

Challenges and Opportunities for Decent Work in Coimbatore's Gig Economy

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of the gig economy has transformed the global labour market, offering workers greater flexibility and new income opportunities through digital platforms. However, this transformation has also exposed significant challenges related to job security, fair wages, social protection, and workers' rights. This paper explores strategies to empower decent work within the gig economy by addressing these decent work deficits. Drawing on the International Labour Organization's framework for decent work, the discussion highlights the need for inclusive policies, ethical platform governance, and strengthened worker representation. It emphasizes the shared responsibility of governments, digital platforms, and workers' organizations to ensure fair working conditions, transparent algorithmic management, and access to social protection. Ultimately, empowering decent work in the gig economy requires balancing innovation with equity—creating a future of work that is both flexible and fair.

Keywords : Gig Economy; Decent Work; Platform Labor; Digital Work; Fair Work

INTRODUCTION

The gig economy has become a defining feature of the modern labour market, driven by rapid technological advancement and the rise of digital platforms such as Uber, Grab, Fiverr, and Upwork. It offers workers flexibility, autonomy, and diverse income opportunities beyond traditional employment structures. However, this new mode of work also presents serious challenges related to job security, fair pay, social protection, and workers' rights.

Many gig workers operate without access to benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, or retirement plans, making them vulnerable to economic instability. Therefore, empowering decent work in the gig economy has become a critical global concern. It involves ensuring that all workers, regardless of employment type, enjoy fair wages, safe working conditions, and access to social protections. By promoting policies, ethical business practices, and worker empowerment, societies can create an inclusive digital labour market that balances flexibility with fairness and human dignity.

Notwithstanding the growing understanding of the nature of gig work, we identified two knowledge gaps. First, there has been no systematic framework for evaluation of the conditions of work on gig platforms; a framework that would, for example, allow measurable comparisons between different platforms and across sectors, countries or time. Second, and related, there has been a lack of clear, straightforward information in the public domain about gig work; information that would, for example, allow consumers to make ethical choices between platforms, or would allow platforms to understand their relative performance. There have thus been calls for such frameworks and for extension of information on decent work standards to the gig economy (ILO Citation2019a; Norton Citation2017; O'Farrell and Montagnier 2020).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To Identify key challenges faced by workers in the gig economy in Coimbatore
2. Examine the current working conditions of gig workers in Coimbatore
3. To evaluate the worker satisfaction in working condition about gig economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examines the gig economy of Coimbatore city. The purpose of the study is to identify the employment pattern of gig workers, workers' income, and job satisfaction in Coimbatore city, where 100 respondents are selected for the study employing the snowball sampling method. The primary data were collected from the selected respondents through a well-structured questionnaire. Software like SPSS and Excel are utilised for quantitative data analysis, including descriptive statistics, Crosstabs, and the mean score method.

DEMOGRAPHICS PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The demographic profile presents the background information of the gig worker respondents in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, employment type, income level, and work experience.

Table 1.1

Demographic profile of Respondents

Factor	Particular	No of respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	48	48
	Female	52	52
	Total	100	100
Age	18-25 years	36	36
	26 – 35 years	20	20
	36-45 years	26	26
	Above 45 years	18	18
	Total	100	100
Educational Qualification	School Level	35	35
	Under Graduate	25	25
	Post Graduate	40	40
	Total	100	100
Type of Gig Work	Ride Sharing	27	27
	Delivery services	31	31
	Free Lancing	42	42
	Total	100	100
Work Experience	Less than 1 year	32	32
	1 year to 3 years	33	33
	More than 3 years	35	35
	Total	100	100

Source : Primary Data

Table 1.1 shows the demographic profile of respondents of Gig workers in Coimbatore district. Under gender wise classification, 52 percent of the respondents are female, and 48 percent of the respondents are male workers.

Under age-wise classification, 36 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 18 to 25 years, 26 percent of the respondents are in the age group between 36 and 45 years, 20 percent of the respondents are in the age group between 26 and 35 years, and 18 percent of the respondents are in the age group above 45 years.

In the educational qualification, the majority of the respondents (40 percent is qualified post-graduate and 25 per cent are qualified under graduate.

Under the type of Gig workers in Coimbatore district, 42 per cent of the respondents are freelancing, 31 percent of the respondents are working under delivery services, and 27 percent of the respondents are working from ride sharing.

The work experience of Gig workers in Coimbatore district depicts that 35 percent of the respondents have more than 3 years of work experience, 33 percent of the respondents have work experience of 1 year to 3 years and 32 percent of the respondents have worked for less than 1 year.

WORKING CONDITION

The working conditions of gig workers vary widely depending on the type of platform or service they are engaged in, such as ride-hailing, delivery services, freelance digital work, or microtasks. However, common themes emerge in terms of flexibility, job security, income stability, and access to social protection.

Table 1.2

Working condition of Gig Workers

Factor	Particular	No of respondents	Percentage
Average number of hours worked per day	Less than 4 hours	29	29
	4-6 hours	26	26
	6-8 hours	20	20
	More than 8 hours	25	25
	Total	100	100
Average number of days worked per week	1 – 3 days	32	32
	4 – 5 days	38	38
	6 – 7 days	30	30
	Total	100	100
Average Monthly Income	Less than Rs.10,000	29	29
	Rs.10,001 – Rs.20,000	22	22
	Rs.20,001 – Rs.30,000	25	25
	More than Rs.30,000	24	24
	Total	100	100
Mode of Satisfaction with your current working condition	High	34	34
	Moderate	22	22
	Low	44	44
	Total	100	100

Source : Primary Data

Table 1.2 depicts the working conditions of Gig workers in Coimbatore District. 29 percent of the workers have an average working hours per day is less than 4 hours, 25 percent of the respondents have an average working hours per days is more than 8 hours, 26 percent of the respondents have an average working hours per day is between 4 hours and 6 hours, and 20 percent of the respondents have an average working hours per day is 6 to 8 hours respectively.

38 percent of the respondents work 4 to 5 days per week; 32 percent of the respondents have worked an average of 1 to 3 days, and 30 percent of the respondents have worked 6 to 7 days per week on average.

Under the average monthly income of gig workers in Coimbatore district is 29 percent of the respondents have an average monthly income of less than Rs. 10,000, 25 percent of the respondents have an average monthly income of Rs. 20,001 to 30,000, and 22 percent of the respondents have a monthly income of more than Rs.30,000.

Overall mode of satisfaction of current working conditions among gig workers in Coimbatore district is 44 percent of the respondents are low level satisfied with their working conditions; 34 percent of the respondents are highly satisfied with their working conditions, and 22 percent of the respondents are medium of satisfied with their working conditions.

Satisfaction of Gig workers

Gig workers' job satisfaction varies widely depending on the type of gig work, income stability, platform management, and personal expectations. While many workers appreciate the flexibility and independence, others express dissatisfaction due to low pay, job insecurity, and lack of benefits.

Table 1.3

Association between Mode of satisfaction of working condition and Gender

Gender	Satisfaction			Total	Chi square Value	Sig
	High	Medium	Low			
Male	16 (33%)	8 (17%)	24 (50%)	48 (100%)	1.961	0.375
Female	18 (35%)	14 (27%)	20 (38)	52 (100)		
Total	34	22	44	100		

	(34%)	(22%)	(44%)			
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Source : Primary Data

Table 1.3 analyse that an association between the mode of satisfaction of working conditions and Gender. Under these circumstances, male respondents have felt that 50 percent of the respondents are having a low level of satisfaction, and 38 percent of the female respondents are having a low level of satisfaction. Overall, 44 percent of the respondents have a low level of satisfaction with working conditions towards gig workers. The chi-square value is 1.961, and the level of significance is 0.375 not having under 5% level.

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE GIG WORKERS

The gig economy provides opportunities for flexible work and additional income, gig workers continue to face a range of economic, social, and occupational challenges. These challenges affect their job security, income stability, well-being, and overall satisfaction.

Table 1.4

Challenges faced by the Gig workers

S.No	Problems	Mean Score	Rank
1	Irregular Income	3.91	VIII
2	Insecure	4.10	IV
3	Not receiving Social Benefits	4.02	VII
4	Long or Unpredictable Hours	4.10	IV
5	Unfair ratings	3.85	X
6	Delayed Payments	4.54	I
7	Poor Communication	4.12	III
8	Safety and security risks	4.48	II
9	Balancing Multiple Jobs	3.90	IX
10	Financially and professionally unstable	4.09	VI

Source: Primary data

Table 1.4 depicts that challenges faced by the Gig workers, delayed payments is the first rank which is the highest mean score is 4.54. the second rank is given by the safety and security risk which is highest mean score is 4.48, poor communication is given by the third rank which is mean score is 4.12, the least score given by the variable is balancing multiple jobs which is the mean score is 3.90. The tenth rank is given by the variable unfair rating, which is the mean score of 3.85, respectively.

Findings

- 52 percent of the respondents are female gig workers rather than male workers.
- Majority of the respondents are in the age group between 18 to 25 years
- 40 percent of the respondents are qualified as post-graduates.
- 42 percent of the respondents are working under the type of work, Freelancing
- 35 percent of the respondents have more than 3 years of working experience
- 29 percent of the workers' working hours average per day is less than 4 hours
- Under duration of working hours per week of gig workers from 4 to 5 days per week
- Under the average monthly income of gig workers in Coimbatore district is 29 percent of the respondents are earning average monthly income is less than Rs.10,000
- Overall mode of satisfaction of current working condition towards gig workers in Coimbatore district is 44 percent of the respondents are low level satisfied about their working condition
- Over all 44 percent of the respondents have a low level of satisfaction with working conditions towards gig workers. The chi-square value is 1.961, and the level of significance is 0.375 not having under 5% level.
- Challenges faced by the Gig workers, delayed payments is the first rank with the highest mean score is 4.54. The second rank is given by the safety and security risk, with the highest mean score is 4.48. Poor communication is given by the third rank, which is mean score is 4.12.

CONCLUSION

The study on “Empowering Decent Work in the Gig Economy (with special reference to Coimbatore City)” highlights the growing importance of gig-based employment as a significant component of the modern labor market. In Coimbatore an emerging industrial and technological hub the gig economy has created new opportunities for income generation, particularly among youth, students, and professionals seeking flexible work arrangements. However, the findings also reveal that while gig work offers flexibility, autonomy, and accessibility, it remains characterized by economic insecurity, lack of social protection, and limited job stability.

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