

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY GIG WORKERS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE FAST-FOOD INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

The rapid rise of the gig economy has essentially changed India's job market, The food delivery gig worker avails the services through a variety of existing networks such as Swiggy, domino's, KFC, Burger King, Uber Eats, and Zomato. This research paper describes several challenges and opportunities experienced by gig workers particularly those doing food delivery for big platforms like Swiggy, Domino's, KFC, Burger King, Uber Eats, and Zomato. The major challenges proved to be income instability, lack of social security benefits, and job stress, all of which work towards an unstable work environment. On the advantages side, such jobs have flexibility and freedom for workers on how they schedule their time. The findings suggest improving labor policies, protections, and training opportunities to address these problems; this would create a conducive environment for the gig economy worker and benefit productivity in the fast food industry.

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Introduction:

In the last few years, the gig economy offered very briefly tagged or flexible work and service independent work, was adopted with the power to transform labor markets across the globe. This trend has gained tremendous momentum in India, and technology coupled with changes in consumption patterns has finally brought it alive. The gig economy is the labor pool that is characterized by short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs. This kind of model has its leaps and bounds for workers, especially in areas like fast food where rapid service and delivery are in demand.

Gig workers are those temporary and flexible independents who render services to the most sought and specific industries such as ridesharing, hospitality, and delivery outlets. They now play a prominent role in India's fast-food culture, where most of these gig workers work strictly as food deliveries, always

partnering on leading platforms like Swiggy, Domino's, McDonald's, Zomato, and Uber Eats when food is ordered-only-delivered to make city life easier. Since the advent of a burgeoning gig economy and the seemingly bright opportunities that accompany such growth, gig workers are faced with several challenges, among which are income volatility, non-existing social security benefits, and empty promises of exploitation protections. In India, where evolution in policy frameworks for gig work is still taking place, looking closely into the subtle experiences of fast-food gig workers will be beneficial in not only understanding their plight but also in identifying possible areas of improvement.

This study aims to examine the challenges and opportunities in which the fast-food industry marks the occurrence of gig work in India. The research focuses specifically on gig workers in the fast-food industry and will highlight the complexity of gig employment

while providing insights to inform better labor policy and practice within this industry.

Definition by McKinsey Global Institute:

McKinsey defines the gig economy as “an economic system in which temporary, flexible jobs are commonplace, and companies tend to hire more independent contractors and freelancers instead of full-time employees.” This definition critiques the structural changes in work relationships.

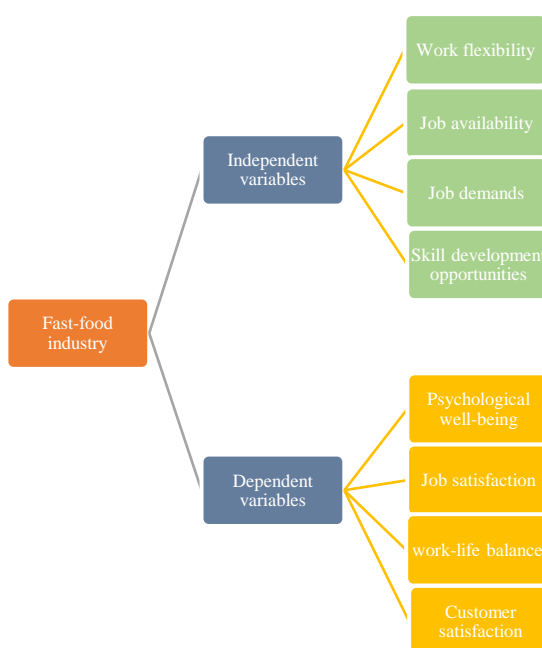
Major food chains in India:

McDonald's:

Number of Employees: Approximately 15,000 employees, including both full-time and part-time.

Gig Workers: Around 3,000 gig workers engaged primarily in delivery roles through food delivery apps like Swiggy and Zomato.

Conceptual framework:



Research Methodology:

- Research Design: Descriptive study methods have been used for the current research study
- Source of Data: The data has been collected through the primary source, i.e., the Questionnaire method. In addition to this, the data has been collected

¹ https://ncaer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/NCAER_Report_Platform_Workers_August_28_2023.pdf

through secondary sources, i.e., articles, various websites, journals, research papers, books, etc.

- Sample size: 40 Respondents.
- Sample Area: Kalyan- Dombivli regions

Objectives of the Study:

- 1) To identify the key challenges faced by gig workers in the fast-food industry.
- 2) To analyze the opportunities that gig work offers to fast food industry workers.
- 3) To evaluate the impact of gig work on the overall well-being of fast-food gig workers.

Hypothesis of the Study:

- H₀** Gig workers in the fast-food industry do not face any significant challenges, particularly in terms of job security and benefits.
- H₁** Gig workers in the fast-food industry face significant challenges, particularly in terms of job security and benefits.
- H₀** Gig workers in the fast-food industry do not face any significant opportunities.
- H₁** Gig workers in the fast-food industry face significant opportunities.
- H₀** There is no significant impact of gig work on the overall well-being of fast-food gig workers.
- H₁** There is a significant impact of gig work on the overall well-being of fast-food gig workers.

Limitation of study:

1. The current study only focused on gig workers in the fast-food industry, and no other industry was covered to understand the challenges and opportunities for them.
2. The research is limited to a specified area for the study.
3. The diversity of gig workers in the fast-food industry may not be fully represented due to time and money constraints which leads to limited sample size.

Review of Literature:

Vandna, Kapil Kumar. “Understanding the challenges and opportunities for sustainable practices in online

food delivery platforms.” December 2023. The research shows how urgent it is to tackle sustainability challenges in online food delivery platforms. This industry's growth also provides an opportunity to stimulate admirable change and help save the earth from decay. It becomes imperative for all, including platform owners, gig workers, consumers, technology providers, and policymakers, to work together to create a sustainable and responsible food delivery ecosystem. Ultimately, on a journey toward sustainability online food delivery platforms collect collective commitment and work through continuous improvement.

Dr. H. Yasmeen Sultana, Ajmal Faiz V. “Impact of Gig Economy on Food Delivery Workers in Union Territory of Puducherry India.” (2024) The traditional frames of employer-employee relationships would be soon disrupted due to an increase in gig employment, particularly towards further formalization of work on the platforms like Uber Eats, Swiggy, and Zomato. It is quite evident that, for the workers who deliver, things don't improve as the service delivery apps' internal architectures remain entirely opaque to them since the systems of incentive are capricious, working conditions are unregulated, collective bargaining power is prohibitive, and the working conditions are unregulated. This was how the scenario would continue for delivery personnel.

Charlene li, Miranda mirosa, Phil bremer. “Review of online food delivery platforms and their impacts on sustainability.” (2020) This review has contributed to three major areas. Firstly, it is the first interdisciplinary review that truly ties together academic research across the wide range of areas impacted by the increased extent of online food delivery. Secondly, it discussed the opportunities and challenges posed by these impacts. Finally, it provides avenues for action for all stakeholders, including online food delivery industry practitioners, policy-makers, consumers, and academics, to maximize positive impacts and minimize

negative ones. The future of online food delivery is bright.

Nikhil Polke, Sachin Tripathi, Mr. Rushil Chandra. “A critical study of the demand and supply in relation to food delivery apps like zomato and swiggy in India.” (2022) This study tries to ascertain the root of varied customer and income penetration between the two applications' price strategies. Zomato provides a heavy discount, which reduces revenue from the higher volume of customers on the one side, while Swiggy offers fewer discounts and ends up costing fewer customers with much higher revenue rates when compared to Zomato. Thus, applications would do well to understand that the discounts and profit margins would have to be correlated.

Sazzad Parwez. “COVID-19 pandemic and work precarity at digital food platforms: A delivery worker's perspective.” (2022) This practical study develops towards understanding of labor-capital relations and rising precarity in work at India's app-based food platforms. The operating model of platforms restricts their information asymmetries and, as such, options available to food delivery workers; given that, they prohibit workers from making even educated decisions. Complicated performance management systems keep workers unaware of the complex controls and work as additional checks. The digital platform-control elements allow platforms to digitally manage labor processes that would be geographically scattered. It also guaranteed minimization of the interfaces of delivery workers for any possible unionization.

Sergio A. Useche, Sebastian Robayo, Mauricio Orozco-Fontalvo. “The hidden cost of your ‘too fast food’: stress-related factors and fatigue predict food delivery riders’ occupational crashes.” (2024) According to a study It transformed transportation in most cities. However, studies on the work conditions of delivery riders hardly looked into the highly demanding a stressful environment under which they

all work with particular reference to the gap in the literature which was safety overlooking this fatigue that experienced these riders. Because it has far-reaching implications, it can mediate between very challenging job settings and psychosocial stressors concerning their impacts on safety outcomes. Previous studies have been done examining several factors contributing to occupational stress and risks to safety. Still, not many studies have directly pointed fatigue to the occurrence of traffic crash incidence among two-wheeled food delivery riders. Focusing on these relationships, studies currently point to a very urgent need for an extensive understanding of how work-related fatigue affects occupational safety, calling upon specific policies and interventions needed to manage stress and fatigue for better overall health and safety of these riders in the gig economy.

Shuhao Ma, Paulo Bala, Valentina Nisi, John Zimmerman, Nuno Jardim Nunes. “Uncovering gig workers-centered design opportunities in food delivery work.” (2023) According to this study, the Gig economy and digital labor platforms started embedding food delivery at the center of the current socioeconomic condition, promising entry-level work, flexibility, and other benefits. Researchers remain divided regarding such benefits that these platforms have given to workers and society. The results developed demonstrate that delivery work is complex and difficult because of the entanglements of physical, digital, social, natural, and human factors. We captured an outlined discussion on gig worker-centered opportunities that emerged from work challenges and that echo what food couriers expect concerning support: visions for work, justice, and inclusion.

R. Sudha, K.P. Jaheer Mukhtar, K.C. Shalini. “Choice of gig work and satisfaction of GWS (Food Delivery service in Coimbatore).”(2024) The study claims that the emergence of gig work points to a prominent change in the work scenario in India, driven by the

turbulence among large and young minds in the country, looking for flexible options in jobs. The said study points to the fact that to most new-age gig workers, especially in food delivery, these jobs are actually seen as supplements to other existing jobs and therefore would let them work on their own time and take up work at different hours of the day, unlike traditional jobs. With changing times, workers now have access to safety and ease of operations instead of the traditional unorganized work, which was mostly based on long, unsafe operations. This only adds another dimension as to why gig work is being censured and publicized by both the state and central governments as a recognition of their growing economic importance and contribution to GDP growth.

Research Gap:

Integrated Sustainability Efforts Limited Focus: While several studies discuss sustainability in online food delivery areas, empirical research into sustainability challenges linked with feasible interventions designed specifically for delivery riders, keeping in view their unique roles and experiences in this ecosystem, is still lacking.

Understanding Agency or Rights of Workers: Existing investigations have characterized the precariousness of gig labor and a model of employer-worker dynamics, but further research still must be conducted on how delivery workers can exercise their rights, the impacts of collective bargaining, or possible policy interventions that would directly redress their needs.

Effect of Occupational Stress and Safety: A few studies discuss the possible relationship of work stress with safety outcomes, but not much of an attempt has been made to quantitatively link stress and fatigue to crashes among food delivery riders; hence, further could be highlighted on occupational health and safety measures.

Regional and Cultural Divergence: The studies mostly focus on specific geographical regions like Puducherry and Coimbatore, and they do not understand how cultural and socioeconomic factors affect the lives of gig workers in the fast-food industry across various regions of India and beyond.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Data analysis is the compilation and structuring of information for problem-solving. Data interpretation and data analysis are part of understanding the totality of research and decision-making. Also, the raw data need analyzing, sorting, and processing so that the results for identifying loops, trends, and other patterns can be achieved statistically, computationally, or through other logic. In practice, data analysis refers to this procedure. These outputs transform enormous amounts of data collected with the help of software such as Excel, Python, and other specialized applications, into results that are meaningful and well-organized. On the other hand, data interpretation puts analytics results into context and makes them become useful insights that are relevant to certain objectives or situations.

ANOVA ANALYSIS :**Table 1.** The impact of part-time work on physical and mental health, whether positive or negative.

ANOVA: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
PA	40	91	2.275	0.30705		
V12	40	135	3.375	0.80449		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	24.2	1	24.2	43.5433	0.000	3.96347
Within Groups	43.35	78	0.55577			
Total	67.55	79				
	Reject Ho if the p Value is less than 0.05					
Hence it is concluded the impact of part-time work on physical and mental health, whether positive or negative.						

Regarding the effects on physical and mental health, the ANOVA test findings show a significant difference between the two groups (PA and V12). The null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected since the p-value is 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance level. This implies that the kind of employment whether full-time or part-time has a big impact on both mental and physical health. The conclusion that the observed difference being statistically significant is supported by the fact that the between-group variance ($SS = 24.2$) is significantly higher than the within-group variance ($SS = 43.35$). The significance of this disparity is further highlighted by the F-statistic of 43.5433.

Table 2. The Frequency of Job-Related Challenges

ANOVA: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
PG	40	82	2.05	0.04872		
V04	40	128	3.2	0.83077		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	26.45	1	26.45	60.1487	0.000	3.96347
Within Groups	34.3	78	0.43974			
Total	60.75	79				
	Reject Ho if the p Value is less than 0.05					
Hence it is concluded Frequency of Job-Related Challenges						

The frequency of job-related obstacles differs significantly between the two groups (PG and V04), according to the findings of the ANOVA test. The null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected since the p-value is 0.000, below the 0.05 significance level. This suggests notable differences in the frequency of work-related difficulties between the two groups. The conclusion of a significant difference is supported by the fact that the between-group variance ($SS = 26.45$) is significantly larger than the within-group variance ($SS = 34.3$). The significance of this difference is further supported by the high F-statistic of 60.1487, which highlights the influence of work-related difficulties on the groups.

Scope of the study:

The findings can help develop labor policies that address the needs of fast-food gig workers in terms of working conditions and social security.

The insights from this research could help policymakers understand the unique needs and challenges facing gig workers so that they can design and implement targeted labor regulations and social security measures for such workers.

The results could also guide the design of advocacy programs seeking to empower gig workers with tools and support systems that help them deal with their working conditions.

The study may also indicate possible areas for technological innovations to improve efficiency and safety in gig work for a broad increase in worker satisfaction and consumer experience in fast food.

By pointing out the key challenges and opportunities facing gig workers, research can stimulate academic debate on the ethical dimensions of gig employment for further studies concerning worker rights and protections.

It can also motivate the crafting of initiatives under corporate social responsibility from companies that

operate within the gig economy for partnership projects geared towards improving the working conditions and financial security of gig workers.

Conclusion:

The empirical study on gig workers in the fast food industry identifies a more difficult landscape. Although gig work has its advantages a flexible schedule and extra income it also has a lot of drawbacks like no job security, low income, no benefits, and limited training opportunities. Most of these employees are subjected to mental stress from inconsistency demand and long working hours, leaving little or no support for structure. But of course, there are virtues in gig work adaptability, and flexibility in the workplace that empowerment can also put into workers' sense of control in scheduling. Given the dependency of the fast food business on gig workers, better regulatory measures and protections along with benefits and training would help enable a more sustainable and productive workforce.

Summary of findings

- Due to their inconsistent income and lack of social security benefits like health insurance and retirement plans, gig workers experience financial instability.
- Stress and long hours negatively affect employees' physical and mental health, necessitating improved safety and health protocols.
- Gig workers have more influence over how they integrate work and life since gig work allows scheduling flexibility.
- Poor compensation, limited career advancement, and inadequate training are common challenges faced by workers, underscoring the need for improved labor laws.
- Since gig workers don't have access to training, offering skill development programs could boost their output and contentment at work.

Suggestions:

1. Depict widely acceptable and fair remuneration levels which show the degree of workload and the prevailing market rates.
2. Generation workers should have the freedom to schedule their shifts and working hours around their availability to improve the practice of work-life integration.
3. Enhance performance and customer satisfaction with performance-driven rewards such as bonuses.
4. Inducting and retraining gig workers are paramount for their arming with relevant skills and insights pertinent to their duties.
5. Look for Partnerships or Benefits Programs that would allow gig Workers to obtain Health Insurance and Retirement Pension plans.
6. Establish a System for gig Workers to Raise Concerns, Issues, and Feedback more easily.
7. Incorporate easy-to-use applications for scheduling, payments, and taking customer orders to improve effectiveness and measurement of performance.
8. Conduct regular safety drills and provision of safety gear to gig workers carrying out deliveries or working onsite.
9. Develop unionistic strategies for members such as the availability of forums where they can interact, exchange ideas, and encourage each other to create cohesion.

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