RETHINKING JOB PERMANENCE: A SHIFT FROM FIXED EMPLOYMENT TO TASK-ORIENTED CONTRACTING IN THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract

The human resource (HR) function in management is primarily responsible for the recruitment and selection of staff within an organization. However, recent concerns have emerged regarding the productivity of employees on permanent contracts, as many tend to become less effective after a short period on the job. This paper aims to explore the factors contributing to the decline of fixed jobs in contemporary labor markets, challenges employers face when adopting non-fixed job structures and how fixed jobs impact job security, career progression, and work-life balance. The study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate HR-related issues affecting productivity. For the qualitative aspect, 30 participants were selected 15 employees and 15 employers or HR managers from various sectors. The quantitative survey targeted 500 employees and 100 employers across different industries. Findings indicate that organizations embracing modern, innovative approaches are more focused on maximizing employee performance. Task-oriented roles with clearly defined job descriptions were found to be more effective and result-driven compared to fixed or permanent positions, where employees tend to lose focus over time. The study also reveals that permanent staff often become complacent and less inclined to pursue self-improvement, unlike contract workers. A hybrid model which includes a mix of full-time employees, part-time workers, freelancers, and contractors, all collaborating in a more fluid and dynamic workforce is therefore recommended.

Keywords: Flexibility, Fixed employment, Job Permanence, Task Oriented Contacting, Workplace

Introduction:

In recent years, the employment landscape has experienced a significant transformation driven by technological innovation, shifting economic models, and changing societal values. The traditional concept of a fixed job is rapidly fading. In its place, more flexible and dynamic work structures which include freelance roles, remote work, gig economy opportunities, and portfolio careers are taking root. This shift marks the clear decline of fixed job models and highlights a growing preference for adaptable employment arrangements.

This evolution carries major implications for workers, employers, and society as a whole. Workers now adapt to a labor market

that prioritizes flexibility, autonomy, and entrepreneurial skills over long-term security. At the same time, employers are rethinking their workforce strategies, embracing flexible hiring models to tap into a wider, more diverse talent pool and remain competitive in a fast-changing world. Meanwhile, governments and policymakers are faced with the challenge of addressing the economic and social implications of this shift.

The transition away from fixed jobs is being driven by a variety of factors like digital technologies, the gig economy, and changing workforce demographics. These drivers are reshaping the way work is conceptualized, structured, and delivered. In view of the above, the following research questions were considered;

1. What are the factors contributing to the decline of fixed jobs in contemporary labor markets?
2. What challenges do employers face when adopting non-fixed job structures?
3. What are the policy implications of the growing trend toward gig work and non-fixed employment models?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Gig Work – Gig work is a short term, flexible, project-based, or on-demand jobs where individuals act as independent contractors without being classified as traditional employees (Canpolat, 2025). A gig economy is a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organizations hire independent workers for short term commitments, it undermines the traditional economy of full-time workers who rarely change positions and instead focuses on a lifetime career. A gig worker is an independent contractor, online platform worker, or contract firm worker, and may also be known as a freelancer.

Task-Oriented contracting – This is a work arrangement where an employee is hired and paid to complete specific tasks rather than being employed permanently for a fixed long-term position (Tabernero, 2009). It focuses on defining specific, measurable tasks and outcomes to improve project performance, rather than just monitoring processes.

Technological Advancements and Automation - The accelerating advancement of technology, particularly in automation and digital platforms, has significantly disrupted traditional employment structures. Automation has replaced many routine tasks once handled by humans, especially in manufacturing and administrative roles (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Meanwhile, AI and machine learning are increasingly capable of handling complex tasks, enabling organizations to streamline operations and reduce reliance on permanent staff (Frey & Osborne, 2017).

Digital platforms have further fueled this shift. Online job marketplaces like Upwork, Fiverr, and TaskRabbit have simplified access to freelance and gig-based opportunities, reducing dependence on traditional full-time roles. These platforms empower individuals to take on project-based or short-term work for multiple clients, offering greater autonomy and flexibility in how and when they work (Zhao & Yang, 2020).

Changing Workforce Demographics - Another key driver of the end of fixed jobs is the changing demographics of the workforce. The millennial and Gen Z generations, who are now the largest segments of the global workforce, tend to prioritize flexibility, work-life balance, and opportunities for personal growth over traditional job security (Hurst & Lavoie, 2019). These younger workers are less inclined to remain in a single, long-term job,

and they are more likely to pursue multiple career paths simultaneously, including freelancing, consulting, and side hustles.

Globalization and Outsourcing - Globalization has been a major driver in the decline of fixed employment. As businesses expand internationally, many seek to cut costs by outsourcing or offshoring jobs to countries with lower labor expenses. Autor, Dorn, and Hanson (2013) note that globalization has significantly contributed to the reduction of manufacturing jobs in developed nations, where workers traditionally depended on stable, full-time roles.

Increasingly, companies rely on short-term hires and contingent labor to adapt to fluctuating demand, offering minimal job security and long-term prospects.

Globalization has also contributed to the end of fixed jobs by increasing competition and encouraging companies to outsource labor to cheaper markets. Outsourcing and offshoring have become common practices in industries such as manufacturing, customer service, and information technology (IT), further diminishing the need for fixed, long-term employment contracts (Sachs, 2015).

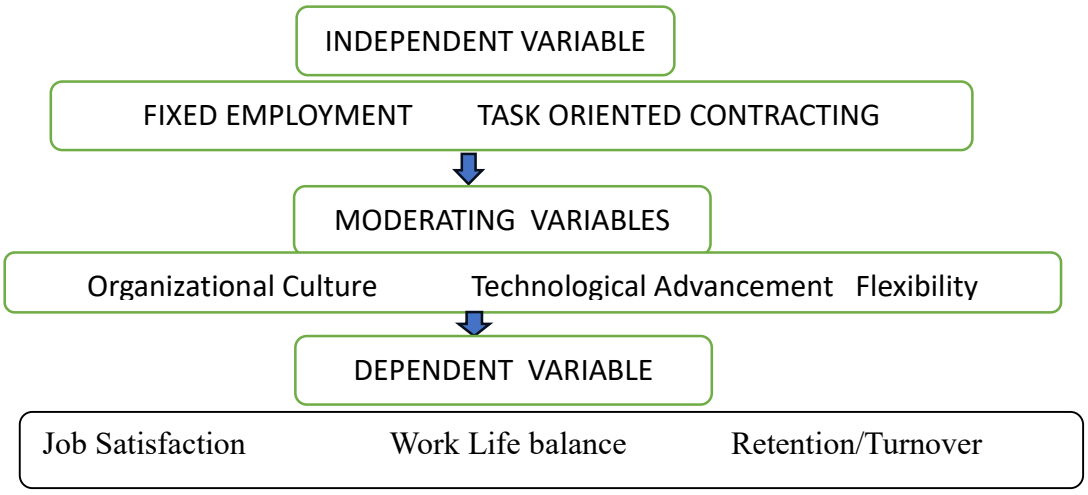
COVID-19 Pandemic and Remote Work The COVID-19 epidemic hastened the transition away from permanent jobs, forcing millions into remote work arrangements. Industries such as technology, banking, and education swiftly adopted remote work, making it the norm during the crisis. This shift has prompted a widespread rethinking of the traditional 9-to-5 office model, with both employees and employers increasingly recognizing the benefits of flexible working arrangements. While the reduction of established occupations provides increased autonomy and flexibility, particularly through freelancing and gig options, it also poses considerable obstacles. Workers suffer increased job insecurity, fluctuating earnings, and limited access to standard employment benefits.

Theoretical Review

The theory that underpins this study is Gig Economy Theory. This theory explains how digital platforms and technology have encouraged flexible work arrangements where individual complete tasks or projects instead of holding permanent positions, (Sundararajan, 2016). The idea is that modern work is increasingly organized around temporary jobs and task-based contracts rather than permanent employment.

Adepoju and Olatunji (2021) investigated the impact of remote work on employee performance within selected commercial banks during the COVID-19 lockdown. Using a survey-based cross-sectional design, the researchers collected data from 150 employees across Lagos-based bank branches. The study found that although most employees initially faced technical challenges due to poor internet and inconsistent power supply, over time they adapted to the new work model. The results suggested that flexibility in scheduling and the elimination of commuting contributed positively to perceived productivity. However, the study also found that low digital literacy among some staff and lack of technical support hindered full optimization of remote work benefits.

Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher's Conceptualization, 2026

This framework suggests that the transition from traditional permanent employment to task=oriented contracting influences workplace outcomes of Job satisfaction and retention or turnover through moderating variables like technology, organizational culture as well as flexibility of work structure.

3.0 Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods research methodology of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative element seeks to understand people's specific experiences, opinions, and perspectives on the fall in fixed employment, focus groups (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews was used to achieve this. The qualitative aspect clarifies the human aspects of the problem, such as how employers and employees view job security/insecurity, and how it affects work-life balance. This was done by collecting and evaluating numerical data in order to find patterns, correlations, and trends related to the declining number of fixed positions. Measurement of the extent to which gig labor, short-term contracts, or remote work arrangements are replacing traditional permanent positions is the goal of the poll.

The research employed purposive and stratified random sampling methods for selecting respondents. A total of 30 respondents comprising 15 employees (from various sectors, technology, manufacturing, and service industries) and 15 employers (or HR managers) were selected for the qualitative survey. This was based on their involvement with flexible or non-permanent work structures, recruited through professional networks, organizational contacts, and job portals offering gig or contract-based work. For quantitative survey, structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to 500 employees and 100 employers stratified by industry, job type, and job tenure to ensure diverse representation. The questionnaire includes both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, designed to capture data on respondents' demographics, perceptions of job security, benefits, work arrangements, and attitudes toward gig work.

Thematic Analysis and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for the analysis. NVivo software was employed for coding and organizing data. Common themes such as job insecurity,

work-life balance, and perceptions of gig work were identified and analyzed in depth. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data collected through the survey while inferential statistics, including chi-square tests and correlation analysis, was applied to examine relationships between variables

Econometric Model

To empirically examine the relationship between flexible work arrangements, job insecurity, work-life balance, career progression, and employee productivity, the study specifies the following regression model:

$$EP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FWA + \beta_2 JIS + \beta_3 WLB + \beta_4 CPC + \beta_5 TA + \mu$$

Where:
EP= Employee Productivity
FWA= Flexible Work Arrangement
JIS= Job Insecurity
WLB= Work-Life Balance
CPC= Career Progression Concern
TA= Technology Adoption
β_0= Constant term
$\beta_1 - \beta_5$= Parameters to be estimated
μ= Error term

The a priori expectation of the model is expressed as

:

$$\beta_1 > 0, \beta_2 < 0, \beta_3 > 0, \beta_4 < 0, \beta_5 > 0$$

This implies that flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, and technology adoption are expected to positively influence employee productivity, while job insecurity and career progression concerns are expected to negatively affect productivity.

4.0 Analysis of the result

4.1 Descriptive Statistics Results

The descriptive statistics show that technology adoption recorded the highest mean value (Mean = 4.12), indicating that respondents strongly perceive technological advancement as a major driver of the shift from fixed employment to task-oriented contracting. Career progression concern also recorded a high mean score (Mean = 4.01), suggesting that many employees are worried about limited long-term advancement opportunities under non-fixed employment structures.

Table 3.1: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Employee Productivity (EP)	3.84	0.79	1.00	5.00
Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA)	3.67	0.88	1.00	5.00
Job Insecurity (JIS)	3.92	0.95	1.00	5.00
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	3.58	0.83	1.00	5.00
Career Progression Concern (CPC)	4.01	0.91	1.00	5.00
Technology Adoption (TA)	4.12	0.76	1.00	5.00

Source: Researchers' Computation (2026)

Job insecurity recorded a relatively high mean value (Mean = 3.92), reflecting widespread concerns among employees regarding uncertainty associated with contract and gig work arrangements. Employee productivity recorded a mean value of 3.84, indicating that respondents

generally perceive task-oriented and flexible work arrangements as moderately effective in enhancing productivity.The standard deviation values across the variables are relatively low, ranging from 0.76 to 0.95, implying moderate consistency in respondents' opinions and suggesting that the survey responses are fairly concentrated around the mean values.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis reveals that job insecurity has a strong positive relationship with career progression concerns ($r = 0.563$, $p < 0.01$) and support for stronger gig worker regulation ($r = 0.611$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that employees who perceive non-fixed work arrangements as insecure are more likely to demand regulatory protection and express concerns about long-term career growth.

Table 4.2: Correlation Matrix of Major Variables

Variables	JIS	FWA	WLB	EP	CPC	SGR
JIS	1.000	0.214**	-0.318**	-0.427**	0.563**	0.611**
FWA	0.214**	1.000	0.472**	0.356**	-0.188*	0.127
WLB	-0.318**	0.472**	1.000	0.401**	-0.276**	-0.092
EP	-0.427**	0.356**	0.401**	1.000	-0.351**	-0.201*
CPC	0.563**	-0.188*	-0.276**	-0.351**	1.000	0.484**
SGR	0.611**	0.127	-0.092	-0.201*	0.484**	1.000

Source: Researchers' Computation (2026)

Note: **Correlation is significant at 0.05 level,* **Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

Furthermore, employee productivity shows a negative relationship with job insecurity ($r = -0.427$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that increased insecurity tends to reduce workers' efficiency and commitment. Flexible work preference is positively associated with work-life balance ($r = 0.472$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that employees value flexibility because it enhances personal and professional balance.

4.3 Regression Results

The regression results indicate that flexible work arrangements significantly improve employee productivity ($\beta = 0.384$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that employees in task-oriented and non-fixed roles tend to perform better when provided with flexibility. Technology adoption also exerts a positive and significant effect on productivity ($\beta = 0.318$, $p < 0.01$), confirming that modern workplace systems enhance efficiency and output.

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Table 4.3: Multiple Regression Result on Determinants of Employee Productivity

Dependent Variable: Employee Productivity				
Variables	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Probability
Constant	2.114	0.421	5.021	0.000
FWA	0.384	0.072	5.333	0.000
JIS	-0.291	0.068	-4.279	0.000
WLB	0.267	0.081	3.296	0.001
CPC	-0.173	0.059	-2.932	0.004
TAdoption	0.318	0.074	4.297	0.000
Model Summary	R^2	0.641	F-Statistic	45.218
	Adjusted R^2	0.627	Prob(F-statistic)	0.000

Source: Researchers' Computation (2026)

Conversely, job insecurity negatively affects productivity (β = -0.291, p < 0.01), implying that employees experiencing uncertainty about job continuity may become less motivated and less committed to organizational goals. Similarly, career progression concerns negatively influence productivity (β = -0.173, p < 0.05), indicating that workers who perceive limited opportunities for advancement are likely to exhibit reduced performance levels.

The model explains approximately 64.1% of the variation in employee productivity (R^2 = 0.641), while the F-statistic confirms that the model is statistically significant overall

.Table4.4: Overview of Key Findings from Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Finding	**Qualitative Insights (Interviews/FGDs)**	**Quantitative Insights (Survey Data)**
Factors driving the decline of fixed jobs	1. Technology advancement, automation, and globalization are major contributors. 2. Cost-saving measures and flexibility in hiring. 3. Shift in organizational priorities towards agility.	58% of employers report cost-saving as a key factor for adopting non-fixed job structures while 72% of employees identify technology as the primary driver of job structure changes.
Employee perceptions of job insecurity	1. Increased job insecurity due to the lack of long-term contracts. 2. Desire for flexibility often outweighs security concerns.	67% of employees express concern about job insecurity. 52% of employees indicate a preference for flexible roles despite security concerns.
Impact on work-life balance	1. Greater work-life balance due to flexible work schedules. 2. Some participants report blurred boundaries between work and personal life.	61% of employees report improved work-life balance while 38% report challenges in separating personal and professional time.
Employer challenges in adapting to non-	1. Managing talent acquisition and retention in a non-fixed framework.	64% of employers face difficulties in talent retention. 56% report challenges in maintaining

fixed work	2. Ensuring productivity and employee engagement.	employee productivity with non-fixed roles.
Career progression concerns	1. Limited career advancement opportunities for gig workers. 2. Fear of stagnation in skill development due to short-term roles.	74% of employees feel that gig work limits career progression while 59% of employees state that fixed employment would offer better career growth.
Policy implications and future of work	1. Need for updated labor laws to protect gig workers. 2. Support for policies ensuring fair pay and benefits for non-fixed workers.	77% of employees call for greater protection of gig workers through regulation. 65% of employers advocate for flexible labor laws that support non-fixed roles.

Source: Researchers' computation (2026)

4.4 Discussion of Findings

Factors Contributing to the Decline of Fixed Jobs: The qualitative data suggests that technology and automation are central to the decline of fixed, permanent jobs. Employers increasingly turn to non-fixed job arrangements (such as gig work or temporary contracts) to reduce costs, enhance workforce flexibility, and cope with changing market dynamics. As stated by many interviewees, the rise of automation in manufacturing and service sectors, along with the global shift towards a digital economy, has significantly impacted job security and permanence.

The quantitative survey supports these findings, with 58% of employers noting that cost-saving initiatives were the primary motivation behind the adoption of flexible job structures. Furthermore, a large proportion of employees (72%) link the decline of permanent roles to technological advancements, highlighting the need for adaptive strategies in workforce management.

Job insecurity is one of the most significant themes emerging from the qualitative interviews. Many employees expressed a fear of not having long-term job security in non-fixed roles. However, some also recognized the trade-off between flexibility and security.

The survey data reveals that while 67% of employees are concerned about job insecurity, 52% still prefer the flexibility offered by non-fixed roles. This indicates a complex relationship between security and flexibility, where employees are increasingly willing to compromise on job stability for greater personal freedom and work-life balance.

Impact on Work-Life Balance: One of the main conclusions drawn from the qualitative phase was how flexible work schedules affected work-life balance. Many participants value the freedom to set their own hours and reported that flexible schedules improved their capacity to balance work and family obligations. However, many also expressed concerns about the fuzziness of work-life boundaries, especially among freelancers and remote workers themselves. This is consistent with other studies that showed that although flexibility has its benefits, it also makes it more difficult to maintain efficient time management.

The quantitative results support these insights: 61% of employees reported an improvement in work-life balance, yet 38% indicated difficulty in clearly separating work from personal time. These findings underscore the need for targeted strategies to help individuals navigate and optimize flexible work schedules.

Challenges of Job Insecurity and Income Instability

While freelancing offers notable advantages, it also comes with significant challenges—

most notably, the lack of job security and income stability. Freelancers and gig workers often experience gaps in employment or inconsistent workloads, making it difficult to maintain steady earnings (Horton, 2019). This financial unpredictability can be especially stressful for those who depend entirely on gig work. Moreover, freelancers are typically responsible for handling their own taxes, health insurance, and retirement planning, adding layers of complexity to their financial management. Without traditional employment benefits like paid sick leave or employer-sponsored health coverage, independent workers must take initiative to secure their own welfare and plan for long-term stability (Prassl, 2018).

Opportunities for Flexibility and Autonomy

Flexibility and autonomy that come with leaving established work is one of the main advantages of remote jobs. Gig and freelance workers can adjust their schedules to suit their own requirements and preferences because they are free to choose how, when, and where they work. Higher job satisfaction and a better work-life balance are frequently the results of this flexibility (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). The chance to expand their skill sets and seek numerous revenue streams also appeals to a lot of people. A freelancer might, for example, teach online classes in the evening, work on a personal project on the weekends, and design graphics during the day. People who appreciate diversity, autonomy, and ongoing professional development will find this portfolio-style career appealing (De Stefano, 2016).

Cost Savings and Access to Specialized Skills

The possibility for large cost savings is one of the main advantages of implementing flexible work arrangements for organizations. Businesses can cut costs associated with full-time employment, such as office infrastructure, benefits, and pay, by hiring independent contractors and freelancers. Employers can also access a worldwide talent pool with this strategy, enabling them to bring in specialized expertise for particular projects without having to commit to long-term hires (Dube, 2020). Additionally, the gig economy provides scalability, allowing companies to swiftly modify their workforce in response to changing demands. This flexibility is particularly useful in sectors where consumer demands are constantly changing, such as technology, retail, and hospitality.

Challenges of Managing a Remote, Non-Permanent Workforce

The shift to flexible work arrangements also introduces significant challenges for employers, particularly in terms of managing remote and non-permanent workers. Ensuring effective communication, collaboration, and performance management becomes more difficult when workers are spread across different locations and time zones. Moreover, the lack of a permanent workforce can create challenges in building a cohesive company culture and fostering long-term employee engagement (Choudhury et al., 2020). Employers must also address issues related to worker classification and legal compliance. As more workers engage in freelance and gig work, companies must navigate the legal complexities surrounding worker classification, benefits, and labor laws. In some cases, companies may face pressure to provide workers with benefits traditionally reserved for full-time employees, such as health insurance and retirement contributions.

A New Era of Work

The end of fixed jobs marks the beginning of a new era in the world of work. While this shift presents significant opportunities for workers and employers alike, it also comes with its own set of challenges. Workers must navigate the uncertainties of income instability and job insecurity, while employers must adapt to a more dynamic and decentralized workforce. As the future of work continues to evolve, it is clear that the traditional model of fixed jobs is becoming increasingly outdated. In its place, a more flexible, diverse, and fluid approach to work is emerging, one that prioritizes autonomy, specialization, and adaptability. Whether this shift is ultimately beneficial for workers and employers will depend on how these challenges are addressed, but one thing is certain: the end of fixed jobs is now.

The Changing Nature of Work

Historically, jobs were seen as stable, long-term positions where workers committed to a single employer for an extended period. These jobs were characterized by predictable hours, steady income, and a defined career progression. However, numerous factors have led to the erosion of this model, particularly with the advent of globalization, technological innovation, and shifts in organizational structures.

Implications for Workers

The decline of fixed jobs brings with it a mix of opportunities and challenges for today's workforce. On the positive side, the rise of gig and freelance work offers individuals increased flexibility, autonomy, and the ability to explore multiple career paths or side ventures. According to the OECD (2021), workers in non-traditional roles often report higher levels of job satisfaction and improved work-life balance. However, this shift also introduces serious concerns around job security, income stability, and access to social protections. Gig workers are frequently excluded from traditional labor regulations and may lack essential benefits such as healthcare, retirement plans, or paid leave (Rosenblat, 2018). This lack of support exposes many to financial risk and deepens socioeconomic inequalities.

As work becomes more fragmented and dynamic, workers must continuously adapt to remain competitive. The demand for upskilling and reskilling has never been more urgent. Developing competencies in areas like digital literacy, project management, and entrepreneurship is increasingly essential for navigating a labor market that is shifting away from fixed employment toward more flexible and diverse work arrangements.

While this shift offers notable advantages, such as increased autonomy, flexibility, and access to diverse income opportunities, it also introduces serious challenges, including job insecurity, income instability, and limited access to social protections. As both workers and organizations adapt to these changes, it is essential to develop supportive policies that address the unique needs of those in non-traditional roles. Ensuring access to benefits, fair labor standards, and opportunities for continuous learning will be key to creating a more equitable and sustainable workforce.

Employer Challenges in Adapting to Non-Fixed Work Structures: For employers, the end of fixed jobs presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, the rise of freelancing and gig work enables organizations to access a broader and more flexible talent pool, allowing them to tap into specialized skills on an as-needed basis. On the other hand, it introduces new complexities in managing a distributed, non-

permanent workforce. From the employer's perspective, the transition from fixed jobs to non-fixed structures has presented several challenges. Employers expressed concerns about maintaining employee engagement and productivity without the traditional structures of permanent contracts. They also cited difficulties in managing talent acquisition and retention, particularly when it comes to gig workers, who may not feel as committed to the company as permanent employees. These challenges highlight the importance of adapting HR strategies to ensure that non-fixed workers remain motivated and productive while feeling valued within the organization.

Policy Implications

The need for new policies to address the evolving nature of work underscores the importance of forward-thinking legislation that can safeguard workers while supporting the flexibility that employers seek. This study highlights significant shifts in the labor market, driven by technological advancements, economic factors, and changing organizational priorities. Both employees and employers face a complex array of challenges and opportunities as fixed jobs continue to decline and non-fixed employment structures rise. While employees value the flexibility offered by gig work, concerns about job security, career progression, and work-life balance persist. Employers, on the other hand, struggle with managing productivity, retention, and engagement in non-fixed job frameworks. The study suggests that there is a clear need for updated policies to protect non-fixed workers while fostering the flexibility that modern economies demand.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

It is crucial to note that the end of fixed jobs does not imply the complete disappearance of permanent roles. Instead, it marks a shift toward hybrid models of work that blend traditional employment structures with more flexible, non-permanent arrangements. This hybrid model may include a mix of full-time employees, part-time workers, freelancers, and contractors, all collaborating in a more fluid and dynamic workforce.

It is recommended that societal attitudes toward employment must evolve to match the shifting landscape. The traditional notion of job stability may need to be reimagined around themes of adaptability, lifelong learning, and the pursuit of diverse, fulfilling career paths. Building a labor market that reflects these values will require collaboration between policymakers, employers, and workers to create a more flexible, equitable, and future-ready economy.

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