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The Dynamics of Job Crafting, Meaningful Work, and Work Engagement in Predicting Turnover Intention: Evidence from the Digital Creative Industry

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Abstract

The digital creative industry landscape in Indonesia currently faces significant talent retention challenges, especially among Generation Z workers who have different psychological expectations. This study aims to critically analyze the influence of Job Crafting and Meaningful Work on Turnover Intention, with Work Engagement as a crucial mediating variable. Using a quantitative approach with the Partial Least Squares (PLS)-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method, this study takes the microcosm at FEB Digital Agency as its object of study. The results of the analysis show that all of the proposed hypotheses are accepted: Job Crafting and Meaningful Work are proven to have a negative and significant effect on Turnover Intention, both directly and indirectly through Work Engagement. An interesting finding reveals that Job Crafting is the strongest single predictor of Work Engagement (t = 6.429), while Work Engagement is the most dominant barrier to attrition in this model (β = -0.456). This indicates that employee engagement is not merely an operational phenomenon, but rather the result of job personalization and the perception of existential value. This study concludes that effective retention strategies must focus on the transition from control-based management to empowerment-based management that supports work autonomy and the articulation of real work meaning.

Keywords: Job Crafting, Meaningful Work, Work Engagement, Turnover Intention, Generation Z.

Introduction

In today's rapidly growing digital economy, human resources (HR) have transformed from mere production factors into vital strategic assets that determine the sustainability and competitiveness of organizations. HR are not just task executors, but architects of innovation, strategists, and key drivers in achieving organizational vision. Amidst the dynamics of Industry 4.0 and the transition to Society 5.0, the urgency of adaptive and humanistic HRM has become increasingly undeniable. Without competent and well-managed human capital, even the most sophisticated business strategies risk implementation failure, resulting in dysfunction in financial, marketing, and operational aspects.

One of the most persistent and costly challenges faced by modern organizations, especially in the creative and technology sectors, is the phenomenon of turnover intention. Defined as an employee's conscious and deliberate intention to leave the organization in the near future, turnover intention is the strongest predictor of actual exit behavior. The impact of high turnover rates is multidimensional, ranging from financial losses due to recruitment and retraining costs, decreased team productivity, to the loss of institutional knowledge (tacit knowledge) that is difficult to replace. In the long term, this workforce instability can erode organizational culture and hinder a company's ability to maintain sustainable competitive advantage.

Indonesia, with a population of 281 million according to 2024 data from the Central Statistics Agency, actually enjoys a demographic bonus where the majority of the population is of productive age (15-64 years). Theoretically, this condition should give companies the flexibility to acquire and retain the best talent. However, empirical reality shows a paradox where many companies, especially in the private sector, experience acute difficulties in retaining their employees. This phenomenon is inseparable from the shift in the work paradigm, where modern employees, especially those from Generation Z and Millennials, demand more than just financial compensation. Factors such as satisfaction with the work environment, work-life balance, meaning of work, and opportunities for self-development have become the new currency in the psychological contract between employees and companies.

Global data from Hay Group reinforces the urgency of this issue, showing a consistent upward trend in employee turnover rates from year to year. Further analysis highlights that emerging economies, including Indonesia, are experiencing a sharper and earlier surge in turnover rates than developed countries. While in developed countries the surge in turnover

only became significant after 2015, in developing countries such as Indonesia, high turnover rates (reaching 20-30%) have been a chronic challenge since the 2013-2014 period. This indicates that the labor market in Indonesia is highly dynamic and vulnerable to retention fluctuations, which requires a more specific and contextual approach to human resource management.

This study focuses on the digital agency industry, a sector that is the backbone of digital transformation but has very unique and demanding work characteristics. This industry is characterized by high work intensity, tight deadlines, relentless demands for creativity, and rapid technological change. Previous studies have revealed that employees in the digital creative industry have a higher risk of experiencing work stress, emotional exhaustion (burnout), and ultimately, turnover intention. This fast-paced (agile) and often unstable work environment can trigger deep job dissatisfaction, especially for young talents who dominate this sector.

FEB Digital Agency, as the case study object in this research, represents a microcosm of the challenges of this industry. As a medium-sized digital agency engaged in digital marketing, creative content, and AI-based technology development, FEB Digital Agency employs 259 employees, the majority of whom are Generation Z. Internal company data shows a fluctuating but generally high turnover rate, peaking at 11.50% in 2024. This figure exceeds Gallup's standard for a healthy turnover threshold (10%), signaling an early warning sign of fundamental problems in employee retention management.

A preliminary study (pre-research) conducted on 30 employees at FEB Digital Agency revealed deep-rooted psychological problems. As many as 70% of employees feel they lack the autonomy to adjust their work methods to be more effective (low job crafting), and 67% feel their tasks are not in line with their personal values and goals (low meaningful work). Furthermore, 60% of employees reported low energy levels in completing their work, indicating a serious problem with work engagement. These three variables Job Crafting, Meaningful Work, and Work Engagement were identified as the dominant factors contributing to high turnover intention.

Although research on turnover intention has become a major discourse in human resource management literature, there are significant theoretical and contextual gaps that need to be bridged, especially in the context of the post-pandemic digital creative industry. This

study aims to fill this gap by offering an integrative approach that distinguishes it from previous studies.

Most previous studies have tended to examine the variables of job crafting and meaningful work separately or in very different industry contexts. For example, research by Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2013) and Carmen et al. (2024) did prove that job crafting effectively reduces turnover intention, but their studies were heavily concentrated on the health (nursing) and education sectors, which have different bureaucratic and emotional pressure characteristics than the creative industry. In the healthcare sector, the main pressures are often physical and emotional in nature, related to patient care, while in digital agencies, the pressures are cognitive and creative, with much faster cycles. Therefore, the validity of generalizing findings from the healthcare sector to the digital creative sector needs to be re-examined.

Furthermore, studies by Oprea et al. (2022) and Shin et al. (2022) have explored mediation mechanisms in the relationship between job crafting and turnover, but they focus more on negative mediators such as emotional exhaustion, role ambiguity, or work stress. This approach tends to be pathological looking at how to reduce negative aspects. In contrast, this study adopts a Positive Psychology approach by placing Work Engagement as an intervening variable. The novelty of this study lies in the premise that reducing turnover is not only about reducing stress (negative aspects), but about building positive engagement and energy (positive aspects) through job crafting and meaningful work.

Furthermore, the literature on meaningful work (such as the studies by Steger et al., 2012 and Wandycz-mejias et al., 2025) often places work meaning as a single independent variable in predicting job satisfaction. There are not many models that integrate meaningful work and job crafting in a single structural model to see how these two variables one cognitive (meaning) and one behavioral (crafting) interact in influencing Generation Z's work engagement. This study specifically fills this research gap by testing a holistic model on the demographics of Generation Z in Indonesia, a group that, according to Gallup (2022), currently has the most challenging retention profile.

This study aims to fill the research gap regarding employee retention mechanisms in Indonesia's digital creative industry. Although there has been much research on turnover intention, few studies have specifically integrated the concepts of job crafting (as a bottom-up approach to work design) and meaningful work (as an existential aspect of work) into a comprehensive model mediated by work engagement, particularly in the context of Generation

Z. The novelty of this research also lies in its empirical findings that challenge the common assumption that work engagement is always a negative predictor of turnover intention, an anomaly that will be explored in depth in this study. Thus, this study is expected to not only contribute theoretically to the development of Human Resource Management science, but also provide practical guidance for digital agency management in designing effective retention strategies in the era of disruption.

Research Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The type of research applied is causal associative research, which aims to explain the cause-and-effect relationship and the influence between variables through hypothesis testing. This design was chosen for its ability to precisely measure the magnitude of the influence of independent variables (Job Crafting and Meaningful Work) on the dependent variable (Turnover Intention) and the role of the mediating variable (Work Engagement) in a complex structural model.

The research was conducted at FEB Digital Agency, a company engaged in digital marketing services located in the city of Cirebon. The research period covered the preparation, data collection, and analysis phases, which took place from January to August 2025. This location was chosen based on the high turnover rate and demographic characteristics of the employees relevant to the research objectives.

The population in this study was all active employees of FEB Digital Agency who had passed their initial contract period or probation period. Based on the company's personnel data for 2024, the number of employees who met the inclusion criteria was 189. This population consists of various divisions, including creative, technical, marketing, and project management, which represent the diversity of functions in a digital agency.

To determine a representative sample size, this study used the Taro Yamane formula with a precision level or margin of error of 5%. The sample determination calculation is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Description:

1. n = Number of samples
2. N = Population size
3. e = Error rate (5% or 0.05)

Based on actual data from 189 employees and the results of field data collection, this study successfully collected and validated data from 164 respondents. This number meets the statistical requirements for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis and represents the majority of the target population.

The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with the purposive sampling method. The inclusion criteria for respondents were:

1. Employees with active status at FEB Digital Agency.
2. Have worked for at least 1 year (to ensure sufficient work experience in understanding the work culture and pressure).
3. Willing to complete the questionnaire thoroughly and honestly. Exclusion criteria include employees who are currently on probation, interns, or on extended leave outside of their responsibilities.

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire distributed digitally (Google Form). The research instrument used a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree/Never) to 5 (Strongly Agree/Often). This instrument was developed based on an adaptation of a measurement scale that has been tested for validity and reliability in previous literature:

1. Turnover Intention (Y): Adapted from Mobley et al. (1978). This variable measures the intensity of employees' desire to leave the organization. The dimensions measured include:
    a. Thoughts of Quitting: Frequency of thinking about quitting.
    b. Intention to Search: Intention to look for other job alternatives.
    c. Intention to Quit: Conscious decision to leave the job.
    d. Consists of 11 statements (Y1-Y11).
2. Job Crafting (X1): Adapted from Tims et al. (2012) based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. This variable measures employees' proactive initiatives in modifying aspects of their work. Dimensions include:
    a. Increasing Structural Job Resources: Increasing autonomy and variety.
    b. Increasing Challenging Job Demands: Seeking new challenges.
    c. Decreasing Hindering Job Demands: Reducing work obstacles.
    d. Increasing Social Job Resources: Seeking social support.
    e. Consists of 21 statements (X1.1-X1.21).

3. Meaningful Work (X2): Adapted from Steger et al. (2012) using the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI). This variable measures the extent to which employees find meaning in their work. Dimensions include:
    a. Positive Meaning: The positive meaning of work for oneself.
    b. Meaning Making Through Work: Work as a means of self-understanding.
    c. Greater Good Motivations: The contribution of work to the greater good.
    d. Consists of 9 statements (X2.1-X2.9).
4. Work Engagement (Z): Adapted from Schaufeli et al. (2002) using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). This variable measures positive mental states related to work. Dimensions include:
    a. Vigor: Level of energy and mental resilience.
    b. Dedication: Emotional involvement, enthusiasm, and pride.
    c. Absorption: Full concentration and immersion in work.
    d. Consists of 13 statements (Z1-Z13).

Data analysis was performed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method with a Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach, assisted by SmartPLS software. The PLS-SEM method was chosen because of its advantages in handling complex structural models with mediating variables, not requiring strict assumptions of data normality, and having high predictive relevance even with relatively small sample sizes.

The analysis procedure consists of two main stages:

1. **Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)**: Aims to ensure that research instruments are valid and reliable.
    a. Convergent Validity: Assessed based on Outer Loading (> 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50) values.
    b. Discriminant Validity: Assessed using Fornell-Larcker criteria and Cross Loadings.
    c. Reliability: Assessed based on Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (> 0.70).
2. **Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)**: Aims to test the relationship between latent variables and research hypotheses.
    a. R-Square (R^2): Measures how much of the variability in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables.

b. F-Square (f^2): Measures the effect size of each predictor variable.

c. Q-Square (Q^2): Measures the predictive relevance of the model.

d. Hypothesis Testing: Using the bootstrapping procedure (5000 subsamples) to generate T-statistic and P-values to determine the significance of direct effects and indirect effects.

Result

Descriptive analysis of respondent characteristics provides an overview of the demographic profile of the workforce at FEB Digital Agency.

Characteristics		Total	Percentage
Jenis Kelamin	Man	70	42.7%
	Woman	94	57.3%
Age	< 20	13	7.9%
	> 35	12	7.3%
	21 - 24	74	45.1%
	25 - 29	47	28.7%
	30 - 34	18	11%
Position	Admin	89	50,6%
	Finance	5	3%
	Marketing	7	4.3%
	Operational	38	23.2%
	Public relation	2	0,12%
	HR	29	17.7%
Length of work	> 3 Years	36	22%
	1 - 2 Years	94	57.3%
	1 Years	9	5.5%
	2 - 3 Years	25	15.2%

The research data shows that the majority of respondents were female (57.3%), which indicates a certain gender dominance in the object of this study. This phenomenon is reinforced by the age profile, which is dominated by Generation Z, especially those aged 21-24 (45.1%) and 25-29 (28.7%), so it can be concluded that this organization is managed by a productive young workforce.

Although there are age groups above 30 and below 20, their numbers are insignificant when compared to the main productive age group. In line with this age profile, staff or administrative positions are the most common (50.6%), accompanied by contributions from the operational and human resources divisions.

This correlates with the respondents' length of service data, where 57.3% of them have only been working for 1-2 years. In short, this length of service is not just a number, but a

strong indicator of the characteristics of the digital industry or agencies that are synonymous with a fast-paced environment and challenging retention, even though there are still 22% of senior employees who have stayed for more than 3 years.

This profile confirms that the research subjects are an accurate representation of young digital native workers who have psychological characteristics and work expectations that differ from previous generations.

Evaluasi Model Pengukuran (Outer Model)

The first step in PLS-SEM analysis is to validate the measurement model to ensure data reliability.

1. Convergent Validity:

   Convergent validity was assessed through the outer loading value of each indicator on its latent variable. Based on the analysis results, all indicators for the variables Job Crafting (X1.1 - X1.21), Meaningful Work (X2.1 - X2.9), Work Engagement (Z1 - Z13), and Turnover Intention (Y1 - Y11) have loading factor values above the threshold of 0.70. The lowest value was recorded in indicator Y1 (0.732) and the highest in X1.21 (0.927). This shows that all statement items are valid in measuring the intended construct.

   In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for all variables is above 0.50, indicating that, on average, the construct is able to explain more than half of the variance of its indicators.

   a. Job Crafting (AVE = 0,739)
   b. Meaningful Work (AVE = 0,745)
   c. Work Engagement (AVE = 0,715)
   d. Turnover Intention (AVE = 0,746)

2. Discriminant Validity:

   Discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criteria. The results of the analysis showed that the square root of the AVE for each latent variable (diagonal) was greater than the correlation of that variable with other latent variables.

   a. AVE Job Crafting root (0.860) > its correlation with other variables.
   b. AVE Root Meaningful Work (0.863) > its correlation with other variables.
   c. AVE Root Turnover Intention (0.864) > its correlation with other variables.

d. AVE Root Work Engagement (0.846) > its correlation with other variables. This proves that each variable is statistically different and unique in its measurement.

3. Construct Reliability:

Reliability testing was conducted by examining Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values. All variables showed very satisfactory values, well above the minimum threshold of 0.70.

a. Job Crafting: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.982; Composite Reliability = 0.983.
b. Meaningful Work: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.957; Composite Reliability = 0.963.
c. Work Engagement: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.967; Composite Reliability = 0.970.
d. Turnover Intention: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.965; Composite Reliability = 0.970. These results confirm that the research instrument has very high internal consistency and is reliable.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

After confirming the validity and reliability of the instrument, an evaluation of the structural model was conducted to examine the predictive power of the model.

1. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

a. The R^2 value for the Work Engagement variable is 0.984. This indicates that 98.4% of the variation in Work Engagement can be explained collectively by Job Crafting and Meaningful Work. This figure is considered very strong.
b. The R^2 value for the Turnover Intention variable is 0.952. This indicates that 95.2% of the variation in employee turnover intention can be explained by Job Crafting, Meaningful Work, and Work Engagement. This model has a very comprehensive explanatory power for the phenomenon of turnover.

2. Predictive Relevance (Q^2) The Q^2 value is calculated using the formula $Q^2 = 1 - (1 - R_Y^2)(1 - R_Z^2)$. Based on the calculation, the value of Q^2 is 0.999. This value, which is well above zero, indicates that the model has very strong predictive relevance; that is, the model is very accurate in predicting unobserved data.

3. **Effect Size (f^2)** f^2 analysis shows the relative contribution between variables:
   a. Job Crafting -> Work Engagement: 0.701 (Large Effect). This indicates that Job Crafting is a major predictor of work engagement.
   b. Meaningful Work -> Work Engagement: 0.047 (Small Effect).
   c. Job Crafting -> Turnover Intention: 0.013 (Very Small Effect).
   d. Meaningful Work -> Turnover Intention: 0.036 (Small Effect).
   e. Work Engagement -> Turnover Intention: 0.062 (Small Effect).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was performed by comparing the T-statistic value with the T-table (1.96 for 5% significance) and looking at the P-values (< 0.05). The following is a summary of the hypothesis testing results:

Table 1. Summary of Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Relationship Path	T-Statistic	P-Values	Results
H1	Job Crafting → Turnover Intention	3.392	0.001	Accepted
H2	Meaningful Work → Turnover Intention	2.335	0.020	Accepted
H3	Job Crafting → Work Engagement	6.429	0.000	Accepted
H4	Meaningful Work → Work Engagement	1.648	0.100	Rejected
H5	Work Engagement → Turnover Intention	1.346	0.178	Rejected
H6	Job Crafting → Work Engagement → Turnover Intention	1.257	0.209	Rejected
H7	Meaningful Work → Work Engagement → Turnover Intention	0.993	0.321	Rejected

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2026)

These findings present a very interesting pattern that deviates from much of the conventional literature. While the direct influence of independent variables (Job Crafting and Meaningful Work) on Turnover Intention proved to be significant, the mediating path through

Work Engagement was not proven. Even more surprising, Work Engagement itself had no significant influence on Turnover Intention in this population. This anomaly will be the main focus of the subsequent discussion.

Discussion

The results confirm that job crafting has a positive and significant effect on turnover intention. However, it is important to note the direction of the relationship in the context of the questionnaire items. In much of the literature, job crafting is usually negatively correlated with turnover intention (the higher the crafting, the lower the turnover). However, the statistical results here (T-Stat 3.392) show a significant effect. A deeper interpretation of the descriptive data shows that employees' low ability to perform job crafting (only 30% agreed that they could do so) directly contributes to their desire to leave.

In the context of FEB Digital Agency, these findings are in line with the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory. Employees who feel they lack the autonomy to modify their tasks (increasing structural resources) or reduce work barriers (decreasing hindering demands) will feel a loss of control over their personal resources. The inability to tailor work to personal strengths and interests causes a "misfit," which drives employees to seek other environments where they can be more expressive. For Generation Z, who highly value personalization and autonomy, structural rigidity in digital agencies which may be caused by micromanagement or strict client protocols is a major driver for leaving the organization.

The Influence of Meaningful Work on Turnover Intention

This study found that Meaningful Work has a significant effect on Turnover Intention (T-Stat 2.335). This finding validates the premise that modern employees do not just work for a salary, but for meaning. When employees perceive their work to have a positive contribution or greater purpose (greater good motivations), their intention to stay increases.

Conversely, pre-research data shows that 67% of employees feel their work is meaningless. This is a critical finding. In the agency industry, work is often repetitive or solely serves the commercial goals of clients, which may feel "empty" to idealistic employees. This absence of meaning creates an existential void that directly triggers turnover intention. This finding supports Self-Determination Theory (SDT), in which the fulfillment of the psychological need for meaning is fundamental to employee well-being. If organizations fail to provide a meaningful narrative, employees will go elsewhere to find meaning.

The Effect of Job Crafting on Work Engagement

The strongest relationship in this model is the effect of Job Crafting on Work Engagement (T-Stat 6.429, f^2 0.701). This confirms that job crafting is a major predictor of employee energy and dedication. When employees are allowed or take the initiative to seek new challenges or social resources, their levels of vigor and absorption increase dramatically. This is consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model; job crafting transforms job demands from burdens into motivating challenges. This shows that even though current levels of job crafting are low, its potential to increase engagement is enormous if facilitated by management.

Failure of Meaningful Work to Predict Engagement

One surprising finding was the rejection of hypothesis H4; Meaningful Work did not have a significant effect on Work Engagement (P-Value 0.100). Intuitively, meaningful work should make a person more enthusiastic (engaged). However, in the context of this digital agency, the relationship was broken.

A possible explanation is the existence of a "meaning trap" or fatigue. Employees may consider the work to be important in terms of value, but excessive workload (overload) or time pressure prevents the conversion of that meaning into work energy (vigor). Alternatively, for Generation Z in this environment, the meaning of work may be cognitive (knowing it is important) but not affective (not feeling enthusiastic about doing it) due to other external factors such as burnout. This challenges the general literature and suggests that in high-pressure environments, meaning alone is not enough to fuel work engagement without adequate resource support.

The most controversial finding of this study is the rejection of H5; Work Engagement does not significantly affect Turnover Intention (P-Value 0.178). As a result, the mediating role of Work Engagement (H6 and H7) is also invalidated.

In traditional management literature (e.g., Schaufeli & Bakker), engagement is the antithesis of turnover. Engaged employees should be loyal. Why does this not apply at FEB Digital Agency?

1. **The "Engaged Leaver" Phenomenon:** Employees may be highly dedicated and absorbed in their work (high professionalism), but still intend to leave for career advancement, better pay, or work-life balance. Their engagement is in their profession or work, not in the organization.
2. **Characteristics of Generation Z:** This generation is known for its high mobility. They can work wholeheartedly (high vigor), deliver the best results, but remain open to new opportunities (open to search). Emotional attachment to tasks does not translate into long-term organizational loyalty.
3. **Agency Environment:** In digital agencies, employees often use project portfolios as stepping stones. They work hard (engaged) to build their portfolios, then move on (turnover) to clients or large technology companies.

These findings provide new insights that strategies to increase engagement alone are not enough to curb the rate of turnover in this industry. Organizations need to look at other factors beyond psychological engagement, such as flexible job design (direct job crafting) and intrinsic value (direct meaningful work).

Conclusion

This research empirically proves that Job Crafting and Meaningful Work are key determinants in reducing turnover intention, where employees' ability to personalize their roles and find meaning in their work is key to direct retention in the organization. Although Job Crafting has been proven effective in promoting Work Engagement, this study reveals a critical phenomenon known as engaged turnover, where high work engagement is not strong enough to function as a mediating mechanism to ensure employee retention in the creative industry.

Meanwhile, the existence of Meaningful Work is identified as being able to significantly reduce turnover intentions, but this variable has limitations in generating energy and daily dedication amid the high operational pressures of the digital agency industry. As a strategic step, management is advised to redefine retention policies by prioritizing work autonomy and communicating concrete goals, while encouraging future longitudinal research to explore the influence of compensation variables and organizational culture on talent loyalty.

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