

LABOR FLEXIBILITY AND INSECURITY UNDER GIG ECONOMY: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD (Insights from an online primary survey data)

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Abstract :

The gig economy has transformed the work culture, offering flexibility and autonomy to workers. However, this flexibility comes at the cost of job security, benefits, and workers' rights. This study explores the impact of labor flexibility and insecurity on gig economy workers, examining the tensions between flexibility and security. A mixed-methods approach combining survey data from 51 gig economy workers reveals that workers value flexibility but experience high levels of insecurity, income uncertainty, lack of benefits, and limited access to social protections. Study highlights the need for policymakers to bring solution; the challenges faced by gig economy workers and ensure that flexibility is balanced with security and protections. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the gig economy's impact on workers and inform policy debates on labor rights and social protections.

Keywords: Gig economy, labor flexibility, insecurity, worker's rights, social protections.

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Introduction:

The gig economy is a labor market characterized by short-term contracts, freelance work, and flexible arrangements, and the insecurity of job or project which is uncertain or "growing economic precarity" rather than traditional permanent jobs. Workers in the gig economy—often called gig workers—perform tasks or provide services on a project-by-project or on-demand basis, usually facilitated by digital platforms or apps. Popular examples include ride-sharing services, food delivery, freelance writing, and home tutoring.

The Revolutionary change in the economy since the 1970s has brought by gig worker, the way these people work, aiming flexibility and autonomy in the hand of the workers itself. As there is a famous quote "Nothing comes for free" However, this flexibility also comes at a cost, as workers has to face lot of insecurity in terms of economic, social, physical and

mental as including income uncertainty, lack of benefits, limited access to social and life protections. As a result, the alleged freedom in gig work, which offers labors flexibility to schedule their working and personal lives become problematic.

This journal **"Well explained that, employment relations have become temporary, that is short-term, part-time and temporary employment, contractual and semi-contractual work and work from home "**

(<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1024529420914473/> McDowell and Christopherson, 2009; Peck, 1996) We argue, that the gig economy is the new concept of a current wave of international division of labor (<https://journals.sagepub.com/Fuchs, 2016>), largely made possible due to the rapid penetration of digital technologies in the production process.

Relatedly, “the gig economy is followed as an option to traditional forms of employment for low- and middle-class wages countries with rising opportunity” (<https://journals.sagepub.com/Kuek> et al.), “One of the oft-cited developmental impacts of gig work is touted as the provision of ‘freedom’ and ‘flexibility’ to labors. Gary Swart, former CEO of O-Desk. “(<https://www.verbllo.com/blog/gary-swart-episode-summary>)

This study aims to explore the impact of labor flexibility and insecurity on gig economy workers, examining the tensions between flexibility and security. By investigating the experiences of gig economy workers, we hope to shed light on the human cost of the gig economy and inform policy debates on labor rights and social protections.

Literature Review:

The concept of gig economy in learning and training has been the focus of attention for many other researchers for more than 2 to 3 decades. With the various famous reviews we will get the clarity and importance of policy makers to regulate the field of Gig economy.

“One of the survey conducted by Up work with IT freelancers, found that 88% valued the freedom and flexibility that comes with freelancing, and 74% were willing to quit their regular jobs to do freelancing” (<https://journals.sagepub.com/Schawbel>, 2013).

It means the madness for getting flexible work is target of more than 74% isn't that amazing, but scary!! Because even the survey I did, professionals are actually not happy with the income and increasing informal time limit under workspace

1. Quality of work profile under gig economy

There is no proper justification of quality of work or job, though for the individual quality will be justified as good feeling while working, you should feel positive that this work space belongs to you

irrespective of income, flexibility, health and autonomy etc.

mostly Circumstances created by Gig economy, I have named it in lighter and positive way as the **"GIG Chakravyuh"** – must say a **Labyrinth of uncertainty and insecurity** that workers must navigate. A very well-known saying from Mahabharat granth written by Maharishi Ved Vyasa, it was easy for Abhimanyu to enter into the chakravyuh but impossible to exit. Likewise the ‘Gig Chakravyuh’ attractive game of achieving comfort, flexible of autonomy, eventually take him inside and will not let him exit. For a gig worker it sounds very good, but it is also a way of losing self-discipline, he will start thinking of only him as an individual happiness rather collective happiness once this ‘Gig Abhimanyu’ starts earning handsome and attractive wages with his convenience, he will start thinking of only ‘today’ rather for future!

This is another reason, gig economy's behavioral analysis shows that it is **‘a double edged swords’**. Supporting fact, gives immense pleasure of increased flexibility but cut the wings to fly assured in future with insecurity of Personal time, social protections- Provident fund, Pensions, Medicals etc.

The next analysis, getting addicted to the output, once you get a positive result in with his flexible time, comfort and increasing income. **This will have a direct relationship with his further behavior. It relates to the Keynesian school of thoughts because increasing money supply and demand involves in their behavior change.** It motivates workers to put his more time and efforts to manage more and more task & projects to attain more profits. Early work for 4 to 6 hrs./a day, he will put 12 to 14 hrs./a day. Gig will become fulltime chain for him. In the beginning he chose to have flexibility and comfort which he will not get during this period of increased input hours. He will become servant of his own

choice, fulfilling them he needs to work. Now he will not be able to differentiate this flexibility has turned into addiction slowly steadily, and as the Indian proverb well goes, "**Vyapar jivan ke liye yaa Jivan hi vyapar ke liye**" - is business meant for life or is life meant for business?

This paradox highlights the tension between the flexibility and autonomy offered by the gig economy and the insecurity, indiscipline and uncertainty that comes along with it. According Anwar, M. A., & Graham, M. (2020). In his work "Between a rock and a hard place: flexibility, precarity and vulnerability in the gig economy in Africa." (www.x-mol.com/paper/https://journals.sagepub.com/home/ch

<https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/esploro/outputs/999794307691>)

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“Challenges of job insecurity, income uncertainty, and the lack of social protections.”

Past studies have also stressed on the need for policymakers to address the challenges faced by gig economy workers.

Methodology:

The research critically and analytically based on **Primary Data** source collected with the help of google forms, circulated on line to various gig workers supported submitting the responses, also used **Secondary data** of relevant literature, including

scholarly articles, such as by Daron Acemoglu, “This paper takes a fresh look at the reasons of the rise of inequality in advanced economies, focusing on the labor institutions and their income.” www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2015/sdn1514.pdf

1. **Research based on pre- set questions:** My research were based on pre set combination of **open and close-ended** questions.

2. **Participants:** Google Form survey distributed among 51 gig workers across various platforms in India (Part time tailoring stitching from home, cloud kitchens, food delivery, ride sharing, IT projects, etc.), including both male and female participants.

3. Data collection

1. The data were gathered by means of a semi-structured interview. Circulated amongst different group of respondents. Questionnaires was already prepared related to survey circulated.

2. Analysis case studies of free lancer’s life.

3. Sample Size: 51 respondents.

4. **Data Analysis :** Qualitative and quantitative analysis of survey responses and interview data with the help of information.

Key Findings:

A detailed analysis of the data collected find in the following theme categories

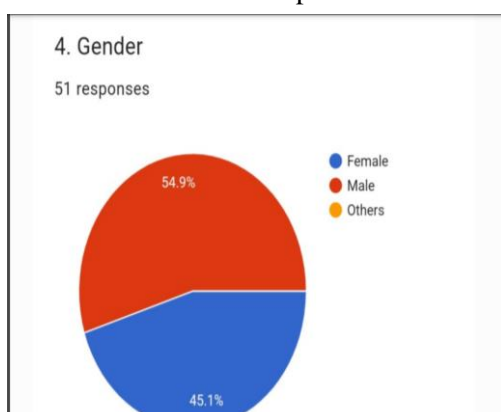
Sample of some inputs received with no. of females over male/age /qualification /gender ratio /platforms work for A sample table of respondents-

Serial no.	Gender	Age	Qualification	Gig Platform Count	Working Duration (hrs) a week
1	Female	19	Graduation	1	26
2	Female	20	BAF	1	24
3	Female	22	TYBMS	2	14
4	Female	36	CA	1	40
5	Male	19	Graduation	1	20
6	Male	24	10th	1	60
7	Male	28	B.Tech	1	48
8	Male	30	Masters	1	40
9	Male	35	B.Tech	1	54
10	Male	28	B.com	2	60

Analytics Report on Primary Survey Data:

1. Demographics

- **Age Distribution:** The age range of respondents spans from 16 to 44 years. Most respondents are between 19 and 36 years old, suggesting the gig economy attracts young adults, particularly those in early career stages or seeking flexible work arrangements.
- **Gender Representation:** The data shows significant participation by women in the gig economy over men. It's a great sign of contribution of women under economy with restrictive schedules and responsibilities.



- **Educational Background:** Diverse educational qualifications, professionals (e.g., CAs). Concludes, Gig work, often unrelated to formal education.
- **Occupations & Experience:** Participants include home tutors, delivery workers, freelance writers, and content creators individuals with over 1- 10 years experienced in the field.

2. Flexibility and Work Schedule

- **Importance of Flexibility:** For the majority of respondents, schedule flexibility is a critical factor. Ability to customize work hours to suit personal needs.
- **Autonomy in Scheduling:** Most respondents reported controlling when and how much they

work. This autonomy is a significant advantage for students and part-time workers.

- **Ease of Time Off:** Mixed responses were observed regarding the ease of taking time off. While some found it effortless to adjust schedules, others faced moderate to high

3. Income and Job Security

- **Monthly Income:** Significantly, from as low as ₹500 to ₹60,000 per month. Many low-income workers rely on gig work as supplementary income, while higher earners often hold specialized or managerial positions.
- **Income Stability:** A recurring concern among respondents is income inconsistency. Many expressed worry about not earning enough, with terms like "unstable" and "insecure" frequently associated with gig work.
- **Access to Benefits:** Benefits such as health insurance and paid leave are absent. Respondents cited this as a significant downside of gig work, alongside a lack of job security and career progression opportunities.

4. Overall Advantages of Gig Work

1. **Flexibility:** Freedom to design work schedules and adjust timings.
2. **Independence:** Opportunity to work independently without hierarchical pressures.
3. **Skill Development:** Many respondents gained valuable skills and industry exposure through gig work.
4. **Supplementary Income:** For students and homemakers, gig work offers an additional income.

5. Overall Disadvantages of Gig Work

1. **Income Instability:** Unpredictable, earnings often leave workers anxious about financial sustainability. Sometimes worker has to face i.e. employer denied paying them.

2. **Job Insecurity:** A lack of permanent contracts and long-term benefits deters many from fully committing.
3. **Stressful Work Environment:** Some respondents mentioned mental stress and excessive workload as challenges.
4. **Limited Benefits:** Absence of social security measures like insurance, retirement plans, or paid time off.

6. Sustainability of Gig Work based on report

Opinions were divided on whether the gig economy offers a sustainable livelihood. While some respondents believe it provides opportunities for financial growth, others feel the lack of job security and benefits renders it unsustainable in the long run.

7. Key Insights

- It is a popular choice among young adults and women, emphasizing flexibility and income supplementation.
- Respondents with specialized skills or managerial positions report higher satisfaction and earnings.
- Gig work complements traditional roles, serving as either a primary or secondary source of income.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, I must suggest the following very important recommendations; It can enhance viability of the gig economy:

1. **Policy Reforms:** Introducing measures like minimum wage laws, social security benefits, and health insurance for gig workers.
2. **Platform Accountability:** Gig platforms should take steps to provide better income stability and resources for skill development.
3. **Worker Awareness:** Educating gig workers about financial planning and opportunities for career growth can mitigate income instability.

4. Regulatory Framework

1. Clear classification of gig workers and traditional workers.
2. Labor laws and protections: Extend labor laws and protections, such as minimum wage, overtime pay, and workers' compensation, to gig workers.

5. Social Protections

1. Portable benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off, that gig workers can access regardless of their employment status.
2. Unemployment insurance

6. Fair Compensation and Working Conditions

1. Fair pay and Safe working conditions
2. Right to collective bargaining: Allow gig workers to engage in collective bargaining to negotiate better pay, benefits, and working conditions.

7. Taxation and Benefits

1. Simplified tax filing, access to tax deductions and credits health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time Provide gig workers off.
2. Access to benefits: with access to benefits, such as 3. Disability insurance: Offer disability insurance to gig workers who become injured or ill and are unable to work.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The gig economy offers flexibility and independence, attracting individuals across demographics. However, addressing its rooted challenges—such as income uncertainty and lack of social benefits—is critical to improving its sustainability and worker satisfaction. Above recommendation can also make gig workers life better and commerce student can have better sight as future growth.

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