GIG WORKERS PERCEPTION ON GIG ECONOMY AND THEIR ECONOMIC GROWTH IN RURAL LIFESTYLE

Dr. Shyamala K, Lakshmi Priya J & Priya Dharshini S

Associate professor,Department of commerce

S.D.N.B Vaishnav College for Women, Chromepet, Chennai-600044

student of Department of B.com(general)

S.D.N.B Vaishnav College for Women, Chromepet, Chennai-600044

ABSTRACT:

The gig economy, a flexible labour market of short-term jobs, is expanding rapidly in India, with gig workers expected to reach 23-25 million by 2030. This model provides employment opportunities beyond local constraints, especially in rural areas, by enabling remote work, freelance jobs, and service-based roles. It helps bridge employment gaps, supports skill development, and connects workers to wider markets. Additionally, it offers new income avenues for artisans, farmers, and entrepreneurs without requiring urban migration.

INTRODUCTION:

A gig economy is a free market system where organizations hire independent workers for short-term commitments. The term "gig" is slang for a job that lasts a specified period of time

G.I.G is also a fairly commonly used abbreviation. Gig abbreviation could mean, God is Good, Get in Gear, Growing in Grace, or any number of other things depending on the situation

Currently, there are 7-8 million gig workers in India and expected to grow at a CAGR of ~12% and reach 23-25 million by 2030, constituting 4.1% of the total workforce.

In rural areas, the gig economy can bridge employment gaps by connecting individuals to opportunities beyond their local region. This includes freelance work, remote jobs, and services like delivery or transportation, creating new income streams without the need for urban migration. It also enables skill development and access to wider markets, particularly for artisans, farmers, or small-scale entrepreneurs.

OBJECTIVES:

1**. Creating Jobs:** Providing diverse work opportunities for rural residents, including remote and freelance jobs, to reduce unemployment.

2. **Supporting Local Skills**: Helping rural workers use their talents, such as crafting, farming, or technical expertise, to earn income through digital platforms.

3. **Preventing Urban Migration**: Offering reliable income options within villages to discourage people from moving to cities for work.

4. **Encouraging Small Businesses**: Helping rural entrepreneurs, farmers, and artisans connect with larger markets and grow their businesses.

5. **Boosting Digital Access:** Increasing access to technology and digital tools, enabling rural communities to participate in the gig economy.

SCOPE:

The gig economy has the potential to transform rural livelihoods by providing flexible, income-generating opportunities that leverage local skills and resources. By bridging geographical gaps and facilitating market access, the gig economy can unlock economic growth and empowerment for rural communities. This can lead to improved financial stability, increased entrepreneurship, and enhanced quality of life for rural residents

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. Kalleberg, A. L. (2009): "Precarious Work, Insecure Workers"

This study examines the rise of precarious employment, including gig work, and its implications for economic stability and job security. Kalleberg highlights the increasing casualization of labour, especially in rural areas, where opportunities for stable employment are limited. The findings suggest that while gig work provides temporary economic relief, it often fails to meet the standards of decent work outlined in SDG 8.

2. De Stefano, V. (2016): "The Rise of the 'Just-in-Time Workforce': On-Demand Work, Crowd Work, and Labour Protection"

De Stefano explores the gig economy's emergence as a global labour trend, with a focus on rural gig workers. The study underscores the lack of labour protections in gig work, which can exacerbate economic vulnerabilities. The paper calls for stronger policy measures to align gig work with SDG 8's objectives of promoting decent work and economic growth.

3. Graham, M., Hjorth, I., & Lehdonvirta, V. (2017): "Digital Labour and Development: Impacts of Global Digital Labour Platforms"

This research investigates the role of digital labour platforms in creating economic opportunities for rural workers. While gig platforms provide access to global markets, the study reveals that rural workers often struggle with low wages and inconsistent work, highlighting a need for better regulation to ensure fair economic growth and job quality.

4. Wood, A. J., Graham, M., Lehdonvirta, V., & Hjorth, I. (2019): "Good Gig, Bad Gig: Autonomy and Algorithmic Control in the Global Gig Economy"

Wood and colleagues examine the paradox of autonomy versus control in gig work. The study finds that rural gig workers value the flexibility of gig work but often face exploitation due to opaque algorithms and limited bargaining power. This dynamic poses challenges to achieving SDG 8's goals of equitable and decent employment.

5. Meijerink, J., Keegan, A., & Bondarouk, T. (2021): "Alternative Work Arrangements and Employee Well-Being: A Review and Research Agenda"

This review discusses alternative work arrangements, including gig work, and their effects on worker well-being. For rural gig workers, the findings emphasize the importance of balancing economic benefits with mental health and job satisfaction, which are critical for long-term economic growth and meeting SDG 8 targets.

TABLE 1.1

GENDER

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Male	79	48.8
Female	83	51.2
Total	162	100

Inference

The majority of respondents are female (51.2%), indicating a slightly higher participation of women in gig work. This suggests a growing trend of women engaging in flexible employment opportunities. However, the nearly equal distribution between males (48.8%) and females highlights gender inclusivity in the gig economy. Understanding gender dynamics in gig work is crucial for addressing workplace challenges and promoting equal opportunities for all.

TABLE 1.2

AGE

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Above 18	42	25.9
20-25	38	23.5
25-30	43	26.5
35-40	39	24.1
Total	162	100

Inference

The majority of respondents are aged 18-24, showing strong participation from younger women employees, while mid-career groups (25-44) also show moderate engagement. Women aged 45 and above represent the smallest segment, indicating potential challenges for senior employees. This emphasizes the need to address emotional intelligence and well-being across all age groups to support SDG 3.

TABLE 1.3

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Matriculation	40	24.7
Secondary	32	19.8
Higher secondary	27	16.7
Under graduate	30	18.5
Post graduate	33	20.4
Total	162	100

Inference

The majority of respondents are undergraduates (41%), indicating strong representation from this educational group, followed by postgraduates (29%), showing significant engagement from higher-educated individuals. Participation from those with HSC qualifications (17%) and PhDs (13%) is comparatively lower. This diverse educational background is crucial for studying emotional intelligence in women employees and supporting SDG 3

TABLE 1.4

SALARY

SALARY	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Below 10000	47	29
15000-20000	42	25.9
20000-25000	39	24.1
25000-30000	34	21
Total	162	100

Inference

The majority of gig workers earn below ₹20,000 (54.9%), with a significant 29% earning below ₹10,000. This suggests that low earnings are a common concern in the gig economy, highlighting financial instability for many workers. The distribution also indicates that a significant portion (45.1%) earns above ₹20,000, suggesting that income levels in gig work can vary widely based on job type and platform.

TABLE 1.5

DO YOU FEEL GIG WORK PROVIDES YOU WITH A SENSE OF FULLFILLMENT?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Yes	50	30.9
No	58	35.8
Sometimes	54	33.3
Total	162	100

Inference

Job satisfaction in the gig economy appears to be mixed. While 30.9% of workers report being satisfied, a larger proportion (35.8%) are dissatisfied, and 33.3% experience occasional satisfaction. This suggests that while gig work offers flexibility and independence, many workers face challenges such as job instability, income uncertainty, or unfavorable working conditions

TABLE 1.6

DO YOU FEEL RESPECTED AND VALUED AS A GIG WORKER?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Yes	68	42
No	43	26.5
Sometimes	51	31.5
Total	162	100

Inference

42% of gig workers feel respected in their jobs, but 26.5% do not, while 31.5% only experience occasional respect. This indicates that respect and recognition in gig work are inconsistent, possibly due to factors such as employer treatment, customer interactions, and the perceived value of gig jobs in society. Addressing these concerns could improve job satisfaction and worker retention.

TABLE 1.7

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOUR LEVEL OF WORKING AS A GIG ECONOMY?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
very satisfied	28	17.3
Satisfied	37	22.8
Neutral	32	19.8
Dissatisfied	42	25.9
Very dissatisfied	23	14.2
Total	162	100

Inference

Satisfaction with gig work is highly polarized. While 40.1% of workers are satisfied, an equal percentage (40.1%) are dissatisfied, and 19.8% remain neutral. This suggests that while gig work provides benefits like flexibility, it also has significant drawbacks such as unstable income, lack of job security, and challenging work conditions.

TABLE 1.8

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING GIG PLATFORMS DO YOU WORK?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Uber	25	15.4
Ola	26	16
Swiggy	25	15.4
Zomato	20	12.3
Uber company	14	8.6
Amazon	22	13.6
Others	30	18.5
Total	162	100

Inference

Gig workers are engaged across multiple platforms, with a significant presence in ride-sharing (Uber/Ola - 31.4%) and food delivery (Swiggy/Zomato - 27.7%). A substantial 22.2% work for other companies like Amazon, indicating a broad diversification of gig employment opportunities beyond transportation and food services.

TABLE 1.9

WHAT TYPE OF GIG WORK DO YOU MAINLY ENGAGE IN

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Transport	18	11.1
Food delivery	22	13.6
Courier	34	21
Home services	26	16
Freelancing	20	12.3
Others	42	25.9
Total	162	100

Inference

The most common type of gig work is "Other" (25.9%), followed by courier services (21%) and home services (16%). Transport and food delivery collectively make up 24.7% of gig work, showing a significant reliance on mobility-based jobs. Freelancing accounts for 12.3%, indicating that digital or remote gig work remains a smaller but notable segment.

TABLE 1.10

ARE YOU A FULL TIME OR PART TIME WORKER?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Full time	79	48.8
Part time	83	51.2
Total	162	100

Inference

The distribution of full-time (48.8%) and part-time (51.2%) gig workers is nearly equal. This suggests that a significant portion of workers use gig jobs as a supplementary income source rather than their primary livelihood. The high percentage of part-time workers reflects the flexibility that gig work offers, attracting those who may be students, homemakers, or individuals balancing multiple jobs.

TABLE 1.11

DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER INCOME?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Yes	74	45.7
No	88	54.3
Total	162	100

Inference

More than half of gig workers (54.3%) rely solely on gig work for income, indicating financial dependence on this employment model. Meanwhile, 45.7% have other income sources, aligning with the high rate of part-time gig workers. This highlights the importance of gig work in supplementing income for many workers, rather than serving as a stable, long-term career option.

TABLE 1.12

DO YOU HAVE A LONG TERM CAREER PLAN AS A GIG WORKER?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Yes	73	45.1
No	89	54.9
Total	162	100

Inference

A majority (54.9%) of respondents do not see gig work as a long-term career, indicating concerns about stability, benefits, or growth opportunities in the sector. However, 45.1% do consider gig work as a viable long-term option, showing that for some, gig jobs provide sustainable career opportunities, possibly due to flexibility and income potential

TABLE 1.13

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN REASONS FOR CHOOSING GIG WORK OVER A TRADITIONAL JOB?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%

Flexibility	28	17.3
Independence	22	13.6
Potential for higher learning	36	22.2
Difficulty in finding a traditional job	43	26.5
Others	33	20.4
Total	162	100

Inference

The most common reason for choosing gig work is difficulty in finding traditional employment (26.5%), indicating that many workers enter the gig economy out of necessity rather than preference. However, financial motivation is also a major factor, with 22.2% citing higher earning potential. Flexibility (17.3%) and independence (13.6%) are also key attractions, showing that gig work appeals to those seeking work-life balance and autonomy.

TABLE 1.14

HOW DO YOU RATE JOB SECURITY IN THE GIG WORK?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
More secure	51	31.5
Not secure	54	33.3
Less secure	57	35.2
Total	162	100

Inference

Job security is a major concern for gig workers, with 35.2% feeling their job is "less secure" and 33.3% considering it "not secure." Only 31.5% believe gig work offers security, highlighting instability as a major challenge in the gig economy. These concerns may stem from lack of long-term contracts, inconsistent work availability, and absence of employment benefits.

TABLE 1.15

HEALTHCARE BENEFITS AS A GIG WORKER

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Yes	89	54.9
No	73	45.1
Total	162	100

Inference

While 54.9% of gig workers have access to healthcare benefits, a significant 45.1% do not, suggesting that many workers lack essential protections. This indicates that while some gig platforms offer health-related benefits, a large portion of the workforce remains vulnerable without employer-provided healthcare, emphasizing the need for better worker protections in the gig economy.

TABLE 1.16

HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE THE GIG ECONOMY IN TERMS OF PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL AREAS

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Positive - it creates more job opportunities	43	26.5
Neutral- it has little impact on employment	37	22.8
Negative- it provides unstable or low quality jobs	41	25.3
Im not sure /no opinion	41	25.3
Total	162	100

Inference

Perceptions of the gig economy's impact on rural employment are mixed. While 26.5% of respondents view it positively, citing increased job opportunities, 25.3% believe it provides unstable or low-quality jobs. Additionally, 22.8% see little impact on employment, and 25.3% remain unsure. These findings highlight the need for policy interventions to enhance job stability and quality in rural gig work.

TABLE 1.17

WHAT WAS YOUR PRIMARY REASON FOR JOINING THE GIG ECONOMY INSTEAD OF TRADITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Flexibility and independence	39	24.1
Lack of traditional job opportunities in my area	38	23.5
Higher earning potential	45	27.8
It was the only available opinion	40	24.7
Total	162	100

Inference

The primary reasons for joining the gig economy vary, with higher earning potential (27.8%) being the most common motivation. Flexibility and independence (24.1%) also play a key role, while 23.5% of respondents cite the lack of traditional job opportunities as a driving factor. Additionally, 24.7% joined because it was their only available option, highlighting the role of necessity. These findings emphasize the gig economy's appeal for financial gains and flexibility, while also revealing its importance as an employment alternative in areas with limited job opportunities.

TABLE 1.18

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE FINANCIAL STABILITY GIG WORK HAS PROVIDED FOR YOU

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Very stable- I have a steady income from gig work	50	30.9
Somewhat stable - My income is inconsistent but manageable	31	19.1
Unstable - My income is irregular and unpredictable	36	22.2
Not stable at all -1 struggle to make ends meet	45	27.8
Total	162	100

Inference

Financial stability in gig work varies among respondents. While 30.9% report having a steady income, 19.1% find it somewhat stable but inconsistent. However, 22.2% describe their income as irregular and unpredictable, and 27.8% struggle to make ends meet. These findings highlight that while gig work provides stability for some, many face income uncertainty, emphasizing the need for better financial security measures.

TABLE 1.19

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE THAT GIG WORK PROVIDES?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Very good-It allows me to balance personal and work life	30	18.5
Good-I manage to balance, though it's challenging at times	30	18.5
Neutral-Work-life balance is neither good nor bad	38	23.5
Poor-It's hard to balance work and personal life	35	21.6
Very poor-Gig work consumes most of my time and energy	29	17.9
Total	162	100

Inference :

The majority of respondents (21.6%) report difficulty in balancing work and personal life, indicating that gig work can create challenges in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Additionally, 17.9% feel that gig work consumes most of their time and energy, further highlighting the struggle for balance. However, 37% of respondents believe they manage to balance their work and personal life, even if it is challenging. A neutral stance is held by 23.5% of participants, suggesting that for many, gig work neither enhances nor significantly disrupts their work-life balance. Overall, these findings suggest that while some gig workers successfully manage their schedules, a significant portion faces difficulties in achieving a sustainable balance, emphasizing the need for better work-hour management and support systems.

TABLE 1.20

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN ACCESSING GIG WORK OPPORTUNITIES IN YOUR RURAL AREAS

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Limited access to high-speed internet	29	17.9
Lack of available platforms or jobs	30	18.5
Limited knowledge or skill set to qualify for certain gigs	37	22.8
Low pay rates offered in rural areas	29	17.9
No challenges - I have easy access to gig work	37	22.8
Total	162	100

Inference

Respondents from rural areas face a variety of barriers to accessing gig work opportunities. Notably, high competition from other gig workers and limited local support each account for 22.8% of the challenges reported, suggesting that community-level resources and guidance for gig workers may be lacking. Additionally, lack of available platform jobs (18.5%) and limited access to high-speed internet (17.9%) indicate infrastructure

TABLE 1.21

DO YOU THINK GIG WORK HAS IMPROVED YOUR OVERALL FINANCIAL SITUATION?

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT%
Yes, significantly I earn more than I did in traditional jobs	23	14.2
Yes, somewhat It's better than unemployment	32	19.8
Yes, somewhat It's betterthan underemployment	33	20.4
No, my financial situation is about the same as before	33	20.4
No, it's worse - I earn less than I did in traditional jobs	41	25.3
Total	162	100

Inference

The majority of respondents (25.3%) report that gig work has worsened their financial situation, as they earn less than they did in traditional jobs. This suggests that while gig work provides flexibility, it may not always offer financial stability or sufficient income. However, a significant portion (40.2%) believes that gig work is at least better than unemployment or underemployment, indicating that it serves as a viable alternative for those struggling to find traditional employment. Only 14.2% state that gig work has significantly improved their financial situation, showing that higher earnings in the gig economy are not widespread. Overall, these findings highlight the mixed financial impact of gig work, suggesting that while it offers opportunities, many workers still face economic challenges that need to be addressed through better pay structures and worker protections.

TABLE 1.22

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE SUPPORT YOU RECEIVE FROM GIG PLATFORMS IN TERMS OF PAY, BENEFITS AND WORKER PROTECTION

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Excellent -1 feel well-supported and compensated	31	19.1
Good-I'm satisfied with the support I get	22	13.6
Fair I feel there are some gaps in support	41	ó
Poor-The support from platforms is minimal or nonexistent	40	24.7
Very Poor-I don't feel supported at all	28	17.3
Total	162	100

Inference

A sizable portion of respondents (19.1%) feel “excellent” about the pay, benefits, and worker protection provided by gig platforms, indicating a positive support system for some. Another 13.6% consider it “good,” suggesting moderate satisfaction. However, nearly half of the respondents (42%) rate their support as “poor” or “very poor,” highlighting a lack of adequate assistance for a substantial group. An additional 25.3% describe support as “fair,” implying there is still room for improvement. These findings underscore the uneven quality of platform support in the gig economy, emphasizing the need for stronger measures to ensure fair compensation, comprehensive benefits, and robust worker protections.

TABLE 1.23

HAS GIG WORK HELPED IMPROVE YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL AREAS

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Yes, it has allowed me to improve my standard of living	37	22.8
Yes, it's helped, but there are still challenges	40	24.7
No, it hasn't had much impact	36	22.2
No, it has made my situation worse	49	30.2
Total	162	100

Inference

Nearly half of the respondents (47.5%) report that gig work has improved their quality of life—either significantly (22.8%) or to some extent (24.7%)—indicating that gig opportunities can enhance living standards for a notable segment in rural areas. However, 22.2% see no real impact, and a considerable portion (30.2%) feel their situation has worsened due to gig work. These mixed outcomes suggest that while gig work holds promise for rural economic uplift, many individuals still face challenges or negative consequences, emphasizing the need for improved support, infrastructure, and protections to maximize the benefits of gig work in rural communities.

TABLE 1.24

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR GIG WORKERS IN RURAL AREAS

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Limited job opportunities	32	19.8
Low pay rates	42	25.9
Lack of job security or benefits	25	15.4
Limited access to training or skill development	33	20.4
Limited access to technology or infrastructure	30	18.5
Total	162	100

Inference

Low pay rates (25.9%) emerge as the biggest challenge for rural gig workers, indicating the difficulty of earning a sustainable income in the gig economy. Limited access to training or skill development (20.4%) and limited job opportunities (19.8%) further highlight the need for enhanced education and broader employment options. Additionally, lack of job security or benefits (15.4%) and limited access to technology or infrastructure (18.5%) underscore significant hurdles to long-term growth and stability. Addressing these challenges is essential to create equitable opportunities and improve the overall viability of gig work in rural areas.

TABLE 1.25

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN THE GIG ECONOMY TO BETTER SUPPORT RURAL WORKERS

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Higher pay rates and better compensation	26	16
More job opportunities or variety of gigs	33	20.4
Better access to training or skill development programs	34	21
More worker protections (e.g., healthcare, retirement benefits)	27	16.7
Improved infrastructure (e.g., internet access, transportation)	42	25.9
Total	162	100

Inference

The most significant demand (25.9%) is for improved infrastructure, including better internet access and transportation, emphasizing the need for connectivity and mobility. Better access to training and skill development programs (21.0%) and more job opportunities or variety of gigs (20.4%) also rank high, indicating that workers desire enhanced opportunities for career growth. Additionally, worker protections such as healthcare and retirement benefits (16.7%) and higher pay rates with better compensation (16.0%) are notable concerns. These findings suggest that to make gig work more sustainable and beneficial for rural workers, policymakers and gig platforms should focus on infrastructure development, skill enhancement, job diversity, and worker protections to create a more inclusive and supportive gig economy

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Do you think gig work has improved your overall financial situation	162	3.2284	1.39331	1.00	5.00
How would you rate the support you receive from gig platforms in terms of pay, benefits and worker protection	162	3.0741	1.35846	1.00	5.00
Has gig work helped improve your quality of life in rural areas	162	2.5988	1.14458	1.00	4.00
What do you think is the biggest challenge for gig workers in rural areas	162	2.9198	1.41412	1.00	5.00
What improvements would you like to see in the gig economy to better support rural workers	162	3.1605	1.42695	1.00	5.00
Gender	162	1.5123	.50140	1.00	2.00

Kruskal-Wallis Test

Ranks

	Gender	N	Mean Rank
	Male	79	81.94
	Female	83	81.08
	Total	162	
	Male	79	85.40
	Female	83	77.79
	Total	162	
	Male	79	78.98
	Female	83	83.90
	Total	162	

	Male	79	86.57
	Female	83	76.67
	Total	162	
	Male	79	84.55
	Female	83	78.60
	Total	162	

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Do you think gig work has improved your overall financial situation	How would you rate the support you receive from gigplatforms in terms of pay, benefits and worker protection	Has gig work helped improve your quality of life in rural areas	What do you think is the biggest challenge for gig workers in rural areas	What improvements would you like to see in the gig economy to better support rural workers
Chi-Square	.014	1.116	.476	1.883	.682
df	1	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.905	.291	.490	.170	.409

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Gender

- Financial Improvement ($p = 0.905$): The high p-value suggests that gig work does not significantly impact workers’ overall financial situation based on the data analyzed.
- Support from Gig Platforms ($p = 0.291$): The perceived support in terms of pay, benefits, and worker protection does not show significant variation among respondents.
- Quality of Life in Rural Areas ($p = 0.490$): No statistically significant evidence suggests that gig work is improving rural workers' quality of life.

- Biggest Challenges for Rural Gig Workers (p = 0.170): Although this has the lowest p-value, it is still above 0.05, indicating no significant agreement or trend in responses regarding the biggest challenge.
- Improvements Needed in the Gig Economy (p = 0.409): No significant pattern in responses about the improvements required to support rural gig workers.

FINDINGS:

- The gender distribution of gig workers is fairly balanced, with 51.2% female and 48.8% male, indicating a near-equal participation of both genders in the gig economy.
- The majority of gig workers fall in the 25-30 age group (26.5%), suggesting that young adults view gig work as a viable employment option.
- A significant proportion of gig workers have a post-graduate (20.4%) or undergraduate (18.5%) qualification, highlighting that highly educated individuals are also engaging in gig work.
- Nearly 55% of gig workers earn below ₹20,000, indicating that while gig work provides employment opportunities, income levels remain modest for most workers.
- Only 30.9% of respondents find gig work fulfilling, while 35.8% do not, suggesting mixed perceptions about job satisfaction.
- While 42% feel respected, a significant portion (26.5%) do not, indicating that social recognition of gig workers is still a concern.
- A significant portion of gig workers (40.1%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their work, but a higher percentage (40.1%) expressed dissatisfaction, indicating mixed perceptions about job satisfaction in the gig economy.
- The distribution of gig workers across platforms shows that Ola (16.0%) and Swiggy (15.4%) are the most commonly used, while other platforms collectively account for a significant share (18.5%), suggesting diversification in gig work opportunities.
- Courier services (21.0%) and "Other" types of gig work (25.9%) are the most common types of employment, indicating that gig work is not limited to transportation and food delivery.
- The gig workforce is almost evenly split, with 48.8% working full-time and 51.2% part-time, demonstrating that gig work serves as both a primary and supplementary income source.
- More than half of the gig workers (54.3%) do not have any additional income, suggesting that gig work is their primary source of earnings.
- A majority (54.9%) do not see gig work as a long-term career, suggesting that many consider it a temporary or supplementary source of income.
- The most cited reason for choosing gig work is difficulty in finding traditional jobs (26.5%), followed by potential for higher earnings (22.2%), indicating that many join the gig economy due to necessity rather than preference.
- A significant percentage of workers (35.2%) feel that their jobs are less secure, while only 31.5% believe their work provides security, highlighting concerns about stability in gig employment.

- While 54.9% of workers reported having access to healthcare benefits, 45.1% do not, indicating a substantial gap in healthcare coverage among gig workers.
- About 50% of gig workers report some level of financial stability, while 27.8% struggle to make ends meet, indicating that gig work provides mixed financial security, with a significant portion facing instability.
- While 37% of gig workers find work-life balance manageable or good, 21.6% find it difficult, showing that gig work offers flexibility but still presents challenges in balancing personal and work life.
- 26.5% believe the gig economy creates more job opportunities in rural areas, but 25.3% think it only provides unstable or low-quality jobs, highlighting a divided perception.
- The top reason for joining was higher earning potential (27.8%), followed by limited traditional job opportunities (23.5%), indicating that financial incentives and job scarcity are key motivators.
- The most common challenge faced by gig workers in rural areas is a lack of knowledge or skill set to qualify for certain gigs (22.8%), followed by limited access to high-speed internet (17.9%) and low pay rates in rural areas (17.9%).
- 25.3% of respondents feel their financial situation has worsened due to gig work, while 20.4% state that their financial status remains the same, suggesting that gig work does not always guarantee economic improvement.
- 24.7% of respondents feel that platform support is minimal or nonexistent, and 17.3% don't feel supported at all, highlighting dissatisfaction with gig work platforms.
- While 22.8% of gig workers report an improved standard of living, a significant 30.2% feel gig work has worsened their situation, indicating that the gig economy has mixed impacts on rural workers.
- The biggest challenge faced by gig workers in rural areas is low pay rates, cited by 25.9% of respondents. Additionally, limited job opportunities (19.8%), lack of job security or benefits (15.4%), limited access to training or skill development (20.4%), and limited access to technology or infrastructure (18.5%) are significant concerns. These findings suggest that financial stability, job security, and access to necessary resources are major barriers for rural gig workers.
- To better support rural gig workers, respondents prioritized better access to training or skill development programs (21%) and more job opportunities or gig variety (20.4%). Additionally, higher pay rates and better compensation (16%) were also seen as important improvements. These findings highlight the need for skill development initiatives and diverse job options to enhance rural gig workers' economic prospects.

SUGGESTION:

- Integrate sustainability concepts across disciplines to create a holistic learning approach.
- Encourage teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving to support sustainability initiatives.
- Use digital tools to enhance education on sustainability and provide interactive learning experiences.

- Conduct regular training and workshops on sustainability education.
- Encourage student-driven sustainability projects and community outreach.
- focused career counseling and job placement opportunities.
- Provide training on using gig platforms for rural workers to maximize opportunities.
- Advocate for policies to regulate payment structures and prevent exploitation.
- Improve internet connectivity and digital infrastructure in rural areas.
- Support small businesses and freelancers with financial and technical assistance.

CONCLUSION

The gig economy in India is growing rapidly, providing flexible work opportunities and boosting employment. It plays a vital role in bridging rural employment gaps by enabling remote and freelance work. This shift supports skill development and financial independence without requiring urban migration. As it expands, it can drive economic growth and empower small-scale entrepreneurs. However, ensuring fair wages, job security, and social protections is crucial for its long-term sustainability.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Broughton, A., Gloster, R., Marvell, R., & Green, M. (2018). *The experiences of individuals in the gig economy*. **Journal of Industrial Relations, 60(4), 465-488**.

2. Graham, M., Hjorth, I., & Lehdonvirta, V. (2017). *Digital labour and development: Impacts of global digital gig work on economic growth and livelihoods*. **Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research, 23(2), 135-162**.

3. Wood, A. J., Lehdonvirta, V., & Graham, M. (2018). *Good gig, bad gig: Autonomy and algorithmic control in the global gig economy*. **Work, Employment and Society, 32(1), 147-162**.

4. Kalleberg, A. L., & Vallas, S. P. (2018). *Probing precarious work: Theory, research, and politics*. **Research in the Sociology of Work, 31, 1-30**.

5. Schor, J. B., & Attwood-Charles, W. (2017). *The sharing economy: Labor, inequality, and social connection*. **Annual Review of Sociology, 43, 373-398**.

6. International Labour Organization (ILO). (2021). *The Role of Gig Work in Rural Economic Development: Opportunities and Challenges*. **Geneva, Switzerland: ILO Press**.

7. World Economic Forum. (2020). *The Future of Jobs Report: The Impact of the Gig Economy on Rural Workforce Development*. **WEF Global Policy Paper**.

8. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2022). *Rural Economies and Digital Platforms: The Role of Gig Work in Sustainable Development*. **OECD Rural Development Series**.
9. McKinsey Global Institute. (2019). *Independent Work: The Rise of the Gig Economy and Its Impact on Rural Workers*. **McKinsey & Company**.
10. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2022). *Leveraging the Gig Economy for Sustainable Rural Development*. **UNDP Policy Brief**.
11. World Bank. (2022). *How the Gig Economy is Reshaping Rural Labor Markets*. Retr
12. Harvard Business Review. (2021). *The Rise of Gig Work in Rural Areas: Challenges and Opportunities*.
13. Pew Research Center. (2022). *Freelancing and Gig Economy: Rural Perspectives*.
14. Brookings Institution. (2020). *The Gig Economy and Economic Growth in Rural Communities*.
15. Forbes. (2021). *Why Gig Work is Becoming a Lifeline for Rural Economies*.