

At the forefront of this resilience narrative stands Generation Z (Gen Z), the latest cohort to enter the workforce. Born between 1995 and 2012, the eldest among them are now facing the complexities of a world profoundly shaped by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) (Breen, 2017; Levey and Levey, 2019). Their entry into the workforce coincides with global upheavals – such as the COVID-19 pandemic to the Great Resignation, racial justice movements, political polarization, women's rights movements and climate change activism. Amidst these tribulations, Gen Z employees have had to adapt swiftly, recalibrating their work practices and embracing virtual and remote environments, all while forming and reforming their conceptions of careers.

In this turbulent landscape, emotional management becomes an indicator of individual resilience (Arora and Rangnekar, 2015). Emotional intelligence (EI) is a cornerstone of self-awareness and social adeptness (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998). High EI is a strategic skill, offering a shield against the VUCA world. Studies reveal how emotions bolster resilience, enhance career contentment and temper the intention to leave a career (ITLC) (DeCastro *et al.*, 2013; Lyons *et al.*, 2015; Green *et al.*, 2011). Gen Z's ability to navigate EI is thus critical to their CR and further success.

The VUCA world has forced businesses to pivot, adopting strategies to maintain business continuity and profitability (Barhate *et al.*, 2022). They may be forced to adopt cut-throat practices such as layoffs and downsizing. The economy's experiences with VUCA directly affect Gen Z's perceptions of careers. For instance, Gen Z considered the technology industry the most coveted sector for work (Barhate and Dirani, 2021). However, the volatility in the technology sector, specifically the recent layoffs of over 152,000 employees in 2022 alone, has influenced Gen Z employees to reconsider industry preferences (Counter, 2022; Kautish *et al.*, 2022). Such changes in the workforce increase the urgency to explore CR's role in Gen Z's EI and perceived career outcomes. Traditionally, research has spotlighted leaders as the architects of resilience, tasked with inspiring and guiding their teams in a VUCA environment (Breen, 2017; Levey and Levey, 2019). However, this study challenges the status quo, arguing that the *locus* of control lies firmly within the domain of individual EI.

Affective events theory (AET) provides the theoretical basis for this assertion, which explains the influence of emotional experiences (i.e. affect) on workplace attitudes (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). AET asserts that exigencies in the environment may lead to affective events that contribute to employees' meaning-making experiences (Ashton-James and Ashkanasy, 2008). These affective events contribute to employees' experiences soliciting emotional reactions, further contributing to their attitudes and behaviors. Thus, affective events have a trickling effect on employee attitudes and behaviors, such as engagement (Shuck *et al.*, 2018). This leads to our assumption and basis for the study – employees' ability to process emotional experiences affects their attitudes and behaviors toward their careers. Employee's cognitive appraisal of careers, especially in a VUCA environment, forms the basis for career-related decisions. Simply put, workplace emotional experiences necessitate employees to rely on skills such as EI and CR for desirable career outcomes.

Contributions of the study

The VUCA environment resulting from events such as COVID-19 and the Great Resignation has caused various affective events requiring employees to react and engage their emotions. Considering the unique circumstances employees face as they begin their careers, Gen Z employees are particularly susceptible to these affective events. Empirical research has

reported variable findings regarding Gen Z's EI (Hamzah *et al.*, 2021), CR (Borg *et al.*, 2020) and the three career outcomes measured in this study – CSAT, burnout and intention to leave career. None of the studies have also measured CR's mediating effect on Gen Z's EI and career outcomes. This study will fill this research gap by testing the mediation model illustrated in Figure 1.

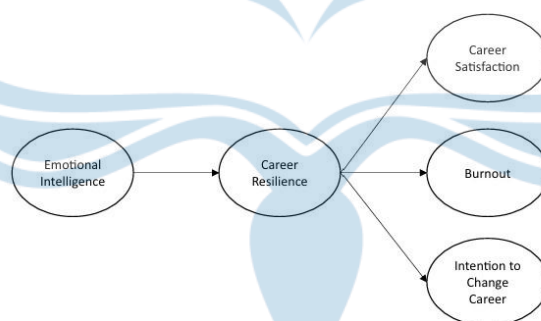
Literature review and hypothesis development

Career resilience

In this study, we use Carson and Bedeian's (1994) definition of CR, which theorizes an individual's ability to adapt to external challenges and their willingness to persist during adversities and fluctuations. In other words, CR depends on individual characteristics, attitudes, skills, behaviors and psychological capacities to overcome career challenges. Internal factors contributing to developing CR include the individual's EI, self-directedness (Botha *et al.*, 2015) and hardiness (Lee *et al.*, 2008). The external factors include the influences caused by the national economy, personal financial needs, societal health and organizational commitments. Recent global stressors have impacted Gen Z's CR such that four in ten Gen Z intend to leave their jobs within two years (Parmelee, 2022).

Owing to Gen Z's entry into the workforce during a volatile work environment, most career development research on Gen Z has examined their career adaptability. Career adaptability is an individual's ability to transition in careers based on anticipated workplace ambiguities (Savickas and Porfeli, 2012). Such adaptive behaviors indicate CR to persist in ambiguities (Jayatilake *et al.*, 20021). Given that Gen Z individuals have launched careers in a VUCA environment, measuring their CR will contribute to academic scholarship in this area. Despite the increasing urgency to develop individual career persistence, CR remains an under-researched construct in HRD's career development literature (Mishra and McDonald, 2017), especially concerning Gen Z.

Career resilience and emotional intelligence. The field of HRD has extensively researched EI, leading to definitions, including an individual's ability to accurately perceive, understand and manage emotions in oneself and others (Gardner, 1993). EI allows individuals to (a) be assertive and motivated (Goleman, 1998), (b) manage stress and mood (Bar-On, 1997), (c) manage personality traits (Clarke, 2010; Petrides and Furnham, 2001) and (d) facilitate decision-making (Mayer *et al.*, 2008; Salovey and Mayer, 1990). The individual's



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Figure 1.
Hypothesized model
indicating the
mediating
relationship of career
resilience with
emotional intelligence
and career outcomes

EI becomes an essential guiding tool in a high-pressure work environment. Additionally, when dealing with everyday career-related outcomes and stresses, an individual depends on their EI to make the decisions most suitable to their career. When facing challenges, employees may not exhibit CR instinctively; rather, it is triggered through their ability to cognitively appraise their environment and generate a suitable emotional response (Howard, 2008). Although research confirms that EI affects an individual's CR positively (Odedokun, 2022) and that Gen Z possesses high EI, the relationship between Gen Z's EI and CR remains largely untested.

Recent research has revealed that Gen Z's high EI can assist them in becoming successful in several customer-oriented careers (Misron and Hee, 2021) such as project management (Magano *et al.*, 2020) or entrepreneurship (Alamanda *et al.*, 2022). An inclination to these roles indicates Gen Z's desire to choose careers that allow them to generate ideas and solve complex and unfamiliar challenges rapidly. Relatedly, Hamzah *et al.* (2021) find that Gen Z's high EI strongly predicts their career adaptability. Compared to older generations, Gen Z employees are less afraid to leave a career, have lower organizational commitment and are more willing to pursue passion. Thus, Gen Z's high EI serves to help them assess their values and passions, giving them the confidence to leave their career.

Goleman (1998) asserts that as EI increases, we can better understand our emotions and put them to work by processing adversity, such as the emotional fluctuations inherent in a potential career change. This means that high EI individuals can move on from careers that create unhealthy emotional impacts. Mixing this perspective with the underlying tenets of AET provides additional evidence as to why Gen Z employees can lean on their EI to find resilience in their careers. Employees use EI to process the uncertain working environment around them (i.e. the characteristics of the job, job demands and emotional labor) and the daily hassles brought on by a pandemic, employee turnover and a range of personal issues to generate productive emotions (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). We believe that Gen Z's higher EI allows them to short-circuit decisions to change careers or leave careers, thus indicating high career adaptability but low willingness to persist in an unsuitable career. Unlike previous generations, we anticipate that Gen Z's high EI will create space for lower CR. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1. Gen Z's emotional intelligence is negatively related to career resilience.

Career outcomes

When examining any career-related concept, career outcomes such as CSAT, burnout and ITLC cannot be overlooked, mainly because career development and management aims to achieve positive career outcomes (Lyons *et al.*, 2015; Mishra and McDonald, 2017). Career outcomes are positively related to organizational commitment (Carless and Bernath, 2007; Kidd and Green, 2006), an important indicator of employee engagement. Employees with high CR are more likely to remain loyal to their organizations as they can stay persistent and adapt to changing circumstances quickly. Thus, positive career outcomes depend on an employee's variable CR.

Career satisfaction. CSAT is a psychological outcome of an individual's perceived career success (Seibert and Kraimer, 2001). CSAT is also a result of an individual's subjective or intrinsic career success (Judge *et al.*, 1995). A study by Lyons *et al.* (2015) tested the mediating effect of CR between personality, career self-evaluation, career orientation and CSAT. These authors concluded that when individuals remain resilient in adverse career environments, they are more likely to achieve CSAT upon achieving career goals.

Further, EI can support employees' perceived CSAT by helping them reduce negative feelings, directly improving job performance (Miao *et al.*, 2016), especially in an adverse

career environment. Daily turmoil related to work environments, work events and human interaction often push employees toward reactions, often hostile, that limit one's translation of essential career decisions into long-term satisfaction (Mishra and McDonald, 2017; Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). Thus, psychological, subjective, intrinsic and extrinsic factors make up for an individual's emotional ability to process CSAT.

Given that Gen Z is young, with at most five years of experience, most Gen Z studies are focused on student populations and the relationship between their EI and career decision-making abilities (Barhate and Dirani, 2021; Bhore and Tapas, 2023). However, the literature on Gen Z's career development and career-related attitudes is sparse. Gen Z is the future of work, and they are beginning their careers in a tumultuous VUCA environment, which may have a long-lasting impact on their EI and perceptions of career outcomes. We will test the following hypothesis for Gen Z based on previous studies:

- H2a. Gen Z's emotional intelligence is positively related to career satisfaction.
- H2b. Gen Z's career resilience is negatively related to career satisfaction.
- H2c. Gen Z's career resilience mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and career satisfaction.

Burnout. Burnout is an employee's psychological condition when exposed to a stressful working environment with high job demands and low resources, resulting in pressure, fatigue, disconnection and disengagement (Bakker *et al.*, 2014; Demerouti *et al.*, 2010; Maslach *et al.*, 2001). Burnout has an established connection with intentions to leave careers, primarily as related to negative work attitudes (Demerouti *et al.*, 2010). This connection highlights the need for employees to engage their predispositions toward resilience. Leaning into their personalities, moods or short-term emotions, workers can harness this resilience to create productive reactions to affective events and, ultimately, limit the weariness or lack of engagement that defines burnout.

These resilient employees can also lean on their emotional abilities to limit burnout. Emotionally intelligent workers use emotions to maintain, repair and improve their moods in the face of the ups and downs of a career (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). In doing so, these workers control emotional reactions, traverse affective work events and sustain positivity in line with AET (Winton, 2023). Individuals engaging in positive emotions allow for higher performance, intellectual growth and an enhancement of one's psychological condition (Wong and Law, 2002). Not only can this direct effect between emotional abilities (i.e. EI) and psychological conditions such as burnout be positive, but a more nuanced relationship that includes CR may exist. High EI employees can lean on their deep understanding of their own emotions to make affirming decisions related to their career (Winton, 2023) while also realizing the importance of their career trajectory in limiting negative feelings and burnout.

As Gen Z is relatively new to the workforce, it is presumptuous to assume they face burnout in their careers like the larger workforce. However, it is plausible that Gen Z experiences burnout if their career-related expectations are unmet. For instance, Gen Z expects mentorship (Barhate and Dirani, 2021), competitive pay and benefits (Chillakuri and Mahanandia, 2018) and to form social relationships in the workplace (Bierbrier, 2022). Based on these preceding research findings, we hypothesize:

- H3a. Gen Z's emotional intelligence is positively related to burnout.
- H3b. Gen Z's career resilience is negatively related to burnout.

H3c. Gen Z's career resilience mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout.

Intention to leave careers. CR strongly predicts an employee's ITLC (Mishra and McDonald, 2017). Tenets of EI suggest that an individual's capacity to assess their situation and react accordingly will help them develop resilience to sustain their career and mitigate the intention to leave careers. These individuals use their knowledge of the causes and consequences of emotions, which are fluid over time, to be resilient and limit snap decisions in their careers (Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Winton, 2023). Thus, employees with higher CR are less likely to leave careers (Carless and Bernath, 2007) as they have more positive work attitudes and organizational commitment (Miao *et al.*, 2017). Further, this resilience can mediate one's EI and regulate distress surrounding one's career so that intentions to leave a career are constrained. Gen Z employees' experiences may not align with research on previous generations.

Research has deemed Gen Z loyal to their organization, provided their career expectations are met (Rodriguez *et al.*, 2019). Some expectations include (a) the ability to build social networks, (b) receive mentoring from supervisors, (c) open access to organizational leadership, (d) instant gratification and (e) rapid career progression. Organizations' competitiveness and performance in the market also have a moderating effect on Gen Z's intention to stay longer (Jayathilake *et al.*, 2021). However, no past research has directly measured the relationship between Gen Z's EI, CR and ITLC. Thus, we hypothesize:

- H4a. Gen Z's emotional intelligence is positively related to the intention to career.
- H4b. Gen Z's career resilience is negatively related to intention to leave career.
- H4c. Gen Z's career resilience mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and intention to leave career.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey method was used to test the hypothesized relationship, as shown in the model, to study the effects of EI on CR and career outcomes (see Figure 1). By design, cross-sectional survey collects data at one point in time to simultaneously investigate the interactions between several variables (Capili, 2021). The following section describes the sample, sampling procedure, measures, data analysis and results.

Sample and study site

Responses were collected from actively working adults within the USA who represent Generation Z. Accordingly, respondents were asked to provide their age for inclusion in this study. Those respondents aged between 18 and 28 years old made up this sample. A total sample of 160 respondents were assessed. Consideration of the acceptability of this sample size to complete OLS regression analysis was given. Using the G*Power software program (Faul *et al.*, 2007), a minimum sample size of 85 was calculated via a *n* a priori analysis. Demographics of the sample include that 86.3% were between the ages of 25 and 28 and 60.0% were male (see Table 1). The sample primarily considered itself Caucasian or White (90.6%) and reported being relatively well educated with most having attained a bachelor's degree (93.1%). The professional and organizational tenure of the respondents was a majority between two and five years (58.8% and 61.3%, respectively).

Access to this sample was garnered via convenience sampling techniques using Qualtrics, which is a Web-based data collection software. The convenience sampling techniques allowed data collection to include thoughtful consideration of validity concerns

Sociodemographic variable	<i>n</i>	%	Career resilience on Gen Z's
<i>Age</i>			
18–24	22	13.8	
25–28	138	86.3	
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	96	60.0	
Female	64	40.0	
<i>Race</i>			
African American or Black	1	0.6	
American Indian	2	1.3	
Asian or Pacific Islander	11	6.9	
Caucasian or White	145	90.6	
Hispanic	1	0.6	
<i>Education</i>			
Some college, no degree	2	1.3	
Bachelor's degree	149	93.1	
Master's degree	9	5.6	
<i>Professional tenure</i>			
< 2 years	22	13.8	
2–5 years	94	58.8	
6–10 years	41	25.6	
> 10 years	3	1.9	
<i>Organizational tenure</i>			
< 2 years	13	8.1	
2–5 years	98	61.3	
6–10 years	46	28.8	
> 10 years	3	1.9	

Note: *N* = 160
Source: Created by author

Table 1.
Descriptive summary
of respondents

with pilot testing of completion times, demographics, attention checks and instrumental manipulation checks (Holt and Loraas, 2019; Oppenheimer *et al.*, 2009). The result of these considerations and the data sampling technique is a diverse sample of respondents (Buhrmester *et al.*, 2011). The samples from online convenience sampling have been shown to be reliable and valid on a level equivalent to data collection methods considered “conventional” (Behrend *et al.*, 2011; Buhrmester *et al.*, 2011; Feitosa *et al.*, 2015; Winton and Sabol, 2022).

The survey involved a single interaction that included an initial screening (i.e. screening for employment and demographic factors), followed up measuring the dependent, mediating variable, independent variables and including a range of attention checks to ensure data quality/validity (Oppenheimer *et al.*, 2009). Attention checks and data quality measures reduced the initial 231 responses by 30.7%. A total of 160 validated actively working Generation Z employees participated in the study.

Measures

The four measures in this study are EI, CR and the three career outcome variables measured using CSAT, burnout and intention to leave careers. Additionally, control variables were

included based on the need to rule out alternative explanations of the outcome variables. In line with recommendations from CR research, control variables included gender, organizational tenure and professional tenure. Descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations and Cronbach's alpha for all variables can be found in Table 2.

Respondents indicated their perceptions of their EI using the WLEIS instrument created by Wong and Law (2002). The scale includes 16 items to measure four dimensions of ability-based EI. The scale uses a seven-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating *strongly disagree* and 7 indicating *strongly agree*, and asks respondents to respond to items such as, "I have good control of my own emotions" or "I always know whether or not I am happy".

CR was measured by adapting the Career Commitment Measure (Carson and Bedeian, 1994) by focusing on the CR dimension. Based on career motivation theory (London, 1983), the measure envisions CR as the willingness of employees to persist in the face of adversity and fluctuations (Carson and Bedeian, 1994). The measure uses four items on a five-point Likert-type scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. A sample item includes, "The costs associated with my line of work/career field sometimes seem too great".

A common measure of CSAT (Heslin, 2005; Lyons *et al.*, 2015) was captured via Greenhaus *et al.*'s (1990) five-item scale. Measured on a five-point Likert-type scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, respondents assessed satisfaction with the progression in their overall career, career goals, income, advancement and development of skills.

Burnout was measured using the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti *et al.*, 2010). The use of the OLBI attempts to overcome previous critical reviews (Halbesleben and Demerouti, 2005; Reis *et al.*, 2015) of the more popular Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). In its original form, the OLBI consists of 16 items measuring both exhaustion and disengagement dimensions. Measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 indicating *strongly disagree* and 5 indicating *strongly agree*, additional analysis of the measure was necessary to ensure scale reliability. A stepwise omission "alpha if item deleted" procedure was performed (Garnefski and Kraaij, 2006; Ireland *et al.*, 2017). The internal consistency of the OLBI in this study was improved to 0.849 with the deletion of a subset of scale items. Risks in culling items through this procedure include creating scales that are too narrow or have diminished reliability or validity (Raykov, 2007, 2008). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was added to the analysis of reliability to test the hypothesized latent structure and construct validity of the OLBI instrument in this study. CFA verifying the OLBI subset suggested that the new factor structure had an appropriate goodness of fit based on RMSEA, CFI, AIC and BIC. In addition to these indices, an evaluation of the difference between the chi-square (χ^2) values of models was performed with preference given to those models that lower χ^2 (Kline, 2016). Model 1 including the

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics
and Cronbach's α
coefficients of all
variables

	1	2	3	4	M	SD
1. EI	0.935				89.330	12.809
2. CR	-0.536**	0.706			8.860	2.778
3. CSAT	0.637**	-0.629**	0.835		23.578	3.914
4. BURN	0.469**	-0.638**	0.407**	0.849	29.113	5.755
5. ITLC	0.253**	-0.188*	0.156*	0.233*	2.610	1.040

Notes: N = 160; **Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$; *Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$; Diagonal values correspond to Cronbach's alphas of the constructs; EI = emotional intelligence; CR = career resilience; CSAT = career satisfaction; BURN = burnout; ITLC = intention to leave career

Source: Created by author

Results

The results of this analysis have been provided in Figure 2 for simplicity and fully in Table 3. Mediation analysis results in Table 2 provide indirect effects in addition to the direct effects. Indirect effect results showed that CR mediates the relationship between EI and both CSAT and burnout. In contrast, this analysis did not support mediation related to ITLC.

In support of *H1*, EI exhibited a direct significant association with CR ($\beta = -0.118$, $t = -7.962$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, EI also showed a significant association with CSAT ($\beta = 0.134$, $t = 6.622$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting *H2a*. CR was significantly and negatively associated with CSAT ($\beta = -0.542$, $t = -5.834$, $p < 0.001$), supporting *H2b*. In support of *H2c*, the indirect effect of EI on CSAT through CR was significant (point estimate = 0.064; CI: 0.011 to 0.115). The bias-corrected bootstrap 95% confidence intervals, based on 5,000 bootstrap samples, do not include zero.

The relationship between EI and burnout was also assessed and found to be significant ($\beta = 0.015$, $t = 2.626$, $p < 0.01$), supporting *H3a*. CR also significantly associated with burnout ($\beta = -0.201$, $t = -7.444$, $p < 0.001$), supporting *H3b*. When assessed through CR, the indirect effect of EI on burnout was positively significant (point estimate = 0.024; CI: 0.012 to 0.034) and supported *H3c*.

Finally, *H4a* related to the direct positive relationship between EI and ITLC was supported ($\beta = 0.019$, $t = 2.568$, $p < 0.05$). Despite this support, the relatively low coefficient may relate to limited explanatory value of EI on an employee's intention to make a career change. The direct effect connection between CR and ITLC (*H4b*) was not supported ($\beta = 0.011$, $t = 0.279$, $p = 0.781$). The mediating effect of CR between EI and ITLC (*H4c*) was also not supported.

Discussion and implications

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies have examined the effects of EI on CR and career outcomes, especially as it pertains to Gen Z. How Gen Z's EI affects their career

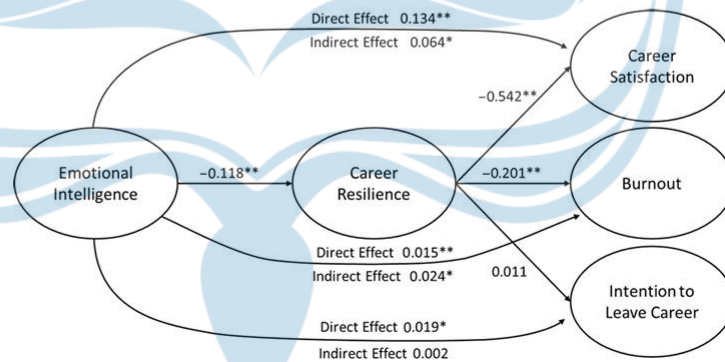


Figure 2.
Mediation analysis of
career resilience on
emotional intelligence
and career outcomes

Notes: **Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$; *Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$
Source: Created by author

adaptability and career decision-making has been studied, but if EI has any effect on their long-term career outcomes remains largely understudied. Further, most studies that examine Gen Z's EI are performed on students enrolled in colleges or high schools. In this study, we present the perspectives of 160 Gen Z employees working in the US economy. Finally, Gen Z as a population is under-represented in the HRD literature, and considering there are 30 million Gen Z employed in the USA, it is important to understand their needs for positive career outcomes. This study thus contributes to the nascent literature on Gen Z in HRD.

The most significant finding of this study concludes that although small, CR has a positive mediating indirect effect on Gen Z's CSAT and burnout. However, contrary to past findings investigating the EI-CR relationship (Odedokun, 2022), Gen Z's EI and CR have a negative association. Further, although EI and CSAT have a positive relationship; CR and CSAT are negatively correlated. Whereas Gen Z's EI through CR positively affects Gen Z's CSAT. This indicates that in a tumultuous career environment, Gen Z can trigger their EI to achieve CSAT. Thus, it can be concluded that Gen Z will feel more satisfied with their careers if they believe they are achieving their career goals in adverse environments.

CR has promising effects on Gen Z's burnout such that higher CR leads to reduced burnout. However, the indirect effect of EI on Gen Z's burnout through CR indicates that higher EI will lead to an increase in burnout. Although contradictory, this finding can be explained by keeping Gen Z's high EI in perspective. Burnout directly results from an individual's emotional exhaustion (Goh and Baum, 2021). Postpandemic, employees reported emotional exhaustion from their careers. Employees in remote work environments, the service industry and the education sector especially experienced emotional exhaustion, leading to burnout because of toxic work culture, supervisors and inequitable work environments (Sull *et al.*, 2022). Our findings show that EI indirectly affects Gen Z's burnout through CR, suggesting Gen Z's EI can help them regulate their careers and find ways to adjust their careers. This finding aligns with previous research that demonstrated Gen Z's high EI as a strong predictor of their career adaptability (Hamzah *et al.*, 2021).

However, the burnout experienced by Gen Z does not lead to the ITLC. This finding suggests that although Gen Z feels burnout, their ITLC is low. This finding does not come as a surprise; when Gen Z feels supported and has their needs met, they display loyalty to their organization and career (Iorgulescu, 2016; Richaud *et al.*, 2005). This finding confirms Gen Z's intrinsic career-related characteristics, such as tenacity, self-assurance and self-reliance (Barhate and Dirani, 2021).

Research implications

CR is a multidimensional concept, and in a challenging work environment where the work conditions are less than optimum, the individual's self-efficacy, risk-taking, social support and reliance on external resources govern how they persist in their careers. In this study, we did not dig deep into the role of the other four constructs; thus, there is rich scope for future qualitative research to examine how each of the four facets of CR is developed among Gen Z and its eventual impact on Gen Z's career outcomes.

Social support plays a vital role in preparation for career instability and developing CR (Jiang, 2015; Nakhat and Sinha, 2019). In the Gen Z context, several studies have examined the role of social support in their career decision-making and career self-efficacy beliefs through Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) lens. Owing to Gen Z's need to build lasting relationships in the workplace, future research can use Bandura's SCCT lens to understand if organizations can build Gen Z's CR.

This study has strong implications for generation-based research in HRD. Despite Gen Z being a part of the workforce for at least six years, limited empirical research on Gen Z has been published. Indeed, Gen Z's workforce inexperience does not yield in-depth explanations of CR concepts; however, as we continue to learn more about Gen Z and their interactions with the work environment, we begin to get a peek into the future of the workforce.

Theoretical implications

This study used the AET (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) as its theoretical framework. We hypothesized that workplace emotional experiences necessitate employees to rely on skills such as EI and CR for desirable career outcomes. Gen Z's high EI has equipped them to recognize, understand and manage their emotions effectively (Shruthi and Shyam, 2023). The AET uses emotional reactions as a basis for the prediction of employee behaviors. However, Gen Z's behavior is known to be triggered not only by organizational events (i.e. appreciation, recognition, rewards, negative interactions with customers or supervisors, etc.) but also by external events unfolding worldwide (Deloitte, 2022). Thus, these Gen Z characteristics, coupled with the findings of this study, imply Gen Z behavior is not inspired by affective events in the workplace alone. These findings render Gen Z workers more unpredictable than the older generations. Thus, this research highlights the usefulness of AET as it relates to the workplace variables operationalized herein, while also highlighting the potential need to expand the boundary conditions of EI and CR research beyond organizational contexts when studying Gen Z.

Practical implications

The findings of this study have strong implications for educators and their career counseling practices. Gen Z students' CR can be enhanced using innovative instruction and career intervention programs (Hamzah *et al.*, 2021). Educators in high school and higher education must design coursework that allows Gen Z to practice resilience. Some ideas could be to teach skills that stretch Gen Z out of their comfort zones and promote lessons on adaptability. Educators must also design as many cross-disciplinary interactions and project-based assignments to foster Gen Z's worldview development so they can be more resilient in adverse life and career situations.

Gen Z's admission into the workforce has resulted in considerable research outcomes that have focused on retaining Gen Z and keeping them engaged and motivated. Given their high EI, Gen Z is highly equipped to analyze their emotions about careers and make decisions impacting the future of their career. Gen Z is willing to leave a career because of their high EI. The youngest Gen Z today is about 11 years old, which provides educational institutions an opportunity to prepare the generation to survive a VUCA environment. It is incumbent for organizations to develop Gen Z's leadership skills that will be useful when trying to survive the VUCA environment and create an environment for sustainable business growth.

Gen Z's EI, CR and expectations of career outcomes are derived from their experiences in institutions of higher learning and watching content on social media. This implies that they need training and development professionals to guide their professional adjustment from academia. In addition, social media content may lead Gen Z to expect illusory career outcomes, causing burnout and intention to leave their careers. However, through active efforts and mentorship, Gen Z's career and workplace expectations can be managed to develop CR (Strauss, 2024).

Limitations

Although this study makes substantial contributions to generation-based research in HRD, we would like to acknowledge a few limitations in this section. First, data was collected through a cross-sectional, self-administered survey distributed among working adults. Without any researcher interference in the participant's response to the survey, we may have introduced the common method variance problem (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Second, we used a pre-validated measurement scale of ITLC from a single source, which may be considered inexhaustive. Therefore, the indicators of ITLC should be used cautiously.

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