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# Choosing as a Freelancer: What should Gen Z prepare for?

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### ABSTRACT



**Purpose:** This study aims to explore the factors influencing Generation Z's decision to pursue a career as freelancers, particularly focusing on student workers. The research seeks to understand the reasons behind their career choices and assess their readiness for freelancing as a career path.

**Method:** The study employs a descriptive quantitative research design, utilizing a survey method. The population consists of 45 respondents working as freelancers at PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera in Jakarta. Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire adapted from the Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ). The data were analyzed using simple calculations with Likert scoring.

**Findings:** The results indicate that Generation Z prioritizes immediacy in their career decisions, viewing freelancing as a practical solution to current challenges and a personal choice aligned with their individual needs and preferences. The findings highlight the importance of flexibility and independence in their career readiness.

**Novelty:** This study contributes to the limited literature on Generation Z's career choices, particularly in freelancing, by providing empirical insights into the motivations and readiness of student workers entering the freelance market.

**Implications:** The results have implications for career development programs and policy-makers, offering valuable information for creating strategies that support Generation Z in their transition to freelance careers. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing training and resources to enhance their career preparedness.

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## 1. Introduction

Human Resources (HR) cannot be denied as the most important factor in achieving organizational goals. The HR in question are employees who are able to work according to what the company needs. In Indonesia, there are two types of employees. Permanent employees and employees who are subject to a Specific Time Work Agreement (or PKWT), are commonly known as contract employees. Outsourced employees and freelancer are classified as this type of employee (Arifianto & Vallentino, 2022).

In general, employment problems in Indonesia are related to the limited absorption capacity of the

economy compared to the number of the workforce which continues to increase. This indicates that utilization and development have not been optimal. Limited employment opportunities force the workforce to face several alternative choices (Malik, 2022), such as permanent employees who are paid wages that are very far from the regional minimum wage standards that have been determined by the government in each region or work not full time, given hours work of at least less than 35 hours per week. As a consequence, many workers are less interested in this offer. Of course this increases the

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number of unemployed. One option that companies can take is to offer contract employee positions.

These employees carry out certain work tasks whose type and nature or activities are not fixed. There are dynamic work times and volumes for employees, so that wage payments to employees are based on attendance. This type of employee must meet the requirements for working less than 21 days or more in 1 month. This kind of work is freelance. Freelancers are workers who do certain work independently and are not bound by contracts or agreements with the company or person who employs them (Prasetyo et al, 2020). Sectors that are commonly taken by students as freelancers include restaurant waiters, interns, event organizers, wedding organizers, and others. This job is a type of work that is specific in nature, easy to do even by unskilled workers, and has a simple job description so that it is easy to change worker positions (Firdasanti et al., 2021). So, some freelancers may provide written estimates of work results and request payment in advance from clients. However, at that time being a freelancer was not very well known, plus there were no social security facilities like those of company employees in general. With the support of technological developments in the field of information and communication, freelances have become commonly used, so that more business entities are utilizing freelances, especially in micro and family companies.

This type of work turns out to be very popular with students. As a student worker, who carries out dual responsibilities as an undergraduate student and a worker at a company, they really understand the conditions experienced when choosing a career as a freelancer. In fact, Firdasanti et al. (2021) found the potential for work exploitation, such as carrying out work assignments outside the contract or vulnerability in terms of wages that do not comply with regulations. Interestingly, research conducted by Ahsan et al. (2022) shows that there are positive changes in Pakistan's economic conditions with the increasingly massive presence of influencers. Next, data from the Central Statistics Agency (or BPS) in 2023 shows that the number of casual employees has reached 46.47 million (or 32 percent) of workers in Indonesia. This condition has increased from before, where in 2021 the number of casual employees

reached 30 percent, dominated by workers aged 18 to 44 years. Tech in Asia in 2019 recorded the number of freelancers at 4.55 percent. So, this shows the reality that more and more people are choosing to pursue a career as freelancer, especially in today's young workforce, generation Z. Sadly, the income earned as freelancer tends to be unstable, because it depends on the number of projects they get (Tysara, 2023).

Not to mention, the choice of a career as a freelancer must be faced with the problem of the absence of regulations regarding cost standards according to the services offered, as well as the absence of social protection and welfare and a lack of security in the payment system (Setiawan, 2023). This condition is similar to that experienced by freelancers who work part-time in the informal sector and non-permanent workers, such as workers in the extraction and plantation sectors. So why do so many people choose to become freelancers? Generation Z chooses to become a freelancer because they like freedom. Freedom which means being able to manage their own time and income according to the skills they have. Yulianti (2024) explains that this is related to work life balance, which refers more to mental health. So the choice of becoming a freelancer can fulfill the desire to work from anywhere. Starting from the phenomenon that has been described, this research moves to identify the problems of decision making to become freelancers made by student workers.

## 2. Critical Review

In determining a career, Su et al (2016) explain that there are personal factors. This factor cannot be separated from environmental influences. Chudari et al. (2020) stated that these factors could be: education, family and cultural background, parents, occupation, gender, and marital status. In particular, there are many inequalities that arise, namely the lack of opportunities to achieve an ideal career. So it cannot be denied that being a freelance worker is not an ideal job and cannot be used as a promising job choice (Masakazu et al., 2023).

Career decision making can be interpreted as a process without simple answers that will continue to develop, where decisions will become increasingly more challenging, with increasing career mobility and also the emergence of new jobs in a disruptive era. There is no similarity between individuals in

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making decisions because they are influenced by style or strategy on the pattern of behavior or methodology chosen for the best decision making (Argyropoulou & Kaliris, 2018).

This is not a complex thing in making a choice, it just requires deep reflection and consideration of everything. All of this risks what will be received in the future. So this requires caution in making career decisions. Difficulties in making career decisions are a situation that will appear and disappear when someone makes a decision because of the many choices, so that making career decisions can be likened to a life task that is quite difficult along with the stages of one's life development (Xu & Bhang, 2019).

Furthermore, Winkel and Hastuti (2013) explained several factors that can influence career decision making. Internally, it refers to factors that exist within the individual, of course these factors differ between individuals in the form of life values, intelligence level, special talents, interests, traits (personality characteristics within the individual), knowledge, and physical condition (characteristics). physical characteristics possessed). Meanwhile, externally, all influencing factors come from outside, namely, society (socio-cultural environment), socio-economic conditions of the country or region, socio-economic status of the family, all members of the extended and nuclear family, school education, peer relationships, as well as the demands attached to each position.

Making career decisions is not easy. Pressure from internal and external factors certainly influences individuals in determining considerations for choosing a career. Therefore it is considered a difficulty. In an effort to identify these difficulties, researchers used the Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ). Because this research focuses on the freelance profession, the questionnaire was modified according to the choice of profession. Apart from that, Levin et al (2023) have also shown the consistency and validity of the statements in the questionnaire even though it was translated into 10 languages.

This questionnaire by Gati et al. (1996) is structured into three lacks: lack of readiness (due to), lack of information (about) and inconsistent information (due to). The lack of readiness factor is composed of two pairs of categories. The first is the difficulty associated with a lack of motivation to engage in career decision-making processes and general indecisiveness regarding all types of

decision-making. Next are the difficulties associated with dysfunctional myths (e.g. irrational expectations) regarding career decision making and a lack of knowledge about the steps involved in this process.

In lack of information, there are three categories, namely lack of information about oneself, about work, and about how to obtain additional information. Gati et al. (1996) emphasizes internal information, which concerns individuals, and the rest is external information. Meanwhile, inconsistent information is also structured into three categories. First, unreliable information, in the form of a set of difficulties regarding the lack of clarity of information or unreliable information. Apart from that, there is internal conflict, which involves conflict within the self and also external conflict, which is in the form of conflict due to influence.

From this explanation, the results of the respondents' choices will be able to describe what deficiencies will describe this research. The choice of work as a freelancer, which is the main point of this research, will be evaluated based on the main choices of deficiencies that arise. So the researcher believes that through this CDDQ, they will be able to provide answers to this research question. Rochat (2019) also agrees that CDDQ is effective in mapping client needs in subsequent efforts to provide appropriate interventions. However, because this research only focuses on preparation in choosing a career as a freelancer, the statements chosen are only the first indicator, lack of readiness.

In relation to freelancers, several previous studies have attempted to uncover the reasons for choosing a career. Quantitative research by Ren et al. (2023) shows that in the international market, the selection of freelance workers is based on the similarity of countries between the employer and the freelancer. Even the service fee factor also influences the recruitment of freelancers. This happened on an online platform recruiting a freelancer. Therefore, Ghosh (2023) suggests that if you choose to become a freelancer, you need to develop skills and increase your professional network. Next, it is necessary to continue branding and looking for affiliates through the community so that it can be known. This is what is known as self-managed.

In Indonesia, there are many choices for a career as a freelancer due to the ease of recruitment, including via online platforms (Widodo, 2019). Even regardless of your competency (many freelancers have low skills), this position can be achieved. This is

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further supported by the ease of work agreements, only verbally (Priartini & Rahmawati, 2020). This is also supported by the research results of Arifianto et al. (2024) which shows that economic factors and autonomy. Economically, many rights are not paid for and there is no bargaining power over what is given. So they become suppressed, without having any autonomy at all.

Therefore, once again, career preparation needs to be planned first. Careful preparation cannot be based solely on instinct or argument, without looking at reality. This research will present data, which can be used as a consideration in a career preparation (as a freelancer).

### 3. Method Innovation

The research method used by the author is a survey method. Surveys are simply the right method to find out feelings, opinions and thoughts. Survey objectives can be global and specific. In a survey, a series of questions is provided to provide a selected sample of a particular target population. This sample presents the characteristics and behavior of the population. Surveys are conducted to explore public attitudes, differences in behavior of various populations, and determine possible changes over time. Therefore, sample selection needs to be done using selection techniques that are not voluntary and not haphazard (Kabir, 2016). This research used a sample of 45 freelancers, who work at PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera in Jakarta.

Each respondent was subjected to a questionnaire, which adapted the CDDQ, and asked to respond via a Google form. Each difficulty is described in sentences in the questionnaire (see table 1). Researchers deliberately made the same number of statements for each indicator. The statements in the questionnaire use Likert scale answers (from 1 to 5). 1 describes an attitude of inconsistency and 5 means that the attitude conforms to the statement. Each answer will be converted to that score.

### 4. Innovation Results and Discussion

There were 45 respondents who provided complete answers to the questionnaire distributed. Description of respondents as in table 2. Most of the respondents were predominantly aged 21 to 23 years. This shows that the respondents are students. This is also supported by the length of work controlled by freelancers with a working period of 1

to 3 years. Many of these freelancers come from Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi (or Jabodetabek).

After the respondents filled out the questionnaire, the answers were then converted into scores (based on Likert). The scores were then added up per statement. The researcher selected the statement with the highest score on each indicator. The scores for each statement are shown in table 3.

It can be seen that in the lack of readiness, the highest mean score is in the seventh statement (Q7), the eighth statement (Q8) and the eleventh statement (Q11). Each statement has a mean value above four (4). This means that there is a common tendency of agreement in the Likert scale description. Each statement represents the factors of indecisiveness, dysfunctional myths and lack of knowledge about the process. This means that only lack of motivation is less described by the respondent's condition because none of the statements have a mean score above 4. If described further in sequence, it can be explained that the highest agreement (answer representation) is in determining decisions in preparing for a current career or the immediacy of a career. That is the main answer. Furthermore, the second and third highest statements have the same mean score, which is 4.09. The next agreement describes the chosen career as the result of one's own decision and is considered capable of solving personal problems. This is what we will discuss one by one.

#### 1) Career immediacy

For informants, all of whom are generation Z, they feel the need to hasten their career. The definition of a career is an activity that can generate money. For Dwidienawati and Gandasari (2018), generation Z is always motivated by money. So for them, by hastening their career, money will be obtained quickly. Furthermore, this answer is related to the next two answers. However, on the other hand, choosing a career (even as a freelancer) is proof that they have the skills and abilities to work. This is known as employability skills. Nasa et al. (2022) describe it as the abilities, skills and knowledge needed to get a job. This illustrates that the immediate need for work (for a career) is an arena for proving one's ability that the informants are ready to work. Even though they have other roles as students, having a job is seen as having more value. Moreover, they are able to prove that there is a material advantage compared to their peers. However, the

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data shows that they experience a lack of knowledge, especially in terms of the process.

To get a job as a freelancer, many informants need information regarding the availability of freelance jobs. This position is widely sought after by Generation Z because of its work flexibility. Hidayah (2021) describes it as immaterial labor, namely workers who are invisible and even difficult to describe. However, this job turns out to have high value. This cannot be separated from the increasingly sophisticated technology, which of course has become part of the lives of Generation Z. So, it can be concluded that freelance jobs are actually widely available in the informal workforce, especially those that utilize digital technology. Indeed, this type of work is very suitable for Generation Z who have been accustomed to the ease of getting information, speed, creative multimedia, and multitasking during their studies (Chun et al., 2016). Therefore, for Generation Z who really want a job as a freelancer, it is necessary to gain knowledge on how to access job information online.

## 2) Career as a solution to personal problems

The choice to have a career as a solution for themselves. Ramadhani and Nindyati (2022) also showed the same research results, where the main reason for Generation Z to work is because of themselves, because of the main need for finances, even though they still have doubts. Because this statement includes a description of the doubts in Generation Z, we will examine what allows these doubts to arise in Generation Z in preparing their careers. However, it should be remembered that these doubts are a form of career doubt, not doubts that exist in oneself (Germeijs & de Boeck, 2002). Furthermore, Öztemel (2013) explained that the possibility of career doubts is influenced by self-doubt, it is better to separate these doubts. Moreover, these doubts are more experienced by vocational high school graduates, who are required to have careers according to their chosen majors. For him, it is necessary to dig up a lot of information and learn from the environment to be able to make the right decisions in a career.

However, nowadays, personal problems that are often experienced by Generation Z are mental health. Akbar et al. (2024) reported various mental disorders experienced by Generation Z in this part of the world. Focusing on Indonesia, these mental disorders are caused by climate, social isolation, dependence on gadgets and environmental factors

themselves. Tyas et al. (2022) gave an example of mental disorders experienced such as: stress, anxiety, depression, and ideas of ending one's life. These disorders were experienced by almost half of the respondents in their study, namely church youth in Malang City. This indicates that even though being active in religion does not guarantee freedom from mental disorders. The solution, Akbar et al. (2024) explained the need for social support, deepening faith in God, and of course realizing the dangers of gadget addiction. This problem often narrows Generation Z's perspective in seeing reality. Everything only appears as a display on a gadget. There needs to be mental self-improvement before starting a career. It could be that the choice of a career as a freelancer is a limited choice because of the urgency in solving these personal problems.

## 3) Career is a personal decision

This statement is one of four statements that describe the Lack of knowledge about the process of personal decisions in a career, for Prawitasari (2018) generation Z chooses a career to pursue the same personal achievements as the previous generation, generation Y. For this reason, they are happy to seek knowledge as one way to achieve the same position as generation Y, so that the lack of knowledge is fulfilled.

In preparing for a career, generation Z needs to gather information related to how the job (career) can be obtained, job descriptions, competencies needed and attitudes at work. This kind of knowledge needs to be sought and prepared by Generation Z in preparing themselves to enter the world of work. In more depth, Rachmawati et al. (2024) explained that relevant educational preparation (formal or non-formal), conducting career planning, building professional networks, seeking work experience (through internships), freelancers, or volunteer work. So, freelancers can be an alternative for generation Z to prepare themselves further. Related to the two previous responses, the decision to pursue a career as a freelancer is due to the desire to work and the need for financial needs. So any job as long as it is in accordance with the flexible character of generation Z, then the career choice will be taken even though it is a freelancer. So it is undeniable that many freelance jobs are filled by generation Z.

## 5. Conclusion

Career determination always requires preparation. This career preparation will certainly

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make it easier to plan a future career. However, all of that is not easy to do. So the starting point becomes a critical foundation that must be right. By considering the four aspects of lack of readiness, it can provide an overview of what difficulties can be anticipated and managed. Of the four difficulties, it turns out that generation Z who choose their initial job as a freelancer responded the highest to the three difficulties. This means that only one was not responded to, namely lack of motivation. In each difficulty, it can be explained that generation Z needs immediacy in their career. It's just that they need to be active in seeking information related to existing career opportunities. That is the solution to lack of knowledge. Meanwhile, regarding career as a solution to personal problems, it is better for Generation Z to first mature all potential mental disorders that are susceptible to being experienced. Finally, the fulfillment of these two aspects becomes the basic foundation in starting a career. So, the initial choice of a career as a freelancer is not a bad decision

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## Author Contribution

Dian Maylanda Putri contributed to the conceptualization, data collection, and drafting of the manuscript. Chandra Fitra Arifianto was responsible for data analysis, interpretation, and critical revisions of the manuscript. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this study.

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## 6. Image and Data Table

### A. Table Research Appendix Data

**Table 1.** Statements in the questionnaire

Difficulties	Questions	Statement
Lack of readiness	Q1, Q5, Q8, Q12, Q2	I am not afraid of failure. I have to ask for support for my decision from those closest to me.
Indecisiveness	Q6, Q11, Q13	I find it difficult to make career decisions because I don't know what kind of work is interesting. I know that choosing a career is a one-time decision and a lifelong commitment. I hope that entering my chosen career will also solve my personal problems.
Dysfunctional myths	Q3, Q9, Q14	Work is an important thing in my life. I hope that through the career I choose, I will realize all my dreams.
Lack of motivation	Q4, Q7, Q10, Q15	I easily get motivated in choosing a career. I believe there is only one career that is right for me. I have to ask for support for my decision from those closest to me.

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Difficulties	Questions	Statement
Lack of knowledge about process	Q6, Q11, Q13	I have a hard time making career decisions because I don't know what steps I should take. I find it difficult to make career decisions because I don't know what my abilities will be in the future.

Source: adapted from CDDQ

**Table 2.** Description of the respondents

Categories	Sex		Age		Domicile		Length of Work	
	Male	Female	17-20 y.o.	21-23 y.o.	Jabodetabek	Non Jabodetabek	1-3 years	3-6 years
Amount	23	22	11	34	36	9	39	6
Percentage	51.1%	48.9%	24.4%	75.6%	80%	20%	86.7%	13.3%

Source: processed by the author

**Table 3.** Total score distribution of respondents' answers

Difficulties	Questions	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Total Score	Mean
Lack of readiness	Q1, Q5, Q8, Q12, Q2							
-	Q1	15	11	11	4	4	164	3.64
-	Q5	11	9	9	5	11	139	3.09
-	Q8	19	16	6	3	1	184	4.09
-	Q12	9	10	16	4	6	147	3.27
-	Q2	14	14	10	6	1	169	3.76
Indecisiveness	Q6, Q11, Q13							
-	Q6	19	12	8	3	3	176	3.91
-	Q11	17	18	8	1	1	184	4.09
-	Q13	14	6	9	6	10	143	3.18
Dysfunctional myths	Q3, Q9, Q14							
-	Q3	14	14	10	6	1	168	3.73
-	Q9	13	8	15	6	3	157	3.49
-	Q14	13	6	7	5	14	134	2.98
Lack of motivation	Q4, Q7, Q10, Q15							
-	Q4	6	9	12	9	9	129	2.87
-	Q7	20	14	3	4	2	185	4.11
-	Q10	5	9	13	9	9	127	2.82
-	Q15	4	9	14	9	9	125	2.78

Source: processed by the author

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