

Gig Economy in the era of increasing Integration and Uncertainties

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the nature and scope of employer engagement in the gig economy. Fast growth of the gig economy in the world has brought with it both hopes and concerns about this new form of digitally-enabled employment. Every work culture has its own risk. Relatively little work has so far looked into the different aspects of gig work. Over the last decade, the term ‘gig economy’ has risen to prominence in public discourse, but, at the same time, missed to attract sustained attention from the point of financial security. With a conceptual approach, this research addresses the recent dynamics of gig economy amidst increasing integration and uncertainties.

Keywords: gig economy, employability, employment engagement, project based work.

Introduction

Employability is a serious issue in an emerging economy like India. Corporate world is witnessing survival challenges in the current pandemic time and it becomes more vulnerable when the economic conditions are unstable. This development has given forth new avenues of business, which needs the modification in outlook of doing business. Globally, firms are hiring gig workers underneath versatile arrangements. This paper is focused on the chance of employment by adopting the culture of the gig economy. The term “gig employee” covers a variety of worker statuses—freelancer, worker, project based work contracts and time bound contract employee - all come under the ambit of the gig economy. Usually, a gig economy is an associate atmosphere wherever organizations contract with freelance staff for short engagements and temporary projects. Instead of ancient full-time positions in an exceedingly specific organization, ‘gig’ staff offer their services for one or additional employers with versatile work arrangements. Historically, ‘gig’ staff, or ‘giggers’ are referred to as freelancers. However, the staff may embrace agency temporary staff, on-call staff, and normal part-time staff. Giggers are found to be a highly favoured work engagement during the current pandemic time with increasing restrictions on physical transport and communications, social distancing, travel restrictions, isolated stay atmosphere and compulsory quarantines.

Gigification is one amongst the varied new ways of operating. Simply put, organisations commission short duration work assignments, project-based positions to freelance staff rather than paying them a conventional pay scale. Both staff and also the firms that rent them as members of the gig economy. Particularly the past five years have shown a big increase of gigification. Millennials present a growing share among giggers. It is also observed that gigs are used as an opportunity to balance monetary uncertainties faced, to overcome health risk, emotional and mental balances and well-being. As gig staff are not in the formal pay-rolls, they escape tax obligations, the number of relief offered for these giggers was unclear at the time of ancient employment work culture. (Bansal & Singh, 2020). Besides the employee, the employer also gets the benefit of gigs, as most of the gigs are working only on a temporary basis (Apouey et al., 2020). The gig economy is also a task-based approach to work that allows bigger flexibility for staff and it is also the same for the corporates participating in gigs. The gig economy is outlined as “a means of working of labour supported individuals having temporary jobs or doing separate items of work, paid on an individual basis.

Professional flexibility is the strongest and significant merit of gig work. In most cases, this professional flexibility is preferred by the employees. Gig work is additional work, which enhances the financial gains of most of the women employees. But at the same time, a majority of freshers’ are depending upon gig work as a stop-gap or test-drive purpose and for few gig workers, it is a replacement career. In the majority of gig jobs, employers are paid on the basis of projects allotted, projects completed or the nature of task involved. The employees have very less control over the nature of the task assigned, time frame/time durations, which makes it more challenging and at the same time demanding.

Literature Review

Gig economy staff will vary from ancient freelance contractors, to freelancers and temporary staffing firm staff who work for elite hours throughout the week at specific time frames. Some of the frequently used platforms for gigs are - Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, Eat sure, Qmin etc. (Brustein, 2019). Gig economy in home-based service which adds extended historical context and highlights continuities and changes in relation to the intermediaries' role. Gig economy also cares about different gig-based work and the normal employment relationship. (Noronha, 2020). Gig work lends to versatile and autonomous work, as the gig employees set their own working time, packages/remunerations, job-roles as well as their own social groups, business associates depending upon their individual cultural and sociological background (Jarrahi et al., 2020)

A Gig Economy is also a system where each employer tries to work in temporary term engagement or as a freelancer instead of a full-time contract and it is not solely the employee who needs such jobs, but, however even the employers additionally hire the employee on a brief lived purpose. The emergence of the digital era additionally helped the roles to travel short-termed; nowadays, it permits variant individuals to figure from their home itself. Gig economy is useful for women as they feel unsafe at intervals in some work settings, as a result of which gigs offer social protection for ladies' staff. In a study conducted on gigs which surveyed women respondents indicated that they are able to earn while staying within the flexible domestic atmosphere and this phenomenon makes their work more comfortable. Employees who are retired from regular employment are also making use of this opportunity as a medium for their earnings (Duggan et al., 2020)). Flexible work can at times be less innovative and original, but, given the time lines, commitment and other restrictions, gigians face challenges between work and leisure (Oyer, n.d.).

Challenges of Gig Economy

Economic downturns place more pressure on the nature and quality of employment of freelancers, like, less work offers, more work with poor packages. With growing uncertainties around, job losses and earning losses are faced by senior gig workers. Such losses lead to long term negative consequences and often they are followed with low packages, poor work culture, erratic timelines. Even though freelancers are less subject to such a kind of extreme losses, at the same time they face salary risk (Kousta et al., 2018). Some gig jobs are one-time and informed on short time frames which often lack clear work descriptions of tasks. Such work sometimes leads to risk and leads to fragile worker-client relations. In addition to the above, gig workers are sometimes placed in precarious and recursive working conditions which restricts their work autonomy and the privilege for better work demands. These phenomenon leads to fewer opportunities for gig workers (Anwar & Graham, 2020)

Individuals with gig work backgrounds may seem less appealing to recruiters of ancient organisations. perennial rejection or a minimum of magnified struggle to secure a placement may lead gig staff to refrain from applying to jobs outside of the gig economy with the same energy they may otherwise use. (Vansteenkiste et al., 2016). Mechanisms of management are widely studied in many ancient organizations, but, amplifying the gig economy differs from ancient organizations in that the role of a personality's supervisor is replaced with digital systems. Thus,

there is reason to suspect that our ancient theories of management won't hold for complete fresh styles adopted in the gig economy.(Flanagan, 2019)

Most freelancers are not protected against the quality risks of an operating life. the shortage of social insurance for self- used is not a replacement development however it's gained additional public attention with the digital economy and crowd working” therefore, the growth of platform work is reproducing gaps at intervals the coverage of social protections for the freelance, that have already been recognised as a growing drawback across employment additional typically.(Pérez et al., 2017). Although the significant merit of gig work is working flexibility, this merit is overlooked in many cases, as the work allocated in short durations with inadequate prior notice. In many occasions the employers prefer faster results, wherein flexibility is challenged.

Besides, as the gigians are working in their own premises, they are denied the opportunity of teamwork, training, opportunities of skill enhancements, on the job and off the job training facilities, knowledge of skills, interpersonal skills. Training helps to boost the abilities to reduce the employment risk and uncertainties at intervals of the task.This phenomenon makes their work sedentary and in due course of time may lead to be less productive and more repetitive. One major downside of the gig economy is the shortage of worker engagement. Gig staff have restricted face-to-face interaction with their supervisors and colleagues compared with the traditional workplace setting, that offers daily interaction with superiors and peers, additionally as a result of the flexibility to make robust relationships.

Reflections

The Gig Economy is currently prospering across the globe, also as a result of the prevailing current pandemic resulting in no or improper mobility, travel risk, social distancing. Growth of information and communication technologies, streaming platforms, online solutions, tele networks have expanded the scope and scale of the gig economy across the globe. This phenomenon has opened immense opportunities to gigians, as the “Work from Home” culture is still prevailing in many parts of the world. Gigs are currently found as a panacea for work especially in regions which are heavily affected by Covid-19 pandemic. Besides that, gigs are considered as an efficient alternative to traditional work, and proves as a replacement paradigm from the ancient pattern of 9 to 5 office work. Although the gig economy is expanding, it is expanding in an unregulated manner. This phenomenon may lead to imbalance growth of work and pay, which may pose a major hurdle in due course of time.

With the growth of technology, new styles of freelancing, contingent work are on the rise, and platform economy is pushing back the traditional form of work and working environment. Changing demographic and economic phenomena are also facilitating the same. (Scully-russ, 2020). Gig staff face a horde of difficulties owing to the unregulated plan of the business, like, pay unsteadiness, absence of acceptable operating conditions, least wages and different government norms.(Koustas et al., 2018)

Existing academic literature on gigs are in the cradle stage, as most of the aspects are being explored and in the initial stages. The literatures on gigs are yet to touch on aspects like - the different varieties of work related challenges of gigians, employer- employee relations, isolated

work nature of gigians, learning by doing, on the job training opportunities, peer learning and team works. Prevailing literature cares with different gig-based work, timelines of work execution, platforms of gig-based work, etc, rather than emphasizing on quality of employment, job security and stability, job risk and challenges, pay-roll and packages, job satisfaction, skill enhancement and training.

Governance system, long term implications of gig work on the job and on the individuals, team work vs gig work, efficiency of gig work over regular work, multi-faceted development of gigians, HRM functioning and gigs, influence of work space on work output and efficiency, control mechanisms, work enablers, gigs and group dynamics are some of the areas still unexplored in gig economy, which are areas to focus for future research on gig economy.

At the macro level, the economic implications of the gig economy also need to be properly explored, both from the employer side and from the employees' side, which can impact considerably on the dynamics of taxation. At the micro level, studies on job related physical, psychological, emotional aspects of gigs are still unexplored. A comparative study on gig work and traditional work upon individuals will surely help one to understand the relative merit or demerit of one over the other in a more logical and scientific manner.

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