

(Research/Review) Article

Job Satisfaction of Freelance Photographers: The Role of Self-Efficacy and Job Characteristics

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the influence of self-efficacy and job characteristics on the job satisfaction of freelance photographers in Surabaya. The background of this research is based on the growth of the gig economy, which has encouraged the emergence of independent work patterns where workers have the freedom to manage their own time, methods, and projects. However, this freelance work system also presents various challenges, such as project uncertainty, fluctuating workloads, and limited structured support or evaluation. In the context of freelance photography, these dynamics are particularly evident, as the work demands not only creativity but also managerial skills to organize work processes independently. This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method with questionnaires distributed to 100 freelance photographers selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method. The results indicate that self-efficacy and job characteristics significantly contribute to shaping job satisfaction. Strong self-efficacy particularly previous work experience enhances freelancers' confidence in facing challenges, while clear job characteristics, especially in terms of task identity, make them feel more directed, valued, and satisfied with their work. These findings emphasize the importance of both internal and external factors in determining job satisfaction and provide theoretical as well as practical contributions to the management of freelance workers in the creative sector, particularly in designing adaptive work strategies in the digital economy era.

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1. Introduction

The development of the Industrial Era 4.0 has significantly transformed employment patterns through the emergence of the gig economy—a project-based work system that enables individuals to work independently without institutional attachment. This pattern differs from conventional, permanent employment and has become increasingly preferred by younger generations.

In Indonesia, the gig economy has grown rapidly, particularly in the creative economy sector, including design, digital content, and photography. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) show that the number of part-time and freelance workers continues to rise—reaching 46.47 million people in February 2023, or approximately 32% of the total national workforce of 146.62 million (Anisa, 2024)—reflecting a shifting interest toward more independent forms of work.

Surabaya, as an industrial city and a hub for creative economic growth, has experienced a similar trend. The freelance photography profession is increasingly in demand in line with the rising need for event, product, and personal documentation services. This profession offers flexibility and autonomy in determining work methods but also requires a high degree of independence and the ability to manage one's workflow. Consequently, it allows individuals to work autonomously without being bound to any specific institution (Kost et al., 2020).

Although freelance work offers freedom, not all freelancers feel satisfied with their jobs. Challenges such as income uncertainty, the absence of structured evaluation systems, and high client expectations often create pressure. The lack of clear performance standards makes it difficult for some photographers to assess the quality of their own work.



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These conditions lead to variations in job satisfaction. Some freelancers feel content because their work aligns with their interests, while others experience stress due to having to bear all responsibilities independently. Job satisfaction is a crucial aspect within the dynamics of freelance work systems such as the gig economy, particularly for freelancers in the field of photography. Umar, as cited in (Swasti & Uma, 2024), states that job satisfaction is an individual's assessment of the extent to which their job fulfills their expectations, needs, and desires. Therefore, job satisfaction becomes an important issue to investigate within this professional context.

One of the internal factors influencing job satisfaction is self-efficacy—the individual's belief in their ability to complete tasks and achieve desired goals (Negara, 2024). High self-efficacy encourages freelancers to be more confident and willing to take on new challenges, whereas low self-efficacy leads to doubt and a tendency to avoid difficult tasks.

Field data obtained from a preliminary survey of 20 freelance photographers revealed that some respondents were hesitant to accept projects outside their usual areas of expertise and reluctant to take on new challenges due to negative past experiences. This condition was particularly evident among respondents with one to three years of work experience, who are still in the stages of adaptation and portfolio development.

In addition to internal factors, job characteristics also influence job satisfaction. According to Hackman and Oldham's theory (Prasetyaningrum, 2020), job characteristics include skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. These dimensions determine an individual's motivation and perception of their work.

In practice, freelance photographers are indeed granted a high degree of autonomy in determining concepts and work processes. However, the preliminary survey also indicated that many respondents reported difficulties in managing independent workflows due to limited guidance from clients and the infrequent provision of clear feedback. This situation often leads to doubts about the quality of their own work.

Considering these dynamics, this study was conducted to analyze the influence of self-efficacy and job characteristics on the job satisfaction of freelance photographers in Surabaya. It is expected that this research will provide theoretical contributions to the development of human resource management studies and offer practical implications for freelancers in enhancing their job satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

Self-Efficacy

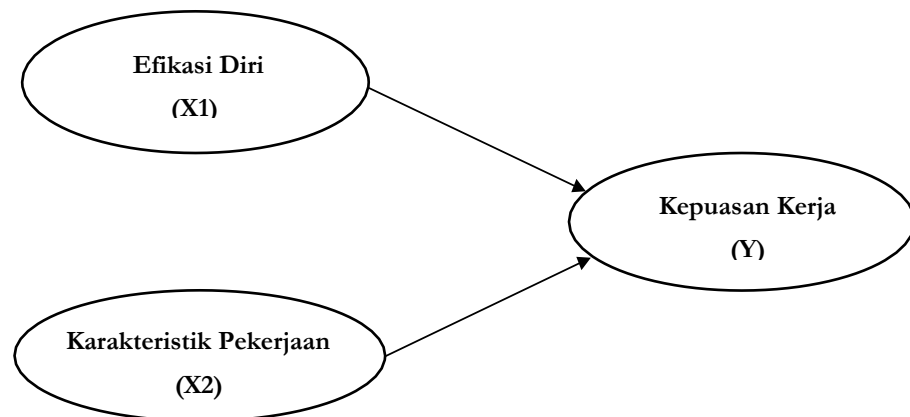
Bandura, as cited in (Findriyani & Parmin, 2021), states that self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks or actions required to achieve specific outcomes. Self-efficacy is also related to an individual's confidence in their capability to act correctly or incorrectly, appropriately or inappropriately, and the extent to which they are able to meet certain standards (Sativa, 2024).

Job Characteristics

According to Mangkuprawira as cited in (Bahri et al., 2024), job characteristics refer to the identification of various job dimensions that simultaneously enhance organizational efficiency and job satisfaction. Hackman and Oldham (Oktafian & Sari, 2023) explain that job characteristics are the internal aspects of a job, referring to its content and conditions.

Job Satisfaction

According to Robbins as cited in (Irbayuni & Pratama, 2023), job satisfaction is an individual's overall attitude toward their job, reflected in the difference between the rewards received and those expected. In line with this, Umar as cited in (Swasti & Uma, 2024) states that job satisfaction reflects an individual's feelings and evaluation of various aspects of their work, particularly the extent to which the job fulfills their expectations, needs, and desires.



H1 : It is hypothesized that self-efficacy (X1) has a positive influence on the job satisfaction of freelance photographers in Surabaya

H2: It is hypothesized that job characteristics (X2) have a positive influence on the job satisfaction of freelance photographers in Surabaya

3. Proposed Method

The research method used in this study is a quantitative approach. The population consists of freelance photographers residing in Surabaya. This study employs a purposive sampling technique, in which respondents are selected based on predetermined criteria, with a total of 100 respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale. The data were analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique with Partial Least Squares (PLS) to examine the relationships among the variables of self-efficacy (X1), job characteristics (X2), and job satisfaction (Y).

4. Results and Discussion

Result

Outer Model

This study employed the SEM-PLS approach with the assistance of SmartPLS 3.0 software. The model evaluation consisted of the outer model (indicator measurement) and the inner model (testing the relationships among variables). The analysis was conducted to ensure validity, reliability, and to test the research hypotheses. The outer loading assessment included the variables Self-Efficacy (X1), Job Characteristics (X2), and Job Satisfaction (Y)

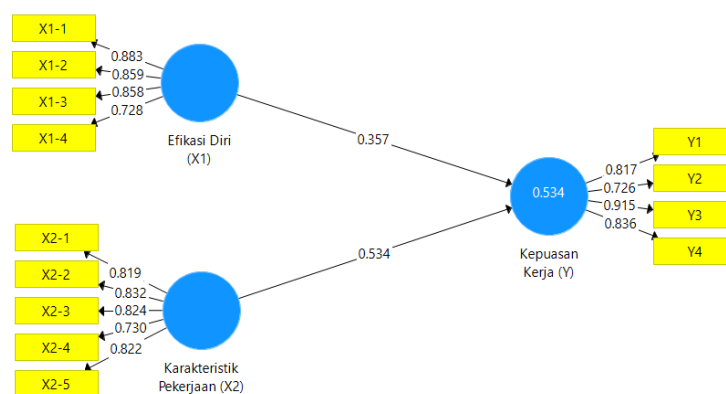


Figure 1. Output PLS

Based on the PLS output, the factor loading values of each indicator, shown above the arrows between variables and indicators, are all above 0.7, indicating that all indicators are valid. The arrows between variables show a positive relationship, with job characteristics demonstrating a stronger influence compared to self-efficacy. In addition, the R-square value can be observed inside the circle representing the dependent variable, job satisfaction.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability testing was conducted to assess the extent to which each construct can be considered trustworthy. This assessment refers to the composite reliability value, which is used to measure the consistency of indicators within each variable. A variable is considered reliable if its composite reliability value exceeds 0.70. This test can also be supported by the Cronbach's Alpha value as additional evidence of reliability. The complete results are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extraced (AVE)
Self Efficacy	0,853	0,901	0,696
Job Characteristics	0,865	0,903	0,650
Job Satisfaction	0,844	0,895	0,683

Based on the results of the Composite Reliability test, the variables Self-Efficacy (X1), Job Characteristics (X2), and Job Satisfaction (Y) each have composite reliability values greater than 0.7. Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables in this study are reliable.

Inner Model

The inner model analysis functions as a tool to evaluate and predict the causal relationships that exist among latent variables. Within this analysis, two crucial statistical outputs are considered, namely the coefficient of determination (R^2) and the p-value. The process of testing is primarily based on the R^2 value, which serves to illustrate the extent to which one variable influences or explains variations in another variable within the research model. A higher R^2 indicates that the independent variable has a stronger explanatory power over the dependent variable, whereas a lower R^2 suggests a weaker predictive relationship.

In addition, the p-value is employed to determine the level of significance of these causal paths, thereby confirming whether the relationships observed are statistically meaningful. Together, the coefficient of determination and the p-value provide a comprehensive understanding of the strength, accuracy, and significance of the hypothesized connections among latent constructs. Hence, inner model testing becomes a critical step to validate the overall structural model, ensuring that the theoretical framework proposed in the study is empirically supported.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 2. R-square.

Variable	R-Square
Job Satisfaction	0,534

The R-Square value for the Job Satisfaction (Y) variable is 0.534. This indicates that the model is able to explain 53.4% of the variance in job satisfaction, which is influenced by the independent variables Self-Efficacy (X1) and Job Characteristics (X2). The remaining 46.6% is explained by other factors not included in this model, such as external factors or other variables that may influence job satisfaction but were not examined in this study.

Path Coefficients

The inner model, or structural model, explains the causal relationships among latent variables based on the research problems and hypotheses. This model illustrates the overall relationships between variables. In SmartPLS, hypothesis testing is conducted using the bootstrapping technique, which produces the Path Coefficient values.

Berikut adalah hasil pengujian hipotesis berdasarkan nilai Path Coefficient, T Statistic, dan P Value yang ditampilkan pada tabel pengujian. Nilai original sample (path coefficient) menunjukkan arah hubungan antar variabel, apakah positif atau negatif. P Value menunjukkan tingkat signifikansi hubungan, di mana nilai $< 0,05$ menandakan hubungan tersebut signifikan. Sedangkan T Statistic digunakan untuk menguji signifikansi jalur, dan jika bernilai $> 1,96$ maka hubungan antar variabel dapat dinyatakan signifikan.

Table 3. Path Coefficients (Mean, STDEV, T-Values)

Direct Effect	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P-Value
X1 -> Y	0,357	4,792	0,000
X2 -> Y	0,534	9,175	0,000

Based on Table 3, the following conclusions can be drawn:

a) Self-Efficacy (X1) and Job Satisfaction (Y):

The coefficient value of 0.357 indicates a strong positive influence. The T-statistic value of 4.792, which is greater than 1.96, and the P-value of 0.000, which is far below 0.05, show that this relationship is statistically significant. This means that Self-Efficacy (X1) has a significant positive effect on Job Satisfaction (Y), and the hypothesis assuming this positive influence is accepted.

b) Job Characteristics (X2) and Job Satisfaction (Y):

The coefficient value of 0.534 indicates a strong positive influence. The T-statistic value of 9.175, which is greater than 1.96, and the P-value of 0.000, which is far below 0.05, demonstrate that this relationship is statistically significant. This means that Job Characteristics (X2) have a significant positive effect on Job Satisfaction (Y), and the hypothesis assuming this positive influence is accepted..

5. Conclusions

Based on the results of the analysis, this study concludes that self-efficacy and job characteristics have a positive and significant influence on the job satisfaction of freelance photographers in Surabaya. An individual's confidence in their abilities, supported by clear task identity, skill variety, and quality feedback, has been proven to enhance confidence, motivation, and overall job satisfaction. However, field observations also reveal that some freelancers continue to face challenges in managing their workflows independently and building self-confidence due to limited experience. Therefore, it is recommended that freelancers continuously develop their self-efficacy through experience and peer learning, as well as strengthen their independent work management skills through effective planning and communication with clients. Future research is encouraged to include additional variables such as intrinsic motivation, social support, or client relationship quality, and to consider the role of mediating or moderating variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing job satisfaction within the context of the gig economy.

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