



The Future of Work and the Evolving Role of Career Counseling: Preparing Gen Z for the Gig Economy and the Age of Automation.

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the evolving landscape of work that Generation Z is encountering, with an emphasis on the essential role of career counseling in equipping them for the gig economy and the age of automation. As technological advancements and shifts in labor market dynamics reshape traditional employment models, young job seekers face unique challenges that require innovative strategies for career success. The article employs a research-based approach to examine the key skills necessary for navigating this new work environment, the transformations in work relationships, and the critical function of career counselors in providing pertinent guidance and support. Moreover, it highlights the significance of developing both soft skills—such as adaptability, communication, and problem-solving—and technical skills relevant to emerging industries. The article posits that career counseling not only serves as an important resource for Generation Z in identifying and pursuing job opportunities but also plays a pivotal role in fostering resilience and adaptability in a rapidly changing job market. By addressing the evolving expectations of employers and the impact of automation on job availability, this article aims to provide insights into how career counseling can effectively prepare Generation Z for the future of work.

Keywords : *Career Counseling, Generation Z, Gig Economy*

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INTRODUCTION

The landscape of work is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by advancements in technology and shifting economic paradigms (Bilon-Piórko, 2022; Stead, 2024). As Generation Z enters the workforce, they are met with a unique set of challenges and opportunities that differ significantly from those faced by previous generations (Fabio, 2024; Nie, 2023). This cohort, born roughly between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, is characterized by its digital nativity, having grown up in an era defined by the internet and social media. As such, their approach to work, career aspirations, and expectations from employers are markedly distinct.

The gig economy has emerged as a dominant force in the labor market, offering flexible work arrangements that appeal to many young professionals (Bandhu, 2024; Milot-Lapointe, 2025). Freelancing, part-time jobs, and gig-based roles provide opportunities for autonomy and varied experiences. However, this shift also brings uncertainty, as gig workers often lack the benefits and job security associated with traditional employment. Consequently, Generation Z must navigate this complex landscape, balancing the allure of flexibility with the need for stability. Automation is another critical factor reshaping the future of work (Alghamdi, 2023; Stavropoulou, 2024). Advances in artificial intelligence and robotics are transforming industries, leading to the displacement of certain jobs while simultaneously creating new roles that require specialized skills (Ardi, 2022; McMahon, 2024). Generation Z must be prepared to adapt to these changes, acquiring skills that align with the demands of an evolving job market. This necessity underscores the importance of effective career counseling, which can guide them in identifying and developing the competencies that will be in demand.

Career counseling plays a pivotal role in helping individuals understand their career paths and make informed decisions (Dispenza, 2024; Haine, 2024a). For Generation Z, who often feel overwhelmed by the myriad of options available, career counselors can provide crucial insights and support (Nair, 2022; Patil, 2024). They can assist young people in assessing their interests, values, and skills, aligning them with suitable career opportunities in the gig economy and beyond (Rokde, 2024; Smith, 2023). This personalized guidance is essential for helping young people navigate the complexities of their career choices. Furthermore, the role of career counselors extends beyond mere job placement (Adel, 2022; Devi, 2023). They serve as mentors, helping individuals build resilience and adaptability in the face of uncertainty. In a rapidly changing world, the ability to pivot and embrace new opportunities is essential. Career counseling can empower Generation Z to develop these traits, fostering a mindset that is open to change and innovation. Counselors can also facilitate workshops and training sessions that equip young people with practical skills relevant to their desired career paths.

The skills gap is another pressing concern that impacts Generation Z's readiness for the workforce (Phillips, 2022; Zeng, 2025). While educational institutions strive to equip students with foundational knowledge, there is often a disconnect between what is

taught and the skills employers seek (Belser, 2023; Muhammad, 2023). Career counselors can bridge this gap by providing guidance on essential skills development, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy, which are increasingly valued in the modern workplace (Drosos, 2023; Hooley, 2022). They can also promote internships and experiential learning opportunities that allow students to gain real-world experience. Moreover, the importance of soft skills cannot be overstated (Domínguez, 2022; Maree, 2024). As automation takes over routine tasks, interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence become crucial differentiators in the job market. Career counseling can help Generation Z cultivate these soft skills, preparing them to excel in collaborative environments and navigate the complexities of modern work relationships (Mariani, 2022; Watson, 2024). By emphasizing the development of communication skills, teamwork, and adaptability, counselors can enhance the employability of young job seekers.

The evolving nature of work also requires a shift in how career success is defined. Traditional metrics, such as job titles and salaries, may no longer suffice (Cont, 2022; Maynes, 2023). Generation Z is increasingly valuing purpose-driven work and alignment with personal values, seeking careers that contribute positively to society. Career counselors can play a significant role in helping young people identify and pursue meaningful career paths that resonate with their aspirations (Carvalho, 2023; Leavy, 2023). This alignment can lead to greater job satisfaction and overall well-being. In addition to individual support, career counseling initiatives must also address broader systemic issues (Osipow, 2024; Sahin, 2024). Policies promoting fair labor practices, equitable pay, and access to benefits for gig workers are essential to ensure that the gig economy remains a viable option for Generation Z (Turcotte, 2023; Young, 2024). Counselors can advocate for these changes, empowering young people to engage in discussions about their rights and protections in the workplace. By raising awareness of labor rights and support systems, counselors can help mitigate the risks associated with gig work.

As we move forward, the collaboration between educational institutions, employers, and career counseling services will be vital in preparing Generation Z (Chandrol, 2024; Dalene, 2023) for the future of work. By fostering partnerships that promote skill development, job readiness, and meaningful employment opportunities, we can create an environment where young professionals thrive (Kempl, 2022; Kim, 2023). These collaborations can also lead to the creation of tailored training programs that address the specific needs of the workforce. Ultimately, the future of work presents both challenges and opportunities for Generation Z (Keshf, 2022; Soidet, 2024). With the right support and guidance, they can navigate this dynamic landscape and emerge as resilient, adaptable professionals (Roziqi, 2025; Wong, 2022). Career counseling serves as a crucial resource in this journey, equipping them with the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly complex world. By focusing on holistic development, counselors can help young people not only find jobs but also build fulfilling careers that align with their values.

In conclusion, the intersection of the gig economy, automation, and evolving work dynamics requires a reevaluation of how we prepare the next generation for the workforce. Career counseling will be instrumental in fostering the skills, adaptability, and mindset needed for success in this new era. By investing in robust counseling services and promoting a culture of continuous learning, we can empower Generation Z to not only navigate but also shape the future of work. Moving forward, it is essential to recognize and embrace the evolving nature of work, ensuring that young professionals are equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study involves 100 participants, consisting of 50 students from the Guidance and Counseling program and 50 students from the Teacher Education program for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Almalki, 2022; Jones, 2023). The aim is to explore their perspectives on the role of career counseling in preparing Generation Z for the evolving job market. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring a diverse representation of experiences and backgrounds within each program. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, allowing for in-depth exploration of the students' views on career counselling (Boland, 2024; Lupton-Smith, 2023), the skills they perceive as essential for the future, and their expectations from career guidance services. The interviews were designed to elicit open-ended responses, encouraging participants to share their thoughts freely and without constraint.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis, which involved coding the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the participants' experiences and perceptions. This process included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by Generation Z in the context of career development, as well as highlight the perceived effectiveness of existing career counseling services. By integrating the viewpoints of students from both programs, this research aims to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how career counseling can adapt to meet the needs of a new generation entering the workforce.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed several key themes regarding the perceptions of career counseling among the participants from both the Guidance and Counseling program and the Teacher Education program for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. One prominent theme was the recognition of the evolving nature of work, with many participants expressing concerns about job security and the impact of automation on future employment opportunities. Students from both programs noted that traditional career paths are becoming less predictable, leading them to seek guidance on how to navigate these uncertainties. They highlighted the importance of

acquiring both technical skills and soft skills, such as adaptability and interpersonal communication, to remain competitive in the job market. This underscores the crucial role that career counseling can play in equipping them with the necessary tools to thrive in a rapidly changing environment.

Another significant finding was the participants' desire for more personalized and targeted career counseling services. Many students expressed that current offerings often lack depth and fail to address their individual needs and aspirations. Those from the Guidance and Counseling program emphasized the importance of integrating psychological insights into career counseling to better support their peers in making informed decisions about their futures. Conversely, students in the Teacher Education program highlighted the need for counseling that not only prepares them for teaching roles but also explores alternative career paths within education and beyond. This divergence in expectations points to a critical gap in service delivery, suggesting that career counseling programs should be more tailored to the specific contexts and aspirations of different student groups.

Table 1. Responses From Students

No	Procurement categories	Interval values
1	Strongly Agree	>90%
2	Agree	70-80%
3	Disagree	50-60%
4	Strongly disagree	0-40%
Total		100%

Table 1 presents the responses from students regarding their perceptions of career counseling services, categorized into four distinct procurement categories based on interval values. The highest level of agreement, "Strongly Agree," corresponds to students who rated the effectiveness of career counseling services at over 90%. This indicates a strong belief that these services significantly contribute to their career preparedness. The second category, "Agree," encompasses responses ranging from 70% to 80%, reflecting a generally positive view but suggesting room for improvement. Conversely, the "Disagree" category, which includes responses between 50% and 60%, highlights a notable portion of students who feel that the counseling services do not adequately meet their needs. Lastly, the "Strongly Disagree" category, encompassing responses from 0% to 40%, reveals a concerning level of dissatisfaction among some students, indicating a critical need for enhancements in the counseling approach. Collectively, these responses underscore the varying degrees of effectiveness perceived by students and point to the necessity for a comprehensive evaluation and refinement of career counseling services to better support the diverse aspirations and expectations of the student body.

Table 1. Details of the study sample

No	Ktioner	Total
1	Counseling guidance students	50
2	Elementary madrasa Teacher education students	50
Total		100

Table 2 outlines the details of the study sample, which consists of 100 participants divided equally between two distinct groups. The first group includes 50 students from the Counseling Guidance program, while the second group comprises 50 students from the Elementary Madrasa Teacher Education program. This balanced representation is crucial for capturing a diverse range of perspectives regarding career counseling services. By including both cohorts, the study aims to explore how the specific needs and expectations of students in these two educational tracks differ, as well as how effective the current counseling strategies are in addressing their unique career aspirations. The insights gained from this dual approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of career counseling within these contexts, ultimately contributing to the development of more tailored and responsive support systems for future students.

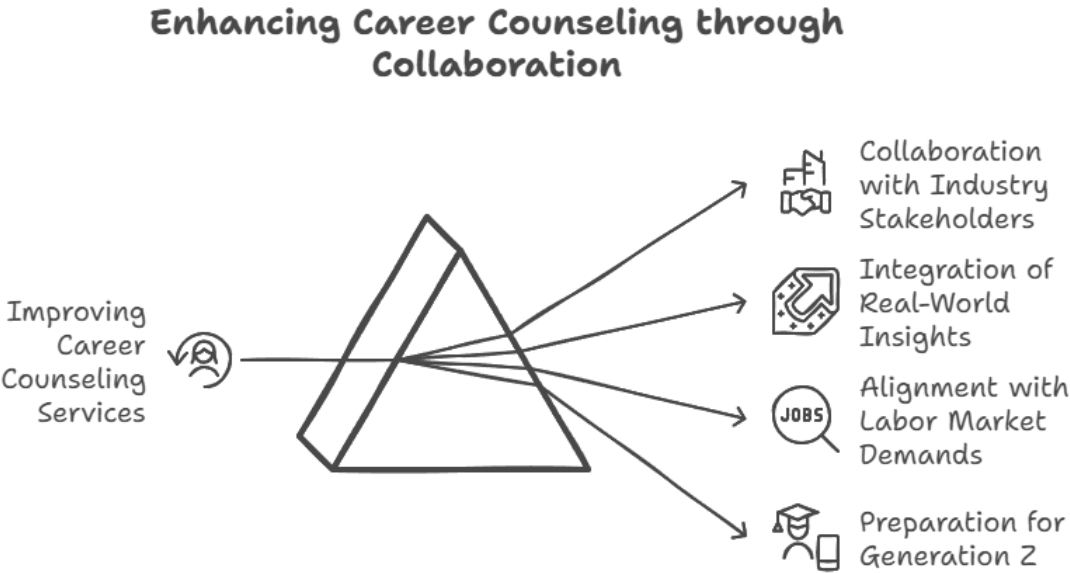


Figure 1. Counseling through Collaboration

The discussions surrounding the effectiveness of current career counseling services revealed a consensus on the need for improved collaboration between

educational institutions and industry stakeholders. Many participants stressed that establishing partnerships with local businesses and organizations could enhance the relevance of the counseling provided. By integrating real-world insights and opportunities into the counseling process, students could gain a better understanding of labor market demands and potential career trajectories. This connection between academic training and practical experience is vital for preparing Generation Z to enter the workforce confidently. Ultimately, the results indicate a pressing need for a reevaluation of career counseling strategies, ensuring they are responsive to the unique challenges and expectations of today's youth, particularly in the context of an ever-evolving job landscape.



Figure 2. Data Trends and Insights on Career Preparedness for Generation Z in the Gig Economy and Age of Automation

In the context of “The Future of Work and the Evolving Role of Career Counseling: Preparing Gen Z for the Gig Economy and the Age of Automation,” Figure 2 plays a crucial role in visually representing key data metrics that reflect the dynamic employment landscape and the skills necessary for success in this new era. The various graphical elements, including line graphs, bar charts, and circular progress indicators, collectively illustrate significant trends such as the rise of gig work, the impact of automation on traditional job roles, and the changing skill requirements for the workforce. For instance, the line graphs may reveal shifts in job demand over time, highlighting the urgent need for career counseling to adapt its strategies in response to these evolving realities. Meanwhile, bar charts could showcase Generation Z’s varying interests in different career paths, underscoring the necessity for personalized counseling that aligns with their aspirations in a gig-driven economy. Additionally, the circular indicators might reflect the effectiveness of existing career counseling practices, measuring how well they prepare students for the challenges posed by technological advancements. Overall, Figure 2 encapsulates the essence of the evolving role of career counseling, emphasizing the importance of leveraging data-driven insights to shape

responsive strategies that equip Generation Z with the adaptability, skills, and knowledge required to thrive in a future characterized by flexibility, innovation, and continuous learning, thereby highlighting the critical need for counseling services to evolve in tandem with the changing workforce landscape.

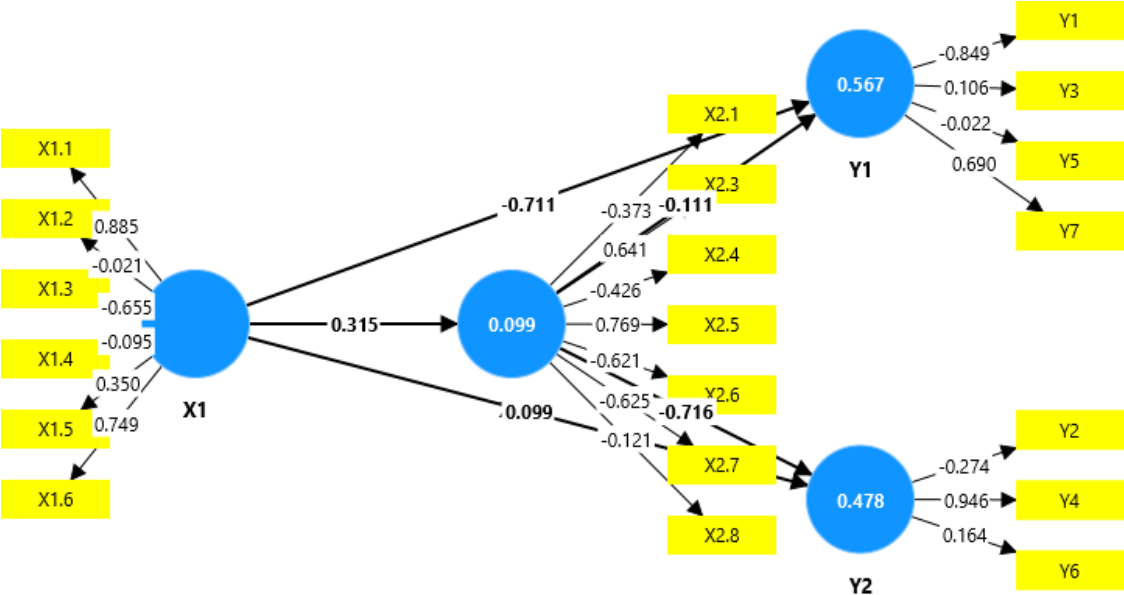


Figure 3. Structural Equation Model (SEM) Representing Relationships Between Variables X1, Y1, and Y2 Smart PLs

Figure 3 illustrates a structural equation model that depicts the relationships between the independent variable X1X1X1 and the dependent variables Y1Y1Y1 and Y2Y2Y2. In this model, arrows indicate the direction and strength of the relationships, with numerical values representing the coefficients of influence. The connections between X1X1X1 and both Y1Y1Y1 and Y2Y2Y2 demonstrate how X1X1X1 affects these outcomes. The X2X2X2 variables (e.g., X2.1X2.1X2.1, X2.2X2.2X2.2, etc.) reflect additional factors that contribute to the results of Y1Y1Y1 and Y2Y2Y2. The positive and negative coefficients displayed indicate the nature of these relationships, providing insights into how these variables interact within the model. Overall, Figure 3 serves to visually summarize the complex dependencies among the variables, facilitating a better understanding of the underlying dynamics at play.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Variables

	AJ	BS	HS	KP	MK
AJ		-0.167	0.011	0.098	0.321
BS			0.011	0.099	
HS					
KP			0.112		
MK			0.040	0.356	

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficients among the variables AJ, BS, HS, KP, and MK, revealing several noteworthy relationships. The most significant correlation is between AJ and MK (0.321), suggesting a strong positive relationship, while AJ has a negative correlation with BS (-0.167), indicating an inverse relationship. BS shows weak positive correlations with HS (0.011) and KP (0.099), implying minimal influence on these variables. HS does not exhibit significant correlations with any other variables, indicating independence in this context. Additionally, KP has a slight positive correlation with MK (0.040) and a moderate correlation with AJ (0.112). Overall, the correlations suggest that while some relationships exist, particularly between AJ and MK, many other connections are weak, warranting further investigation to understand their implications in the dataset.

Table 4: Values of Variables AJ, BS, HS, KP, and MK

	AJ	BS	HS	KP	MK
0	-0.378	-2.049	-1.876	-1.224	-1.276
1	-0.456	0.683	0.144	-2.126	-0.499
2	-0.300	-0.683	-0.866	-1.224	-1.276
3	-0.378	0.683	0.144	-0.322	0.277
4	-0.222	2.049	-0.866	0.580	1.054
5	-0.145	0.683	0.144	1.482	1.831
6	3.592	-0.683	-0.866	0.580	1.054
7	-0.222	-0.683	0.144	-0.322	0.277
8	-0.145	0.683	-0.866	0.580	-0.499
9	-0.222	-0.683	0.144	1.482	-1.276
10	-0.300	0.683	1.155	0.580	-1.276
11	-0.300	-0.683	2.165	-0.322	0.277
12	-0.222	0.683	1.155	-0.322	0.277
13	-0.300	-0.683	0.144	0.580	1.054

Table 4 displays the values of the variables AJ, BS, HS, KP, and MK across 14 different indices, highlighting the variability and potential relationships among them. The data reveals a range of negative and positive values, indicating diverse interactions. For instance, AJ consistently shows negative values, particularly at indices 0, 1, and 2, suggesting a tendency towards lower measurements, while at index 6, it spikes to a significant positive value of 3.592. BS exhibits a mix of both strong negative values, such as -2.049 at index 0, and positive values like 2.049 at index 4, demonstrating fluctuating relationships. HS shows a notable positive value of 2.165 at index 11, contrasting with several negative values, which may suggest varying influences or conditions affecting this variable. KP presents a more stable pattern, with notable positive values at indices 5 and 9 (1.482 and 1.482, respectively), hinting at consistent upward trends. MK, on the other hand, oscillates between negative values and a peak of 1.831 at index 5, indicating a complex relationship with the other variables. Overall, the diverse range of values in Table 4 suggests intricate dynamics among the variables,

warranting further investigation to understand the underlying factors that contribute to these trends and how they may interact in broader analyses.

DISCUSSION

As we navigate the future of work, it is essential to recognize the profound changes reshaping employment structures, particularly with the rise of the gig economy and the advent of automation (Cardoso, 2023; Gagne, 2023). These shifts are not merely trends; they represent fundamental transformations in how work is organized, how value is created, and how individuals engage with their careers (Shilaskar, 2024; Shoham, 2024). For Generation Z, who are entering the labor market during this period of transition, effective career counseling is more critical than ever. Counselors must evolve their strategies to prepare young individuals for a landscape characterized by flexibility, uncertainty, and rapid technological advancements.

The gig economy embodies a significant departure from traditional employment paradigms, where short-term, contract-based work is increasingly favored over stable, long-term positions (Aldrovandi, 2024; Fitzpatrick, 2022). This shift aligns well with Gen Z's values of flexibility, independence, and the desire for work-life balance. However, it also introduces challenges such as income instability, lack of employee benefits, and the need for self-management (Bakshi, 2022; Um, 2024). Career counselors need to equip Gen Z with the skills required for gig work, emphasizing the importance of versatility, personal branding, and entrepreneurial thinking (Chen, 2023; Phillips, 2023). This includes teaching young people how to effectively market their skills, manage their finances, and navigate the complexities of freelance work, all of which are essential for sustaining a successful career in a gig-oriented environment.

In addition to the gig economy, automation is fundamentally transforming job roles across various sectors. As machines and algorithms increasingly take over routine tasks, the demand for workers with advanced skills in technology, creativity, and critical thinking is on the rise (Ertelt, 2022; Sensoy-Briddick, 2022). Career counseling must shift its focus to guide Gen Z toward fields that are less susceptible to automation, such as those emphasizing human creativity and emotional intelligence (Haine, 2024; Osborn, 2024). This proactive approach requires counselors to encourage young individuals to pursue education and training in disciplines that will remain relevant in an automated world. By fostering a mindset of continuous learning and adaptability, counselors can help prepare Gen Z for future job markets where the ability to pivot and acquire new skills will be paramount.

Moreover, the integration of technology into career counseling itself can enhance the effectiveness of the guidance provided to Gen Z (Arthur, 2024; Khalijian, 2023). Digital platforms and tools can facilitate personalized career assessments, skill mapping, and job matching, enabling counselors to offer tailored advice that resonates with the individual aspirations and strengths of young people. By leveraging data analytics and artificial intelligence, career counselors can help young individuals identify emerging job trends and align their skills accordingly (Li, 2022; Pordelan, 2022). This technological integration not only makes career counseling more accessible

but also empowers Gen Z to take charge of their career trajectories in an increasingly complex job market.

Mental health and well-being are critical considerations that must be addressed within the framework of career counseling for Gen Z (Atay, 2024; Hidayat, 2022). The pressure to succeed in a competitive and uncertain job landscape can lead to heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout (Ginevra, 2024; Milot-Lapointe, 2024). Career counselors must prioritize holistic approaches that address not only career aspirations but also the emotional and psychological needs of young individuals (Keshf, 2024; Naser, 2023). This includes fostering resilience, promoting work-life balance, and encouraging self-care practices. By creating supportive environments where young people feel empowered to discuss their concerns and aspirations, counselors can help mitigate the adverse effects of workplace stressors and enhance overall career satisfaction.

Furthermore, the role of career counseling extends beyond individual guidance to encompass advocacy for systemic changes in educational and workplace policies. As the gig economy and automation reshape the labor market, there is a pressing need for policies that support job security, fair wages, and access to benefits for gig workers. Career counselors can play a vital role in raising awareness about these issues and advocating for equitable practices that protect the rights of workers across various employment models. This advocacy is essential to ensure that Gen Z can navigate the future of work with both confidence and security, fostering a labor market that values diversity, inclusion, and fair treatment.

Additionally, as we consider the global implications of these shifts, it is essential to recognize the varying impacts across different demographics and regions. Career counseling must account for diverse backgrounds, including socioeconomic status, race, and geographic location, as these factors significantly influence access to opportunities and resources. Tailoring career counseling approaches to address these disparities can empower underserved populations within Gen Z to navigate the evolving job market effectively. By fostering inclusivity in career guidance, we can work toward a future where all young individuals have the tools and support necessary to thrive, regardless of their starting point.

In conclusion, the future of work presents both challenges and opportunities for Generation Z, necessitating a reimagined approach to career counseling. By equipping young individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the gig economy and an increasingly automated world, career counselors can empower them to navigate a complex and dynamic job market. Emphasizing adaptability, lifelong learning, and mental well-being, while also advocating for systemic changes, will be crucial in preparing Gen Z for a successful and fulfilling career journey. As we move forward, the collaboration between educators, counselors, and policymakers will be vital in shaping a future of work that is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of the next generation. By addressing these multifaceted challenges and opportunities, we can

ensure that the workforce of tomorrow is not only well-prepared but also resilient and capable of thriving in an ever-evolving landscape.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the future of work is being reshaped by significant developments such as the rise of the gig economy and the rapid advancement of automation. These changes pose unique challenges and opportunities for Generation Z, who are stepping into a labor market that demands flexibility, adaptability, and a diverse skill set. Career counseling plays a crucial role in preparing young individuals for this evolving landscape by equipping them with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of gig work and automate environments. This includes fostering skills that emphasize creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence, which are increasingly valuable in a world where routine tasks are being automated. By prioritizing these competencies, career counselors can empower Gen Z to pursue careers that are not only fulfilling but also sustainable in the long term.

Moreover, as the role of career counseling evolves, it is imperative to adopt a holistic approach that encompasses mental well-being and systemic advocacy for fair labor practices. The pressures of a competitive job market can take a toll on young individuals, making it essential to integrate mental health support into career guidance. Additionally, advocating for policies that protect the rights of gig workers and promote equitable opportunities is vital for creating a labor market that values inclusivity and fairness. By addressing these multifaceted issues, career counseling can foster a generation of resilient and empowered workers who are prepared to thrive in the dynamic and unpredictable world of work. As we look to the future, collaboration among educators, counselors, employers, and policymakers will be critical in shaping a workforce that is not only equipped for success but also committed to fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

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