



GIG ECONOMY CAREER SUSTAINABILITY: EXPLORING THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS

*** Ms. Glorita Pereira, ** Ms. Jagruti Naukudkar & *** Dr. Delcy Lopes**

** Economics – Assistant Professor, VIVA College of Arts, Commerce & Science.*

*** BBI – Commerce Assistant Professor, VIVA College of Arts, Commerce & Science*

**** BAF – Commerce Assistant Professor, VIVA College of Arts, Commerce & Science*

Abstract :

The rise of the gig economy has redefined work by offering flexible, on-demand opportunities across various sectors. While this model provides autonomy and income generation avenues, it also poses challenges to the long-term career sustainability of gig workers. This study explores the critical factors that affect gig workers' ability to sustain their careers over time. Relying on secondary data and industry-based case studies—including the notable efforts of Salauddin Shaikh, who pioneered unionization for gig workers—the research examines the impact of technological tools, income fluctuations, skill levels, and industry differences. The study further assesses how these elements influence job stability, career growth, and economic resilience. Based on the findings, the research offers constructive recommendations at three levels: industry, government, and individual. Key suggestions include implementing fair wage policies, expanding access to social protection, promoting digital upskilling, ensuring legal safeguards, and encouraging self-driven financial planning. The study underscores the importance of a collaborative and well-regulated approach to ensure that the gig economy evolves into a more equitable, secure, and sustainable employment ecosystem.

Key Words - Gig Economy, Career skill, Sustainability.

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

Introduction:

The third decade of the 21st century is witnessing the greatest revolution in the labour market i.e. the emergence of the gig economy. Gig economy refers to the labour market arrangements that do not follow the traditional employer-employee relationship. Gig workers enter into formal agreements with on-demand companies to provide services to the company's clients. Prospective clients request services through an Internet-based technological platform or smartphone application that allows them to search for providers or specific jobs.(Ananya Radhakrishnan and Namrata

Singha Roy,2023). According to the study conducted by Mckinsey in 2016, there are four types of gig workers, Free agents who primarily derive their income from independent work, secondly the casual earners who use the independent work as a supplementary income, thirdly the reluctant who prefer independent work but are engaged in the traditional job and fourth category is financially strapped who do independent work out of necessities. Gig economy includes all platforms that employ independent freelancers, consultants, and workers in various industries, including communications, information technology,

content production, social media marketing, food and beverage, artistic disciplines like design and art (Harpreet Singh Malhotra, 2020). Thus, the main feature of the gig economy is short term task based contracts rather than traditional long term contracts or permanent jobs.

In India the gig economy is growing rapidly. According to the study conducted by Niti Aayog in 2022, India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy, in the year 2020-21 7.7 million workers were engaged in the gig economy. The study estimates that the gig workforce would expand to 23.5 million workers by 2029-30. There are several factors that are responsible for the rise of the gig economy. The evolution of the digital age, availability of cheap internet facilities, and smartphones are the major factors. At first, the gig economy mostly benefited highly skilled professionals who could work remotely, like graphic designers and IT consultants. But as app-based services like Uber, Ola, Swiggy, and Zomato proliferated, the landscape began to change dramatically. These platforms allowed a greater number of people, particularly low-skilled workers, to participate in the gig economy. (Tanmay Sachdeva, 2024). In countries like India, rising unemployment has also contributed to the emergence of the gig economy. Many people who were laid off during the pandemic turned to freelancing or gig work. The study conducted by the American Opportunity Survey shows that many people choose gig work out of necessity as they are unable to find jobs.

Hence, the factors responsible for the emergence of the gig economy can be broadly divided into two parts- pull factors and push factors. Pull factors are those factors which makes gig work attractive such as flexibility in work, ability to choose the type of work, ability to work for oneself rather than for others, on the other hand there are push factors which includes the situations that necessitates one to choose a gig work for example

unemployment in labour market, inflation, lack of vocational training and so on.

Gig workers however face a number of challenges. Instead of being called employees, gig workers are categorized as independent contractors. This implies that they handle insurance, taxes, health care, and other perks. Although the gig economy provides businesses with cost-effectiveness and flexibility for workers, it has also sparked worries about workers' rights, job security, and the need for legislative frameworks to guarantee equitable treatment of gig workers. However the major challenge faced by the gig workers is career sustainability. Key factor in career sustainability is financial stability. Gig workers often get irregular payments. According to a survey conducted by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), more than 90% of gig workers in India reported irregular monthly earnings. Though the gig economy offers flexibility there is limited scope for career progression. The work in the gig economy is task based rather than skill enhancing. These challenges question the career sustainability of gig workers. The present study tries to explore the factors that would be helpful in achieving income stability and career sustainability in the gig economy.

Review of Literature:

The gig economy has redefined employment structures globally, shifting away from traditional employer-employee relationships toward more independent, project-based work (Jacobs et al., 2024). The gig economy contributes to job expansion by providing varied opportunities for income generation especially during the economic downturn. It provides supplementary income and also the flexibility of work (Joshi et al. 2024). The gig economy has grown significantly, providing flexibility for workers and cost-saving opportunities for employers. However, its sustainability faces multiple challenges, including lack of regulation, absence of benefits, job insecurity,

payment issues, and emotional distress (Financial Times, 2024). One of the biggest challenges in the gig industry is the lack of comprehensive labor regulations. Since most gig workers are classified as independent contractors rather than employees, they lack access to legal protections such as minimum wage laws, job security, and collective bargaining rights (Aranca, 2024). Even though many countries have taken measures to regulate gig work, for instance, India's Social Security Code Bill, 2019, aims to provide gig workers with pension and medical benefits, they are inadequate. Gig workers often lack **essential employment benefits**, such as health insurance, paid leave, and retirement plans, which are typically available to full-time employees (Financial Times, 2024). A fundamental challenge of gig work is **job instability**. Unlike traditional employees, gig workers do not have long-term contracts or guaranteed work, making their income highly unpredictable (Financial Times, 2024). Many gig workers experience delayed or inconsistent payments due to a lack of formal contracts. Some governments have intervened by mandating prompt payment policies. For example, the UK's Good Work Plan introduced regulations requiring clearer payment terms for gig workers (UK Government, 2020).

Without these benefits, gig workers face greater financial instability and difficulty in planning for the future.

Though the business enjoys multiple benefits of gig work in the form of cost effectiveness, flexible workforce which is adaptable, access to specialized workforce, there are certain challenges faced by the employers in managing the gig workforce. Various problems can be faced while managing gig workers such as communication, project management, quality assurance (Bahu, 2024). In contrast to conventional employees, gig workers often demonstrate a reduced sense of responsibility and a weaker long-term

commitment toward the organization. (Kiruthiga, P. Sankar, 2024). This difference arises primarily because of the temporary and flexible nature of gig work, where individuals are typically engaged for short-term tasks or projects rather than permanent roles. As a result, gig workers may prioritize personal flexibility and immediate earnings over organizational goals, making it challenging for employers to cultivate loyalty and sustained dedication.

A major challenge for employers is ensuring data confidentiality and securing intellectual property rights for the products or services delivered by freelancers. (Roy and Shrivastava, 2020). Managing the costs of gig workers can be a big challenge. While hiring gig workers is often cheaper than having full-time employees, the rates can change, and businesses may need to pay more for workers with special skills. This can make it hard to keep the budget under control.

Having known the challenges of gig workers and employers, the government can play a major role in shaping the gig economy. One of the biggest challenges in the gig industry is the **lack of comprehensive labor regulations**. Many countries do not have specific laws governing gig work, leading to inconsistent labor practices and potential worker exploitation (Financial Times, 2024).

Stewart and Stanford (2017) discussed how policymakers and regulators expand the regulatory framework for governing gig work. One of the ways to achieve this is to expand the term employment and create a new category of independent workers and create rights for workers and not for employees. Gig economy has led the government to rethink their labour laws to support gig workers. The European Union is working on new rules to make gig work more predictable and fair, so workers aren't left without support. In Canada, the government has made changes to give gig workers access to benefits like health insurance and unemployment support, which were

usually only available to full-time employees. Singapore has also set up guidelines to ensure fair contracts and better ways to resolve disputes for gig workers.(Mary Christine Wheatley,2024), **India's Social Security Code Bill, 2019**, aims to provide gig workers with **pension and medical benefits**, although it does not mandate employer contributions (Financial Times, 2024).The Code on Social Security, 2020, marks a pivotal development by recognizing gig and platform workers as distinct categories. This legislation aims to extend social security benefits to these workers, including provisions for life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits, and old age protection. However, the implementation and effectiveness of these provisions remain subjects of ongoing discussion. Various industry experts have given strategies that gig workers can adopt for sustainability.(source linkedin) Learning new skills makes workers more attractive to employers and helps them earn a steadier income. By learning different tasks and staying informed about changes in their industry, gig workers can stay ahead and keep getting work.Gig workers should focus on managing their money wisely by planning for times when work might be scarce. They should also make sure to save for things like retirement and healthcare. Additionally, it's important for them to handle their taxes properly, making sure they follow the rules in their area.Networking plays a crucial role in securing consistent work opportunities. Engaging in industry events, online forums, and professional groups fosters collaboration and knowledge-sharing, enhancing career prospects. Businesses that depend on gig workers should implement fair labor practices, including offering fair pay, providing access to training and opportunities for career advancement, and supporting workers' mental health and overall well-being through dedicated programs (Sustainability Directory, 2024).

The gig economy offers great opportunities for both workers and businesses, but it also comes with major challenges that could impact its long-term viability. To create a sustainable gig economy, it's essential to put strong policies in place, ensure financial security, and focus on the well-being of workers. By tackling these issues, everyone involved can help build a fair, stable, and inclusive work environment.

Objective:

1. To identify and analyze the key factors that influence the long-term career sustainability of workers in the gig economy.
2. To evaluate the influence of technological advancements and digital tools on gig workers' ability to maintain long-term engagement and income.
3. To evaluate the impact of skill level, industry type, and income variability on the long-term career sustainability of gig workers.

Research Methodology

For this study, we used a variety of methods to gather and analyze information. We looked at five industry case studies and five individual case studies to understand the different factors that affect gig workers' long-term success. We also reviewed an ample amount of existing research and information from various sources, such as workers' and employers' views, government roles, legal regulations, and opinions from experts in the field.

This study mainly relied on secondary data, meaning we used information that had already been collected by others through surveys, reports, and studies. By reviewing all this data, we could gain a better understanding of the key factors that affect gig workers' ability to succeed in their careers over the long term.

Case Studies:

Through comprehensive review of literature, the researcher has identified that in order to have a sustainable gig career, workers need to have skills and

strategies and thus appropriate designing will help the gig workers overcome the challenges. To be precise five case studies of successful gig workers from various industries are analysed in order to understand the approach and techniques implemented by them. In addition to that, case studies of five firms are analysed to know the industry needs.

Gig workers often face the challenges of irregular income, Lack of social security, gaps in legal and regulatory frameworks. Similar problems were faced by **Salauddin Shaik**, an Uber driver by profession. He started to work for Uber in 2014. First few months of his work was smooth as companies gave heavy incentives. Due to the heavy incentives and good payouts provided by the company many drivers bought their own cars on the loans but soon the payout decreased due to competition. The earning was not regular. Two drivers in Hyderabad committed suicide as they failed to pay their EMIs. These incidents made him realize the exploitation of the gig workers. In 2019 Salauddin co-founded the Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers (IFAT), a coalition of unions that now has over 36,000 members. In 2020, he also launched the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU), which now has over 10,000 members, including cab drivers, food and grocery delivery workers, and e-commerce delivery persons from the southern state. These organizations provide collective voice and bargaining power to the gig workers. Salauddin and his union actively engaged with policymakers, raising issues about wage security and the absence of benefits. Their persistent efforts contributed to policy discussions that led to the introduction of gig worker protection bills in states like Rajasthan and Karnataka. Their union has also filed petitions in court to get social security benefits to gig workers. Through media engagement and social media campaigns the organization tries to create awareness about the struggles of gig workers. The example shows

how organising and creating awareness can overcome the challenges in the sector which is decentralized.

Due to the short term contracts gig workers often face the problem of project availability. Which leads to irregular and fluctuating earnings. To overcome these problems, gig workers can seek external help such as freelancer.com. It is a website that helps businesses find skilled workers for different types of jobs, like tech, creative work, and professional services. It has over 47 million users from around the world. People looking for work can sign up, browse job postings, and submit bids to get hired for projects. The gig workers and freelancers, employers can collaborate and connect through the platforms. By building an appealing and strong profile, upskilling in-demand skills and developing long term relationships with clients the freelancers can have a stable workflow and income.

Freelance content creators in India work through various platforms but often face challenges of fierce competition, lower and irregular pay at initial stages. To overcome these challenges many writers focus upon niches such as technology, finance where their expertise can earn them higher pay. Investing in online courses helps them to be updated about the industry trends. Pocket FM is a voice streaming platform which enables the content writers and voice artists to convert their content in audios which helps them to reach to masses. But new artists often struggle with algorithms which affect their earnings. These platforms also put pressure for constant production of content. To overcome the challenges the content creators discuss together on various platforms and social media. They help each other to improvise the content. They also promote each other's work. This is how community support and collaboration can be useful to overcome the challenges.

To promote sustainability of gig workers the company's need to identify the challenges freelancers and gig workers face and take measures to solve the

problems. Let's see the example of Zepto, a startup which promises quick deliveries relies on the large network of delivery partners who operate under high-pressure conditions. These workers face challenges such as erratic incomes, strict delivery targets, and safety concerns in congested urban areas. To overcome the challenges, the company has taken various measures. Zepto implemented comprehensive training programs via mobile apps that use simulations and real-time feedback to improve drivers' route planning and safety practices. The company introduced flexible shift options and created internal forums where drivers share experiences, advice, and support, helping them manage stress collectively. By negotiating better healthcare benefits and safety gear for its delivery partners, Zepto has gradually built a more sustainable working environment while maintaining its high-performance standards.

Conclusion:

In the current digital era, the gig economy has become a prominent work paradigm that provides millions of people with flexibility and earning options. But its quick expansion has also made gig workers more vulnerable to issues like inconsistent income, no social safety net, and little opportunity for professional advancement. A comprehensive strategy that tackles issues at the organizational, individual, and policy levels is required to guarantee the sector's survival. The parts that follow offer doable tactics and suggestions for creating an ecology for gig labor that is equitable, safe, and welcoming.

Recommendations:

Policy-Level: To guarantee that the expansion of the gig economy is in line with worker welfare, a strong and comprehensive policy framework is essential. Governments may make the gig economy more secure and egalitarian by instituting social security, fair salaries, legal protections, and tech-enabled governance.

Organizational-Level: By providing equitable compensation, social safeguards, skill development, and inclusive participation, platforms must transform into moral partners. For both employees and the platform, open procedures and support networks can promote long-term success, loyalty, and wellbeing.

Individual Level: Gig workers may take control of their success by networking, learning new skills constantly, managing their money, and protecting their rights and health. These proactive measures not only guarantee survival but also open doors for significant development and professional advancement.

References:

1. Green, Daryl & Polk, Xanshunta & O'Donnell, Heidi & Doughty, Kelsey & Carr, Michelle & Costa-Cargill, Devan. (2021). *The Gig Economy: A Case Study Analysis of Freelancer.com. Management and Economics Research*
2. *Financial Times* (2024). "The Future of the Gig Economy: Benefits and Challenges."
3. Aranca (2024). "Regulatory and Economic Challenges in the Gig Economy."
4. *Sustainability Directory* (2024). "Gig Work Sustainability: Balancing Flexibility with Fair Labor Practices."
5. *LinkedIn* (2024). "Building a Sustainable Career in the Gig Economy."
6. *Premier Science* (2024). "Redefining Work: The Gig Economy's Impact on Work and Life."
7. *Financial Times*. (2024). *Challenges of the Gig Economy and Its Future Sustainability*.
8. *Financial Times*. (2024). *Challenges of the Gig Economy and Its Future Sustainability*.
9. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379535699_Challenges_and_impact_of_the_gig_economy
10. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12144-025-07368-z?utm_source=chatgpt.com
11. <https://www.aranca.com/knowledge-library/articles/business-research/how-can-gig->

- economy-become-sustainable?utm_source=chatgpt.com
12. https://www.linkedin.com/advice/0/how-can-gig-workers-create-sustainable-career-zpngc?utm_source=chatgpt.com
13. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191308518300042?utm_source=chatgpt.com
14. <https://www.aranca.com/knowledge-library/articles/business-research/how-can-gig-economy-become-sustainable>
15. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191308518300042>
16. <https://www.elgaronline.com/abstract/book/9781035318537/chapter4.xml>
17. <https://premierscience.com/pjbm-24-369/>
18. <https://www.hrfuture.net/future-of-work/gig-economy/navigating-new-terrain-the-gig-economys-transformative-influence-on-career-paths/>
19. <https://esg.sustainability-directory.com/term/gig-work-sustainability/>
20. https://perfectstorm.org/historical-evolution-of-the-gig-economy/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
21. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-71213-5_57?utm_source=chatgpt.com
22. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-71213-5_57?utm_source=chatgpt.com
23. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/09/07/demand-for-online-gig-work-rapidly-rising-in-developing-countries?utm_source=chatgpt.com
24. https://praguebusinessjournal.com/the-gig-economy-reshaping-the-future-of-work/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
25. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353804019_The_Gig_Economy_A_Case_Study_Analysis_of_Freelancercom

Cite This Article:

Ms. Pereira G., Ms. Naukudkar J. & Dr. Lopes D. (2025). *Gig Economy Career Sustainability: Exploring the Factors that Contribute to Long-Term Success.* In **Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal**: Vol. XIV (Number II, pp. 89–95).