

Shifting Work Arrangements for Women: A Review on Full-Time Work to Gig Work

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Abstract

India is one of the labour centric country facing the problem of a falling female labour force participation rate (FLFPR). Women are now shifting from conventional inflexible full-time professions searching for better work-life balance and flexibility. Despite the fact that the gig economy is not new, it is a rapidly developing situation that is changing the nature of work and contributing to a substantive change in the way contemporary economies are organized. This article presents a clear and methodical overview of the impediments women face in the full-time professions and the gig economy's potential to be the "future of work" for women. Following the brief overview of the gig economy in India, the impediments in traditional work and the potentiality of gig opportunities have been explained in reference to India. Literature has been used from reports, news articles, peer-reviewed articles and books. Not to be gender-specific, the gig economy gives the flexibility to work at any stage of life thereby reducing double jeopardy. The role of working women in full-time jobs seems to be more "supportive" to household income, but unendurable stress and work-life balance have given rise to shiftment towards slash work. The drivers behind the shift especially for women could vary on the basis of the level of skill, life stage and contribution percentage in household income. Medical benefits, social security for workers and a considerable monitoring policy for online harassment especially for female giggers could increase the national participation rate in the economy. A brief conclusion completes the analysis.

Keywords: Gig workers, women, traditional work, India, potential, FLFPR

1. Introduction

The term Gig work or "slash work" is not even new. It was developed in 1920 which means "engagement" now used in the sense of *temporary work engagement*. Work-life balance, flexibility, autonomy, and personal branding are all motivators for these workers. This term has been a buzzword in India over the last decade, luring lakhs of millennials with side hustle prospects. They're also known as freelancers or independent contractors. Sheena, for example, is an excellent example of a female gig worker in India because she works as a content writer for GradeUp from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and then drives for Uber from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. India is still struggling to give women in the workforce equal opportunities. Despite economic and educational advancements, the female labour participation rate (FLFPR) has declined to 20.3% in 2019 (Karne & Sharma, 2021). While 70 lakh women have lost their jobs this year, India has plummeted to 112th place in the ('Global Gender Gap Index: World Economic Forum Perspective', 2021). Unbalanced work-life, domestic work, children's schooling, and other factors could all be contributing factors. According to some reports, women's dropout rates in the formal sector are rising as a result of their increased domestic care responsibilities and the lack of child care facilities. The purpose of this article is to illustrate the issues that women encounter in regular 9-to-5 professions, as well as how these challenges have been addressed by the introduction of the gig economy.

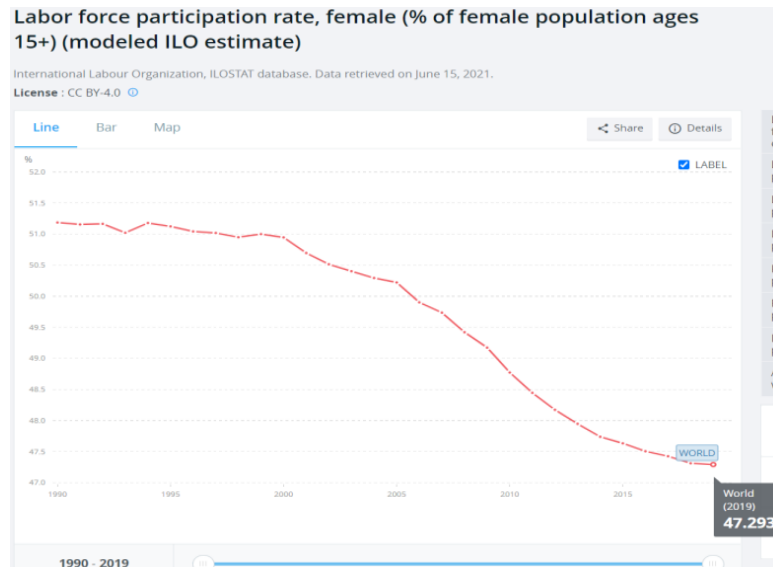


Fig -1: World FLFPR 1990 – 2019

2. Literature Review

(George et al., 2015) have focused on the challenges which are faced by Indian working-class women and how they deal with the situation within and without their families. The impact of nuclear families on working women also impacts the role conflict amongst the working women.

According to (Francavilla & Giannelli, 2010) educated women would rather have the more probable choice to sit at home and send their child to school for more education and fewer work activities. Some studies have also shown that there is a detrimental effect on children cognitive development if the mother is involved in full-time employment.

The half of the population of India is made of female labor force. Despite academic and socio economic growth, the FLFPR is decreasing. The probable reason behind is due to mobility constraint. The lower rail to road ratio is exclusionary for women (Gupta & Bhamoriya, 2021).

Domestic female workers in India include ones who carry out household chores or assist the employer with household work (Beri, 1945). They state that they have a heavy workload and less remuneration, they live in terrible conditions and are vulnerable to abuse.

When women work in similar positions as men, they are 40% more distressed when their personal life is disturbed by office chores. Women who have “preschool children” suffer comparatively higher role conflict. Home-based working women have indicated more life and work satisfaction, less perceived stress and more than full time working women (Desai et al., 2011). In one research paper, the effect of COVID-19 on women's employment has been highlighted and also what are the new employment regions for women post-pandemic has been stated.

Perceived usability of flexible work means the extent up to which the formally available flexible work practices are freely used by the employees of the organization. (Hayman, 2009) has added to the literature the importance of perceived usability of organization policies to reduce the negative impact of work conflicting on the personal life and personal life interfering with the work.

In later years, the future of work would be redefined amidst the diverse technology. The paper focuses on understanding the future of work in India in emerging economies (Bhattacharyya & Nair, 2019)

3. Methodology

The present paper aims to understand the problems of the women workforce in traditional jobs and the potential in the gig economy to uplift the female workforce rate in reference to India with the help of a review of the literature. The study conducted in this paper is descriptive and secondary data has been used for data analysis. The literature has been used from books, reports, newspaper articles, and various research journals.

4. Issues confronted by women in a full-time job

Globalization, privatisation, and liberalisation have lowered the bar for women's job opportunities. Women's job roles have shifted from domestic to office work. This has made women financially strong and independent, but there have always been visible barriers for societies that most working women face in traditional full-time work opportunities (Natarajan, 2016).

4.1. Impediments towards commuting

Previously, commuting was thought to be heavily gendered. Women, on the other hand, now commute longer distances than men as a substitute for relocating to nearby workplaces in order to balance domestic responsibilities and economic activity (Mondal & Samanta, 2021). Working women residing in hostels have a significant relationship with anxiety due to fear of missing a bus or reaching a late hostel premise leading to unnecessary embarrassment and reprimand (Kulkarni, 1976). Even after socioeconomic progress, the female labour force participation rate of FLFPR is dropping. The low rail-to-road ratio is to account for the problem (Gupta & Bhamoriya, 2021). If the job mandates working the night shift, arranging transportation becomes a challenge, as travelling at night is risky for night shift nurses. They are required to attend social occasions and night shifts as part of their duties (Rathore et al., 2012). Women will find rail travelling to be both handy and economical. Because of insufficient public transit, job prospects are limited, which has a negative impact. Women commuters have been accused of harassment and eve-teasing at bus stops and aboard buses, with bus drivers and conductors being regarded as primary perpetrators in certain cases (Nguyen, 2021).

4.2. Child rearing and mother's job relation

Full-time work is not easy when it comes to married working women with a child to manage. A single female parent support half of poor family and three fifth of chronically poor family with children. Women in their eighties are twice as likely as male to be impoverished (Okin, 2015). Childbearing and child born responsibilities are borne by women. It is considered that the mother has the most control over her children's schedules. Role conflict is higher if the working women have "preschool" children. The presence of women in the family increases the child's well being and educational opportunities (Francavilla & Claudia Giannelli, 2010). There lies the chances that children are deprived of going to school if mother works outside the home. The occupation of the father is better if the mother sits at home and sends the child to school and the wealthier is the family. Studies have shown that the children's responsibility hinders the ability to advance for full time working professionals leading to career tradeoff (Buddhapriya, 2009). Mothers, in comparison to males, require more time commitment, multitasking, physical labour, and a strict timetable to manage child-rearing (Craig, 2006).

4.3 Domestic worker's condition

Domestic employees are those who work in their employers' homes or assist them with household chores. They are treated as servants in India. They go from rural to urban locations, but after years of service with the same job, they still receive less salary and recognition. They, particularly female employees, are subject to abuse and live in deplorable conditions. Long-term maltreatment, abuse, and humiliation have harmed their self-esteem (Beri, 1945). In order to avoid attrition, they are sometimes forced to labour extra undetermined home chores.

4.4 Workplace harassment and discrimination

When it comes to hiring or promoting women employees, there is gender bias at work. In India, 85 percent of women miss out on raises and promotions due to their gender (LinkedIn, 2021). If a female and male job application with the same qualifications is submitted to the same employer, the female applicant is more likely to be rejected. It forms the stereotype that women are less capable than men for long work commitments and are more prone to instability due to childbearing responsibility. Workplace incivility is more targetable towards women causing higher stress, turnover intention and poor performance (Saxena et al., 2019). A vast literature is available reinforcing “double jeopardy” or gendered ageism faced by women i.e discrimination based on age and gender at the workplace (HASINOFF, 2007; Krekula, 2016; Walker et al., 2007). In a study, it was revealed that age discrimination is at higher prevalence (35.5%) than men (28.2%) at the workplace. Hard discrimination was seen to have significant relation with gender than soft discrimination at the workplace (Stypinska & Turek, 2017).

4.5 Substandard Work-life balance

Studies have reinforced findings that work/family integration is more complex for mothers than fathers or childless women (Baker, 2010). It has been found out that home-based working women are the least stressed, most well adjusted and most satisfied with their career as compared to working women (Desai et al., 2011). Even after years of development, work is still considered to be the prime responsibility of men while women are expected to take vital responsibility for the family. When family life is interrupted by work, women still are 40% more distressed than men. In today's nuclear family, unreliable childcare and inactive spousal support create a slew of barriers for women to participate in the labour market with zeal. Nurses who work the night shift are frustrated because their husbands and children do not cooperate (Rathore et al., 2012).

4.6 Inflexibility and health hazard association

In a nationwide study of working women, it was cited that the key reason to leave the job for 80% of the women is the inflexible nature of the job (Desai et al., 2011). The inflexibility of jobs gives less freedom to women to dwell around work and home. Most women who have to somehow agree to night duty have to plan for a safe mode of transport and eventually avoid the night shift at the workplace irrespective of the higher income provided for the night shift. Nurses suffer from insufficient sleep, fatigue, mental and physical health problems during late-night shifts (Rathore et al., 2012). Even recruiters have a hard time retaining female employees who take time off in between jobs or become pregnant, raising the company's costs.

5. Renaissance of Gig Economy in India

In the past few years, India's gig economy have grown drastically. The rise of successful gig work platform highlights the current demand and enormous promise that gig economy offers. It is important to note that “gig economy” isn't a new industry in and of itself; rather, it's a shift in how workers are searched out, employed and remunerated (BCG, 2021). The definition of gig worker is though unclear in code. The term “gig worker” has been framed in Code on Social Security, 2020 as “a person who performs work or participate in work arrangement and earns from such activities outside employer-employee relationship” (Code on social security, 2021). Platform work has been defined as “an employment form in which organizations or individuals use online platform to access other organizations or individuals to solve specific problem or to provide specific services in exchange for payment” (Code on Social Security, 2020). The code also states that such workers, even if they are not employees may be eligible for certain social security benefits imposed by the state. The workers are broadly divided as “on-demand workers” and “cloud workers”. The workers broadly fall into 8 distinct segments of gig work in India depending upon the contribution to family income, skill level and life stage (BCG, 2021).



Fig -2: Gig worker segment in India

The applicability spans nearly all sectors of the economy but the top 4 sectors of gig workers are Construction, Manufacturing, Retail Trading, Transportation and logistics (BCG, 2021). For the purpose of flexibility and career choice, India white collar workers are opting independently for gig. Deloitte's latest millennial study shows that 64% of full-time workers are taking gig work as a side hustle (Deloitte, 2019). The findings have revealed that non-monetary benefits play a limited role for gig workers, however, the drive could vary depending upon the workers distinctively categorized into 8 segments. The gig work tends to be more gender-inclusive (BCG, 2021). Females comprise 13 per cent of Urban Casual Labour and Helper in Household enterprise versus 11% amongst Regular wage/salary earners and Employers (PLFS estimate, 2018-19) which is similar to the BCG survey where 30 per cent of gig workers were women compared to 26 per cent representation in regular jobs. At least 57% of heads of firms felt that side hustle will boost women employability in India (UNDP, 2021). The ratio of men to women is approximately 50:50 as compared to a traditional ratio of 70:30 (Nobel House survey, 2019). Moreover, India's gig economy will reach to \$455 billion by 2023 with an annual compound rate of 17% was predicted by Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (Sumathi Bala, 2021).

6. Unlocking the potential of the Gig economy for women

The gig economy has been defined as the "future work for women". Due to flexible and remote working characteristics, in coming days the potential of women joining in gig economy will be tremendous (UNDP, 2021). This pandemic has fast-tracked the adoption of the gig economy and remote working in India. A survey reflects key sectors which have increased women participation like pharmaceuticals (59%), FMGC (41%) and electrical and electronics (44%)(UNDP, 2021). In choosing a job, women gig workers place a large value on opportunity on better earnings and flexible scheduling, with other factors such as wage increment and personal development taking a back seat. More than one-fourth of gig workers do so to cover extra household expenses (beyond usual expenses) such as medical emergencies, family event and paying off leases (BCG, 2021). According to the founder of ETHERworld, in his own company, the women's participation rate has grown up by 4% from April 2020 to December 2020. Since gig work is more gender-inclusive (BCG, 2021), women are performing more female-oriented gig works like beautician, and caretaker than male dominating work due to the skills they possess. Platform work gives skill-oriented work rather than degree oriented. Interestingly, According to research, in high skills and low skill jobs, the employer would be indifferent to the gender for recruitment and the impact of technology would also be neutral. Women are working and earning more and are able to choose the timing according to their comfort. This brings avoidance of working at strange times. Customers are also unconcerned about using female personnel for car-hailing or food delivery. When female respondents were asked to choose the top three reasons to shift towards gig work, flexible

hours, more control over earning and more personal time were the top three reasons followed by less stress, opportunity to follow interest and no commute (Hyperwallet, 2017). Women can choose to indulge in multiple works within a day according to their convenience and choice of work. She can be a beautician as well as a content writer on Gradeup, thereby allowing flexibility to earn according to the interest and capacity of an individual. It would be a mistake to disregard the significance of *personal branding* in a flexible job. It works as a spot for an individual to attract potential clients for work opportunities. Workplace harassment has always been a deciding factor for workplace selection. Women are free to leave the workplace anytime if they find uncomfortable with the employer.

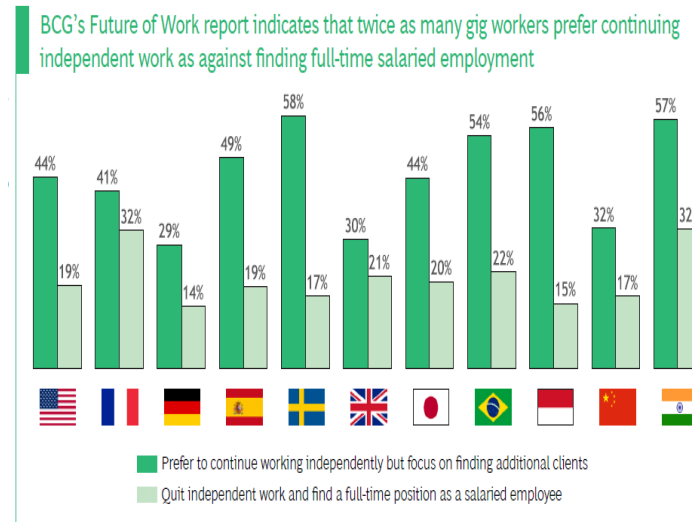


Fig -3: Percentage of gig workers preferring full-time and part time work salaried employment

7. Conclusion

India has a tremendous growth opportunity to extend the female labour force participation rate in the upcoming years. The technology-driven gig economy is booming in India. Apna. co, professional networking and job platform have seen a 40% increment in women's participation in the second quarter of 2021. Not to be gender-specific, the gig economy gives the flexibility to work at any stage of life thereby reducing double jeopardy. The role of working women in full-time jobs seems to be more "supportive" to household income, but unendurable stress and work-life balance have given rise to shifting towards slash work. The drivers behind the shift especially for women could vary on the basis of the level of skill, life stage and contribution percentage in household income. A study reinforced that non-monetary benefits are not major driving forces for workers. India's average gig workforce participants are dominated in low skill work which was higher than the global average (BCG, 2021). Medical benefits, social security for workers and a considerable monitoring policy for online harassment especially for female giggers could increase the national participation rate in the economy.

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