

# A STUDY ON GIG WORKERS THROUGH A SOCIOLOGICAL LENS IN WAZIRABAD, NORTH DELHI, INDIA

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**ABSTRACT:** The gig economy is a form of free-market labour market in which freelance, short-term, and contractual jobs are more prevalent than permanent jobs. The gig economy has seen massive growth since the COVID-19 pandemic. It offers a range of occupations, including independent graphic designers, content producers, IT professionals, and ride-hailing firms such as Uber and Ola. In this system, workers come into a formal job agreement with on-demand companies. The study attempts to evaluate and understand the socio-economic standards, day-to-day problems and challenges in work culture, and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats experienced by gig workers in selected areas of North Delhi city. The study focused on the issue of gig workers, using both primary and secondary data sources. The sample size was 150, and the sampling was done using a non-probability method. Descriptive analysis was used to analyse the data, supported by graphical representation. The study identified the following themes: educational background, safety concerns, workload, gender roles, work culture, and the health of workers in the gig economy sector in Wazirabad, Delhi city.

**Index Terms:** Gig Economy, Work Culture, Platform Economy, Gig Workers, Work Culture

## INTRODUCTION

The gig economy has become a significant part of the global economy & it is growing rapidly. The gig economy is a digital platform-driven labour market in which work is performed on a short-term, flexible, task-based, and contractual basis. The Gig Economy has created a paradigm shift in employment patterns. In this system, temporary work is more common than traditional full-time employment. The gig economy saw a massive rise in the 21st century and has become a significant and rapidly evolving form of work globally, fundamentally reshaping employment patterns and labour market dynamics. The rise of the gig economy centres around the tension between flexibility and exploitation. "Gig" is a highly informal term for short-term jobs; musicians in the music industry widely use it. It is a free-market system in which task-based wages are more unexceptional than regular wages; workers are remunerated only for their specific assigned tasks. The workers are called gig or platform workers and independent workers, and they earn their livelihood by providing particular services such as food delivery, ride-hailing, logistics, freelance work or home services through digital platforms like Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, Blinkit, Rapido and Ola. In this system, gig workers join an on-demand company to provide a specific service and are paid for the work performed (Donovan et al., 2016). It is also known as the open talent economy.

The gig economy is a newly established and developing business area that holds great potential to grow. It is the process of bartering work for monetary compensation, which is done between people or organizations through an electronic system. In 2026, the size of the gig economy is estimated at USD \$674.1 billion; by 2035 expected to reach USD \$2522.37 billion. This is projected to grow more than 3 times, with a CAGR of 15.79% from 2026 to 2035 (Business Research Insights, n.d.).

A McKinsey's American Opportunity Survey (AOS) of 2022 stated that 36% or 58 million Americans are considered independent workers. There is no correct way to calculate the total number of workers worldwide; the number of active registered workers is not displayed on platform websites. This is partially due to the fact that platforms utilize different definitions of "active" workers and compete with one another for financing and users. But a World Bank Report in 2023 estimated that there are 154 million registered gig workers and 435 million online gig workers, accounting for 4.4% to 12.5% of the total labor workforce, also suggesting these estimates are on the lower side (Datta et al., 2023).

## In India

The massive growth of the Gig Economy in India isn't accidental; it is the outcome of several joining factors:

1. **Technological Democratization:** The availability of affordable smartphones and data plans to the Indian population. India has more than 936 million internet user and 650 million smartphone users. Is expanding rapidly in rural areas, big numbers of internet users create a strong pillar for the gig economy.
2. **Urbanization:** Rapidly growing new cities and a new way of life, which is fast and timeless, increased the demand for on-demand services, from ride-sharing to home repairs.

3. The COVID-19 Impact: During the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional sectors were closed, and the gig economy provided for all the demands of the people; those who lost jobs also shifted into flexible online or delivery work. The gig economy became their financial necessity. COVID-19 acted as an accelerator for the gig economy (Bodhankar et al., 2026).

The gig economy has a mix of low, medium, and high-skilled jobs, but most of the gig jobs in India don't require special skills; a person with no skills or training can also join. Resource Optimization is also a factor; also called the shared economy, gig workers often utilize own resources like a two-wheeler, car, room, own smartphone. The most important Factors are startups, especially tech startups like Zomato, Swiggy, Blinkit, Zepto, Flipkart, Rapido, Ola, etc. Also, some foreign companies like Amazon are mainly in e-commerce, online food delivery, ride-hailing, home services, and digital freelancing and have expanded rapidly, supporting service-consumption-driven growth. These apps, startups or companies created a massive marketplace, and for them to do business, they require a massive, cost-effective labor workforce of Gig Workers for content creation, marketing, logistics, and delivery. In India during 2020-21, there were approximately 7.7 million gig workers, projected to grow to 23.5 million by 2029-30. Millions of gig workers in India are working in these companies, and their transactions could be worth \$250 billion. Gig workers provide them with a cheap labour workforce and play an important role in urban employment, especially for youth, migrants, and semi-skilled workers, thereby reducing open unemployment. Most of them join because they are unable to find any other job and many of them are overqualified; it also gives them flexibility.

The NITI Aayog in 2022 gave a report on the gig economy. It offers India's first official statistical and conceptual framework distinguishing platform and non-platform gig workers. In the report, they stated many things India massive rise in Gig economy due to Rapid digitalisation, increasing smartphone penetration, affordable internet, and the Digital India initiative, it has accelerated the expansion of platform-based employment in India. India had 7.7 million gig workers in 2020-21, equal to 1.5% of total workforce, and projected to rise to 23.5 million by 2029-30, which shall be equal to 6.7% of the non-agricultural workforce and 4.1% of the total workforce. The report showed Retail and transport account for the highest number of gig workers. The report shows: 47% medium-skilled jobs, 22% high-skilled jobs, 31% low-skilled jobs, Future trends show demand of high skilled workers.

### **Women's participation in Gig Economy**

Both worldwide and in the Indian context, the gig economy and women's participation have been extensively covered in recent study. According to Berg et al. (2018), women frequently earn less than men for comparable jobs in online labor markets, suggesting that there is gender-based income discrepancies. In their UN Women report, Hunt and Samman (2019) noted that because of caregiving obligations, women typically utilize platform employment augment household income rather than as a primary source of income. Beyond the gross challenges faced by gig workers, women's participation in the platform economy is further restricted by a mix of gender specific access, social, economic, and technological barriers. small digital access and low digital literacy remain a foundational constraint. Many women lack autarkic control over smartphones and internet use, and face challenges in navigating apps and digital systems. Data show that only 56.2 per cent of women aged 15 and above own a floating phone, and just 37 per cent report being able to perform online banking transactions, reflecting both unequal device ownership and flimsy confidence in digital use. As of 2020, only 6.3 per cent of driver licences in India were held by women.

According to a study by Sharma and Mehta (2020), women's active participation is hampered by social Norms, home duties, and limited mobility even if digital platforms offer flexibility. In a similar vein, D'Cruz and Noronha (2021) noted that female platform employees in India frequently encounter client prejudice, safety issues, and a dearth of grievance redressal mechanisms. One of the concerns is the protection of women gig workers from workplace sexual harassment (SH). Occupational segregation and functional barriers remain a sizeable challenge, In the alleged "low to mid skilled" work, men take up jobs in food delivery and ride hailing, while women again tend to take on work considered "appropriate" patriarchally, such as beauty, care, internal help, and cleaning (Indian School of Business, n.d). As of 2020, only 6.3 per cent of driver licences in India were held by women, restricting their access to delivery and transport work. Targeted skilling, women centric credit support and vehicle leasing models can help redress these entry barriers.

According to NITI Aayog's report women make up over 23% of gig workers, they are primarily employed in low-skilled, low-paying industries. The International Labour Organization (ILO 2021) notes that unstable employment, a lack of maternity benefits, and restricted access to credit or insurance programs are problems faced by Indian women gig workers.

### **The Legal Status of Gig Workers**

This is the challenge for government to give legal status to gig economy workers. The legality of gig workers status has been debated through various countries. The United Kingdom, for one, came to rule in the originative judgment in the case of Uber BV vs Aslam, 2021, that Uber drivers were "workers" entitled to simple rights, including bottom wage and paid leave.

Most of the gig workers are considered as independent contractors; they get excluded from protection accorded to regular employees under labour laws. Many of them belong to unorganized sector, hence they are not getting 'Employees Provident Fund' and the Employees' State Insurance Schemes and social security benefits.

The Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 and the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 1952 are two examples of Indian labor regulations that were passed during a time when the idea of "gig" work was non-existent. However, because the nature and scope of the advantages as well as the enforcement methods have not been adequately defined, its implementation remains a challenge, these typically provide security for workers in influential industries, leaving gig workers unprotected. There is uncertainty over gig workers' job rights and entitlements due to the absence of a clear, organic structure. Another important step toward giving gig workers legal recognition was the "Code on Social Security", 2020. This statute defines gig workers as people who engage in nontraditional labor arrangements that do not come under the employer-employee relationship. Additionally, it proposes to providing gig and gig workers with social security benefits, including insurance, maternity benefits, and aware funds. However, because the nature and scope of the advantages as well as the ambiguity over the definition of gig work, enforcement methods, contribution liabilities of platform companies have not been adequately defined, its implementation challenges remain significant.

### Issues & Challenges Faced by Gig Workers

Flexibility, independence, and the possibility of earning additional money are only a few advantages of the gig economy (Liang et al., 2023). However, it has drawbacks such as unsettled income, explosive employment, and the lack of benefits like retirement plans and health insurance (Celestin and Vanitha, 2021). A careful analysis highlights the necessity of legislators, corporations, and employees collaborating to create a semipermanent framework that strikes a balance between adaptability and fair treatment (Kossek and Kelliher, 2023). The gig economy raises a variety of issues despite its growth, peculiarly with regard to worker rights and protections (Mehta, 2023).

Gig workers' earnings are isolated because they work on commission. In and of itself, this causes financial instability for workers who wish to have at least a considerable level of living. Ninety percent of Indian gig workers experienced revenue unpredictability, and majority of them made less than ₹25,000 per month, according to a survey by Flourish Ventures. In companies like Zomato, Swiggy, Blinkit, Zepto gig workers earn very less per order many times ₹10 (Business Standard, 2024). These digital platforms continue to control the gig workers by dictating the terms of service, the hours worked, and the payment schedule. Gig workers have virtually limited recourse to challenge the working circumstances, thus weakening their position in the absence of unionization or collective bargaining. Since gig workers are classified as autarkic contractors because there is no clear employment relationship, they are not desirable for benefits like insurance, gratuities, and pension plans that are offered to fair regular employees. This renders interpersonal security ineffectual at times of economic downturn or private emergencies brought on by illness or accidents. There is always the risk of harassment at work, unjust dismissal, and complimentary dues.

The Union Budget 2025 included social security measures for gig workers at the national level, which include the following:

- e-Shram Registration and ID Cards: Gig workers are poised to obtain formal identity cards and be enrolled in the e-Shram portal — a statewide database developed for workers in the unorganized sector. This step pulls them officially into the fold of government assistance services, opening opportunities to interpersonal security coverage and broader financial inclusion. By January 27, 2025, further than 30.58 crore workers from the informal sector had already signed up on the portal.
- Health Insurance via PM JAY: Under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, gig workers would be eligible for annual health coverage of up to ₹5 lakh per family. This clause provides them access to free treatment for better medical disorders.

### Review of literature

The gig economy has led to a paradigm shift in the workplace, with short term, task-based agreements replacing long term, traditional contracts (Dhand et al, 2025). Sen (2022) claims that this paradigm gives employees flexibility and autonomy, enabling them to select jobs that suit their schedules and skills (Dong et al, 2023). But there are drawbacks as well, like explosive employment and a lack of traditional benefits (Gagne et al, 2022). The report highlights the necessity of updating labor regulations to deal with these issues.

To understand the work culture and livelihood of the gig economy worker in North Delhi, the researcher has studied existing literature in journal articles, newspapers, and blog articles at a national and international level. Through technology enabled labor platforms, the gig economy has become one of the key characteristics of the modern digital economy, radically ever-changing traditional job relationships. The platform economy is normally defined by academics as a system in which floating applications and digital platforms mediate interpersonal and economical interactions (Kenney & Zysman, 2020). The gig economy has produced two opposing viewpoints within this paradigm. The positive or utopian viewpoint sees digital platforms as tools that democratize economic prospects by allowing people to access more labor markets, become autarkic business owners, and have elastic work schedules. The dystopian viewpoint, on the different hand, contends that platform-based management, automation, and technology breakthroughs worsen labor precarity, reduce job security, and make workers more reliant on digital algorithms.

Recursive management via customer rating systems is a unparalleled feature of platform mediated gig work. In contrast to traditional Taylorist management, Wood et al. (2019) contend that digital platforms exercise control indirectly by assessing employees based on client feedback and performance metrics following task completion. recursive monitoring, ratings, and incentive structures create

modern forms of labor discipline and surveillance even while workers seem to have further liberty in how they organize their work. This suggests that the freedom of gig employment often coexists with invisible administrative control systems.

Several scholars have examined the opportunities and challenges associated with the expansion of the gig economy. According to Roy et al. (2020), digital platforms have greatly increased employment opportunities by facilitating cross border connections between employees and clients, especially in developing nations. Benefits of gig labor include access to global markets, flexible work schedules, and chances to develop technical skills. However, incompatible income, lean interpersonal security, a lack of work benefits, and explosive employment often outweigh these advantages. These results imply that whereas platform employment makes the labor market further accessible, it also shifts financial risk from employers to employees.

India's rapid digitalization and extensive adoption of platform technology have made it one of the biggest gig labor markets in the world. India is the second-largest freelancing market in the world, according to the Digital Future Society (2019), where digital platforms have lowered transaction costs by putting employees and clients in direct contact. Because companies are typically not compelled to give paid vacation, health insurance, or retirement benefits, gig employment offers significant cost advantages from an employer's point of view. Drawing on the World Development Report (2019), Djankov and Saliola (2018) contend that growing digital infrastructure has produced favourable circumstances for the quick expansion of on-demand services in emerging nations.

The fast growth of India's gig economy is further demonstrated by a number of industry surveys. According to Salman and Varsha (2019), over a million drivers have been employed by app-based transportation platforms, and Delhi has surpassed Bengaluru as the top location for migrant workers entering the technology-enabled gig economy. India has emerged as one of the fastest growing markets for flexible staffing, according to Sindwani (2019). However, the report highlights that gig labor is not a semipermanent career choice for many people, but instead a result of unemployment and a lack of conventional employment prospects. As a result, gig work often serves as a survival tactic instead than a route to semipermanent employment.

Concerns about the health and social security of employees have also been highlighted by the nimble expansion of platform work. According to Chowdhry (2020), employees of ride hailing and food delivery services often put in excessively long hours to receive platform-based incentives, which can lead to health issues such chronic stress, exhaustion, liver illnesses, back pain, and neck discomfort. Workers' susceptibility is further increased by the lack of comprehensive interpersonal protection procedures, peculiarly when it comes to resolving complaints about pay, incentives, or working conditions. These results highlight the fact that regressive working conditions and occupational wellbeing frequently result from the economic freedom that digital platforms offer.

Overall, the body of research indicates that platform capitalism, digital technology, and shifting employment arrangements are driving the gig economy, which is a complex restructuring of labor markets. Although academics recognize its potential to increase flexibility and labor market participation, they repeatedly draw attention to enduring issues with recursive control, inferior working conditions, lean valid protection, and income insecurity. The economic and regulatory aspects of gig work have been extensively studied, but the interpersonal experiences of gig workers especially in the Indian context have received comparatively little attention. This disparity highlights the need for further sociological studies looking at the lived experiences of workers, interpersonal security, gender aspects, and the semipermanent effects of platform-based employment.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

It is very important to study Gig Workers in India; there are 7.7 million Gig workers facing many kinds of problems. Not only low wages, there are many more factors like social security, health issues, too much work load, long working hours, Mental Pressure.

With projections indicating a workforce of 23.5 million by 2029–2030, the gig economy in India is growing quickly and is expected to increase greatly in the upcoming years. Although this expansion offers important job opportunities, it also puts workers at risk for many financial, occupational, livelihood & health related issues. Gig workers often deal with low wages, job risks, and a lack of compensation for accidents or damages uninterrupted while working, peculiarly those involved in delivery and transport services. In many situations, employees are creditworthy for paying for repairs or medical care in addition to enduring carnal and rational strain as a result of lengthy workdays, hostile working conditions, and performance expectations. While making substantial contributions to service delivery systems, gig workers are still not covered by full employment rights, and their remuneration frequently follows a "pay as you go" approach that puts output ahead of security and welfare considerations. A fundamental difficulty faced by gig workers is the restricted availability of skill development and upskilling possibilities, which constrains their career advancement and income potential. The absence of stiff training methods hampers their ability to adjust to changing labor market needs. Therefore, warm policy interventions and considerable restrictive frameworks are fundamental to promote fair working conditions, increase financial security, and assure the semipermanent sustainability of gig employment in India.

## OBJECTIVES

- to evaluate gig economy workers' earnings and patterns of subsistence.

- To determine the financial difficulties gig workers experience.
- To investigate the workplace culture that gig workers encounter.
- To investigate the mental and sociological aspects of gig work.
- To evaluate gig workers' socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.
- to investigate the reasons behind the respondents' decision to enter the gig economy.
- To investigate the health implications of gig economy workers.
- To investigate the degree of security and safety awareness.
- To offer suggestions

## RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Given India's fast-growing gig and platform-based workforce which is expected to rank among the largest in the world, the very significant part of the economy, this study critically evaluates the livelihood and work culture of gig economy workers in the country, is especially important. From app-based drivers and delivery riders and platform based domestic workers, this study sheds light on the day-to-day reality of India's gig economy. It details income volatility caused by shifting incentive schemes, the lack of interpersonal security benefits and the workplace culture influenced by recursive management, customer ratings, and long hours often put in to make up for low pay per task. The study is determinative and significant to guarantee gig workers' strength, opportunities, and, consequently, how to prevent risks and setbacks in numerous ways.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a complete mixed methods approach qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, and secondary data analysis intended to capture the variety of gig labor experiences in the Wazirabad area of New Delhi. The study is primarily descriptive. The study mainly studies work pattern & health condition & livelihood of gig workers.

Quantitative component: Used to measure income levels, working hours, earnings variability, and awareness of welfare schemes through structured surveys.

## SAMPLING

Depending on the theoretical level and study scope, the sample size is 150 respondents for survey-based studies & 10 participants for qualitative interviews.

The methods of Sampling used were Convenience sampling & purposive sampling because gig workers are geographically scattered and lack a central database. To guarantee representation across various platform types and work pattern categories - regular vs. irregular gig workers, single platform vs. multi-platform workers, stratified sampling may be employed.

## DATA COLLECTION

The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data, collected in a manner suited to the descriptive nature of the research.

Primary data were collected directly from gig workers working in a variety of gig economy sectors, including home based platform services, food and grocery delivery, and ride hailing. Information about the respondents' demographic profile, working conditions, working hours, occupational hazards encountered at work, somatic and moral health issues resulting from platform-based work, and their level of awareness regarding safety and security measures, welfare schemes, and social security provisions extended by the State Government have all been gathered using a structured questionnaire & interview schedule. To enhance and validate the comments received, casual conversations and, when practical, direct observation of working conditions at common workspaces, such as delivery hubs, waiting spots, and pick-up locations, have been conducted in addition to the organized program.

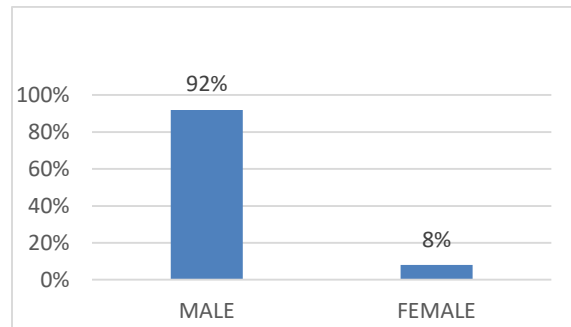
Secondary Data collected from a variety of public and unpublished sources. The Government of India's and NITI Aayog's publications and data on the gig and platform economy, the 2020 Code on Social Security, and relevant state government notifications and welfare board reports are among them. Academic journals, books, working papers, and earlier research studies on gig work, occupational health, and labor welfare; reports from labor organizations, trade unions, and worker associations that represent gig and platform workers; and news articles, case studies, and official platform disclosures pertinent to the working conditions and safety precautions of gig workers in India are examples of additional secondary sources.

The combination of primary and secondary data enables the study to present both the lived experiences of gig workers regarding their working conditions and health, as well as the broader policy and institutional context within which these experiences are situated.

The collected data is analyzed descriptively Graphical representation, Frequency table, Pie Chart.

## Data Analysis & Interpretation

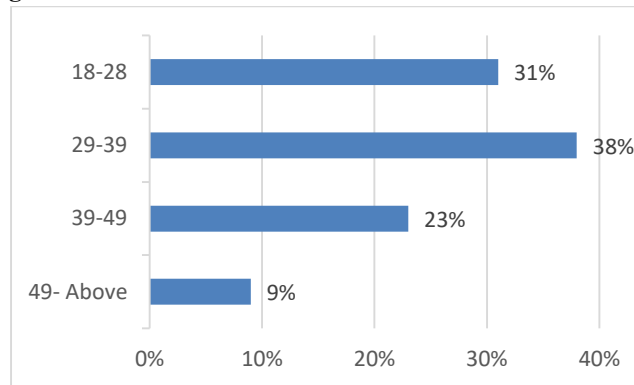
### Gender-wise distribution of Employees



(Figure 1 Gender wise distribution of Gig Workers, Source – Primary Data)

In the study, it was found that more than 90% of gig workers are male, it is a highly male-dominated sector. The gender gap is too big in the gig sector, women avoid this job due to safety concern, family issues. Some Platform companies do not allow women to take orders after 6:00 PM they are concerned about women's safety.

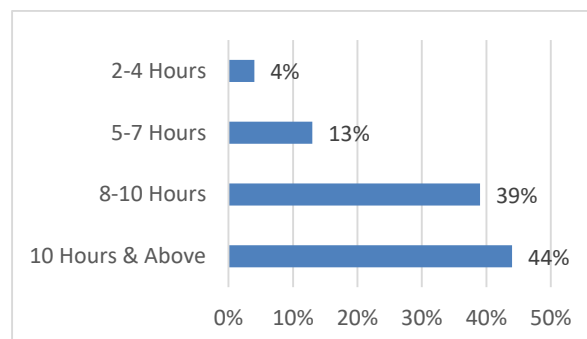
### Age-wise distribution of gig workers



(Figure 2- Age-wise percentage of gig workers, Source- Primary Data)

The above data show that Gen Z & Millennials make up the largest share of gig workers, together accounting for 63% of the total. This shows youngsters highly dominate it & it is popular among them. It also shows Gen X has a 22% share in the sector. The low digital literacy and physical capacity to do work among the age group of 49 & above, so they have only a 9% share as gig workers.

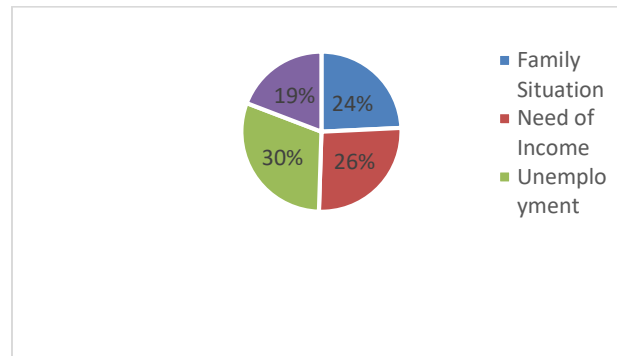
### Working hours of the Employee



(Figure 3- Number of working hours of gig workers, source- primary data)

With 83% of respondents (8–10 hours and 10 hours & above combined) working a practical 8 or more hours each day, the data unequivocally shows that gig workers put in quite lengthy practical hours. This result supports the idea that gig work requires an important time commitment from employees, often equivalent to or greater than full-time regular practical hours, despite its common perception as a flexible and self-paced type of employment. The majority of respondents appear to view gig work as a primary, full-time career rather than a supplemental or part-time source of income, as only a tiny percentage of the workforce (17% collectively for 2–4 and 5–7 hours) engages in gig labour for limited hours.

## • Factors that Motivated You to Join this form of Employment

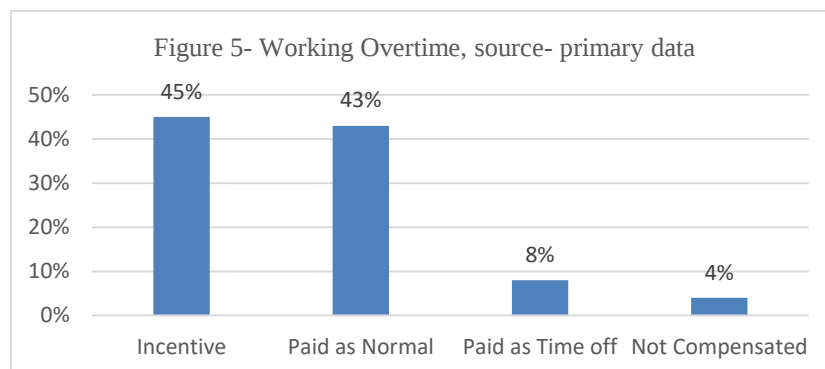


(Figure 4- Reason for choosing this sector, source- primary data)

The data shows the different explanations given by respondents for their decision to work in the gig economy. The greatest percentage of workers—31%—joined this industry as a result of unemployment, closely followed by 26% who stated that their main motivation was a need for revenue. Approximately 24% of the respondents said that their decision to enter the gig economy was impacted by their family status, and 19% said that all of the aforementioned variables combined to influence their choice.

According to the research, entry into the gig economy is chiefly motivated by financial need rather than preference or choice. When "Unemployment" (31%) and "Need of Income" (26%) are combined, they account for 57%, This suggests that many workers turn to gig work chiefly for survival or income generation instead of for the flexibility or autonomy the industry is often associated with. "All of the Above," data suggests that an important portion of the workforce is motivated to enter the gig economy by a mix of demands from their families, unemployment, and financial difficulties instead of by an exclusive issue. This illustrates how participation is varied and often motivated by compulsion.

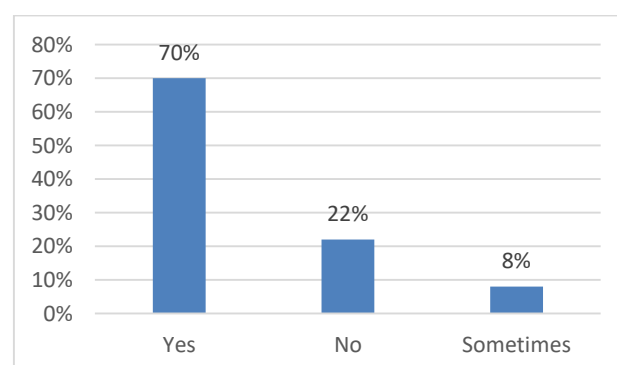
## • Working Overtime



(Figure 5- Working Overtime, source- primary data)

The way gig workers are reimbursed for overtime is shown in the above Figure 5. The big percentage of employees, 45%, are found to receive an incentive for working overtime, closely followed by 43% who receive regular compensation (i.e., at the base pay rate without any additional benefits). Just 8% of respondents said they receive time off as compensation, and a tiny but remarkable 4% said they receive no compensation at all for working extra. According to the research, the majority of gig workers (88%) are compensated for overtime in some way, either through loose pay (43%) or incentives (45%).

## • Break Time received by the workers



(Figure 6- Break Time between their work time, source- primary data)

The above Figure data shows whether or not gig workers are given breaks during their working hours. It can be seen that a huge majority of respondents, or 70%, said they take breaks between tasks, whilst 22% said they don't take any breaks at all when working. A lesser percentage of respondents, 8%, said they just occasionally get breaks, which suggests that workplace break policies are not always consistent.

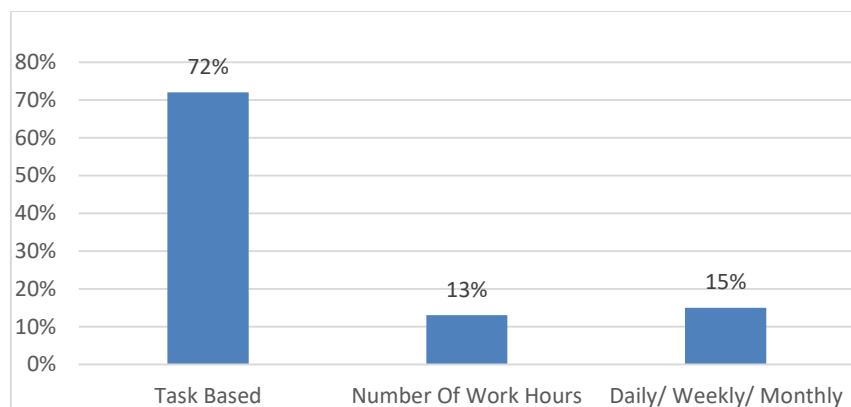
- Number of Orders per day achieved**



(Figure 7- Numbers of orders per day, source- primary data)

The number of orders completed daily by employees in the gig economy is shown in the statistics above. The majority of respondents—43%—complete more than 20 items daily, with 34% completing between 15 and 20 orders. Just 11% of respondents finish fewer than 10 items each day, compared to roughly 19% who complete 10–15 orders every day. With 77% of responders (15–20 orders and more than 20 orders combined) completing 15 or more orders daily, a significant majority of gig workers operate at a high daily order volume. In order to achieve or surpass these order volumes, workers must maintain a high level of efficiency and speed throughout their working hours, indicating a rigorous pace of work.

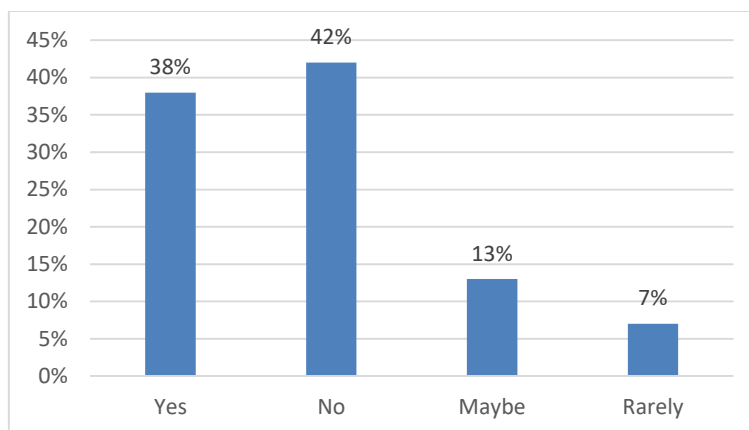
- Salary Based On**



(Figure 8- Salary based on, source- primary data)

The above data states that just 13% of respondents are paid according to the number of hours worked, whereas the vast majority of respondents—72%—are paid according to a task-based model. 15% of workers are paid on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, which is comparable to traditional employment arrangements. With almost three out of every four workers (72%) being paid per task or order completed rather than for the time they spend working, the data unequivocally shows that task-based/piece-rate remuneration predominates in the gig economy. When combined with the previous statistics on working hours, break time, and order volume, this discovery has important ramifications.

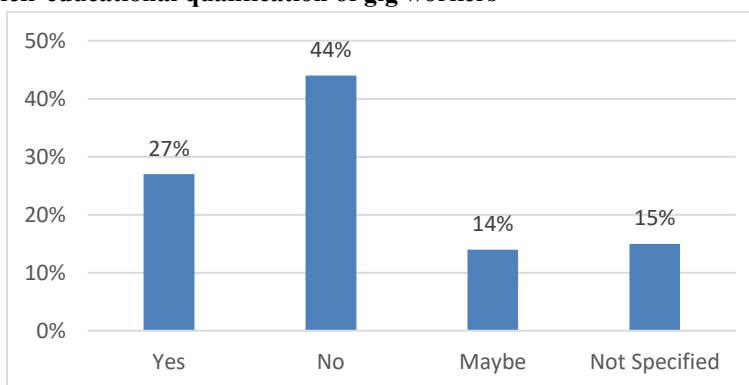
## • Work Life Balance of the workers of Workers



(Figure 8- Salary based on, source- primary data)

The above data shows the work life balance of gig workers. It is noted that 38% of respondents said they had a decent work-life balance, while the biggest percentage of respondents, 42%, said they do not. 13% of respondents were unsure and said "Maybe," while 7% said they hardly ever experience work-life balance. The information paints a somewhat divided but generally unfavourable image of gig workers' work-life balance. Combining "No" (42%) and "Rarely" (7%) results in 49% of respondents, or almost half of the workforce, reporting a poor or non-existent work-life balance. Up to 62% of employees express some degree of anxiety about their ability to reconcile work and home life when the "Maybe" category (13%) is also taken into account as a kind of doubt or partial discontent.

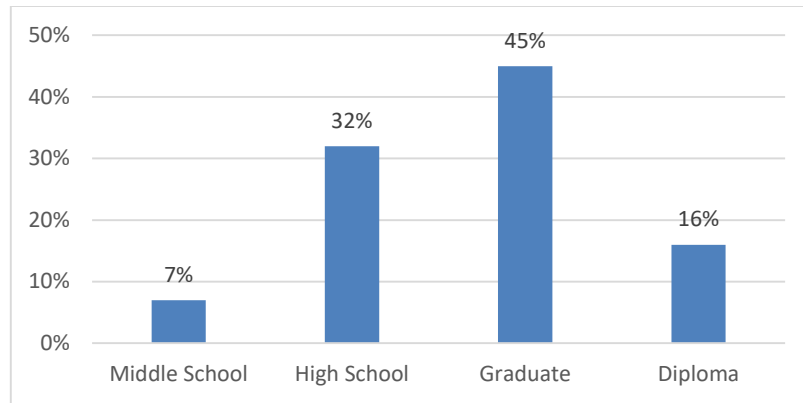
## • Work according to their educational qualification of gig workers



(Figure 10- Work according to their educational qualification of gig workers, source- primary data)

The above data shows that the majority of respondents, or 44%, stated that their current gig work does not correspond with their background qualifications. Of those surveyed, just 27% said they were working according to their qualifications, and 14% were unsure and said "Maybe." 15% more did not provide a precise answer. The information shows a notable discrepancy between gig workers' educational background and the type of work they do. A significant portion of the gig labor may be underemployed or working outside of their field of training or study, as evidenced by the fact that nearly half of the respondents (44%) are working in a field unrelated to their educational background. 58% of respondents indicate a clear or partial mismatch between their qualifications and the work they do in the gig economy when "No" (44%) and "Maybe" (14%) are combined. This indicates that entry into gig work is not a career choice driven by qualifications for the majority of workers, but rather one shaped by other factors. This finding is consistent with previous data on reasons for choosing this sector (Figure 4), where the most common motivations were unemployment (30%) and need for income (26%), rather than skill-based or qualification-aligned career planning.

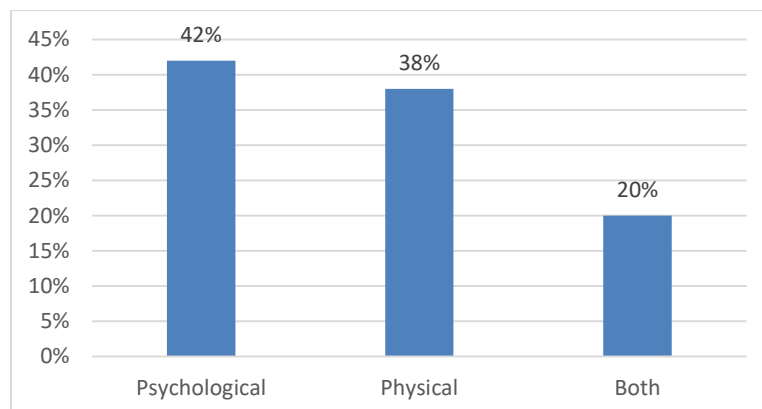
### Educational Qualification of the Gig workers



(Figure 11- educational qualification of gig workers, source- primary data)

The above data shows the levels of education attained by employees in the gig economy. It is well-known that the big percentage of respondents 45%, are graduates, with 32% having finished high school. Just 7% of the respondents have completed middle school, compared to about 16% who have a diploma. Examination. One remarkable and perhaps surprising conclusion from the data is that, contrary to plain belief, the gig economy workforce in this sample is not largely made up of people with less education. Rather, 61% of the workforce has relatively higher tertiary education (Diploma/Graduate level), with over half of the workers (45%) being graduates and 16% holding diplomas. The preceding finding (Figure 9) that 44% of workers believe their current gig work is not in line with their instructive background is directly supported by this. The fact that 61% of the workforce has a diploma or graduate level qualification, but the majority report a mismatch with their work, strongly suggests that educated people are entering gig work due to a lack of appropriate stiff employment opportunities rather than out of choice or qualification fit. This finding supports the former finding that unemployment (30%) is the simple reason for entering this sector (Figure 4).

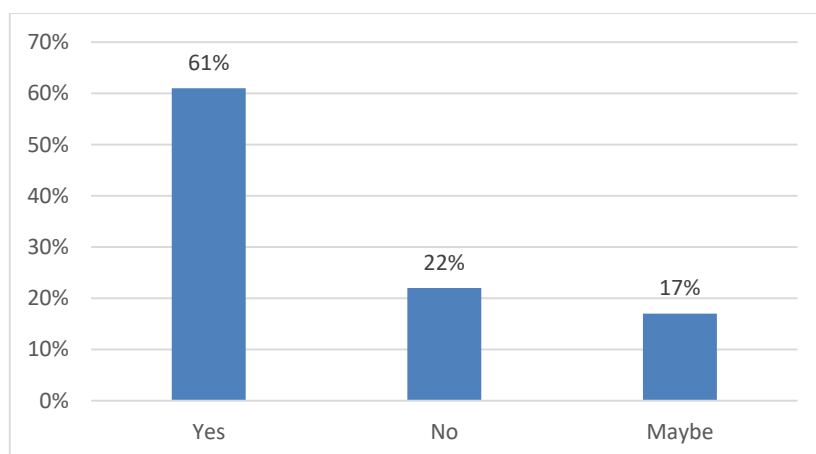
### Health aspects of gig workers



(Figure 12- Health Aspects of gig workers, source- primary data)

The above data shows that 38% of respondents reported having physical health problems; the bulk of respondents, 42%, reported having psychological health problems. Another 20% of respondents said that their jobs caused them to have problems with both their physical and psychological health. According to the research, the most general health issue among gig workers is mental pressure, which affects over half of the workforce (42%). Psychological health is the most prevailing health concern in this industry, with 62% of workers reporting mental health problems, either unparalleled or in conjunction with somatic ones, when the "Both" category (20%) is added.

## • Gig economy is the way of the future



(Figure 13- gig economy is the way future, source- primary data)

The above data show the perception of Gig workers about whether they think the gig economy is the optimum option for their future careers. The gig economy is distinctly the way of the future, according to 61% of respondents, while 22% disagree and say "No." Another 17% are doubtful and say "Maybe". An important majority of workers (61%) remain affirmative about the future of the gig economy despite the numerous issues noted throughout this study, such as provident working hours (83%–94% working 8+ hours daily), incompatible break provisions (30% lacking consistent breaks), inferior work life balance (49% reporting inadequacy), qualification job mismatch (44%), and primarily psychological health concerns (71%). This study is particularly important since it shows a challenging duality in worker mood.

## Case Studies: Gig Economy Workers

Few interviews were conducted with gig economy workers from different companies.

Case number 1- Mr X, 25 years old man. He is a Gen Z, works as a food delivery rider for Y company, putting in over 8 hours a day. He holds a postgraduate degree in Political Science. Due to financial constraints and family pressure, he took up this gig work part-time, but it has since become his primary employment. This shows Qualification-job mismatch (Figure 10), unemployment as an entry motivator (Figure 4), long hours (Figure 3), task-based pay (Figure 8), and psychological strain (Figure 12).

Case number 2- Mr X is 37 years old and works as a taxi driver or ride-hailing platform worker. He is a Zoology graduate who has been in this profession for 6 years to support his family. He works more than 10 hours a day, 6 days a week. He shared that driving daily causes him neck and back pain, which is a source of distress for him. Another problem is his expense in phone & maintenance of car. For long work hours, he gets little incentive. This shows long working hours (Figure 3), inconsistent breaks (Figure 6), physical health impact (Figure 12), incentive/normal-pay overtime structure (Figure 5).

Case number 3- Mr X is 29 years old and is preparing for the UPSC exam in Delhi. He has been preparing for eight years; however, following the death of his parents last year and facing a financial crunch, he was compelled to take up a job as a gig worker. He works six hours a day to cover his living expenses and is now struggling significantly to manage his time between his studies and his job. It shows entry into gig work driven by financial necessity/personal crisis rather than career choice (Figure 4), a moderate working-hour bracket (Figure 3) that still disrupts time management, and psychological strain from competing demands (Figure 12).

Case number 4- Mr X, a 24-year-old B. Com graduate, has been working in the gig economy for three years. He lost ₹15 lakh in online gaming and the stock market, leading his family to sever ties with him. Although he searched extensively for employment, he could not find a job paying more than ₹12,000; consequently, he now works over 10 hours a day in ride-hailing, earning an average of ₹30,000 per month. This shows qualification-job mismatch despite being a graduate (Figure 11), long working hours (Figure 3), task/trip-based compensation exceeding available formal-sector wages (Figure 8), and the gig sector functioning as a higher-paying alternative to low-wage formal employment amid personal financial crisis (Figure 4).

Case number 5- Mrs X, a 32-year-old woman, joined a gig platform two years ago because her family's circumstances necessitated having an elastic source of income that could accommodate her children's school schedules and home duties. She chooses to work fewer hours (5–7 hours per day) than many gig workers do because she values being able to choose her own schedule over making the most money. She acknowledges that her per-task earnings are lower than she would like and that she occasionally takes on extra projects during festival seasons to get incentive pay, which momentarily interrupts her routine, even though she is happy with the freedom gig employment gives. She considers her work-life balance to be "manageable, but not ideal," citing sporadic stress when family demands and order demand collide. This shows family circumstances as the primary motivator for entering gig work (Figure 4), a deliberately

shorter working-hour bracket chosen for flexibility (Figure 3), incentive-driven task-taking during peak periods (Figure 5), and a moderately strained but self-managed work-life balance (Figure 9).

Gig workers systematically provided a number of recommendations when asked how to enhance their health and work life balance. Many advocated for enforced rest periods incorporated into shifts instead than left up to private preference, as well as a cap on everyday working hours to avoid unrestricted workdays motivated by revenue pressure. A reoccurring demand was for fair, higher rate pay for overtime instead than being paid at regular rates or not at all, as well as a minimum guaranteed income, regardless of task volume, to lessen the pressure to overwork.

Given the physical demands of jobs like driving and delivery, employees actively advocated for access to basic health insurance and medical care, as well as moral health and counselling facilities, which reflect the high levels of moral stress indicated. alternatively of severe task goals, some suggested flexibility amid private situations (financial problems, family loss). In order to prevent gig employment from becoming a semipermanent trap, educated respondents also asked for skill development and connections to formal sector jobs. big workers requested interpersonal security benefits like long fund and accident coverage, while others wanted non task time (waiting, checking in) to be acknowledged in compensation.

The majority of respondents use gig labor as their independent source of income instead than as a supplement, chiefly due to financial necessity and unemployment instead than private inclination. Task based pay, which encourages employees to work long hours (sometimes 10+ per day) and large order volumes in order to secure sufficient revenues, has formed the current work culture, which is intensive and output driven. This fosters a culture of steady availability, where employees take on the majority of the functional risk and have bottom job security, fixed pay, or methodical benefits. Rest and breaks are often traded for income. The industry's culture tends toward self-driven overwork, with wages, health, and stability totally dependent on individual effort and platform demand, despite the fact that it offers comparatively easier entry and flexible timing in theory.

Overall, workers weren't seeking to leave gig work — they wanted basic structural protections similar to formal employment, without losing its flexibility.

### Theoretical Application: A Sociological Analysis

The empirical findings of this study — encompassing both the survey data and the individual case studies — lend themselves to interpretation through multiple sociological frameworks, each illuminating different dimensions of the gig worker's lived experience.

This is based on Karl Marx's idea of alienation. Workers are alienated from the labor process itself due to the prevalence of task-based remuneration (72%) and algorithmic control, which turn labor into discrete, monetized units. The delivery worker juggling numerous platforms and the ride-hailing driver working more than ten hours a day to earn ₹30,000 serve as striking examples of surplus value extraction, in which workers face all risk while platforms maintain control and profit. Mrs X's festival season incentive work occasionally supersedes her preferred independent schedule, demonstrating that "flexibility" is still constrained by platform-imposed rationalisation. Max Weber's concept of rationalization explains the calculative, efficiency-driven logic of algorithmic task allocation and incentive structures. The regulatory vacuum surrounding gig work the lack of standardised norms governing hours, pay, and breaks is captured by Émile Durkheim's concept of anomie. This is reflected in the far-flung mental strain (71%) reported by all respondents, including the UPSC candidate who finds it rough to balance work and exam preparation. In situations like Mrs X and the UPSC candidate, who both manage inconsistent tasks without the institutionalized reciprocative systems that stiff employment typically provides, Talcott Parsons' structural functionalism, particularly the idea of role strain, applies. The debt-ridden graduate and the jobless graduate represent "innovation," pursuing culturally prescribed financial goals through unconventional means after legitimate formal sector avenues proved inaccessible, according to Robert K. Merton's Strain Theory, which explains adaptive responses to blocked opportunity structures. While Erving Goffman, Arlie Hochschild, and Ulrich Beck explain emotive labor, the "second shift," and individualized risk, respectively, Guy Standing's precariat thesis and Pierre Bourdieu's capital theory work together to explain the general instability and underemployment of informed workers. When combined, these models show that gig employment is class embedded, adaptable, and structurally unstable.

### Major Findings of the Study

**Demographic Profile of Workers-** According to the demographic data, 68% of respondents are between the ages of 26 and 45, indicating that the gig workforce is chiefly made up of people in their prime working years. A further 24% of workers are younger, between the ages of 18 and 25. Only 8% of workers are 46 years of age or older. With 61% of the workforce having a diploma or graduate degree and only 7% having only completed middle school, the workforce is comparatively well educated. These results show that gig work is largely performed by educated, working-age individuals, challenging the notion that it is limited to a low education cohort.

**Need and Motivation to Enter the Sector-** economical need, not private inclination, is the simple factor influencing entry into the gig economy. The most general explanation was unemployment (30%), which was closely followed by the need for money (26%), family situations (24%), and a mix of causes (19%). Overall, 56% of those who joined the industry did so because they were unemployed or needed money, highlighting the fact that involvement is largely motivated by necessity. Case-level evidence also shows that entry is

frequently forced by private crises, such as financial loss, bereavement, or difficulty getting equivalent formal sector employment; for some workers, flexibility about caring obligations also played a role.

**Working Conditions and Livelihood Patterns-** long working hours, task-based insecurity, and little downtime are characteristics of working conditions. Nearly half of workers reported working 10 hours or more each day, and between 83% and 94% reported working eight hours or further. Just 15% of workers receive a firm intermittent wage, while the large majority (72%) are paid on a task-based basis, resulting in unpredictable income. Accordingly, 77% of respondents finish fifteen or more orders every day, indicating a fast-paced work environment. Gig work functions as a primary, regular occupation rather than a supplemental source of income, as evidenced by the fact that 30% of workers still receive inconsistent break provisions, and overtime compensation is similarly inadequate, with 43% receiving only their regular pay rate and 4% receiving none at all.

**Health Aspects and Work-Life Balance-** The most common health concern is psychological strain, which is cited as the main problem by 51% of respondents. This number rises to 71% when both physical and psychological effects are taken into account. 29% of workers report physical health problems alone, while another 20% report both. Work-life balance outcomes reflect these worries, with 49% of respondents feeling an inadequate balance and only 38% indicating satisfaction. Case-level narratives confirm that workers' health strain is frequently exacerbated when juggling the demands of gig labor with conflicting obligations like preparing for exams or providing care.

**Qualification-Employment Alignment and Future Outlook-** There is a strong discrepancy between employees' qualifications and their current jobs; 44% of workers say that their work does not fit their educational background, whilst only 27% say that it does. Given that 61% of the workforce has a diploma or graduate degree, this discrepancy is very remarkable and suggests that informed workers are significantly underemployed. Despite these obstacles, 61% of respondents are affirmative about the gig economy's future, compared to 22% who disagree and 17% who are unsure. This suggests that workers' opinions of the sector's viability are influenced further by its relative accessibility and necessity than by their level of satisfaction with their current working conditions.

## CONCLUSION

This research set out to examine the demographic profile, motivations, working conditions, health aspects, and future outlook of workers engaged in the gig economy sector. The findings show that young to middle-aged, reasonably educated people make up the majority of the gig workforce. Near of these people entered the industry out of need rather than choice, largely due to unemployment and the desire for additional income. This implies that gig employment serves more as a functional reaction to limitations in the stiff labor market than as a freely selected career path. Extended working hours, task based and frequently unpredictable compensation, uneven break allowances, and insufficient overtime compensation are all characteristics of a demanding and largely uncontrolled work environment, according to the examination of working conditions. These conditions seem to be directly linked to the major health issues found in the study, with psychological strain emerging as the most common problem, closely followed by physical health effects, both of which are exacerbated by the ongoing lack of a suitable work-life balance reported by almost half of the respondents.

The important discrepancy between workers' educational backgrounds and the type of jobs they hold is another fundamental finding that points to important underemployment, particularly among graduates and diploma holders who are unable to find formal sector jobs appropriate to their training. Despite these important obstacles, respondents' gross attitude toward the gig economy is still cautiously optimistic, with the majority viewing it as a viable path to future employment. This perception seems to reflect the industry's relational accessibility rather than cordial contentment with current working conditions.

With the introduction of the idea of a "new economy" and modern organizational techniques that are now reshaping labor markets nationwide, the processes of liberalization, privatization, and globalization (LPG) have importantly altered the current interpersonal and economical structure. Since their inception in the early 1990s, these processes have radically changed the nature of employment, production, and organizational structures, resulting in further adaptable, technologically advanced, and market responsive work models, of which the gig economy is one of the most familiar modern examples.

When considered collectively, these results present the gig economy as a location of both functional risk and potential. Although the industry offers some notional flexibility and comparatively unrefined entry barriers, there are important trade-offs in terms of worker wellbeing, sufficient rest, and income stability. To turn gig work from a necessity-driven compromise into a sustainable and equitable form of employment, the study emphasizes the need for specific policy interventions, such as minimum income guarantees, regulated working hours, equitable overtime compensation, and access to health and social security provisions.

## SUGGESTIONS

1. **Regulation of working hours:** Since 83% to 94% of workers already work eight or more hours a day, frequently more than ten, sensible limitations on daily working hours should be implemented and supported by regulatory control.
2. **Minimum guaranteed income:** Since 72% of workers rely solely on erratic task-based pay, establish a wage minimum that is independent of task volume.
3. **Fair overtime compensation:** Since 43% of workers receive no extra benefits and 4% are completely unpaid for additional hours worked, standardize overtime pay at a premium rate.

4. Mandatory break policies: Since 30% of employees report irregular or non-existent breaks, establish regular rest periods throughout shifts.
5. Health and mental health support: Given that 71% of employees express psychological stress and nearly half report physical health problems, provide access to basic health insurance and counselling services.
6. Social security and welfare measures: To bring gig workers near to formal sector protections, extend retirement benefits, accident insurance, and provident fund contributions.
7. Addressing qualification-employment mismatch: Given that 58% of workers report a mismatch between their qualifications and present job, it is important to strengthen the connections between education, skill development, and employment prospects.
8. Support during personal/financial crises – Provide workers experiencing severe personal difficulties with short-term alleviation methods like lowered goals or emergency aid.
9. Improving work-life balance: Considering that nearly half of employees (49%) experience insufficient work-life balance, implement regular scheduling and clearly defined off hours.
10. Comprehensive policy framework: Create a specific legal and regulatory framework for gig and platform workers, making sure that flexibility does not come at the expense of essential rights and economic stability.

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