Digital Nomads in Emerging Economies: Institutional Embeddedness, Autonomy, and Organizational Support in Cross-Border Work

Jimoh Adams Lukman

Department of Auditing, College of Accounting Sciences, University of South Africa,

Pretoria, South Africa jimohal@unisa.ac.za

HOW TO CITE:

Jimoh Adams Lukman (2026). Digital Nomads in Emerging Economies: Institutional Embeddedness, Autonomy, and Organizational Support in Cross-Border Work

International Journal of Special Education, 41 (19s) 993 - 1005

ABSTRACT:

Digital nomadism is a recent trend in cross-border work that has become visible, but lacking an organization in theoretical explanations in the fields of international management of the institution theory and remote work studies. The digital nomads as described in the existing literature are usually portrayed as geographically free agents without taking into account the institutional complexity of emerging economies where most of them are located. This study creates a multilevel conceptual model of how digital nomads negotiate the institutional structures of regulatory dynamism and infrastructural unevenness. The study relies on the institutional theory, global mobility research, and organizational support theory to present the construct of autonomy, and embeddedness alignment. It posits that the cross-border work should be based on sustainable work, where congruence between individual autonomy orientation, organizational governing intensity, and institutional strength of the host country is important. Mismatch creates compliance risk, identity strain, and organizational exposure, and the calibrated support structures allow institutional navigation without compromising autonomy. The research adds to the global mobility theory by theorizing digital nomads as intermediate actors between expatriates and gig workers, expands the institutional theory to the context of voluntary mobility, and develops the organizational support research to the context of cross-border remote work.

Keywords- Autonomy, Cross-Border Work, Digital Nomads, Emerging Economies, Institutional Embeddedness, Organizational Support.

INTRODUCTION

The cross border work studies have long focused on two main types of mobility: expatriation that is firm-based and structural economic mobility that is migration based. International human resource management research has explored the case of expatriates whose movement is institutionally backed, structured by contract and planned, and organized by multinationals. Such arrangements normally incorporate relocation packages, compliance management and firm structures that diminish uncertainty and cushion the employee and the firm against regulatory risk. Simultaneously, migration research has concentrated on the migrations that are influenced by wage differentials, work, labor market wars, or political instability. The idea of mobility is understood in both traditions according to organizational tool or as a reaction to economic constraint (Cooke *et al.*, 2020).

Remote work has become institutionalized and supported by the growth of digital technologies, which has brought a qualitatively new mobility configuration. Many of the professionals are increasingly living temporarily or semi-permanently in other countries and staying connected to employment relations or client contracts in other locations (Dunmade *et al.*, 202). These people are what are popularly known as the digital nomads. They often move freely and not because of organizational requirements, and they work via digital infrastructures, which allow physical distance between labor and employer. This separation of residence and place of organization upsets the traditional beliefs regarding the spatial demarcation of work.

Digital nomadism is yet to be systematically incorporated into the mainstream theoretical discussions in the study of international business and organisation though its visibility is growing. The studies on remote work

have predominantly investigated the concepts of autonomy, job design, and job performance in the domestic setting and have shown that flexibility can bring about better levels of satisfaction and productivity in conditions when it is in place (Ehn *et al.*, 2022). The career theory has also highlighted boundaryless or protean careers in terms of self-directed mobility and identity construction (Hannonen, 2020). Meanwhile, digitally mediated labor studies have examined the nature of algorithmic coordination and novel modes of control in platforms (Kellogg *et al.*, 2020). Nevertheless, the institutional implication of cross-national countries relocation with the preservation of digitally mediated employment is seldom covered in this literature. Consequently, the digital nomads tend to be represented as being relatively free of location.

These types of representations make institutional environments appear less relevant over time. The institutional theory states that economic and organizational behavior is embedded within regulative, normative and cognitive frameworks that establish what constitutes acceptable behavior and distribution of authority (Iliescu, 2021). The rules like immigration, taxes, and labor laws are in parallel with unstructured rules and relationship structures that influence the day to day deals. Although work activities may be digitally mobile, living within a specific jurisdiction implies exposure to these systems of rules. The ability to work anywhere does not destroy institutional embeddedness; it only increases the number of institutional fields that people have to work.

This is especially acute in the emerging economies. These environments are also characterized by institutional heterogeneity, changing regulatory environments, and the different levels of formal institutional development (Jimoh, 2026). Enforcement in certain environments can be uneven, bureaucracy can be untransparent and market middlemen can be undeveloped. Lacking formal governance is usually filled by informal institutions such as personal networks and community associations. These make the transaction costs and uncertainty to rise. Mobile professionals build a complicated opportunity and vulnerability blend.

Digital nomads are drawn to emerging economies because of a number of reasons. Reduced living expenses can lengthen income incomes acquired in high wages countries. Cities within these economies are becoming more and more popular places to settle down, work, and enjoy the cosmopolitan social atmosphere.

Certain governments have also launched visa classes that are aimed at drawing remote employees, and this signifies an initiative to seize economic spillovers about foreign specialists. However, policy innovation does not necessarily result in regulatory certainty. Issues revolving around tax residency, social security payments and type of employment are often left unresolved. In such an environment, one can accidentally put into jeopardy compliance risk to oneself or the employer.

In a study on international business, results have revealed that companies expanding to overseas markets are faced with a liability of foreignness due to the inability to deal with foreign institutional settings (Jiwasiddi *et al.*, 2024). The opposite does not apply to digital nomads. As opposed to companies setting up operations in new jurisdictions by use of subsidiary companies, people are moving but still attached to companies based in different locations. This structure generates institutional multilayer exposure. The employee should understand and follow the rules of the host nation and, at the same time, be responsible to the rules that are set by the employers based on home country statutes. The employer, in its turn, should pay attention to the fact that the physical presence of the employee in a foreign country provokes tax collection or regulatory environment. The complexity of the institution consequently becomes not that of the subsidiary but that of the individual worker.

These forces have been exacerbated by the increased normalization of remote work after the global disruptions. Flexible geography across national boundaries is a growing demand on employees by organizations. Other companies have reacted by limiting international mobility on grounds of compliance reasons. Other people have established systems of approval in an organized manner and advisory services. These different reactions imply that digital nomadism poses governance challenges that are not entirely addressed by the current expatriation models.

Such theoretical treatment has to cease celebratory accounts of autonomy and freedom. Although autonomy is connected to the positive motivational effects (Koskela & Beckers, 2024), it can create new types of uncertainty as it is applied in different institutional settings. The institutional theory underlines the fact that rules allow taking action in a coordinated manner because of their stability and predictability (Thompson, 2021). Whenever regulatory environments are unequally applied, the actors need other mechanisms to decipher expectations and gain legitimacy. The digital nomad working in the emerging economies, thus, needs to establish some institutional competencies that would be used to supplement their technical and professional skills.

Meanwhile, new economies are not identical. The differences in the quality of governance, the digital infrastructure and regulatory transparency generate the varying degrees of the institutional strength. One country may be very different to another defining the experience of a digital nomad. Theoretical explanation should then include institutional differentiation as an aspect as opposed to the emerging economies being a homogenous set.

DIGITAL NOMADS AND CROSS-BORDER WORK

The study of global mobility has evolved much more on the differences between the assigned expatriates and self initiated expatriates. Multinational enterprises send assigned expatriates to overseas subsidiaries or operations and usually give them a lot of organizational support, such as relocation support, compensation adjustments, and contractual protections (Koskela & Beckers, 2024). Mobility is embedded in the corporate strategy, and managed by the existing international human resource management systems. Self initiated expatriates, in turn, move on their own seeking career opportunities in foreign countries and, in most cases, they enter the labor markets of the host country without the immediate sponsorship by a home organization (Wang *et al.*, 2020). They are self directed in terms of their mobility, but normally end up in the institutional set up of the host economy.

Digital nomads left both types in an analytically significant manner. To start with, their source of income is often not linked to the country they are staying in. Instead of becoming a part of a local labor market, they tend to maintain the employment relationships, client-based contracts, or entrepreneurial operations which are rooted elsewhere. Work is performed based on digital infrastructures which allow spatial division between task performance and organizational place (Jimoh, 2025). Second, their moves are mostly optional and can be revoked and they choose to be geographically flexible instead of permanently migrating or long term organizational placement.

Such structure makes typologies of international workers difficult. Digital nomads do not always form part of organized expatriation programs, nor do they always get relocation benefits or compliance monitoring, unlike when one is assigned as an expatriate. They may not want to have a stable employment in the country they are posted, and may not be involved in the local labor markets economically as compared to self initiated expatriates. Concurrently, they also contrast platform based gig workers whose work is managed mostly by algorithmic management systems that standardize work and measure performance digitally (Kellogg *et al.*, 2020). Numerous digital nomads continue to have existing employment ties to organizations based in other places, and in which they work under a contractual form of operation that predates or supersedes their physical move. Their work thus touches the field of international human resource management, sponsorship of remote work and digitally mediated labour research.

The career theory offers helpful though incomplete information about this type of mobility. The boundaryless career approach states that modern professionals tend to build careers not only within the boundaries of an organization but also within the boundaries of nations, as they focus on individual agency and not on institutional attachment (Hollifield & Wong, 2015). In the same vein, the protean career model focuses on self direction, adaptability, and finding a fit between work decisions and personal values (Holleran, 2022). These schemata shed light on the motivational aspects of digital nomadism, in terms of autonomy, flexibility and lifestyle assimilation. Nevertheless, they are more prone to foregrounding individual agency and pay limited attention to the institutional contexts of mobility that occurs.

The legal and regulatory requirements of the resident in a foreign jurisdiction are independent of geographic flexibility. Regardless of the cooperation performed digitally taxation, immigration, rules of employment classification, and social security still exist. People can have host country tax residence although their employer is also based off-shore. The presence of an employee in a foreign country can impose compliance costs on the employer in situations where it is deemed to be creating a taxable nexus or initiating the local-based labor safeguards. These problems give an example that mobile mediation through technology is still embedded in territorial-defined regulatory structures.

As a result, digital nomads cannot be theorised as power actors who are not members of institutions. Instead, they are concomitant to different spheres of regulation. They have to balance the legal requirements of the country they live in with the jurisdiction where their employer is based and occasionally with other jurisdictions where clients or online platforms are based. Such duality/or multiplicity embeddedness creates ambiguities in governance. Citizens might not understand what rules to follow and organizations might not know to what level of control and compliance should be exercised.

Organizational wise, digital nomads provide uncertainty to the traditional models of employment. Conventional expatriation systems presuppose strict hierarchies and set territorial placards. The stability of domestic labor law frequently serves in remote work arrangements across the borders of countries (Dunmade *et al.*, 2023). These assumptions are upset by cross border remote mobility especially where employees take the initiative. Organizations have to choose between formalizing international relocation, limiting geographic mobility and accepting informal ones. Both the methods have implication of risk exposure, employee satisfaction, and strategic flexibility.

In theory, digital nomads are a transitional group of cross border worker typified by voluntary mobility, digitally mediated labor, and partial attachment to an organization. What is unusual about them is not just their orientation toward the lifestyle, but also the decoupling of residence and the place of work. This unholstering undermines traditional distinctions between expatriation and migration and demands theoretical formulation that takes into consideration institutional multiplicity. The identification of digital nomads as institutionally based but geographically mobile actors offers a platform on which the interaction between autonomy and governance and regulatory context can be examined through the organization of modern cross border work.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF EMERGING ECONOMIES

The institutional theory offers an elaborate approach to the understanding of the context of organizational and economic behavior. Scott (2014) theorizes institutions as pillars of regulative, normative and cognitive. Regulative pillar is the formal rules, laws and enforcement mechanisms which are supported by sanctioning power. Normative pillar refers to societal expectation, professional principles and value systems that stipulate proper behavior. Cognitive pillar is an embodiment of shared understandings and taken-for-granted assumptions that influence action and interpretation. A combination of all these factors brings about patterned stability in social and economic life.

The emerging economies often have skewed growth in these pillars. Legal frameworks can be in place but they do not have uniform enforcement opportunities. Regulatory regimes can shift very fast depending on political or economic forces. There may be high opaqueness in bureaucratic processes and even high levels of administrative discretion. Meanwhile, informal rules and relations tend to play an even bigger role in the process of transactions organization and dispute resolution (Jimoh & Kee, 2022). Formal codification and informal practice coexist resulting in institutional heterogeneity, which forms the manner in which actors decipher risk and opportunity.

These dynamics are also explained by institutional voids concept. The term institutional voids is used to describe the lack of, weakness of, or fragmentation, of intermediaries, enforcement systems and market-supporting institutions that promote credible exchange (Bednorz, 2024). In this kind of situations, information asymmetries are greater, contractual enforcement can be unpredictable, and dispute resolving procedures can be uncertainty based. In the case of multinational enterprises entering these settings, institutional voids augment the transaction expenses and amplify liability of foreignness, which is the drawbacks firms endure as a result of being unaware of the local norms and regulations (Holleran, 2022).

Albeit the concept of liability of foreignness was created with the aim of explaining the challenges at the firm level, the weakness can also appear at the individual level. The ambiguity in regulations facing digital nomads living in emerging economies is as ambiguous as organizational exposure. The visa regimes can be a new one or inconsistent interpretation. Tax remittances may be subjected to complicated criteria, and the advice may be unclear on the issue of remote work. The applicability of labor law can be unclear where someone has taken up employment in a foreign company and is based locally. These uncertainties expose both the individual and the organization the person works to compliance risk, especially assuming the presence of an employee creates taxable nexus or provokes local employment protection.

Simultaneously, institutional heterogeneity creates motivation of strategic geographic repositioning. The variations in costs structures, regulatory costs, and the quality of infrastructure provide arbitrage opportunities. Reduced living standards have the effect of prolonging income in higher wage economies. Visa arrangements can be made flexible and may lessen the obstacle to temporary residence. The development of digital infrastructure in large cities of the emerging economies allows an opportunity to be involved in the global value chains even without being physically close to corporate headquarters. These reasons make the emerging economies appealing to mobile professionals.

This two-fold nature of opportunity and exposure makes emerging economies environments of institutional difference as opposed to deficiency uniformity. The fact that each country and even region of the same country has institutional variability implies that digital nomads face different regulatory environments. The environments can provide a transparent remote work visa system and effective digital connectivity, whereas others can be bureaucratically opaque and lack structural uniformity. Such a generalized representation of emerging economies would thus blur significant differences in institutional strength and predictability.

Actors in situations that have less reliable formal institutions often use informal mechanisms to eliminate uncertainty. The evidence of studying managerial relationships proves that the relationships can be used instead of weak formal governance to exchange information and trust (Nash *et al*., 2021). Personal relationships can also offer advice in how to work around bureaucracy, find a reputable service provider, or understand what is required by the regulatory requirements. In the case of digital nomads, these functions may be fulfilled by connecting with local people, working networks, and expatriate associations. These relationships can aid to make clear what is demanded of tax, residential practices, or administration not entirely open to view via official means.

Nevertheless, there are also shortcomings of depending on informal networks. The relational resources may be available based on language and cultural knowledge. Digital nomads that do not socially engage with the local communities might not enjoy informational benefits enjoyed by embedded actors. Uncertainty may also continue in such instances and adaptation difficulties may escalate. Furthermore, it is not possible to entirely replace formal legal protections with informal ones in dispute or regulatory enforcement.

The theorizing of digital nomadism is thus filled with the understanding of the institutional context of emerging economies. These environments are not just the setting of the lifestyle mobility; these environments are systematic systems of rules that determine incentives, limit behavior and allocate risk. Digital nomads living in them are placed under multilayered institutional pressures and need to be interpreted and negotiated. Locating the concept of digital nomadism into the context of the institutional heterogeneity and voids, one will be able to examine the interaction of opportunity-seeking mobility and regulatory complexity. This viewpoint goes beyond the triumphant accounts of flexibility and emphasizes factors in structure that drive the sustainability of cross-border remote work.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES

The organizational strategies concerning cross-border mobility are determined by underlying findings of research based on perceived organizational support. Judging whether their organization appreciates their efforts and considers their welfare serious, employees make judgments that lead to commitment, trust, and performance (Jimoh & Kee, 2022). In conventional international assignments, support is apparent and formalized. Expats are normally accorded relocation, legal counseling, tax organization, and well-organized channels of communication that elucidate expectations in the foreign country (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These mechanisms will eliminate doubt and enhance the perception that the organization is with the employee even in terms of foreign environment.

Digital nomadism leads to another structure of responsibility. The scope of organizational obligation is less imperative when the trigger of relocation is established by the employees and not by the firm. The employee can continue on a domestic contract but stay physically outside the country and this results in a gap between the legal residence and place of employment. Organizations need to determine whether to embrace such mobility as a personal issue, a continuation of distance working or as an international assignment that needs central management. All decisions have compliance, risk management, and employee relations implications.

The studies of remote work emphasize the role that autonomy plays in the development of work results. Increased freedom of place and time is linked to increased job satisfaction and better performance when the right conditions of tasks are available (Aroles *et al.*, 2020). Meanwhile, autonomy may bring in a coordination problem and confusion of roles especially where there is a complication in the communication. As geographic mobility involves national boundaries, such coordination problems are overlapped with legal and regulatory issues. The organization will need to determine whether current policy on remote work is sufficient to deal with cross-border exposure or it needs further regulation.

Governance systems can be informal disclosure norms through to formalized compliance systems. Other companies must have the employees consult before they move to other countries and give information on the period and place. Other companies perform evaluations to track tax exposure and data protection requirements

(Cook, 2020). Within more complex arrangements, companies can rewrite employment agreements, utilize local law firms or hire middleman services to meet regulatory requirements. These steps will allow less ambiguity and definition of responsibility, but they also portend different levels of managerial control.

Such structures are designed to show an old organizational conflict between empowerment and control. Formalization may facilitate the attainment of effective coordination through standardization of procedures and ambiguity reduction. Meanwhile, over-monitoring can be perceived by the staff as intrusive, especially by those employees who consider geographic flexibility to be the core of their professional identity. The same governance mechanism may be taken as protection support or restrictive control, depending on its application and communication.

The calculus of the governance intensity is influenced by the institutional context. Where taxation policy is difficult to understand or there is uncertainty in the practice used to enforce it, the little supervision can put the organization at risk of both financial and reputational harm. Risk mitigation tools in such environments may be developed in form of structured compliance procedures. On the other hand, when regulatory systems are clear and well-enforced and highly restrictive policies burden administrative systems without sufficient payoff, such policies can be counterproductive in terms of administrative cost. Good governance therefore must be sensitive to difference between the institutional strength at different places (Mancinelli, 2020).

Support mechanisms which blend a sense of clarity and flexibility can result in compliance as well as commitment. Fairness perceptions can be promoted by giving employees access to professional advice, understandable policy guidelines, and open decision criteria. Employees will tend to perceive oversight as stewardship as needed by organizations when they clarify the regulatory constraints that guide their policies. Conversely, opaque or irregular policies can destroy trust and fuel informal deals that increase risk.

The digital nomads thus force the organizations to rethink traditional separation of domestic remote work and official expatriation. The concept of cross-border residence leads to legal and institutional exposure despite the same job tasks. The structures of governance and support should be adjusted to consider this exposure without violating the autonomy that drives mobility. The perspective of governance as a compliance tool and a relationship signal provides organizations with the opportunity to structure themselves in a way that manages institutional complexity without diminishing employee engagement.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: AUTONOMY–EMBEDDEDNESS ALIGNMENT

The proposed framework integrates three dimensions:

1. Individual autonomy orientation
2. Organizational governance intensity
3. Host-country institutional strength

The autonomy orientation is associated with the extent to which self-direction and geographical flexibility are important to people (Reichenberger, 2018). The degree of formal policies and monitoring structures is captured by the degree of governance intensity. Institutional strength is a concept that indicates the predictability and consistency of the formal rules (Toivanen, 2023).

The main argument is that alignment of these dimensions is the solution to sustainable cross-border work.

Mistrust causes tension and danger.

Compliance exposure is high when institutional strength is low and the level of governance is low. On the other hand, identity conflict and dissatisfaction could arise where there is high governance intensity and high autonomy orientation. Balanced alignment generates the ability to navigate the institution and maintain autonomy.

Propositions

Proposition 1:

Digital nomads rely more on informal local networks in emerging markets with poor formal institutions to decrease uncertainty.

Proposition 2:

Weak institutions where the intensity of organizational governance is low enhance compliance and legal risks to employing organizations and digital nomads.

Proposition 3:

High governance intensity decreases the institutional uncertainty but it has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between job satisfaction and autonomy orientation.

Proposition 4:

Autonomy-embeddedness incongruence enhances role conflict and identity strain. Proposition 5:

Intermediate intensity of governance and institutionalized institutional support has better cross-border sustainability as compared to the low-intensity or the high-intensity of governance.

Proposition 6:

The institutional weakness has a moderate relationship with the cross-border performance moderated by institutional competence.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The perception organizational support (POS) concept is a highly informative element in the organization strategies of managing cross border mobility, as it emphasizes the fact that organizations actions are interpreted by the employee as indicators of the degree to which their own contributions and well being are being appreciated (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). In the event of perceived high-level support among the employees, chances of commitment, trust, and discretionary effort are highly likely to be exhibited. Under classic expatriate packages, companies offer a package of formal support structures aimed at minimizing unpredictability and, instead, focused on assimilation. These will be relocation assistance, advice on local legal and tax requirements, formal communication channels and availability of advisory services. These provisions do not only help the expatriate to cope with the new circumstances but also help to create the impression that the organization is keen on keeping the organization safe, which further augurs loyalty and engagement (Jimoh, 2026). The perceivability and formality of such support are relevant especially in situations where institutional complexity or cultural distance may worsen the issues relating to relocation hence lowering the chances of performance degradation.

Digital nomadism poses a unique threat to the traditional organizational structures. The movement is usually self motivated in such situations and the employees decide what host countries to go to without formal organizational approval or organization planning. This is dislocation that leads to uncertainty in the duties of the organization especially when the employee is still under domestic contract but is physically based overseas. These arrangements may put the individual as well as the organization at a risk of having legal, tax or regulatory liability which is not expected since the relationship between employment location and jurisdiction of residence is not officially determined. Organizations are thus left with a big choice of whether to consider such mobility as informal continuation of remote jobs as a personal issue to the employee or as an international assignment that needs to be governed and managed. Every choice has a regulatory compliance, exposure to risk, and employee engagement preservation implication, where insensitivity on such aspects can create both operational and reputational effects.

The studies of remote work have emphasized that autonomy is one of the determinants of employee performance and motivation, and the freedom of choice in how and where to work is observed in every case of higher satisfaction and output (Shaffer *et al.*, 2023). There are however more complexities when the autonomy is practiced internationally. Physical distance and different time zones may challenge communication, which is less synchronous, complicate role expectations coordination, and challenge accountability structures. These coordination challenges overlap with the legal and institutional environments of the host site further increasing the necessity of organizational focus. In the absence of proper advice or monitoring, the employees will unintentionally break the immigration, labor, or tax laws putting them and their employers at risk of compliance.

In order to deal with these risks, organizations have governance mechanisms that vary in their formality and intensity. There are organizations that are based on informal disclosure policies, where employees are expected to inform the management about their intention to relocate, and there are companies that have formal approval systems or risk analysis with regard to tax, labor legislations, and data protection. In more complicated cases, the companies can amend employment agreements or hire local lawyers or refer to the services of intermediaries to make sure they comply with the regulations. Although such structures create less unpredictability, and responsibilities become clearer, it is also an indicator of different levels of supervision. When too strict, the governance mechanisms may be seen to be too restrictive coming in the way of the autonomy that spurs the cross border mobility. On the contrary, the lack of control in the environment with high regulatory risk may expose the individual employee and the organisation to legal and financial fines.

The governance structures should hence be designed in a manner that balances between the two purposes of facilitating autonomy and compliance. The organizational theory has always known that formalization may at the same time promote coordination and limit flexibility (Reichenberger, 2018). Formal processes are also predictive and less ambiguous especially when dealing with intricate legal systems. Meanwhile, to maintain employee trust and engagement, organizations need to communicate the intent of oversight, focusing on protective intent, but not control. Unpredictable, foggy, or punitive policies are likely to destroy trust, promote the informal process, and leave them more vulnerable to risk, whereas clear policies accompanied with advisory services strengthen equity and minimize ambiguity.

The degree of governance needed is determined by the institutional conditions of the host country. Under circumstances of complex taxation, unstable regulations or inconsistencies in enforcement, an augmented supervision is required to reduce the jeopardy of legal and reputational. On the other hand, in nations that have a stable and transparent legal system, little or no intervention can be required without the need to overload the administration. This is a calibration of governance which makes governance proportional to risk and to institutional reality. Besides, giving employees access to advice, clear guidelines, and organized decision-making criteria may positively affect the perception of support without breaking autonomy. Organizations combine both regulatory exposure and motivational needs of mobile employees by combining legal compliance with the relational support.

This means that digital nomads require a reconsideration of existing separations between remote work back at home and expatriate work. By being mobile, they add an institutional and legal complexity to job activities that would otherwise be the same. The governance and support systems should be deliberately structured in such a manner that would maintain a balance between regulation and autonomy that would allow motivation and performance. When used wisely, these structures can have a twofold use, that is, reducing institutional and legal risks and communicating organizational concern and support which in the end helps to create sustainable working arrangements cross borders which are beneficial to both the worker and the organization.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The emergence of digital nomadism and cross-border remote work has great implications on organizational management. To begin with, the organizations should employ diverse governance strategies which are sensitive to the institutional risk profile of the host-country. Using a unified approach in the treatment of all international mobility does not consider the differences in the complexities of regulations, the reliability of enforcement, and the local labor laws. Rather, organizations need to adjust the extent of oversight and support to the legal and institutional environment with a balance between adherence and flexibility. As an example, the employees who are going to work in countries with clearly established taxation and steady enforcement practice may need little or no intervention, but those who are going to work in a setting with vague legislation or with weak enforcement systems might need more structured control and guidance services. Organizations can alleviate

exposure by balancing the intensity of governance with institutional risk without subjecting their employees to additional restrictions on their autonomy.

Second, the support mechanisms in the organizations should incorporate mechanisms that protect autonomy and in the process maintain compliance. Formal systems may comprise a location approval measures, availability of local legal or tax consultants and visa and work placement advice. These mechanisms are useful in aligning expectations and minimizing the chances of unintentional nonadherence, but may be crafted to give employees flexibility in their work place, work schedules and lifestyle decisions. Communication is paramount: by defining governance as a protection instead of a constraint, trust and involvement is strengthened. When employees can see the logic behind policies and can be given practical instructions, they will be more inclined to see the oversight as an organizational investment in their well-being.

Third, the dual embeddedness of digital nomads should be acknowledged by human resource and talent management functions. The workers work concurrently within the legal system in the host country and the contractual binding of their home organization. Managers should take into consideration the complexities it creates, such as tax, social security and exposure to employment laws. Educating the HR on these dynamics, using legal expertise and keeping a well-documented record are some of the steps that are necessary in decreasing institutional and legal risk.

The governments of emerging economies are also important at the policy level in determining the viability and appeal of remote work across borders. Articulate remote work visa programmes, uniform tax programmes on working foreigners and open labour laws can minimise confusion to both individuals and institutions. This policy transparency reduces mobility barriers, increases levels of compliance, and helps to make up-and-coming economies more appealing places to work by skilled workers. In this regard, policymakers that offer regular and foreseeable frameworks stand in a better position of reaping the economic advantages due to increased consumption, sharing of knowledge and entrepreneurship linked to mobile professionals, without sacrificing regulatory control.

Lastly, organizations need to find the advantages of cross-border mobility as a strategic talent management approach and not just a compliance issue. With the support offered properly, and trust being developed, firms have an opportunity to retain the high-performing employees by using digital nomadism, get them more engaged, and open up numerous talent pools in various countries of the world. Mobility policies that are aligned with the realities of the institutional environment will help to achieve business aims and employee desires and provide a sustainable paradigm of international remote working.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Subsequent studies of digital nomads and remote working across borders must also look into some of the uncharted sections in order to advance theoretical and applied knowledge. First, empirical research performed in various institutional settings would allow in better understanding how autonomy and local regulatory and normative frameworks interact. Exploring various emerging and developed economies may identify the role of institutional power, regulatory transparency and informal regulation in determining the consistency between individual mobility and organizational control. The longitudinal research designs are especially useful because they can be used to monitor how the identity, professional integration, and work performance of digital nomads change with time based on the shift in the institutional or the organization environment. Also, comparative research of corporate employed digital nomads and independent freelancers may help shed light on variations in governance requirements, compliance risk, and support systems with emphasis on the impact of organizational affiliation in the mediation of institutional risk.

The connection between technological infrastructure and digital literacy and institutional embeddedness and its relationships with sustainable cross-border work could also be explored through research. To have a broad conceptual orientation, that is, to incorporate the psychosocial outcomes, that is, the sense of belonging and career satisfaction and resilience, may give a comprehensive picture of how autonomy and embeddedness together determine the outcome of both individual and organization. Lastly, interdisciplinary methods that combine international business research, organizational behavior research, and policy research might reveal information about how companies, states and people negotiate regulatory complexities, and how they take advantage of the opportunities of location independent work. Together, these research directions would offer solid evidence to support the organizational policy, government regulation, and personal decision-making in the changing nature of digital nomadism.

CONCLUSION

Digital nomads in the developing economy have a unique position between embeddedness and autonomy, and operate in an ambiguous institutional landscape on one hand along with organizational ties on the other hand. They are not independent of regulatory and normative frameworks and they are not wholly covered by classical expatriate schemes. Their success and viability are pegged on a delicate balance between the freedom of the individual, organizational control, and the institutional host country conditions. Compliance risks can be minimized in organizations that offer systematic assistance without excessive thwarting of autonomy and maintain interest and productivity. Similarly, institutions in the host country providing transparency in the taxation, visas, and labor laws facilitates the location-independent work and makes it more appealing. Through the incorporation of findings of institutional theory, global mobility studies, and perceived organizational support, the present paper provides conceptual basis to the interdependence of autonomy, governance, and embeddedness in the institutions in the context of remote work across borders. This framework points out the circumstances in which digital nomads may be efficient and offers a set of recommendations to those organizations, policy makers, and researchers that strive to navigate the changing environment of international mobility.

REFERENCES

Aroles, J., Granter, E., & Vaujany, F.-X. (2020). ‘Becoming mainstream’: The professionalisation and corporatisation of digital nomadism. New Technology, Work, and Employment, 35(1), 114–129. https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12158

Bednorz, J. (2024). Working from anywhere? Work from here! Approaches to attract digital nomads. Annals of Tourism Research, 105, 103715. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2023.103715

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Cook, D. (2020). The freedom trap: Digital nomads and the use of disciplining practices to manage work/leisure boundaries. Information Technology & Tourism, 22(3), 355–390. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40558-020-00172-4

Cooke, F. L., Schuler, R., & Varma, A. (2020). Global work and mobility. International Journal of Human Resource Management, 31(4), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2019.1619264

Dunmade, E. O., Ajayi, M. A., & Jimoh, A. L. (2023). Globalization and its impact on human resource management practices in Pz Cussons Nigeria Plc., Lagos. The Journal of Business Studies, 7(1). https://www.fcm.esn.ac.lk/jbs/vol_07-1.html#

Ehn, K., Jorge, A., & Marques-Pita, M. (2022). Digital nomads and the Covid-19 pandemic: Narratives about relocation in a time of lockdowns and reduced mobility. Social Media + Society, 8(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221084958.

Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 71*(3), 500–507.

Hannonen, O. (2020). In search of a digital nomad: Defining the phenomenon. Information Technology & Tourism, 22(3), 335–353. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40558-020-00177-z

Holleran, M. (2022). Pandemics and geoarbitrage: Digital nomadism before and after COVID-19. City, 26(5–6), 831–847. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2022.2124713

Hollifield, J. F., & Wong, T. K. (2015). The politics of international migration. How can we ‘bring the state back in?’ In C. B. Brettell & J. F. Hollifield (Eds.), Migration theory: Talking across disciplines (3rd ed., pp. 227–288). Routledge.

Iliescu, A. N. (2021). The emergence of knowmads from the knowledge workers. Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy, 9(1), 94–104. https://doi.org/10.2478/mdke-2021-0007

Jiwasiddi, A., Schlagwein, D., Cahalane, M., Cecez-Kecmanovic, D., Leong, C., & Ractham, P. (2024). Digital nomadism as a new part of the visitor economy: The case of the ‘Digital Nomad Capital’ Chiang Mai, Thailand. Information Systems Journal, 34(5), 1493–1535. https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12496.

Jimoh, A. L. (2026). Black applicants’ reaction to affirmative action plans in Brazil. The influence of psychological empowerment. Management Research: The Journal of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. https://doi.org/10.1108/MRJIAM-08-2025-1797.

Jimoh, A. L. (2025). Digital HR systems adoption and administrative efficiency in public institutions: The role of employee digital literacy. Industrial and Commercial Training. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ICT-05-2025-0072.

Jimoh, A. L., & Kee, D. M. H. (2022). Talent management: The way out of poor task performance. Industrial and Commercial Training, 54(4), 623–636. https://doi.org/10.1108/ICT-03-2022-0016.

Kellogg, K. C., Valentine, M. A., & Christin, A. (2020). Algorithms at work. *Academy of Management Annals, 14*(1), 366–410.

Koskela, K., & Beckers, P. (2024). Typologizing digital nomad visas: Comparing policy rationales from tourism to wealth accumulation to immigration. Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis, 26(5), 407–425. https://doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2024.2343696.

Nash, C. E., Jarrahi, M. H., & Sutherland, W. (2021). Nomadic work and location independence: The role of space in shaping the work of digital nomads. Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies, 3(2), 271–282. https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.234.

Shaffer, M. A., Reiche, S., & Dimov, D. (2023). Mobile work and global talent management. Academy of Management Annals. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2023.0001.

Thompson, B. Y. (2021). Digital nomads living on the margins: Remote-working laptop entrepreneurs in the gig economy. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Toivanen, M. (2023). Countercultural lifestyle no more? Digital nomadism and the commodification of neo-nomadic mobilities. Mobility Humanities, 2(2), 70–89. https://doi.org/10.2309

Wang, B., Schlagwein, D., Cecez-Kecmanovic, D., & Cahalane, M. (2020). Beyond the factory paradigm: Digital nomadism and the digital future(s) of knowledge work post-COVID-19. Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 21, 1379–1401. https://doi.org/10.17705/1jais.00641