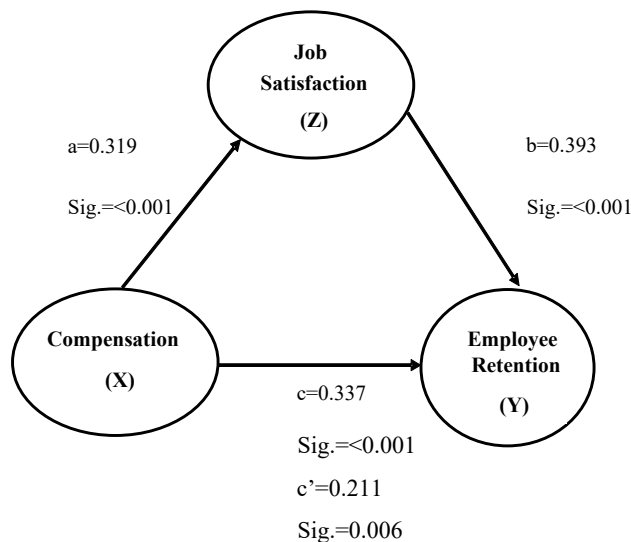


Image 1. Calculation of X and Z against Y

Source : Processed Primary Data, 2025

To establish mediation for variable Z in the connection between variables X and Y, three statistical significance requirements must be met: path coefficient c must demonstrate statistical significance ($\text{sig.} < 0.05$), indicating a direct relationship between X and Y; path coefficient a must achieve statistical significance ($\text{sig.} < 0.05$), demonstrating the influence of

X on Z; and path coefficient b must show statist. The characterization of mediation is determined by examining the change in significance from coefficient c to c' (representing the direct effect of X on Y after incorporating Z). Complete mediation is evidenced when coefficient c exhibits significance while coefficient c' becomes statistically non-significant following the inclusion of Z, indicating that Z entirely accounts for the relationship between X and Y. Partial mediation is established when both coefficients c and c' maintain statistical significance after introducing Z, suggesting that Z partially explains the relationship between X and Y while a direct effect of X on Y persists. In the present analysis, given the statistical significance of paths a, b, and c, the examination focuses on the transformation from c to c'. The observed reduction in the c coefficient from 0.337 to 0.211, concurrent with the loss of statistical significance for c', indicates the presence of complete mediation. This finding leads to the conclusion that job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between compensation and employee retention. Compensation exerts influence on job satisfaction, which subsequently affects employee retention. Consequently, the entire effect of compensation on employee retention is mediated through the mechanism of job satisfaction, with no remaining direct effect after accounting for this mediating variable.

Hypothesis Test Results

Table 7. T-Test Results

Model	Parameter				Hypothesis
	Calculated t	Sig.	t Table	Sig.	
X against Y	4.986	0.001	1.991	0.05	Accepted
X against Z	4.297	0.001	1.991	0.05	Accepted
Z against Y	5.877	0.001	1.991	0.05	Accepted

Source : Processed Primary Data, 2025

Based on the analytical outcomes of the statistical t-test, the ensuing empirical determinations were substantiated: 1. The remuneration variable (X) manifests a statistically significant influence on employee retention (Y), corroborated by a significance value of 0.001, which is inferior to the established alpha threshold ($\alpha = 0.05$), concomitant with a t-statistic (4.986) that prevails over the critical t-table value (1.991). These analytical results compel the repudiation of the primary null hypothesis (H_{01}) and corroborate the endorsement of the first alternative hypothesis (H_{a1}), thereby attesting to a positively oriented and statistically significant association between compensation and employee retention; 2. The compensation construct (X) further reveals a consequential effect on job satisfaction (Z), as denoted by a significance magnitude of $0.001 < \alpha$ (0.05) and a t-statistic (4.297) that eclipses the t-table benchmark (1.991). In conformity with these statistical conventions, the secondary null hypothesis (H_{02}) is refuted whereas the second alternative hypothesis (H_{a2}) is ratified. This verification confirms that compensation engenders a favorable and considerable impact on job satisfaction; and 3. The job satisfaction parameter (Z) exhibits a significant effect on employee retention (Y), substantiated by a significance value of $0.001 < \alpha$ (0.05) and a t-statistic (5.877) that exhibits statistical preeminence relative to the t-table reference (1.991). This evidentiary outcome justifies the dismissal of the tertiary null hypothesis (H_{03}) and validates the third alternative hypothesis (H_{a3}), evidencing that job satisfaction sustains a positive and statistically significant influence on employee retention.

Sobel Test Results

Tabel 8. Multiple Linear Regression Test Results

Model	Coefficient	Std. Error Coefficient	Significance
X terhadap Z	0.319	0.034	0.001
Z terhadap Y	0.520	0.049	0.001

Source : Processed Primary Data, 2025

As evidenced by the linear regression analysis presented in Table 9, the remuneration variable demonstrates a statistically significant effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.319$, $SE = 0.034$; $*p* = .001$). This research suggests a positive and substantial association between salary and work satisfaction within the employee cohort. The research shows that work satisfaction has a substantial impact on employee retention ($\beta = 0.520$, $SE = 0.049$; $*p* = .001$). This finding supports the hypothesis that higher levels of work satisfaction are associated with higher employee retention. Consequently, it can be deduced that both postulated relationships are not only positive but also possess considerable statistical significance, thereby providing empirical support for the theoretical framework underpinning this investigation.

$$\begin{aligned}
 z &= \frac{0,319 \times 0,520}{\sqrt{(0,520^2 0,034^2) + (0,319^2 0,049^2)}} \\
 &= \frac{0,166}{\sqrt{(0,270 \times 0,001156) + (0,102 \times 0,002401)}} \\
 &= \frac{0,166}{\sqrt{0,0003121 + 0,0002449}} \\
 &= \frac{0,166}{\sqrt{0,00557}} \\
 &= \frac{0,166}{0,0236} \\
 z &= 7,033
 \end{aligned}$$

The statistical computation derived from the Sobel test yielded a Z-value of 7.033. At the 5% significance level, this value substantially exceeds the critical threshold of 1.96, indicating that job satisfaction functions as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between compensation and employee retention. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_{04}) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_{a4}) is accepted. These results demonstrate that remuneration exerts both a positive and substantial direct effect on employee retention, in addition to a significant indirect effect operating through the mediating mechanism of job satisfaction.

The Influence of Compensation on Employee Retention

The study discovered that pay has a positive and substantial influence on employee retention among Generation Z employees in Surabaya ($p < 0.05$). This finding suggests that increasing compensation levels are associated with higher employee retention rates, which is consistent with previous research. As Bibi, Ahmad, and Majid (2018) noted, the compensation component is a crucial factor in employee retention. Furthermore, Wirayudha and Adnyani (2020) found that implementing a fair compensation system can increase employee retention while simultaneously reducing turnover rates. This finding supports the theoretical assumption that compensation functions not only as a financial reward but also as a strategic tool for companies to retain employees. For Generation Z, fair compensation represents a form of recognition from the company and also reflects career development opportunities. Companies with competitive compensation packages are more likely to retain young employees, as Generation Z is generally pragmatic and views compensation as an indicator of the company's fairness. Empirically, compensation that meets or exceeds expectations contributes to a sense of financial security and motivates employees to stay with the company. Conversely, inadequate compensation can increase turnover intentions among this demographic. Therefore, it can be concluded that adequate and competitive compensation is a crucial factor in efforts to retain Generation Z employees in Surabaya.

The Influence of Remuneration on Job Satisfaction

A statistical research found that income had a substantial positive impact on work satisfaction ($p < 0.05$; calculated T-value $>$ T-table value). This finding suggests that both financial and non-financial remuneration components significantly contribute to higher work satisfaction among Generation Z employees. These findings are compatible with the research of Aisyah and Faeni (2021) and support the viewpoint of Puteri and Ramli (2017) on the need of creating a fair pay system. Furthermore, a clear and fair remuneration system and intrinsic job aspects both influence Generation Z's job happiness, making compensation an important consideration in efforts to boost employee satisfaction and retention. This phenomenon can be explained by the Generation Z perspective, which interprets compensation in a broader context, encompassing not only material benefits and incentives but also supportive facilities and opportunities for individual skill development. The characteristics of this generation, which values a balance between material rewards and meaningful work experiences, reinforce this finding. Meeting financial and non-financial remuneration objectives fosters appreciation and recognition inside the organization, which boosts employee happiness. A comprehensive compensation strategy is therefore an effective tool for companies to strengthen the emotional commitment of Generation Z employees.

The Influence of Job Satisfaction on Employee Loyalty

Job satisfaction improves employee retention ($p < 0.001$; T-count $>$ T-table). In other words, the more satisfied a person is with their employment, the more likely they are to stay. This conclusion is supported by research conducted by Irabor and Okolie (2019) and Biason (2020), which highlight the importance of work satisfaction in employee retention. Rachmawati (2018) also found that job satisfaction, especially through recognition, opportunities, and good working relationships, increases loyalty. For Generation Z, job satisfaction is closely linked to meaningful experiences, flexibility, and growth opportunities. This generation is more loyal to companies that offer self-fulfillment and a good work-life balance. Job satisfaction, especially regarding salary, relationships, promotions, and supervisors, increases loyalty and a sense of belonging among Generation Z employees, thus reducing the desire to change jobs. Thus, job satisfaction is a natural retention factor for Generation Z.

The Influence of Remuneration on Employee Retention with Job Satisfaction as a Mediating Variable

Based on the Sobel test results, it can be inferred that work satisfaction plays an essential mediating role in the relationship between salary and employee retention ($Z = 7.033 > 1.96$). This finding aligns with the empirical results reported by Vera Violetta & Edalmen (2021) and Winoto et al. (2021), whose studies corroborated an analogous mediating effect across diverse contextual settings. From an empirical perspective, equitable compensation exerts a dual influence on retention: it directly enhances employee retention while concurrently exerting an indirect effect through the elevation of job satisfaction levels. Stated differently, job satisfaction operates as an explanatory mechanism elucidating the process through which compensation affects the organizational retention decisions of Generation Z employees. Individuals within this generational cohort who perceive their remuneration as fair and market-competitive are predisposed to experience heightened job satisfaction, which subsequently reinforces their intention and propensity to remain with the organization. Consequently, employee retention strategies that fail to incorporate the factor of job satisfaction are inherently suboptimal, given that job satisfaction constitutes a critical pathway linking compensation policies to retention outcomes. It is therefore imperative for organizations to adopt an integrated strategic approach that synergizes equitable compensation frameworks with initiatives designed to augment job satisfaction, thereby achieving optimal retention outcomes for Generation Z personnel.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the effects of salary and work satisfaction on employee retention in Generation Z. According to empirical studies, compensation has a significant positive influence on staff retention. Implementing a comprehensive compensation system—including base salary, benefits, bonuses, and fringe benefits—helps increase a company's attractiveness as an employer while reducing employee turnover intentions. Furthermore, research findings indicate that salary has a substantial impact on enhancing job satisfaction. A fair remuneration system improves job satisfaction, produces a positive work atmosphere, and stimulates people. Conversely, job satisfaction likewise demonstrates a positive correlation with employee retention. Empirical evidence indicates that employee loyalty is fortified by factors including a supportive occupational environment, constructive interpersonal dynamics, and avenues for career advancement. Specifically, job satisfaction functions as a mediating variable, explaining the relationship between compensation and employee retention. Consequently, compensation enhances retention both through a direct pathway and an indirect mechanism mediated by elevated job satisfaction. The synergy between competitive remuneration strategies and high levels of job satisfaction constitutes a critical determinant for sustaining Generation Z workforce retention and serves as a source of sustainable competitive advantage for organizations.

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