

Growth and Challenges of Gig Economy in India with Special Emphasis on the Role of Women Gig Workers

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Abstract

The gig economy in India has witnessed rapid expansion in recent years, driven by technological advancements, digital platforms, and evolving labor market dynamics. This paper explores the growth trajectory of the gig economy in India, examining its socio-economic impact, regulatory landscape, and sectoral distribution. Special emphasis is placed on the participation of women in gig work, highlighting both opportunities and systemic challenges. While the gig economy offers flexible employment and income-generating avenues for women, it also raises critical concerns regarding job security, wage parity, digital literacy, and access to social protection. The article critically analyzes how gendered norms and structural barriers affect women's engagement in gig work, drawing on recent data, case studies, and policy developments. The study concludes with recommendations for inclusive policy frameworks and interventions aimed at ensuring equitable and sustainable growth of the gig economy in India.

Keywords: Digital platforms, gig workers, women,

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1. Introduction to the Gig Economy

The gig economy refers to a system of work whereby independent or self-employed individuals provide services to customers, often via a digital platform. Growth in the gig economy is ubiquitous; different countries are adapting to the technology-driven new economy. Until nothing more than a delivery boy/cab driver was termed as gig worker, the landscape of gig economy has changed tremendously over the period. A growing number of platforms are catering to a more diversified set of gig economy jobs, extending beyond ride-hailing and delivery services to transcription, programming, graphic design, cleaning, creative, and much more. However, little is known about this fast emerging new economy of gig work especially from the emerging country perspective. Research is needed to study from different dimensions the gig economy structure, performance, implications on economy/society/individual, challenges, and the way forward.

In recent years India has emerged as one of the fastest growing gig economy markets in the world. The pandemic has acted as a catalyst to fuel the growth, when the gig economy came to the rescue of many who lost jobs but also hampered the livelihood of several others. Gig economy is expected to play a pivotal role in the post-pandemic recovery journey from both job creation and economic perspectives. There is a growing interest to study the emergence, trends, and challenges of the gig economy in India, however, the existing literature is scarce

and opaque therefore warrant more extensive econometric modeling and analysis. It has been reported that India has 15 million gig workers mainly involved in transportation, delivery, home services, and skills services. Proper regulation of the ecosystem is the need of the hour for the sustainability of gig economy, gig workers, and gig platforms. Understanding the dynamics of the gig economy and making platforms accountable while providing security and protection to gig workers is an important and complex research question needing the highest priority.

Women's participation in gig job is a new and promising dimension. Women workers constitute a sizeable chunk in many urban gig economy jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the center of attention to women workers who are overburdened with jobs, household chores, and caregiving tasks. Many women would prefer gig jobs over conventional jobs given flexibility of timing and work location. This trajectory is yet to be unveiled. Existing works are scanty, inchoate, and incapable of addressing critical research questions. This calls for research explorations on the emergence, dynamics, trends, and challenges of women gig workers accompanied with multinomial logit modeling. Moreover, advocacy of suitable government rules and regulations on flexible working hours and maternity laws is critically needed, in view of the unique challenges faced by women gig economy workers. Tackling these issues in their entirety is a serious extension of existing works in developing country context needing the highest priority, which are richly rewarding in terms of theory, application and contribution to societies.

The secondary workers are educated with minimum technical skill compared to primary workers. The employment scenario is bleak and usually the graduates from the higher schools are attracted towards corporate employment and they have a urge to be engaged in corporate openings therefore the corporate culture encourages them to apply as freshers and they are observed in the employment market (Hans & Selvi, 2024).

2. Historical Context of Gig Work in India

India's economy has witnessed phenomenal growth during the last two decades, yet going by the World Bank criteria for development, a large number of citizens are poor. Millions of Indians teeter on the brink, manage to stay afloat, close to poverty, or neither poor nor rich. In the Indian context, workers in the gig economy, also known as the on-demand economy, are the new woof of the labour market. Workers may remain, full time, part-time, temporary, self-employed workers, or agency workers. They may also stay on the supply or service side of platform intermediary etc. At the same time, gig work is often touted as a new form of العمل الحرا for women. It promises work life balance, sewing more autonomy, flexibility, leaving it open for micro entrepreneurship, and opportunities of better avenues for women and/or those looking for second jobs or jobs while caregiving. However, based on experiences primarily in the global south and the UB country's context, it is also important to look at the continued and perpetuating inequalities in these labor markets, without losing sight of gender (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023).

Like many Indian women who dwell in small towns and villages, over half of their adult life is spent in the confines of their homes, away from the public gaze. After marriage, convincing

their in-laws to allow them to take a job were much less than the challenges of conjugal adjustment and starting off pregnancy needed for establishing a career. The gig economy promises hope for better livelihoods for these women who wish to remain in the private sphere, nurturing their children and household chores. Gig work is said to offer flexibility of time and place of work, the use of disposable communication and computing devices like a smartphone within the domestic sphere, workplace anonymity avoiding harassment, and the stigma of feminization of the labour market. However, the growth of the gig economy in US and west European cities leads to concern among feminist researchers for harassment, gendering of jobs, inequalities in wage and work conditions. Women's gig work has also been called 'shutterstock' work for the access to women gig workers by MNCs and platform owners.

3. Current Trends in the Gig Economy

The current trend in gig employment in India indicates the increase in gig economy, predominance of Digital platform Service providers, Entry of new players in the gig space and increasing dominance of women gig workers. The gig economy is a labor market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs. Gig workers perform a variety of tasks ranging from Data Entry, Customer Service, and Data Validation as Primary gig work - the digital gig work designed to be completed with a computer and high-level skill set. Gig work performed with smartphones is referred to as Mobile type. This may consist of various microtasks from tasks with a few clicks to reviewing apps/platforms and uploading videos for monetary compensation. Pre-covid lockdown, there were almost 300 Indian gig economy startups. During covid lockdown, certain gig startups emerged due to the demand for essential items like food, medicines, and daily supplies and General e-commerce were successful as they became a daily need for every household. Further, delivery service platform players have entered the hyper local ecosystem for delivering anything and everything within minutes. Today, India has 2,80,000 MoW and this number is still rising. In the next 5 years, the Indian online platform gig economy has the potential to grow 5-6x and create jobs for more than 2 billion people. The gig industry of India is expected to grow at a CAGR of more than 17% from 2021 to 2026. The report projects that the gig industry in India is expected to grow at a robust rate in FY23 on the back of the increased internet penetration, monetization of online content, and rise of short-format videos among other technological advancements.

The other significant finding is although the gig economy and gig workforce is anticipated to grow at a faster rate, a major challenge that lies ahead is maintaining the balance of gig labor while upholding the rights of gig workers and the responsibilities of both the workers and employers. The high fluctuation in demand for gig services means gig workers often face unstable incomes despite long hours of working. Process digitization is supposed to replace large numbers of entry-level gigs in India. The growing gig workforce and increased employment insecurity have a high possibility of increasing PROs. The online gig platforms' dominance over workers, low bargaining power, and the lack of a policy framework on disputes, and grievances make gig workers prone to distress. Women gig workers face a greater digital divide due to economic reasons and inadequate inherent social, economic structures both digitally and non-digitally. The growth of gig opportunities at all time slots and

flexibility were found to be the general advantages of gig work among the women gig workforce. However, it also has some major concerns. With long journey hours, covering 16-18km daily for a single trip, particularly during night-time is an unwanted risk for personal safety among the bike riders. The chances of meeting harassment while riding in dark alleys and the gender stereotype that women should not ride a bike which is unsafe and dangerous are alarming factors as stated by women gig workforce respondents.

4. Demographics of Gig Workers in India

The gig economy is estimated to have generated 94 million jobs, or 40 percent of India's total workforce. Gig work holds immense promise as a pathway from the informal sector to better livelihoods while also considering issues of safety, security, efficiency, and productivity. However, the pandemic-induced economic slow-down and associated restrictions were likely devastating for many gig workers, especially women, as it engulfed them in the 'exclusion trap' (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019).

89 percent of gig workers in India earn less than INR 15,000 a month and only 7 percent make above INR 30,000, which is the cut-off for middle-class capital expenditure. This illustrates an in.view (and over-reliance) on the gig economy as 'survival' work, with no option to accumulate wealth from these jobs. This trend is more pronounced for women as they earn 7 percent less than male gig workers and their time spent on all gig activities (164 vs 199 minutes) is also much lower (Dokuka et al., 2022). Gig work is still dominated by males (85 percent), with women mostly taking up low-paying survey and medical gigs. Even within travelling gigs, female workers are scared to take up the night shifts. Wage discrimination persists with men getting paid 17 percent more for same-order deliveries and running bikes are a male-preferred vehicle.

Despite these grim realities, gig workers are quite robust in their hourly search efforts for gigs (1.5-2 hourly on average), as they are aware of non-jugglery flexibility. Two-thirds of women workers vie for possibility of new day-offs and only one-third males say they adjust to more workload. Women gig workers, primarily in metros, cities with better 4G connectivity, and in an arranged marriage, earn remarkably better owing to sibling help in the household.

5. Economic Impact of the Gig Economy

The gig economy is contributing significantly to India's GDP. In 2022, it was estimated to be valued at around 9 billion USD and is expected to rise to around 25 billion USD. The leading state for gig work is Delhi, with 56% of gig contributors, followed by Maharashtra. Over 20 million currently work in this economy. As much as 30% of this group performs multiple jobs as gig workers, and 65% of them utilize only one platform. The reason for using the gig economy is a side income from a minimum wage job or employment at home. In this economy, while one job may have more time-consuming orders, the other may be less engrossed, allowing the taker to assist on the competing job, thus increasing work efficiency (Dokuka et al., 2022). More prominently, though, is that workers have the privilege of lessened pressure for daily earnings as compared to those in the traditional structure or economy (Auguste et al., 2022). Nevertheless, there remain challenges in income variability in these platforms as well, with some more established apps giving rise to side apps with less work pressure but

comparatively less pay too. Despite complaints against the big apps, analysts believe they still tackle the unruly entrants more effectively than the latter. Rates and policies thus leading to side gigs picking up speed tend to be less profitable. Concern for job security and pay issues make gig workers join trade unions to keep the violators in check and raise awareness towards future work impact. The need for balanced treatment and share of earnings is of utmost importance in this economy. Gig economy platforms are relatively informal and less tradable (barring a few). Still, this rising branch offers opportunities for all, especially women (30% taking these jobs found more business opportunities across cities). Those opting for mileage work are advised accuracy in driving choices, while decisive drivers preferred a pick-up-after-drop strategy to boost efficiency (time and loss). Though residential workers have lower wages, they still prefer that, as keeping up with outside work is time-consuming. “Women only” jobs have become popular as well, especially in low-paying jobs, as the risk-return trade-off is lower, since the wages do not follow the traditional schemes.

6. Technological Advancements and the Gig Economy

Technological advancements have brought about an unprecedented increase in the use of gig work applications. Platforms that recruit gig workers with high pay based on the terms of the corporations have emerged. A real-time report about the completed job and payment record is provided to both parties in the agreement. Applications that serve as recruiting and connecting platforms have increased. It is possible to estimate the revenue brought to corporations by measuring the number of completed jobs and time worked by gig workers from the service application logs. On the other hand, it is challenging to measure wage levels or working times for gig workers from the logs of recruiting applications, as they do not take part in task management and monitoring. Revenue index information, such as job scores, available posts, and total ratings, can also be obtained directly from the logs of gig recruiting applications. However, wage level and working overtime must be estimated from gig workers’ profiles on competitive recruiting platforms. It is possible to provide indirect evidence of the wages of gig workers on one platform from competitor gig recruiting applications thanks to the recently released large-scale multi-platform gig worker data. Causal relationships can be evaluated using statistical methods. On the other hand, it is challenging to assess the effect of each company’s interventions on platform value based solely on the gig worker side. The mechanisms of gig job recruitment actions of labor platform companies can be reconstructed using the logs, user behaviors, and models. The influence of extra elements can also be inferred by comparing data with or without such elements. However, it is difficult to identify the precise causes of result changes.

As gig economy platforms in SaaS companies report many workers willing to work in gig jobs with low wages, future competition in recruiting gig workers will be intensified. HR managers must be aware of the challenges and opportunities brought by job recruiting platforms. Provider firms must design specific recruitment activities and classification models to retain gig workers for corporation-wide task capability enhancement and gain chances of successful task acquisition (Bang, 2019).

7. Legal Framework Governing Gig Work

The intricacies accompanying online labour platforms or gig work in recent years remain in turmoil due to pressures on the existing constitutional framework for labour relations with respect to the engaged gig workers. Notably, the changing nature of work, electronic work and a fiercely competitive environment for online platforms has deep consequences in this sector. At the outset, there is a need to critically examine the amount and nature of competence between labour and electronic work in light of labour law neo-liberalism. In an ongoing quest for labour law governance, a gradual struggle can be seen in attempts to formulate a legal framework. (John Hawley, 2018)

Traditionally, gig platforms' relationship with their workers is governed by the terms of service. Thus, almost every platform has a standard form contract that seeks to compel their workers to agree to a liability disclaimer or an exclusion clause. Many gig workers may find these clauses, which are often long and in legal jargon, hard to interpret. New regulations in France, and in certain jurisdictions elsewhere around the world, seek to make platforms liable for the actions they take against their workers. It is arguable that platforms do control their workers and hence may be liable for their actions. In essence, platforms seek to compel workers to enter contracts that, to a greater or lesser degree, limit the liability of the platform. Workers, meanwhile, will want the terms of service to be construed in their favour (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023).

The online labour market is increasingly becoming a key destination for skilled workers, enabling them to work anywhere in the world while also providing a platform for firms and clients to hire talents across borders at reasonable prices. Potentially, this addresses the barriers to employment of poor and marginalised communities while also offering them new opportunities for career advancement. Over the last decade, the online labour market has been branded differently as 'cloud labour', 'crowdwork', 'weblabour', 'gigjobs', etc., digitally mediated tasks which can be performed sub-competitively from any corner of the globe (including developing countries). They can be defined as jobs which can be offered by clients and performed by workers with the help of an online platform and outsourced from one part of the globe to another. Platforms like Amazon MTurk, Task Rabbit, Guru, oDesk, etc. facilitate these online labour markets.

8. Challenges Faced by Gig Workers

Gig economy (or digital freelance platform work) could be defined broadly as a labor market characterized by the prevalence of freelanced jobs rather than permanent jobs. Workers send their offerings, so-called gigs, to perform one-time jobs. In the classic gig labor market trusted intermediaries such as agents represent the needs of clients and promote workers' services. In the supervised gig economy this function is fulfilled by platforms that use special software to connect clients and workers. Although the online gig economy is a relatively new diversification of labor, its scope is growing rapidly. Independent workers outnumber regular workers in several sectors (an example being taxi services), and gig workers account already for a significant portion of the employed in many countries. The gig economy can offer a work opportunity and empowerment especially to women who have a hard time finding jobs due to their domestic responsibilities which can include taking care of children and elderly relatives (Dokuka et al., 2022). In contrast to traditional jobs, gig jobs do not require a long-

term contract. Rather they consist of one-time tasks that workers can choose from at any particular moment. Therefore, gig employment gives workers flexibility allowing them to balance work with household chores. In addition, the gig system does not demand a full working day and mostly offers micro-tasks that can be performed within a short time. This allows women to fit work with breaks from domestic responsibilities better. Online labor platforms connect bidders from different countries which raises translation services or remote assistance tasks and promotes developments in technology. However, the advantage of flexibility and freedom can be transformed into a multi-layered challenge. Even women who were successful in the gig system started domestic work where they were supposed to cook, clean, do laundry or look after children all day long (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023). Consequently, their professional work became squeezed to early mornings, night hours and weekends. Some participants added that household work had been given priority because it was literally in front of them, and the distance-shaped professional jobs were not going to vanish. Notwithstanding flexibility, in many cases it is hard for them to stop working for their families when required. This obligation can conflict with the deadlines of tasks which in turn means disputable rates or account suspension.

8.1. Job Security and Stability

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted the labor market, affecting gig and non-gig workers. The gig economy is touted as more resilient due to its remote work capabilities, but it also comes with disruption and turnover risks. The gig economy's growth and innovation from the COVID-19 pandemic create opportunities and threats for gig workers. Addressing fracture points and building resilience in the gig economy is critical, as gig workers are often left out of policies aimed at stabilizing labor markets. In developing countries like India, gig platforms make work more accessible and expand job opportunities. Unlike platform work, traditional jobs are scarce and harder to come by, especially for women. However, the gig economy sometimes has unfair worker treatment. Gig platforms need to create a level playing field so that all genders and skill levels can use their services to earn a livelihood. Before the pandemic, women accounted for just 27% of gig workers in India, compared to 73% men. In the wake of COVID-19, women in platform work had to balance responsibilities for children, the elderly, and the household. Nearly half of women attributed fewer hours in 2020 to these added responsibilities, losing them earnings and resulting work-life friction (Dokuka et al., 2022). Job security is always talked about in a conventional job. It was believed that gig jobs had less stability and security than full-time jobs. Gender is related to job security issues, with husbands being more reliable. There is an issue regarding the fluctuation of weekly hours. However, many gig jobs, especially delivery and transport, are flexible, so workers can adjust their working hours to some extent according to their wish (Auguste et al., 2022).

8.2. Income Inequality

The first and foremost concern connected with gender imbalance in the gig economy is income inequality. Income inequality is a common problem connected with job choice – job loss causes geographical and economic consequences. Flexible working arrangements are sought to prevent the said disadvantages. Nevertheless, income disparity persists in the gig economy. The gig economy industry is growing, and the gender gap persists because of a skill

mismatch. Working women lose career possibilities and experience lower job stability (Dokuka et al., 2022). The gig economy is either perceived as beneficial or hazardous. Male gig workers are mainly found in taxi and truck hailing services with lower gender inequality and stable revenue, whereas women gig workers are found in very informal low-wage services such as housekeeping and elderly care. Such working variances caused by job efficacy metrics and output measurement rules cause gender disparities. Furthermore, conditions for using smartphones, internet availability on smartphones, and regular internet connectivity vary for genders, and therefore they further disadvantage women gig workers. It finds that gig jobs are preferred more for lower education, i.e., for jobs of picking up edible portions and road side selling, and thus it supports the case of hand-to-mouth job choice. The gig jobs are preferred more for jobs of lower prestige such as street female singers, scraping human skin jobs, and other side goods vending.

8.3. Lack of Benefits

Both the central and state governments have taken steps to deal with the issue of benefits for workers in the gig economy and have debated whether or not they should be considered workers. Different Indian states have replied to the centre's query in tandem with the states who have acted earlier. The Delhi government has required that all food-delivery applications were to register with the government, receive a unique ID, and report commission structures to the government. Maharashtra has requested that gig workers are treated as employees of the platforms. It is imperative for the government to act quickly on this issue since the labour laws in the country were largely based on the industrial economy, now outdated in many respects (Dokuka et al., 2022). Likewise, the impact of a conceivable future pandemic is discussed wherein the advantages of gig jobs in health experts are discussed at length. But, it would be prudent for the government to set the confines of gig work as a model before the supposition of a contagious outbreak reverts. Combined with legislation, it is necessary for the good practice of management where treatments of urgent issues, like sexual harassment, privacy of data shared, etc. are accessible. There is a need for the government, as well as platform management, to set protocols of validation, compliance, and filing grievance for workers since the current practice does not enable the column titled grievance redressal to be filled. Moreover, the big question of safety apart from social security is to be enforced by the government.

With food-delivery, ride hailing, crowdwork, and home-services at the forefront, gig platforms are proliferating in the country, recruiting thousands of workers in their unregulated internet-based digital ecosystem. Workers can sign up or off easily, enjoying flexible hours and choice of work. But there is a lack of benefits like pensions, health insurances, and minimum wages. Hence, soon after the workers are recruited, they have to face struggles to work sustainably. They are also left out of the social security schemes, previous sources of work, and other difficulties in employment. It is argued that a gig-platform-centered, multi-faceted policy intervention is crucial. Considerations on the transport of goods, mass communication media, and storage/ warehousing jobs, and mid tier workers are also discussed.

8.4. Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance refers to the ratio of personal life to career work. A well-balanced work-life balance gives a person an excellent and healthy life. Quite often in the gig economy, freelancers come across the notion of balancing their personal life and career body. The allocated discussion for work-life balance has a number of viewpoints from the female gig workers of Bangladesh. All the participants exemplified a successful work-life balance, wherein they manage to work on their own freelancing profession while undertaking their family duties. In their discussion on the ideal work-life balance, participants also delineated some variations such as balancing work with sports or watching movies, and revealing preferences for multi-tasking. While of course the discussion on achievement and contribution to their family income was a common strategy of gaining acceptance and recognition, the notion of control packaged in the capability of managing diverse family commitments emerged across the narratives. While balancing work and family is celebrated, some deeper layers and variations of meanings are explored. Freelancing was often depicted to have the potential to control time and opportunity to balance family. However, there also limits to this framing as time and control was often understood within boundaries of family structure in terms of time to work in the absence of family members or times when workloads had not been too much (Dokuka et al., 2022).

Jasmin illustrated her experience, assigning herself as a good mother that accommodates every wish of her children. She explained, “Sometimes while I am working, Ishak is crying on his desire of something, and I have to accommodate whatever he wishes. It feels like I am doing wrong professionally, but if I do not heed him, which has been and is still conceived as my prime duty, then I am doing wrong in my family as a mother”. Sophia articulated that her son is her boss for whom she obliged many of her professional duties. Another nuance of the work-life balance is viewed in defining a good parent soul instead of a good wife. In the narratives, woman gig workers embraced cognitions that it is their prime duty to maintain a proper home and family by being an excellent parent, which carries a particular significance with culturally attributed mothering practices and related pressures (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023).

9. Role of Women in the Gig Economy

The gig economy in India is a double-edged sword. A new life for millions of individuals seeks additional income streams in the gig economy, but there are worries that this can lead many people to work more than they should, which can eventually affect their mental well-being (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023). A sizable portion (85 million) of India’s workforce (of 475 million people) is engaged in the gig economy. Only 1%–3% of the gig workforce receives social security benefits, and 90% of gig workers are unregulated. In light of the above-mentioned advantages and concerns linked to gig economy work, it is interesting to know the composition of gig workers in India, as gig workers must be predominantly male. Considering those influences and gender disparities in gig workers, a holistic overview of gig workers is confirmed, with special attention to women gig workers. By taking on less stereotypically male types of gig work, women could enter the gig economy occupation with less backlash and

gender stereotypes, enabling an estimate of the potential effects of women involvement in the gig economy, as may encourage women to gain independence (Dokuka et al., 2022).

The gig economy can provide an avenue for increasing women's economic inclusion. This sector provides women with a flexible and safe way to work. Women in Lahore, Pakistan, working in online freelance digital services, balance household responsibilities with their desire to participate in digital gig work, a type of work presented as flexible, independent, and safe. This flexible work model allows women to avoid transportation risks while helping them uplift themselves financially. Despite the promise of independence many women experience, they voice various constraints in and outside of the home that limit their independence. Gig work is often combined with tight domestic responsibilities. Therefore, it can be said that the gig economy provides more freedom and flexibility to women; it is also highly constraining. The stories of women in digital gig work in Lahore, Pakistan, illustrate women's ongoing struggles in their endeavors to forge independent identities through gig work. They navigate their domestic and professional roles while working towards their desired independence. Additionally, these narratives provide a picture of the constraints still at play in this venue hailed for technological liberation. It is through technology that significant transformations can occur, and yet embedded, structural patriarchal norms shape how these technologies are adopted and utilized. Although a newly emerging sector in patriarchal societies, the digital labor market is gendered by traditional norms protectionism.

9.1. Participation Rates

Recently, gig economy platforms are evolving as a means of wage income for a large cohort of Indian workers to gain financial independence while improving their wage income. In this regard, it becomes important to understand the effects of gig economy platforms on job creation in India and how women gig workers can contribute to that growth and navigate that process given their unique challenges.

Gig work offers jobs as a solution for time-poor women who are mostly captured in unpaid domestic and care work. Women gig workers can either take up hourly tasks from task brokers or they can find customers directly. This new way of employing women gig workers in relatively well-paying jobs on gig platforms is fraught with the potential for risk but also new economic opportunities. For those who work via task brokers, not having a smartphone is a barrier for anyone who expects to do gig work in these platforms. The role of job brokers in organizing and suggesting tasks to gig workers can improve job access for gender-specific work. There are gendered dimensions of job design, wage payment, and job intermediation that women gig workers need to actively navigate while working in the gig platforms.

Women gig workers represent a new cohort of workers who earn their primary income on gig economy platforms. Following previously used definitions, gig economy brand-representative marketing, delivery, and ride-hailing work done in the form of a task or job for a specified period or an agreed-upon payment are broadly defined as gig jobs. The number of women gig workers is limited to a small sample of their primary work across all platforms. Women gig workers use a wide variety of gig economy platforms. Using path differences in their educational backgrounds, one analysis shows how they navigate work both on and off

platforms. On gig economy platforms, writing, editing, customer support, online tutoring, website testing, data entry, and research work are mostly done by women gig workers. It is also important to understand the working conditions of women gig workers on platforms, such as low pay, low job security, long work hours, and high levels of job intensity.

9.2. Types of Gig Work Undertaken by Women

The gig economy is comprised of a variety of jobs and these are not new to the world. Outsourcing of tasks to individuals on financial arrangements such as hourly, daily or weekly basis started in the pre-industrial era. However, with the invention of pay-per-click job assignments, it gained popularity. Some of the earliest known gigs were the writing, translation and editing jobs that required one-off effort, and for those the payment was generally small as compared to the traditional jobs requiring full time education or training. Online platforms ensured that unmet needs were expressed in text through simple words and that workers are available for the jobs with one click from anywhere in the world. The jobs were small, scattered and offered no long-term engagement opportunities. In such cases, people who had time and a computer were more likely to respond. Women headed a families, had children and used PC at home were the best target groups (Zahn, 2019). It was observed during the pandemic that women gig workers selected jobs requiring similar skills and joined the groups exclusively of women having similar cultural backgrounds. Female writers were often referred by their peers to teams of female proofreaders or editors, which raised questions of wage discrepancies.

The following categories of occupations are examined: personal services; use of women-specific skills; workplace-based jobs; use of skills common to both genders; and jobs applicable to all. The types of gig jobs for women generally match the same categories as those for men, but the demands and specifications often differ. The type of tasks vary according to locale and demand. For example, drivers and delivery personnel work primarily in the cities while men in rural areas, who want supplementary income, engage in agriculture-linked activity (Dokuka et al., 2022).

9.3. Barriers Faced by Women Gig Workers

The digital gig economy is often touted for its potential to democratize labor by erasing geographies, shrinking companies and industries, valorizing connectedness, and tapping into previously unseen human potential across the globe (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023). Despite the opportunities offered by the gig economy, there are many challenges that are inherent in the models of gig work. While the flexibility of freelance has been highlighted as one of the few advantages of gig work, similar to what women narrators share in Bangladesh as well as other countries, this advantage can also become a challenge when women's working lives start to automatically overlap with their households. Comments by Sarah highlight the dilemma that comes with the flexibility of online work. She argues that while having flexible working hours allows her to spend time with kids, her domestic responsibilities significantly reduced her working time. Drawing on prior research and women's accounts from various studies, Ayon's work showcased that in many places, controlling time and space in one's work leads to greater invisibility of work, and while at the encouraging stance, untracked,

uncontrolled, non-observing coworking environment brings a feeling of overwork that often negatively influences health and well-being.

Unlike the trials in structuring work, several discussions implied emotional crossroads women are in. Simply expressing the advantage of online hustings does not capture variations in time-space relations. Similar to how Aisha's view reflected: "In online workplaces, certificates/skills matter, not seeing each other. Men's domination is primarily about societal perception" they often overshadow job opportunities. Rather, an individual's perception of freelancing is a complex matter, which is greatly influenced by other family members and surrounding people beyond oneself. Hannah, for instance, reported that she hides her freelancing from her family due to negative perceptions of freelancing jobs. Her husband thinks she needs to leave her online job and focus on household work. Similar, rather layered challenges that women freelancers face were found from women in Bangladesh, whose work is often not recognized by society. Besides the lack of recognition, being recognized as a freelance worker just because of the gendered division of labor can provoke disgust among family members. As expressed by Nadira, "everyone thought I would become a burden after I got married and this disgust is unexplainable even to higher educated people." So there are very pertinent questions like "how do I reach my goal without escaping from my family?"

10. Empowerment through Gig Work

Globalization, information and communication technologies (ICT), shift towards knowledge-based economies, and advancement in forceful infrastructure and online platforms have opened up new ways of working. "Gig economy" and "gig work" have emerged as the terms for this labor condition, which differs in nature from the previous forms of employment, when workers were hired on permanent basis, on hourly wages to work for a fixed time schedule. Worldwide gig economy revenue was estimated at 350 billion U.S. dollars in 2022 and is projected to grow at a CARG of 17% from 2023 to 2030. Like many other countries, the gig economy has grown noticeably in India. However, the nature of employment in the gig economy is very different from the previous forms of employment.

The degree of freedom workers enjoy in gig work, in terms of time, place, and scale of work, is taken up positively by many workers, across gender in many developing countries, including Bangladesh. Whether gig work has become a means of empowerment or disempowerment for women who are mostly confined to domestic spheres in developing countries like India is a very important question to look into. Women gig workers face many empowerment as well as disempowerment challenges. The shift from family worker to wage worker in gig economy is perceived as a formal power (in employment) transition from unpaid to paid, or from amoral to moral position, which is associated with regard and recognition from society and husbands. Besides, financially serviceable at family level, possession of properties, and improved living standards indicate a transition from patriarchal to egalitarian gender relations at family level.

However, women gig workers often encounter many economic and social challenges of setbacks in this transition. Many gig workers struggle to maintain work-family balance due to the concurrent increase of domestic responsibilities with income. At family level, the outsourced work especially after COVID-19 has made women primary domestic laborers and

this domestic workload continues to consume much of their productive time. If sufficient family support in terms of assistance in household chores is not there, this could impact one's delivery of gig work as gig work is time bound. Sustainability of gig work from family perspective is still at stake. The adverse impacts of social norms and imagery of gig work for women collected from social and family surroundings have created a fear of nuisance situation for them. Due to these gendered challenges, much of their outputs are not commoditized, which defeats the very purpose of becoming a gig worker (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023).

10.1. Financial Independence

Gig economy has become a significant source of employment. It provides flexibility, diverse working hours, and a variety of jobs. Countries across the world are undertaking studies to gauge the impact of growing gig sectors on economic growth and employment. Despite being a relatively new subject for scholars, previous studies have established a correlation between the importance of the gig economy in India and the fate of women's job prospects. The existence of gender barriers narrows down women's job profiles and options in India (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023). Women's participation in the workforce is less than that for men, by a large margin. The introduction of mobile technology and several internet-based apps have made the uptake of gig work easier for women. Women gig workers are now undertaking several jobs that encompass domestic work, ridesharing, and micro-tasking. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that there exist several challenges.

The rapid uptake of gig work by millions of women can bring independence and freedom, allowing them to balance and juggle multiple commitments such as work, family, and home. However, poverty, adverse societal norms, limited financial literacy, skill constraints, and poor internet connectivity regarding labour market requirements act as formidable barriers. The existing studies on female migration and welfare highlights transition to the gig economy through micro-level changes, but there has been very limited work on understanding the growth of the gig economy in India. More importantly, attached challenges and the role of women gig workers in the gig economy remain understudied. The present work aims to fill this research gap. As a preliminary attempt, it primarily aims to gauge a snapshot of the growing gig sector and demographic of women gig workers in India. It additionally aims to foreground the challenges faced by this category of workers.

The insights gathered through focused group discussions and face-to-face interviews highlight the necessity of growth in this sector. The initiative taken to bring this narrative to the forefront is a step towards informing policymakers and a wider audience about their role, problems faced, and the deliberate steps to ease their challenges and transitions. India is on track to become one of the world's fastest-growing gig economy markets. The gig economy comprises 15% of the total workforce in India and is anticipated to grow at a CAGR of 17%.

10.2. Skill Development

In this new age of digital technology, where new business models flourish and economies turn digital, a new flavor of employment is being added to the conventional setup of India. People not necessarily bound to a particular time and location gain digital access to companies interested in their services. With the growth of digital platforms, the unorganized sector of gig

economy work promises to bring better opportunities (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023). The gig economy is a segment of the Indian economy that is growing quickly. Car drivers for foreign companies, delivery boys for companies, and other comparable examples are all part of the gig economy. Businesses expand their physical presence and broaden their reach through the gig economy. The collaborative way of working in the gig economy is spreading, elevating the country's economy to the following level of digital development by offering a variety of opportunities like cooking, driving, delivering, gardening, cleaning, pet care, etc. Moreover, this flexible workforce increases opportunity for women working in tier 2 and tier 3 cities.

Digitization opens mobility and reach for businesses, offering opportunities for gig workers (Dokuka et al., 2022). It refers to labor positions that, through online platforms, provide short-term contracts or freelancing rather than permanent jobs, either on-site or virtual. Based on data from eight Indian states, primarily Southern ones, elaborate on the causes of women's underrepresentation in the gig economy. The context is analyzed at three levels: women's socioeconomic and social context in these states, the barriers that women confront while entering gig work, and how these barriers are manifested on digital platforms and affect gig women negatively. It is a burgeoning economy, opening reasonable opportunities for many new workers in cities, especially for women in tier 2 or 3 cities. The new sources of income help enhance their socioeconomic conditions. However, the narrative is not the same for women gig workers here, as women gig workers find the barriers even more pronounced in the Indian territory. Women gig workers, socialized in patriarchal households, experience their lives differently than men. Their public mobility is discouraged and restricted, resulting in the application load shedding with a reduced chance of receiving jobs or work.

10.3. Networking Opportunities

While the generalization regarding a typical male picture of a gig worker in the Indian gig economy remains true, the women gig workers also have their sub groups and collided identities depending upon the platform worked for, affordability and access to the mobile phone, constraints regarding gender roles and faith, and the level of autonomy in their job role, nature of interactions and dependence upon the platform. Despite their different subgroups, they have several similar characteristics and restraints that make their lives more challenging than their male counterparts (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023). The transportation women gig workers like drivers, delivery persons and those performing in pre-paid apps both D2C and B2C sectors are at the highest risk of harassment and abuse which does not only put their safety and security at stake but also harms their reputations and mental health issues that dissuade from continuing this line of work. There are lives and livelihoods at stake of women gig workers and it is a loss to the City. Currently, as the platform workers are unorganised, their movement can not be a union but a federative movement to bring in the required resolve from the government (Dokuka et al., 2022). The women gig workers are expected to perform gendered roles, while managing their own work, they have to negotiate with people in no designated space. Women face threats of social and economic relationship break from the family or the spouse if they violate the expected roles as a homemaker. The demands of the platform on the one hand and risk of offending societal code on the other creates a space of contested identity. Women workers remain sceptical seeking help and

negotiation from the platform due to their self doubts regarding the power to negotiate as well as fear of generating negative perceptions among the peers. The worries of personal safety from identity disclosure or retaliatory revenge remain salient in their narratives. Most of the women gig workers wish to reach out to a women coterie at work and a union making women space. However, despite all these routine difficulties and challenges, they do manifest their voice, space and agency in their work in either personal spheres of experiences or participating in formal collective dissent actions such as social media campaigns and talks and discussions.

11. Case Studies of Successful Women Gig Workers

The rise of the gig economy has presented a range of careers in which millions of individuals can benefit by monetizing their skills. However, the benefits of this arrangement have not always been mutual. While some nations and workers have reaped the rewards of on-demand labor, others have seen an influx of gig jobs depress wages and diminish working conditions for millions. Around the world, the preponderance of gig workers is sourcing increasingly low-paying jobs through online platforms. This ethnographic account of the experiences of a population of South Asian women who negotiate the gig economy as trilingual freelancers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic offers an overview of their relationship with these developments. Using the oppositional spaces and spaces of dreams framework, this paper describes how social contexts frame how women imagine gig work and the barriers they encounter in trying to make their dreams a reality. At all levels of the gig economy, this workforce navigates an array of challenges that disproportionately jeopardize their safety and undermine the affordances of this nontraditional work arrangement. They use a range of strategies to secure the socioeconomic and sociocultural freedoms this work represents. However, numerous barriers—social, technological, economic, and institutional—hinder these workers in their attempts at extracting the gains of on-demand labor. These struggles are intertwined with gender, class, trauma, and systemic inequalities amplified and redirected in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023). The gig economy is an employment system characterized by flexibility and skill-based work, where individuals undertake independent paid jobs. In South Asia, expanding internet infrastructure and smartphone access fuel participation in the gig economy. There is limited literature considering the relationship between gender and gig labor in South Asia. This paper chases these working women's imaginations of, processes of entering, and experiences of gig work. Negotiating the demands of family, household chores, a side business, and aspirations of higher income, financial independence, and a career requires complex calculations and deliberations. Framing gig work as nontraditional work, this paper extends the idea of spatialities to the field of agency, unpacking how the imagined affording of gig labor—flexibility, work-life balance, independence, and the resemblance of professional work—clashes with experiences of insecurity, audit, and criminality. Women find ways to get around this audit culture, engaging in creative and entrepreneurial work-arounds in what can be termed oppositional spaces (Dokuka et al., 2022).

12. Government Initiatives Supporting Gig Workers

It has been acknowledged that gig economy work is typically offered through informal job contracts, which does not fall under the formal employment definition and lacks systems for tracking. With the absence of these systems, gig economy workers do not receive the same benefits and protections as formal workers. Public health sectors and other essential services made efforts to improve situations during COVID-19, and the containment measures mobilized collective action of gig economy workers (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019).

While gig economy work is inherently flexible, it leads to a number of constraints for those who are able to adapt. Gig economy platforms create bidding contests among the workers instead of providing equal opportunities. Uncertainty about the number of orders can create undue stress on the workers if controls or punishments are unjustly placed. Lack of transparency of the platforms can create an imbalance of power, with platforms extracting greater commissions or suddenly blocking some workers from their ability to earn an income (Dokuka et al., 2022).

Relatively few solutions of gender-neutral nature had been proposed until now. For example, gig economy platforms can implement policies monitoring activity ratios of genders. Moreover, gender ratio should be monitored at the level of the executives of the platform for the equitable governance of the sector. This process would require not only taking measures for gender reporting but also a commitment of management to take care of this issue in the sector. Additionally, the authorities should publicly encourage the data collection and reporting of the gender disaggregation level. For example, decentralized apps of those platforms, which significantly enhance anonymity and safety of the data reporting, should be developed.

13. Role of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations

Three main observations can be identified about India's gig economy, based on reviews of the world's experience.

a. Diverse Public Interventions

Public bodies implement several initiatives toward gig and platform workers—similar to other global experiences—to respond to the immediacy of the gig economy's growth as well as its incompleteness and imperfections (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023). Regulation concerning working time, pay, and other terms and conditions of employment is vital, especially when workers are not classified as employees. Lending credence to this point is Section 14, which prohibits discrimination on arbitrary grounds, including worker's gender, pregnancy, or maternity. Reviews of the global assembly line by Californian workers in the mid-90s highlight the need for new public bodies (wage boards)—equivalent to the earlier ones set up in India to regulate unorganised and informal work arrangements—to regulate the new gig economy, especially crowdwork.

There is also a need for a new body to monitor compliance with the 2008 rules pertaining to security service companies regarding providing social security entitled to workers. The review of bag/parcel delivery platforms shows that gig workers have recently gone online to share their experiences seeking resolution from state agencies. A related need is for transport

regulators like the state transport departments to have visibility over ride-hailing and freight-booking apps to protect gig workers' entitlements. However, workers' participation in the gig economy's design, regulation, and conduct is essential—instead of these currently being done in silos in public bureaucracies that limit accountability.

b. Skeptic Consumer Attitude

The global gig economy's growth is being closely followed by a third of Indian consumers adopting a skeptical attitude toward internet platform companies' size and growth and their impact on workers or suppliers. There is little certainty about attempting consumer collective action—based on global experiences by ride-hailing and meal delivery platforms—vis-à-vis these companies with an uncertain business model. This signals the successful organisation of gig workers who have a tale to tell about why the control exercise of app-based platform companies needs to stop, and this, too, has a bearing on gig consumers. The three gaps that need to be addressed for gig workers to voice concerns are discrepancies in Covid-19 labour policy announcements; their continuing exclusion from policy-making; and recommendations of a change in the representation of gig workers on policy-making boards that ask for provision to be made for this by the government in the next fiscal policy.

The National Health Authority's implementation of Ayushman Bharat, India's universal health insurance scheme, has witnessed coverage for health workers during the pandemic through insurance and infrastructure expenses. At the same time, funding from the private sector has been enabled subject to better accountability frameworks, including constituency-based participation in implementation.

c. Multiple Research Gaps

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) remain the largest and most highly diverse segment of India's gig economy that leads to further research. Quantifying the impact of issues affecting gig workers' empowerment and cooperation is essential, especially as gig workers from construction, delivery, and transport categories have switched occupations, leading to further heterogeneity. The lack of inter-gender comparative studies of gig work is also a gap that requires addressing. Compliance to gig economy rules in terms of informed interviews, the transparency of advertisement bidding, minimum pay levels, etc., is a continuing research gap. Complementing gig work with offline education providers to build professional skills and recover losses from penury and precarity is yet to be understood. Gendered education and awareness programs about these services need thorough consideration.

14. Future of the Gig Economy in India

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated already existing inequalities in the world. Women, who comprised the majority of informal workers, have lost their jobs at a far greater rate than men during the pandemic. As a crisis response, countries have sought to extend social protection, such as cash transfers, to these informal workers. However, the lack of identification complicates reaching out to these informal workers. They could be encouraged to register for cash transfers through a campaign in which the information gathered would

help target the assistance to them. Given the accelerating digitalisation that will outlast the pandemic, fast-tracking registration for tax identification numbers could be considered. Unprecedented opportunities have arisen for women in the gig economy sector in Asia and the Pacific. Some of these women gig workers struggled to navigate working flexibly without enabling infrastructures like reliable telecommunication and social protection. In Asia, countries developed measures addressing these challenges and expanding gig workers' decent working conditions. Ensuring a safe, accessible, and enabling online working environment, as well as using strategies deployed with the gaming community to prevent online violence against women are essential. Regulations focusing on workers' rights and independent workers are needed on a regional basis. Building gender-responsive tax systems, expanding social protection through taxation or through mechanisms utilising private sector involvement, and ensuring portable and portable coverage of social insurance means are all critical future concerted efforts (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023). Gender gaps in gig employment in developing countries are less well understood. Gaps in gig task choice and location, hours worked, experience, and repayments are larger in India for women than for men. Women internalize fewer hours across all gig tasks. Interestingly, gender gaps in being in a gig job persist only for the non-male tasks. Marginalized women enter primarily female gig jobs; others appear to work at the margins of gigacity. The combined gender gap in earning a gig task is large and statistically significant for women in India, wherein women also receive relatively lower repayments for given hours. The detrimental bias arises regardless of opportunities or engagement postponement and parallelly arises for men and women in all locations. Women working in traditional sectors find it difficult to transition to gig employment with informative barriers (Dokuka et al., 2022).

14.1. Predicted Growth Trends

The gig economy is an emerging trend globally and India is no exception to it. While India's traditional economy survives on a huge informal workforce, recent years have seen huge growth in businesses which cater to a cycle of on-demand work, enabled by digital platforms. India is expected to be a major supplier of gig workers in the forthcoming years, especially for digital platforms owing to a large English-speaking/ educated population. The gig economy in India is anticipated to grow to USD 455 billion by the year 2023; focus on non-digitally enabled work platforms which connect blue-collar workers leading to the vertical expansion of the gig economy by increasing jobs in the retail, hospitality, delivery, and logistics sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as an important catalyst for the growth of the gig economy, enhancing opportunities for work-from-home jobs. The future of work is rapidly changing globally to become more on-demand, automated, and flexibly scheduled. The proportion of freelance work in the form of jobs hired and performed through online platforms is expected to increase steeply over the next few years as the nascent gig economy matures ((Dokuka et al., 2022)).

India's gig economy is growing rapidly at a CAGR of 17.4% and is projected to reach a market size of USD 1.16 Tn by 2028 ((Bajpai & Biberman, 2019)). Currently valued at USD 353 billion, its market size is expected to reach USD 455 billion in 2023. Organized gig markets are expected to contribute around USD 90 billion to India's GDP and generate 6 million jobs by 2023. The gig economy in India is estimated to employ over 27 million workers across a range

of sectors including transportation, delivery, accommodation, and business services in areas such as content creation, data labeling, and accounting. However, around 130 million workers in India are still relying on informal work to make a living. Non-digitally enabled work platforms are expected to connect around 180 million informal workers to new job opportunities, leading the vertical and horizontal expansion of gig work respectively.

14.2. Potential Policy Changes

The rise of the gig economy poses a myriad of challenges, particularly in an informal market like India, where concerns regarding the role of women and vulnerable workers are amplified. On the one hand, existing gender inequities and gender gaps in a formal labour market trickle down to gig work, affecting women gig workers who continue to be victims of the patriarchal system. In India, traditional gender roles limit women's habitual mobility, resulting in unintended biases against women gig workers in certain occupations and shifts across sectors, with women tending to prefer work that does not interfere with their domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, employers prefer hiring men, rejecting women on safety grounds, as safer jobs undertaken by women cannot claim non-compliance in labour laws. On the other hand, women gig workers face unique challenges arising from gig work that provide them with no hope of protection under the law (Dokuka et al., 2022). Prevalent crimes against women such as stalkers, physical assault, and robbery are new challenges for women, men, and non-binary genders alike, primarily in app-specific domestic tasks. While a large pool of gig workers and entrepreneurs streaming in under the gig economy is new in India, gig platforms are new as well. In a fast-changing scenario of policy framing and implementation, the government is taking time to absorb the evolving gig economy, leaving it unattended for a while. The expertise and knowledge of gig workers and entrepreneurs can be utilised in policy-making. The Indian government can bring together women gig workers and entrepreneurs on a common platform to understand their challenges and suggest suitable policy measures. Industry experts can then be involved to assess the legitimacy of the suggested reforms (Ford, 2019). A national women gig worker policy can be formulated, framed, and enforced to address widespread inequities. Engaging with gig platforms in the public domain will enable them to kickstart initiatives on disclosure, welfare measures, grievance redressal, community development, and implementation of laws, policies, and reforms. Gender-based social welfare measures can be initiated nationwide for gig workers of vehicle and fin-tech platforms. An evidence-based approach emphasising scientific data collection, analysis, research, and impact monitoring and assessment is required to draw in and pursue even gig platforms that shun fiscal accountability and their socio-legal responsibilities.

15. Comparative Analysis with Global Gig Economies

There has been significant research on the growth of the gig economy in several countries, especially against the backdrop of the pandemic. The major focus of this research has been to analyze the use of gig work vis-à-vis its implications on employment, income, and work-life balance. The gig economy represents a major opportunity for women to earn additional income. This presents an important avenue to call attention to the growth of the gig economy; the implications of gig work for women workers, and the growth of the gig economy in South

Asia. This study offers a comparative analysis of the gig economies in India, Bangladesh, and Kazakhstan while focusing specifically on the issues faced by women workers. Countries like Kazakhstan that are relatively new to gig work; providing domestic help and house cleaning-type services to countries further on in the cycle like India and Bangladesh (where freelancing and supply through online platforms is increasingly prevalent) gradually including women films in the gig economy in the global South. Employment in northern metropolitan areas takes on a distinctive gendered dimension, as revealed by interviews with female taxi drivers in Almaty. By citing their female counterparts in Central and South Asia, it may be argued that gig work is inherently gendered (Dokuka et al., 2022).

While the gig economy is touted as a space for women's empowerment, the reality for many women workers is not as rosy as is usually assumed. Women workers can choose when and how much they want to work, how far they venture outside of home or take clients, and whether or not they wish to engage in a particular service or with a particular client. By situating the gendered experiences of women gig workers in Bangladesh, this study illuminates how, in these same platforms for power, choice, and freedom that are heralded for women's growth and agency, entrenched inequalities continue to perpetuate and underpin attitudes of contempt for certain women with perilous hailing-out lives (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023).

16. Impact of COVID-19 on Gig Work

COVID-19 has devastated economic activity around the world, exacerbating sectors of the economy that were already in decline and hastening the decline of some economic sectors. This includes the crisis in traditional business models, with the automobile and hospitality sectors suffering incredible losses. By "traditional business models," the concern here is mostly industries and occupations whose methods of operating have been largely unchanged, and often highly regulated (Auguste et al., 2022). Innovations in models of work have been affecting industries undergoing these declines for some time, however. Chiefly among these innovation is the gig economy, a rapidly growing sector of the economy with potential for both democratizing effects among workers and dangers attendant to economic conditions and state regulations that are very new and evolving.

Much previous research has shown widespread use of gig work among the working-age population. This body of work also examines the advantages and disadvantages of gig work to workers. These advantages include flexibility and the potential for increased non-standard hours, particularly nights and weekends when there are increased demands for gig work deliveries. Disadvantages include financial instability and uncertainty given often very little or even no health or other benefits, legal protection, or recognition by the state. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted economic activity while also creating new economic activity previously unheard of, and thus accelerated and derailed traditional business models and innovations therein (Dokuka et al., 2022). Differences in costs and burdens of this economic transition among segments of the working-age population can provide insight into overall questions about both the gendered expectations of the changing landscape of work as well as the efficacy of responses by gig platforms, governments, and the states.

17. Mental Health and Well-being of Gig Workers

Mental health and well-being of women gig workers are two interconnected aspects of their lives, and an imperative area for studies to delve. In fact, the emotional dimensions of gig working were hardly touched upon within gig-worker-centric research, let alone scholarship investigating preferentially abominably neglected gig working women. Whenever mental health and well-being are discussed in gig working literature in general, it is often interpreted as work-induced unhappiness, with particular reference to feeling overburdened, experiencing symptoms of distress, and exhaustion. There is a notable lack of scholarship addressing the perspectives of gig workers' psychological sky and critical analysis of suicides, traumas, and other feelings usually shown in dramatists' fables. The necessity of such knowledge bases is keen in the particular case of women gig workers in Bangladesh, as women's destinies themselves entwined the socio-cultural facets of the country, which drive them to suppress their mental agonies as ideal women. Nevertheless, this socio-cultural milieu is tediously abrasive that can poignantly render women's minds claustrophobic, torturous, and smeared with hopelessness, and suicidal sanity. Within these coordinates, the tale of Saudi Arabian working women starkly exemplifies (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023) women's educational catastrophes notwithstanding being educated and painstaking.

Although gig working operates with flexible hours, women gig workers often find themselves entangled with quotidian domestic chores, thereby excogitating grievances pertaining to feeling torturously overburdened with work. Aisha's testimony showcases how women class themselves as ultimate responsibilities' bearers, sometimes amid demise in the family. This agony is compounded as after the mother's demise, she and her sister were to prepare meals, as they shared none with the father, which they averred was the mother's duty. Thus, she felt overburdened with domestic chores, which are tacitly ascribed responsibilities but became impediments to working engagement. Hannah recollects agonously, I found no time for taking care of my work. Female gig workers' fragile lot before families perverts the very essence of gig working to strangle their career prospects. Domestic woes sprawling entry into gig spaces then incubate complaints, because of which academic neglect were assiduously shrugged off through assertion of primo status of husbands vis-a-vis wife.

18. Strategies for Enhancing Women's Participation

The work-life balance in the gig economy is skewed towards household chores for women. Solutions to this challenge should focus on better household responsibilities distribution between mothers and fathers. From a young age, fathers should take over part of the responsibilities that used to belong exclusively to mothers, as, in a good model of a family, both mothers and fathers share these duties. The shift can go alongside broad awareness campaigns targeted at women and men to challenge and overcome outdated social norms. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can implement such initiatives, along with other digital platforms and labor market brigades seeking to boost women's entry into the gig economy (M Mashrur Arafin Ayon, 2023). On the platform side, women's care responsibilities should also be a top priority. They can be raised by measures to create support communities. Such communities can help women share concerns and challenges about care duties, working restrictions, and suggestions to improve the situation. Conversations can be directed to both

men and women. While the former can help foster awareness of gender inequalities in care duties, the latter can provide suggestions on how to mitigate the pressure by changing processes from fixing places to tasks.

Explicit monitoring efforts should accompany platforms' initiatives. Checking how accurate the measure to raise awareness and improve support community work is, measuring the number of working hours spent after 9 PM, and feedbacking women from these mechanisms would be a way to go. Given the examples of localized adjustments in online labor market promotion, these instruments can be adopted by platforms and NGOs to boost women's entry into online labor markets, as well as investigate the differences in how these societies perceive and respond to the gender gap in their respective gig economies.

The gig economy's growth and relevance set clear and substantial challenges for economists, researchers, businesses, platforms, and the labor force, especially for women workers on platforms where gig worker bid on a job (Dokuka et al., 2022). Economically, with the proliferation of jobs on gig platforms comes the proliferation of workers. Not all of them can find a job, and many of them cannot earn enough to make the gig economy a meaningful element of their life. Measures to facilitate women-specific entry should be motivated by the gender gap caused by a restrictive environment, which may force women to leave the gig job. In a traditional society, outside obligations, such as unreasonable workloads or care tasks, aggravate difficulties in reorganizing time for work.

19. Community Support Systems for Gig Workers

Gig workers, or independent contractors who monetize personal labor through a digital platform, have become an increasing part of the labor force worldwide, but many observers believe that government regulation for gig work is lacking. Freelance or gig work, which includes both employment in the "alternative" and "on-demand" economy, is a rapidly growing segment of the labor market. However, it often offers little or no protections for workers, increased economic vulnerability, and is thus seen by many as "precarious". The gig economy has also grown significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it remains unclear whether companies are taking responsibility under the law. With it now representing 10% of U.S. employment and approximately 70 million workers worldwide, there is an urgent need to investigate the gig economy and how it differs across platforms but also by policy intervention.

The authors describe a study of gig working arrangements such as Uber, Lyft, Instacart, Doordash, and TaskRabbit such as the variation of gig work across platforms, and barriers to entry and challenges workers face in establishing trust and hiring. We identify well-established collective action that companies ignore. Greater accountability can improve worker well-being and reduce inequity in the gig economy. Protecting collective action and promoting collective bargaining rights can significantly improve gig workers' bargaining power. Moreover, the city government can introduce collective-level regulatory interventions. Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber, Lyft, and the rideshare economy can reduce the social costs associated with TNC-induced traffic congestion, labor exploitation, and the local decline of taxi businesses by using direct regulation measures supplemented by a small tax on rides. Finally, they suggest ways for immediate and relatively low-cost worker protections.

What does “gig work” entail? People who perform tasks or provide services through an “app”, platform, or online retailer, is classified as gig workers. Most gig workers earn wages through a website or app run by a tech company and perform on-demand labor such as ride-sharing, food, package delivery, errands, and personal services (Dokuka et al., 2022). Other gig workers earn wages writing and editing documents and articles, creating and editing videos, and helping others with tasks such as web design, bookkeeping, or coding. The gig economy refers to the labor market surrounding gig work; the gig workforce includes workers who earn money through gig work; and gig jobs are tasks or services that workers perform as gig work (Auguste et al., 2022).

Gig work is typically performed by independent contractors or freelancers, and gig workers control when, where, how, and how much to work. The broad definition of gig work captures a wide range of tasks and services for gig workers characterized by a large range of earnings, skills, and access to health, retirement, and leave benefits. Since gig work can either occur in-person or remotely, gig workers’ characteristics, protections, and targeted supports are also varied.

20. Conclusion

The Gig Economy is a new thing which has been a subject of research in developed countries and now it is an important area of awareness in developing countries like India, Bangladesh, etc. There is a need to study this area along with the challenges faced by women gig workers. Patterns of work are rapidly changing, with increased platformization of labor and a move toward more fragmented, more informal work. The gig economy or digital labor market is the type of labor market where work is offered and taken through online platforms with a less direct employer responsibility towards workers compared to traditional forms of employment. The Gig economy is growing in India. Due to the sudden onset of the pandemic, the country was under lockdown. There was a significant dip in work from platforms. Flexible jobs are rising among women’s work participation online from home as security, safety, social, and economic concerns were raised in other jobs. Women are logistic drivers, delivery agents, and workers across all the platforms in various fields and job types. Women work for lesser hours than men due to family responsibilities. The analysis centers on women gig adaptations, challenges, age relevance at work, domestic work impact, and comfort zones.

The economic impacts are disclosing the women workers' plight with earlier gigs. Quality and availability of devices, data costs, and competition challenges are examined. Language disambiguation, cultural loss, mainstream exposure, behavior, credit denial, analysis contacts, and social concerns are other challenges raised. Along with work isolation issues and the need for active support network suggestions, participative assistance with incorporated strategies are derived. The results mainly focus on women gig workers in India as well as in the world. The analysis then narrows to a specific region where there are tremendous growth and challenges for women workers. The recent development and demand can heavily impact them. At last, limitations, future research, and additional investigations are discovered across a wider view.

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