

## HYBRID WORK AND CAREER GROWTH OF GENERATION Z: A LITERATURE REVIEW

BY

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### Abstract

Hybrid arrangements are now an assumed part of the working world, especially within the high-tech sectors, and as a consequence of this, Generational Z is struggling to reconcile the digitally independent and purpose-driven career they desire with the gauntlet of American managerial careers that still consist of visibility, mentorship, and structured sponsorship within the organization. This document based research asked how hybrid arrangements affect career advances for Generation Z focuses on flexible working schedules, job autonomy, and hybrid work arrangements as the organizational focus. The research was aligned with the Job Characteristics Theory, Expectancy Theory and Job Demands-Resources Theory, which jointly provide an account of the study through the dimensions of job design, motivation and the organizational context functional vs. dysfunctional outcomes to a career. A systematic desktop review covering the period 2020-2025 was undertaken to study the available empirical and theoretical literature pertaining to Generation Z working under hybrid arrangements. The study found that with the provision of autonomy around tasks impacting motivation, job satisfaction, and job performance gained, but career forwardment was achieved, only when the autonomy and flexibility of tasks were coupled with systematic feedback and mentoring working at a desk with little oversight. The performed research outlines the importance of organizational support in the forms of virtual mentoring, inclusive leadership, and wellness initiatives in maintaining engagement and retention. Combining multiple forms of support with the hybrid working model was found to enhance the career growth trajectories of Gen Z employees. There should be policies concerning the organization of flexible work arrangements, specifically designed HRM practices centered on autonomy and support, further investment in digital technologies, and calls for longitudinal research on the career advancement of Gen Z, as study suggests. The research shows the importance of hybrid work environments in providing professionally meaningful experiences and opportunities to young workers.

**Keywords:** - Career growth, Generation Z, Hybrid work arrangements, Job autonomy

### INTRODUCTION

Integrated into professional development, career growth allows individuals to span multiple roles, organizations, and even industries. Contemporary career growth focuses more on the multifaceted nature of advancement and includes continuous learning, acquisition of new skills, development of

competencies, knowledge building, networking, visibility, personal career path flexibility, personal branding and self-promotion, self-management, and performance evaluation in more adaptive ways as opposed to traditional rigid corporate hierarchies (Jayatissa, 2023). The focus of this study was the

impact of hybrid work on the career growth of Generation Z.

Muriithi and Ndeto (2024) center their work on the career growth strategy pillars of the digital fluency, purpose-driven roles, and a culture of lifelong learning. They argue that these pillars are core to the work growth environment. While traditional approaches to growth in an organization relied on hierarchical promotion and loyalty to the organization, contemporary growth favors self-directed learning and adaptive career paths (Jayatissa, 2023). Digital skills, meaningful work, and career flexibility are foundational in the career growth strategies for Generation Z.

Generation Z employees are digital natives and are at the forefront of rapid changes in careers that are agile, technology enabled, and focused on constant personal development frameworks (Oringo, 2020). Consequently, there is the need for organizations to understand that the workplaces they offer should embrace a sense of flexibility to accommodate Gen Z's professional and career aspirations and needs.

With organizations adopting hybrid work arrangements, blended telework systems, and structures, there is a need to rethink career advancement. Hybrid arrangements provide flexibility relating to where one works, when one works, who one works with, and communication relationships and frameworks, thereby changing the silo concepts of professional progression, which were previously unidirectional, linear, and top-down (Odundo, Odundo & Akach, 2024). This is more so for Gen Z employees who are after autonomy in work, digital engagement, and career flexibility. With the digital economy, Gen Z professionals engage hybrid work systems with remote synergizing, asynchronous communication, and autonomy in self-learning. The technology integration in the workplace corresponds with improving the concentration of remote tasks, sustaining productivity, and allowing asynchronous communication for Gen Z employees while working with global networks (Aprilina & Martdianty, 2023).

Generation Z is the first generation of digital natives. Members of this generation were born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s and are now entering the workforce. The workforce is digital, evolving rapidly in technology, and organizational structure.

Having Smartphone's, the internet, and social media as everyday features of life, Gen Z professionals are digitally fluent. Gen Z professionals do not conform to the rigid structures of the past, instead opting for autonomy, new ways of innovating and working, and flexible and non-linear careers. There is an increasing focus on collaboration in the digital space, on purpose-driven work that seeks alignment with values, on accelerated skills-based work, and on virtual engagement. There is also relentless focus on self-directed microlearning, personal branding, and increased online visibility, making Gen Z highly strategic. Due to these features, Gen Z is a key driver of change in the professional landscape and the new hybrid work setting (Aswani & Otiende, 2024).

Unlike the rest of the generations, Gen Z is not adjusting to the hybrid work system; they are striving to take advantage of it for personalized career growth. Unfortunately, they are working within unapproachable, archaic structures. With these structures, disengagement becomes the default for remote workers and hybrid workers. Delayed visibility, stalled promotions, and lack of social capital, relationships, and mentorship are also accretions to disengagement (Rattanaburi et al., 2025).

In the context of hybrid work in Kenya, Generation Z gains an unparalleled opportunity to digitally work at career-enhancing levels (Muriithi & Ndeto, 2024). Generation Z employees will use upper digital hybrid work strategies to enhance and build agility to lead projects on skills tailored to company core abilities and strength. The increasing use of AI, digital engagement with customers, and cloud computing makes Generation Z employees at the center of critical technology for personalized skill development, rapid learning, and the opportunity to lead virtually and demonstrate influence (Bharat & Mittal, 2024). These employees gain mobility and the ability to work in cross-national teams while developing sophisticated skills digitally (Iqbal et al., 2021). The flexibility of hybrid work is significant. Even with all the changes of the work environment and technology, there is little understanding of how these work environments and flexible work systems will affect Generation Z.

As noted in the literature, there are some remaining gaps, including little access to strategic mentorship,

low in-person visibility in the leadership pipeline, and poorly developed digitized personal branding and recognition frameworks (Kimani & Mose, 2023; Oringo, 2020). Furthermore, many institutions are yet to fully adopt structured up skilling initiatives, integrated performance evaluation systems, and career mapping frameworks that align with the values of Gen Z and their digital competencies (Aswani & Otiende, 2024). For telecommunications companies, which are crucial in this context, closing these gaps is necessary to retain youthful employees and equip them with the skills for leadership in an evolving tech-driven environment. To this purpose, the current study addresses the influence of organizational support on vertical mobility of Generation Z in hybrid work settings and seeks to propose actionable measures for the disengaged Gen Z cohort, expanding their digital career prospects, and fostering transformative inclusive leadership.

### Statement of the Problem

Globally, hybrid and remote work models have proliferated and created more alignment with generational work preferences and attitudes towards flexibility. Rapid asynchronous and online communication, and collaboration across geography, have created time and location flexibility (Muriithi & Ndeto, 2024). For the most part, such arrangements fail to create meaningful growth in the Gen Z workforce. Within the leadership pipeline, Gen Z workers lack visibility which places them outside of mentorship, and in the absence of structured systems for career mapping, evaluation hierarchies, and performance appraisal, they continue to be

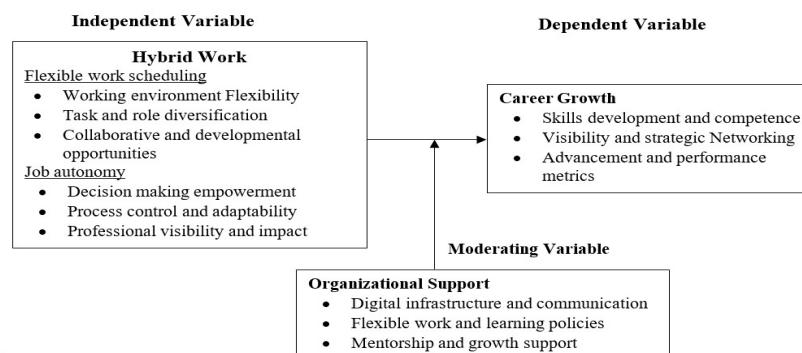
unacknowledged (Burt & Jones, 2023). This situation stems from generational bias, digital inequity, and over-centralized control of hierarchical structures (Muriithi & Ndeto, 2024). While offering the prospect of international work, remote arrangements also permit cross-border payments and the construction of online résumés. However, they fail to provide access to recognized and structured career advancement opportunities, professional development, and long-term occupational mobility.

Most Gen Z workers in Kenya use Upwork, FlexJobs, Remote Tasks, and similar sites as income-generating opportunities. Unfortunately, these platforms also lack mentorship, learning loops, and comprehensive career advancement processes (Nairobi News, 2024). Within remote arrangements, the absence of institutional support risks leaving Gen Z employees without access to leadership and significantly detached from opportunities for strategic career advancement.

While autonomy initiates positive self-driven activities like job crafting and self-management, evidence suggests it, by itself, does not sustain professional growth without supportive inclusive organizational structures (Diaa, Abidin & Roller, 2024). Generation Z recruits are changing organizational culture by asking for genuineness, dignity, and purpose. Nevertheless, most companies are still behind, and organizational assertiveness is seen as entitlement rather than innovation (Deloitte, 2023). Thus, this study seeks to understand an important aspect pertaining to Generation Z employees and their hybrid work arrangements, along with the implications such arrangements have on their career development.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework****Theoretical Framework**

The research was grounded on Job Characteristics Theory, Expectancy Theory, and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory. These theories were selected for their capacity to define the three central variables in this study: hybrid work (independent variable), career growth (dependent variable), and organizational support (moderator).

**Job Characteristics Theory**

Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) provides a framework for understanding how job design influences employees' attitudes and behaviours. The theory supports hybrid work, which for this study is the independent variable. JCT states that the five job dimensions (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) shape three psychological states: experienced meaningfulness, responsibility for the outcome, and knowledge of the results. These psychological states work outcomes including motivation, satisfaction, and performance, as well as career advancement (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Given the changes to the workplace, especially hybrid and flexible arrangements, the dimensions of a job may shift, meaning JCT is well suited to theorize how work is structured today.

This study aims to examine the particular effects hybrid working models have on autonomy within organizations. Flexibility in hybrid working setups changes the degree of design autonomy employees have in their jobs considerably. It affects fundamental job design elements like autonomy, task identity, task significance, and in the psychological states of employees. Thus, the study considers JCT to be its theoretical foundation. The combination of hybrid work, flexible arrangements, and varying degrees of control over one's tasks modifies the relational job characteristics on a profound level, improving the employee's experience. The work shifts from contextual in nature to a primary determinant of the employee's key results, highlighting the transformed nature of the role in the workplace. This enables the study to focus on hybrid work as current, enriched job characteristics, and analyze its role in employee

engagement and advanced career opportunities in the current employment environment.

**Expectancy Theory**

This study is anchored on Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964), with career growth as the dependent variable. Building on and expanding the range of motivating influences to include individual abilities and role perceptions, Lawler and Suttle (1973) contributed to the development of the Porter-Lawler Model, which asserted the importance of relative fairness of rewards, as a condition for motivation, sustaining. Recently, Zajda (2024) examined the cognitive dimensions of motivation and linked the theory with behavioral decision-making models. Expectancy theory explains employee motivation in a sequential order of expectation whereby effort leading to performance and performance manifesting in outcomes, organizational and individual, is a motivating factor. The elements of the theory include expectancy (the belief that effort will attain performance), instrumentality (the belief that performance will lead to rewards), and valence (the worth a person places on a reward).

With hybrid working arrangements, Savolainen (2018) contends that Gen Z employees will become more engaged if organizations show the connection between effort and reward and how it translates to career advancement. Organizations are encouraged to incorporate specified autonomy within established formal expectations of remote work, develop a structured career advancement framework, build a feedback loop for transparency, and provide clear, accessible career pathing documentation to manage expectations. Provide relational proximity to senior personnel to enhance visibility and engagement for career advancement, and distribute industry-lite digital learning materials designed around Gen Z's drive for growth and motivation that addresses gaps in competencies to meet your organizational expectations.

In this study, this theory was used to examine how the expectancy-performance-reward framework within the hybrid work environment affects the career advancement of Gen Z employees.

**Job Demands-Resources Theory**

The J-D-R (Job Demands-Resources) model was pioneered by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) to

comprehend how work affects employees and their performance. As research considers organizational support (which) (as) will be the moderating variable in this study. Given the stated workplace factors, Employees will be classified under Job Demands (Burnout) (Stressors leading to disengagement-extensive workload, digital fatigue, and career ambiguity) and Job Resources (Support systems in place to help employees cope with challenges) (Mentorship and digital collaboration tools that maintain motivation) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Employees in hybrid work models experience social isolation and career ambiguity as their primary work-related challenges despite enjoying flexibility autonomy. As Bakker & Demerouti (2007) stated, organizational support in the form of collaboration tools and virtual mentorship frameworks can diminish these challenges, thereby improving employee engagement. More extensively, the J-D-R model (demands-resources model) endorses the provision of asynchronous and synchronous improvements in structural guidance to alleviate career ambiguity, promote agile digital skilling, and scaffolding of instruction to accommodate continuous learning aligned with the career aspirations of Gen Z, and implement (performance) and (reward) a transparent performance and reward framework linked to measurable work outcomes, to tracked promotions, and salary increments, clear roles that promote accountability, career visibility, and career-structured feedback mechanisms to articulate engagement, growth opportunities, and clarity on expected performance relations. & structurally aligned with their work.

The JD-R Theory explains organizational support's moderating role in the study regarding hybrid work and career progression for Gen-Z employees. Hybrid work involves job demands and resources. Social isolation and career uncertainty are job demands, and flexibility and autonomy are job resources. Support boundaries the adverse effects of job demands, acting as the study's moderating variable, by providing critical resources like virtual mentorship, digital collaboration tools and professional development. These resources help Gen-Z employees focus on primary stressors, motivation and challenges hybrid

work. Support, then, maximizes the positive effects gained from autonomy and flexible scheduling in addition to providing support and transparency around career goals. Organizational support's transparency around the goals and career development opportunities enhances their career growth. Support for goals highlights organizational interventions to mitigate issues of visibility and career support. It maintains hybrid work conditions to disengage Gen-Z employees to provide sustained career growth and visibility on work to support burnout.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, employees integrate, adapt, and respond to changes in their positions and the evolution of their positions due to the adoption of flexible working conditions. Yadav and Bagri (2025), within the scope of the resilience and adaptability in a flexible working culture, centered on the flexible hours and compressed workweeks, and posited that a need supportive work environment is a predictor of adaptive workplace resilience and agile practices. More importantly, in the context of work-related motivation and burnout, the most crucial element to well-being, work-life integration, and all that is flexible scheduling (Handayani & Pebriyani, 2020). Challenges, however, such as the need for organizational support, especially for digitally fluent Gen Z workers in hybrid arrangements, and the absence of rigid boundaries around the work-life problem remain. Balancing organizational goals and work-life improvement demand is critical.

The role of innovation and digital literacy as positive contributors to flexible and hybrid environments extending performance outcomes is preferable more recent referred documentation. As stated by Wibisono, Khaddafi, and Ilham (2025), innovative work behaviours is enhanced by creative self-efficacy, and this relationship is further enhanced by digital literacy. This highlights the need to integrate the enhancement of digital skills as flexible work arrangements are implemented aimed at career advancement for young professionals. The psychosocial safety climate has more recently also been described as a correlate to hybrid work. As stated by Juutinen et al. (2023), a positive safety climate is associated with a reduction in stress and burnout, and with an increase in positive



engagement, thus implying the need of a positive psychological work environment is essential to sustain career progression within a hybrid context. However, the need to understand the psychosocial safety climate on Gen Z's career progression is still a gap that remains irrespective of industry and geographic location.

Flexibility improves employees' balancing of organizational life and personal commitments encouraging productivity and general wellness as exhibited in Pakistan's case (Abid & Barech, 2017). Nevertheless, understanding and implementing flexible scheduling practices tend to differ by management level which indicates the need for organizational level education and policy tuning to better address Gen Z's employment needs. Likewise, Azaka, Kaizer and Audu-Ibrahim (2024) point out the balancing of professional and personal life and career advancements associated with flexible work setups and the added organizational supports of mentorship and electronic work resources. These results reinforce the notion that merely providing flexible scheduling does not translate to the desired career advancements without the necessary organizational resources to augment the flexibility.

These are well captured in studies conducted in Kenya. For example, Mbae, Ogolla and Mbebe (2019) demonstrated that job flexibility, sharing, and telecommuting positively influence the integration of work and personal life and enhance employees performance, on the integration of work and personal life. While the direct effect on career growth may not have been the primary focus, the improvements on engagement and productivity signal potential career growth. These results contribute to understanding the importance of flexible practices from both the organizational perspective as well as the perspective of employees, particularly in developing economies.

Autonomy has a vital impact on intrinsic motivation, engagement, and proactive management of one's career. Moreover, autonomy promotes psychological needs and dedication in one's occupation. This can be reflected in self-determination theory and the job characteristics model. Concerning adaptable job performance, the flexibility and growth needed to pursue a job in one's career, as highlighted by Tabiu,

Pangil, and Othman (2020), are crucial in job advancement, especially in the rapidly evolving Gen Z. Zhou, Li, and Gong (2019) worked on job autonomy and intrinsic motivation related to proactive behavior. This intrinsic motivation, particularly when amplified by organizational support in China, can contribute to one's sustainable development as an employee. Moreover, the autonomy one has correlates to the intricacy of the mechanisms guiding one's career advancement. Coetzee and De Villiers (2010) describe how engagement and motivation in one's career can be negatively impacted by the discomfort of uncertainty and the lack of clarity surrounding a job. This underscores the impact of role clarity and the appropriate supporting structures for autonomy, especially in a hybrid working model which may increase ambiguity. The degree of support autonomy is also influenced by age and employment classification, for racial and ethnic groups, sex, and the intersection of these variables. This shows a need for altered support systems in order to handle the varying types of Gen Z.

Mworia, Wachira, and Mwaura (2021) have shown in Kenya that greater job autonomy leads to improvements in employee performance because it increases motivation, creativity, and ownership. Even if the aforementioned studies address the public sector, they uphold the assumption that autonomy, improves career progression, while additionally, emphasizing the importance of autonomy on hybrid arrangements for the digitally savvy Gen Z. This hypothesis is also supported by private sector evidence from Kenya (Evelyne, Kilika, and Muathe, 2018). With the decision making autonomy suggested to be the most preferred within Gen Z's empowerment, coupled with the flexibility preferences, organizational configurations in the modern workplace, are likely to be foundational in advocating progression for younger employees.

The positive effects of autonomy also depend on the existence of adequate supportive feedback and the requisite mentorship. As discussed by Makone and van Tonder (2024) and Prabha and Kirupa (2024), the absence of those, especially for autonomy-seeking Gen Z, will leave career advancement unattainable. Gehrke (2024) recommends more direct and cooperative

leadership to nurture proactive career attitudes. The generational disparity in autonomy demands the emergence of new leadership and supportive frameworks, necessitating the advancement of hybrid job design and support configurational frameworks to facilitate career advancement for Gen Z.

The effects of various organizational support systems, such as the quality of leadership, mentoring, communication, and provision of resources, may play a crucial moderating effect on the relationship between hybrid work and the outcomes for one's career. Kohont (2025) identifies the complex challenges of reconciling the relaxing work from home routine with the demands of real-time collaborative work and argues that in hybrid work settings, in which people need to flexibly adapt to varying demands, most crucial for engagement and performance are flexible policies and adaptive leadership. Using the example of civil service in Indonesia, Dara, Febriantina and Suwatno (2025) show how strong organizational support mitigates the adverse consequences of hybrid work, enhances one's psychological well-being, and boosts overall productivity. Within hybrid work arrangements, the ability to integrate remote work with socializing, especially in scheduled work hours, seems to be one of the more important facets to be encouraged for sustaining career advancement.

This is also supported in the literature. Cherono and Wanyoike (2024) explain how the hybrid work culture promotes performance by enhancing work-life balance, increasing technology use, and strengthening organizational support, and also point to the need for cultural change to maximize the benefits of hybrid working, especially for younger employees where career growth exigencies are more pronounced. Onyango (2024) discusses how organizational policies that support flexible scheduling, job sharing, the use of ICT, and other conducive environments boost employee performance in the Kenyan financial sector. While there are clear performance benefits, the impact on career growth for Gen Z is under-researched, presenting a significant gap that requires organizational focus.

Wider evidence from Kenya highlights the value of comprehensive support in an organization in an individual's career advancement from the perspective

of the more balanced Human Resource Management practices of integration of organizational support in mentorship, wellness, as well as flexibility (Odhiambo, 2024). Holistic support aligned with the work-life integration patterns used by the technologically savvy Gen Z, as well as with the support system of work-life balance, is most crucial in increasing retention (Kimani & Mose, 2023).

### **Flexible Work Scheduling and Career Growth of Gen Z Employees**

The study by Muriithi and Ndeto (2024) looked at hybrid work systems and employee performance. They wanted to see how parts of hybrid work such as job sharing and job autonomy affect performance outcomes in this area. They used a cross-sectional survey design, and for the simple random sampling method, they chose a sample of 177 employees from telecommunications firms. The study used questionnaires as a data collection tool and subsequently performed reliability and validity checks. The results of the analysis done on SPSS showed a very strong and positive relationship between job autonomy and employee performance, and a moderately strong relationship between job sharing and employee performance. The results of this study strengthen the idea that employees need to be able to control the tasks that they work on and be able to share work with others in order to work more effectively and become more motivated. This study highlights the need for more studies on the reinforcement of autonomy and flexibility as an employee effectiveness career growth factor.

Oginga (2023) analyzed employee retention initiatives and their effects on Generation Z employees' performance at Kenya Power & Lighting Company (KPLC). He used a descriptive research design and a sample of 200 employees from the population where primary data was garnered using semi-structured questionnaires. The researcher evaluated the influence of training, leadership, work environment, and job attributes on the retention and performance of employees using multiple regression analysis. The key results indicated that each of these factors performed positively and significantly on the performance of Gen Z. This finding denotes that training which is cohesive and constructive, leadership that is attentive and

understanding, and the provision of work environments that promote employee inventive collaboration and recognition should be prioritized. This indicates that for Gen Z, training is advancement and flexible work schedules, which falls under work environment assistance policies, are essential.

Kathukya, Mwangi and Maundu (2025) researched flexible work arrangements and employee engagement in five-star hotels in Kenya. When using a descriptive research design and data derived from a sample of hotel employees, this study described, and concluded, flexible work arrangements and employee engagement linked significantly positively. Then, the hotels' authors further suggested, as a way employee engagement enhancement, hotels must provide the required tools, resources, and technology to maintain employees' flexible work schedules. For hotels in the Kenya hospitality industry, this research showcased the flexible work arrangements scope potential to boost employees' engagement. Considering Kenya's hospitality industry attracts Generation Z, the work environment suggested positively influences this generation as well.

Kangogo and Wanambiro (2019) examined how flexible working schedules influenced the organizational commitment of healthcare employees in hospitals located at Nakuru Town in Kenya. For this study's descriptive research design, 86 employees across 15 hospitals were surveyed using questionnaires containing items on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaires were processed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, and regression and correlation analyses in SPSS. The weak correlation discovered in the study concerning flexible work policies and organizational commitment ( $r = 0.237$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ) denotes that when organizational commitment is displayed, employees are willing to work under flexible policies. This led the study to infer that the motivational and productivity gains, as well as the quality of service delivery improvements, are dominant in flexible work arrangements and the overall organizational performance is a function of these improvements.

In their study, Tubey, Kurgat, and Rotich (2015) examined the expectations of working Generation Y on the Kenyan job market, particularly focusing on employment seeking, final-year university students.

They used a descriptive approach and gathered data using questionnaires on students from Moi University. They concluded that the employees of Generation Y were demanding quick promotion prospects, work environments that were adaptive and supportive, little supervision, and existence of high-end technology at the workplace. On the contrary, the respondents positively viewed the work ethic on employees, employment aids, compensation and pay, and welfare services as critical to their employment expectations. Although the research was on Generation Y, it provides data that can be useful in understanding the Generation Z, especially on the pressure of flexible work schedules and outlook of increased opportunities. This indicates that flexible employment conditions could form part the comprehensive employment expectations, which is critical for advancing and retaining younger employees, particularly the Gen Z population, in fast-changing industries. Indirectly, the study also supports the need to reconsider human resource systems to the demands of the emerging workforce with respect to disengagement and career development.

In the next report, we report on the latter work of Odhiambo (2024), summarizing the relationships among work-life balance initiatives and employee turnover within leading consulting firms in Nairobi County, Kenya, which specialize in labour outsourcing. Work-life balance initiatives covered in the study include wellness programmes, hybrid work arrangements, maternity and paternity leave, and medical coverage. The researcher administered a census sample involving 274 of the 809 employees across four consulting firms and applied descriptive statistics and linear multiple regression in analysing the data. The findings determined that wellness programmes, parental leave and medical schemes markedly and positively impacted employee turnover. In addition, the design of the hybrid work programmes positively affected employee turnover, but the contribution was statistically insignificant. The author also noted that employees' sex impacted turnover in a positive and statistically insignificant manner. The author demonstrates the unique culturally and contextually work-life strategies to demonstrate. These gaps positively enhance employee satisfaction, engagement, and ultimately retention in Kenya.



Odhiambo's work aligns with contemporary literature. Although hybrid work programmes do not directly influence turnover, they affirm the work-life programmes which include medical and parental support to retain employees more so employees in the Gen Z cohort who work in fast growing sectors where there have been evident gaps in career advancement and retention.

This research enhances comprehension of the protection of employee turnover in the context of Nairobi's socio-economic landscape and the role of integrative work-life balance strategies in consultancy firms.

### **Effect of Job Autonomy on Career Growth of Gen Z Employees**

Possession of autonomy encourages employees to engage in job crafting and allows for self-management of a career which, in turn, promotes flexibility and commitment to a career (Martins et al., 2024). Career optimism is closely associated with autonomy in decision-making, and having control over one's schedule (Zychová, Fejfarová & Jindrová, 2024). Studies conducted in Kenya illustrate this correlation as well. For instance, Muriithi and Ndeto (2024) stated that autonomy was positively correlated with performance ( $r = 0.752$ ) and Mworira et al. (2021) showed that autonomy was a significant predictor of motivation and the inspiration for ongoing learning. However, autonomy as a feature of one's job, in the absence of formal feedback and mentorship, is unlikely to result in advancement in one's career (Mokoena & van Tonder, 2024).

Mworira, Wachira, and Mwaura (2021) researched how job autonomy impacts employee performance in Isiolo County Government in Kenya. The purpose of the research was to find out how job autonomy impacts service delivery and work output of employees within the county government. The study used a descriptive research design within a mixed-methods approach and used stratified sampling to select 140 employees as study participants. Data collection was done using structured self-administered questionnaires and interviews, which was followed by descriptive and chi-square statistical analysis in SPSS. Results showed autonomy positively influenced employee

performance, and that there was a high level of job autonomy among employees.

The findings suggest that enhancing the motivational factors within employees' roles leads to greater work independence, learning, and outcomes overall, and that increased independence and self-direction may be the most important motivational factors of all. Expanding on the research that highlights the positive aspects of job autonomy, the present research shows that for Gen Z employees, the value of autonomy is particularly pronounced in careers in which employees have the discretion to meaningfully enhance their motivation and active work engagement. The relationship is critical in clarifying the position of job autonomy on the career development of Gen Z employees, particularly in technology and innovation careers.

Baluku et al. (2019) explored the role of autonomy in the relationship between entrepreneurial mentoring and entrepreneurial intentions of youth from Germany, Kenya, and Uganda. Under the frameworks of self-determination theory and the theory of planned behaviour, the authors focused on a sample of 1,509 young individuals, which included university students, the waged, and the unemployed. The authors employed multi-group design to examine the impact of mentoring, autonomy, and entrepreneurial intentions (EI). The results of the study were that there was a positive correlation between entrepreneurial intentions and mentoring and between entrepreneurial intentions and autonomy and with the moderator being autonomy. High autonomy made mentoring to be more effective among students and the unemployed. When the country-specific mentoring effects were compared, there were extreme results of Germany and Uganda and the middle was Kenya with the least effects. The differences in employment status were discussed with autonomy suggesting a psychosocial need of focus in entrepreneurial motivation and persistence.

This provides insight into the relationship between nurturing autonomy in mentoring and the development of entrepreneurial intent, especially for young people in economically diverse countries like Kenya. Here, enhancing autonomy in mentoring may help Generation Z employees more rapidly adopt entrepreneurial mindsets. Furthermore, the psychological impact of autonomy in entrepreneurial

contexts showed the need to expand the literature on the autonomy-career development nexus.

The effect of autonomy, one of the job characteristics, on employee performance within private equity firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya, was analyzed by Evelyne, Kilika and Muathe in the year 2018. The focal research question of the study sought to establish the effect of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback on employee performance. The researchers sought to answer the research questions through a descriptive research design, and used a census of 210 employees in 25 private equity firms. Data collection was through questionnaires administered from July to September 2016. 116 completed questionnaires were returned and were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, specifically multiple regression analysis using the stepwise method in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Results indicated that employee performance was positively and significantly predicted by autonomy, skill variety, task identity and feedback while task significance was the only one that had no predictive power. The recommendation was to practice job rotation and provide more freedom in decision making. The implication of the study to the current research was on job autonomy and career growth of Generation Z employees, in that it suggested autonomy is an essential driver for motivation and performance, both of which are determinant for career growth in evolving sectors. This indicates that job autonomy provides the empowerment, motivation and potential career growth that Generation Z employees seek. This is a potential recruitment incentive within fast evolving sectors to retain the employees.

The literature evaluation indicates that integrating job autonomy enhances motivation, engagement, and proactivity among Generation Z employees, hence promoting their career progression. As demonstrated by Martins et al. (2024), autonomy allows Gen Z workers to manage themselves, perform job designing, and make commitments to adaptable career stage. Research in Kenya has proved that autonomy boosts motivation and performance (Muriithi and Ndeto, 2024; Mworio et al., 2021). The Kenyan research on organizations and entrepreneurship also emphasizes the significance of motivational autonomy as it demonstrates that it can be used by persons to feel

more empowered and motivated in their professions. This demonstrates the significance of autonomy as an intrinsic motivator to the more psychologically significant job that Mworio et al. (2021) assumes is in concordance with Gen Z interests in digital and inventive interaction. With that in mind, performance, motivation, and proactive career behaviors increase, meaning that autonomy, as well as mentoring and leadership that acknowledges their special needs, creates conditions in which a major career growth may occur.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper utilized a systematic desktop review to determine the impacts of flexibility of work scheduling, job autonomy, and organizational support on career build of Gen Z employees. This research, which was based on a positivist approach, objectively evaluated the literature on the topic of hybrid work (flexible working hours and job autonomy) and organizational support with regard to career development among Gen Z workers. The researcher searched the academic databases, government publications, policy briefings, and peer-reviewed publications. The search terms applicable were hybrids work arrangement, flexible work schedules, job autonomy, organizational support, career growth, generation Z employees, and Gen Z Employees Career Growth in Kenya. The search involved academic articles published within the period of 2020 and 2025. This list of search terms was used as the inclusion criteria on the reviewed literature to identify the studies that addressed the career development of Gen Z employees under hybrid work conditions. The review comprised critical screening and evaluation of methodological quality, followed by thematic synthesis of the findings. Recent work by Nyakio and Madgalene (2024) on hybrid work systems and employee performance in Kenya's telecommunication sector focused on aspects relevant to this study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Influence of Flexible Work Scheduling on Gen Z Career Growth

The literature research showed that flexible work schedules change how Gen Z workers connect with their jobs in a big way and give them power over

where and when they work. A study in several countries suggests that such flexibility is a necessity to the Gen Z workers because they can balance their career goals with their personal lives and thus attain a positive impact on their psychological well-being. This is because it allows people to be more motivated and happy at the workplace, which is also essential in enhancing performance and career growth. Nonetheless, it was also suggested by research that companies should carefully draft their policies because unchecked flexible working conditions can lead to the situation when the employees spend too much time at work, and this, in turn, leads to the collapse of work-life balance and burnout. The gen Z employees prefer to gain new skills and do work that has purpose, thus companies are advised to provide the employees with strong support systems, which will help them achieve their objectives.

Studies show that flexible working can transform the conventional workplace to fit into the wants of Generation Z concerning digital nativity and agility in African situations. To start with, hierarchies and various forms of technology infrastructure make it not as successful. A study carried out in Kenya found that flexible work arrangements improve employee engagement and commitment to the organization but the career progression of Generation Z is stationary and uneven without employer efforts to create and maintain supportive and transparent opportunities. That demonstrates that flexible scheduling is not a panacea; it should be implemented along with career-oriented programs that should be aware of and reward of the work done remotely and with the use of the flexible work arrangements.

The article under analysis conducted in Kenya suggests that flexible scheduling is gaining popularity, yet it is commonly accompanied by outdated thinking patterns that render Gen Z incapable of advancing their professions. Adaptability in motivation and involvement Feedback and mentorship recorded in the actual life were underlined as the crucial aspect of on boarding, as well as performance technologies and other tools tailored to the career paths of Gen Z that are critical to professional development. Also, family-friendly and wellness programs coupled with flexible work environment facilitate non-linear career progression. This entails the Kenyan firms interested

in leveraging the flexibility of time should ensure that their cultures do not oppose the working behaviors and career aspirations of Gen Z.

### **Effect of Job Autonomy on Gen Z Career Growth**

Among the motivational aspects noted in the literature, the importance of job autonomy looms large. Gen Z employees appreciate the opportunity to command how tasks are completed, how to customize their career trajectories, and how to engage in job crafting in proactive ways. With autonomy, employees appreciate intrinsic motivation and psychological empowerment, as critical for Gen Z. However, as noted in the literature, the favorable effects of autonomy are contingent on the existence and provision of formal structures in the organization, with feedback and mentoring. In the absence of such structures, the employees may similar to those in the literature be unable to convert autonomy into progressive career movement. Furthermore, analyses around generation show that members of Gen Z, in contrast to other cohorts, are more likely to pursue different managed arrangements. This points to a possible gap in leadership where more Z managers are likely to prefer a different style and suggesting that a different appropriate management approach of autonomy is required.

In the African context, the impact of job autonomy on career growth was supported, but affected by more systemic issues such as sector and economic variability. Kenyan studies also confirmed the motivational, performance, and learning impact of autonomy. However, the extent autonomy will facilitate career growth is largely dependent on the provision of appropriate and more deeply embedded institutional mentoring geared towards younger professionals in volatile, complex, and rapidly changing environments. This highlights the more complex issues that the context is likely to constrain fuller expressions of individual agency, as more would be expected of the organization in developing economies.

### **Organizational Support for Hybrid Work and Career Growth of Gen Z Employees**

The majority of the studies reviewed demonstrate that the organizational support is one of the most important

components, which allow Gen Z employees to enjoy the flexibility in scheduling that brings positive transformations in their occupational growth. The support will be in the form of virtual mentoring, inclusive leadership, honest feedback, well-being, and engagement that will help people to remain at their jobs and see a career opportunity. Support Systems: In a hybrid work setting, the risk of social isolation and professional uncertainty is reduced through the use of constant mentorship and the development of a sense of belongingness. The working Gen Z who generally use the hybrid systems require a support system that supports them through constant mentorship and makes them feel part of the system. The solutions are flexible, provide immediate reward, and enable social integration, which are necessary to help manage the isolation experienced within mixed workplaces.

Within the African setting, studies have shown that in the case of hybrid work environments, organizational support is becoming a critical factor regarding the success of Gen Z. For younger workers in Kenya and South Africa, unsupportive cultures and systems in hybrid work environments are likely to increase strain and limit career progression. To enhance job performance, support from the organization involves hybrid-sensitive leadership, cohesion-maintaining communication, and accommodating policies targeted to varying employee needs. As Gen Z is growing within the organization, the region's unique features and support systems organizationally will have to be aligned with organizational demands, provided the systems are culture and context appropriate.

In particular, Kenyan studies show that organizational support involves far more than the offer of asynchronous work capabilities. Restorative support includes work-life integration wellness policies, career development alignment, responsive leadership frameworks, and flexible work structures. Restorative support has a direct impact on job satisfaction and retention, and a positive indirect impact on career progression for psychosocially younger workers. The direct impact of hybrid work on retention being minimal indicates that organizations are likely placing hybrid work without sufficient safeguards. In Kenya, this involves espoused flexible HRM practices centered on mentorship, performance, and learning,

integrated with behavioral and psychosocial safety performance frameworks.

## CONCLUSION

In response to the enjoyment of career advancement attributed to motivation derived from satisfaction with the balance between work and personal life autonomy, the degree of work flexibility offered to Gen Z at a place of work greatly changes work involvement behavior in constructive ways. The satisfaction and motivation related to work involvement behaviour is highly increased by the work-life balance as the level of work flexibility provided to Gen Z at a workplace. Goals and values congruence to the psychological side have positive effects to goals and work performance of the person. Goal and value congruence has a positive influence on the goals and work performance of an individual. Conversely, in an attempt to maintain the benefits of work flexibility, organizational flexible work balance to maximize the psychological balance and the work performance has the task of adjusting the goals and values. Flexible work arrangements pursue the customary work culture adaptation with the conventional and recent anticipation of agility. Goal and value alignment is transferred to the psychological balance and work performance. The flexible work arrangements complete the adjustment of ingrained work cultures with the traditional and the recent expectation. Goals and values alignment comes with the psychological balance and work performance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's results, companies need to develop and follow rules and procedures that allow for flexible work arrangements that include job autonomy, hybrid employment, and a good work-life balance. This is in response to Generation Z's need for empowerment and meaningful involvement. Employers should offer completely integrated systems for assistance, such as virtual mentorship, structured feedback, inclusive leadership, and wellness programs. These systems must be put in place to boost job satisfaction and encourage professional growth. Investing in digital technologies, making HRM methods more open and recognizing hard work, and creating spaces for ongoing learning can all help

Generation Z's digital skills be used and supported for productivity and innovation.

Future research should prioritize longitudinal, sector-specific studies in Kenya and similar contexts that examine the interplay between hybrid work and organizational support on Generation Z's career trajectories. The research should encompass the impacts of mentorship, leadership, and culture on career advancement. The development of organizational support instruments, cross-generational studies, and support emphasizing mental health, sustainable development goals, and entrepreneurship in relation to career outcomes will provide essential insights into the cross-generational management of Generation Z, especially regarding emotional support, values, and entrepreneurship.

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