

**THE GIG ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT CREATION IN THE  
DIGITAL ERA: EXPLORING THE OPPORTUNITIES AND  
FACILITATING CONDITIONS FOR POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

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**Sannegadu Rajesh**

*Ph.D., Senior Lecturer, University of Mauritius, Faculty of Law and Management, Moka Mauritius*

[r.sannegadu@uom.ac.mu](mailto:r.sannegadu@uom.ac.mu)

**Erceg Aleksandar**

*Ph.D., Full professor, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics and Business in Osijek, Osijek, Croatia*

[aleksandar.erceg@efos.hr](mailto:aleksandar.erceg@efos.hr)

**Pudaruth Sharmila**

*Ph.D., Senior Lecturer, University of Mauritius, Faculty of Law and Management, Moka Mauritius*

[sh.pudaruth@uom.ac.mu](mailto:sh.pudaruth@uom.ac.mu)

**Thanika Devi Juwaheer**

*Ph.D., Professor, University of Mauritius, Faculty of Law and Management, Moka Mauritius*

[roubina@uom.ac.mu](mailto:roubina@uom.ac.mu)

**Jovanka Damoska Sekuloska**

*Ph.D., Associate professor, University of Information Science and Technology "St. Paul the Apostle" Faculty of Computer Science & Engineering Ohrid, North Macedonia*

[jovanka.damoska@uist.edu.mk](mailto:jovanka.damoska@uist.edu.mk)

**Abstract**

*Digitalization, supported by improved Information and Communication Technology (ICT), has drastically disrupted the nature of employment, shifting from traditional long-term employment to stable employment and, more recently, towards short-term work arrangements, commonly known as the gig economy.*

*The gig economy has affected various sectors, including transportation, hospitality, healthcare, and education. In simple terms, the gig economy is characterized by short-term, flexible, and digitally platform-mediated work. On the one hand, the gig economy creates job opportunities; on the other hand, it raises concerns about job security, income levels, and employment rights. Both the individual and the organization should be well prepared to operate effectively in the gig economy. The potential benefits of the gig economy will be undermined without mutual preparedness. While the individual should cultivate their mindset regarding the terms and conditions of flexible work arrangements, organizations should develop short-term work practices, diverse reward strategies, and robust digitalization platforms to support the gig economy. With the rise of the gig economy, expected to reach USD 2,178.4 billion by 2034 (Business Research Insights, 2025), both individuals and organizations face a dilemma. The individual needs to reconcile stability and job security with job flexibility and autonomy. In contrast, the organization needs to strike a balance between stable work arrangements and the need to reduce costs and promote innovation.*

*While the gig economy is likely to grow, there is a pressing need to prepare both individuals and organizations for its opportunities and challenges.*

*Therefore, the objective of the paper is to explore the policy implications of the gig economy by analyzing the opportunities and facilitating conditions. The conceptual paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how stakeholders can leverage the potential of the gig economy to drive sustainable innovation and employment creation.*

**Keywords:** *Digitalization, the gig economy, organizational factors, employment creation*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The rapid advancement of digital technologies and the rise of innovative business models have significantly transformed traditional employment frameworks and reshaped the global labor market. The increasing digitalization of economic activities has not only created new work opportunities but has also fundamentally changed the nature, organization, and geographical distribution of labor. Digital technologies, combined with the widespread availability of high-speed Internet and online platforms, have facilitated the emergence of a borderless labor market, where individuals—especially freelancers—can offer their expertise and services on a global scale (Graham et al., 2017).

Consequently, the Internet has morphed into a vast, dynamic marketplace for labor, enabling the real-time exchange of knowledge, skills, and competencies across geographical boundaries. This transformation has redefined employment relationships, altered work arrangements, and shifted the demand for specific skill sets (De Stefano, 2016). The digital transformation of work has led to the emergence of new occupational categories and hybrid professions, while simultaneously rendering specific traditional roles obsolete. Online gig platforms allow remote workers to participate in multiple short-term projects concurrently, often supplanting the conventional model of full-time employment with a single employer. As a result, digital labor has become a prominent feature of the global economic landscape, reshaping patterns of production, consumption, and income distribution (Langley and Leyshon, 2017). Empirical evidence supports the rapid expansion of this phenomenon. The global gig economy experienced a 17.4% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from 2018 to 2023. According to the World Bank (2023), the gig economy accounts for up to 12 percent of the global labor market. Freelancers now make up 46.6% of the workforce, compared to 39% just last year. The global freelance platform market size is projected to increase at a CAGR of 16.6% from 2024 to 2029. The global freelance platform market is expected to grow with a CAGR of 15.4% and reach \$12.01 billion by 2028. The gig economy has grown 15x faster than the traditional job market. The global freelance market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15% through 2026.

This consistent growth underscores the structural integration of online freelancing within both developed and developing economies. In advanced economies, digital labor enhances organizational flexibility, cost efficiency, and access to specialized skills (Manyika et al., 2016). For developing economies, digital labor serves as a crucial mechanism for economic inclusion, income generation, and integration into global value chains (Kuek et al., 2015). A significant portion of the global digital labor force resides in developing countries, where online work grants access to international markets and alleviates local labor market constraints (Graham et al., 2017).

The significance of digital labor became particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which acted as a catalyst for the widespread adoption of remote work and digital collaboration tools. During this period, online labor platforms emerged as critical

infrastructures, enabling economic continuity for millions of workers and businesses (International Labour Organization, 2021). This crisis highlighted both the resilience and vulnerabilities inherent in digital labor markets, particularly in relation to issues of income security, algorithmic management, and social protection (Berg, 2016; Wood et al., 2019).

As the gig economy gains prominence within the digital landscape, it has transformed traditional labor paradigms, providing many workers with flexibility and independence while simultaneously posing challenges related to job quality and precariousness (Anwar and Graham, 2021). This precarity may lead to job insecurity, reduced benefits, and increased stress levels for workers, negatively impacting their satisfaction and well-being (Kuhn and Galloway, 2019). Such challenges underscore the urgent need for collective bargaining mechanisms to enhance worker protection, ensure fair treatment, and improve working conditions (Miranda Boto and Brameshuber, 2022). To address these issues, a balanced strategy is essential—one that harnesses the advantages of flexibility while mitigating the risks of job instability and precarious employment (Himani Srihita et al., 2025).

As the digital economy continues to evolve, the online labor market is poised to exert an increasingly significant influence on global employment structures, labor policies, and socioeconomic inequalities. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of digital labor is crucial for formulating policies that strike a balance between flexibility and innovation, on the one hand, and fairness and inclusivity, on the other, in the future of work.

## **2. SCOPE OF THE GIG ECONOMY**

The gig economy is referred to as the sharing economy, peer economy, on-demand economy, and platform economy (Taylor et al., 2023). The gig economy has rapidly emerged as a form of service delivery that challenges existing business models, labor-management practices, and regulations (Healy et al., 2017). The term "gig economy" describes a labor market characterized by temporary, independent, and flexible work arrangements (Devinatz, 2019). In this context, individuals often take a project-based approach, accepting various gigs or assignments as independent contractors rather than occupying traditional employee roles within organizations (Minter, 2017). Digital platforms have significantly accelerated the gig economy by connecting workers with employers or customers seeking specific services (Soundarya and Kumar, 2025).

The gig economy has several characteristics. One of the main characteristics of the gig economy is flexibility, which it offers to workers. As individuals can choose where, when, and how much they want to work, they can balance their personal and professional lives while pursuing different income-generating activities (Lehdonvirta, 2018). Many gig workers are independent contractors who provide their services only when needed (Nadler, 2017). Therefore, they do not require long-term contracts and choose which gigs to accept (Sridhar et al., 2023). Advancements in information technology play a significant role in the development of the gig economy (Damoska Sekuloska and Erceg, 2023). This transformation is evident in the shift from local to global labor markets, from full-time to temporally flexible work, and from permanent to casual employment (Kässi and Lehdonvirta, 2018). Gig workers utilize digital platforms, including ride-hailing apps, online marketplaces, and freelancing websites, to connect with clients or employers (Ray, 2024). These platforms act as intermediaries, linking buyers and sellers. Digital platforms are the most important and necessary place for 73% of freelancers to find a job, as their dominance stems from their ability to efficiently and quickly match supply and demand, leading to a significant reduction in transaction costs (McKinsey, 2015). These platforms provide access to skills and talent worldwide, offering decent pay and greater flexibility than the regular labor market (Damoska Sekuloska and Erceg, 2023). The gig economy encompasses a wide range of work types. Gig workers are

present in various sectors, including transportation (such as ridesharing drivers), deliveries, household tasks, the arts, and business (Soundarya and Kumar, 2025).

The gig economy offers several benefits to its users. Freelancing enables individuals to set their own schedules, choose tasks that interest them, and have greater control over their professional lives than in traditional employment models (Roy and Shrivastava, 2020). It provides individuals with opportunities to supplement their regular income through side jobs, which may appeal to those looking to start a business or increase their earnings (Celestin and Vanitha, 2021). Gig work also enables individuals to regularly improve existing skills or acquire new ones. This platform enables individuals to explore different sectors, gain diverse experiences, and build a portfolio of work (Kuhn et al., 2021). The benefits of the gig economy vary significantly depending on whether the user is a business, a worker, or a customer (Swetha et al., 2025). For businesses, the gig economy enables companies to reduce expenses and enhance operational efficiency (Alon et al., 2023). Employers are not required to provide a physical workplace or benefits such as paid time off or health insurance, and this expectation is generally absent. The flexibility of the gig economy allows companies to hire specialists for short-term or specialized tasks that would be costly to employ permanently (Kuhn et al., 2021). In the gig economy, a worker's work-life balance may improve compared to traditional employment models. Workers in this field enjoy greater flexibility in setting their schedules, allowing them to avoid being limited to a single employer (Lehdonvirta, 2018). Customers appreciate the flexibility and diversity the gig economy offers for hiring individuals to deliver private services (Oranburg, 2018). Many services now offer higher quality at a lower cost than before. There is a broader range of service providers, delivery options, and physical locations available to you.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Freelancing, commonly conceptualized as the gig economy, does not represent a novel form of employment but rather a reconfiguration of labor practices that has gained renewed prominence in the digital era. Its modern manifestation emerged in the aftermath of the Great Recession, when significant segments of the global workforce lost access to stable, long-term employment and consequently turned to short-term, task-based engagements as a means of income generation. Scholarly analyses suggest that the gig economy served as a crucial employment buffer during economic downturns, providing temporary work opportunities when conventional, full-time positions were scarce (Donovan et al., 2016).

The rise of digital labor epitomizes this structural transformation by enabling individuals to perform discrete, independent tasks—or "gigs"—without maintaining permanent employment relationships (Graham et al., 2017). Accelerated by rapid advancements in digital and information technologies, the gig economy has evolved into a widespread and integral part of the employment landscape. Increasingly, workers are voluntarily transitioning from traditional employment to independent, project-based engagements distributed across multiple employers (Chen, 2016).

The Internet and digitalization have profoundly reshaped labor markets, altering the spatial and organizational dimensions of work. This transformation has generated new occupations while simultaneously rendering specific traditional roles obsolete. Particularly within developing economies, the digital labor market has emerged as a crucial source of livelihood, serving either as a primary occupation or as a supplementary income stream. A growing body of research identifies the gig economy as a defining feature of contemporary labor dynamics (Taylor et al., 2017), reflecting broader shifts in work culture that prioritize flexibility, autonomy, and independence, underpinned by technological innovation (Kolmar, 2022).

The expanding population of freelancers constitutes one of the most significant developments in global labor evolution. The proliferation of online work platforms (Chan and Wang, 2018; Huws et al., 2017) positions digital labor and online talent marketplaces as foundational components of the future of work. Such platforms facilitate global labor connectivity, enabling the efficient matching of employers and skilled professionals irrespective of geographical boundaries (Horton et al., 2018). The interplay between information and communication technologies (ICTs) and gig-based employment reflects three overarching trends reshaping contemporary labor markets: (1) a shift from localized to global remote work, (2) a transition from full-time to flexible employment arrangements, and (3) a movement from permanent to temporary or project-based occupations (Kässi and Lehdonvirta, 2018). In this context, online freelancing offers a viable model for flexible employment, empowering individuals to participate in diverse projects without dependency on a single employer (Gray & Suri, 2019).

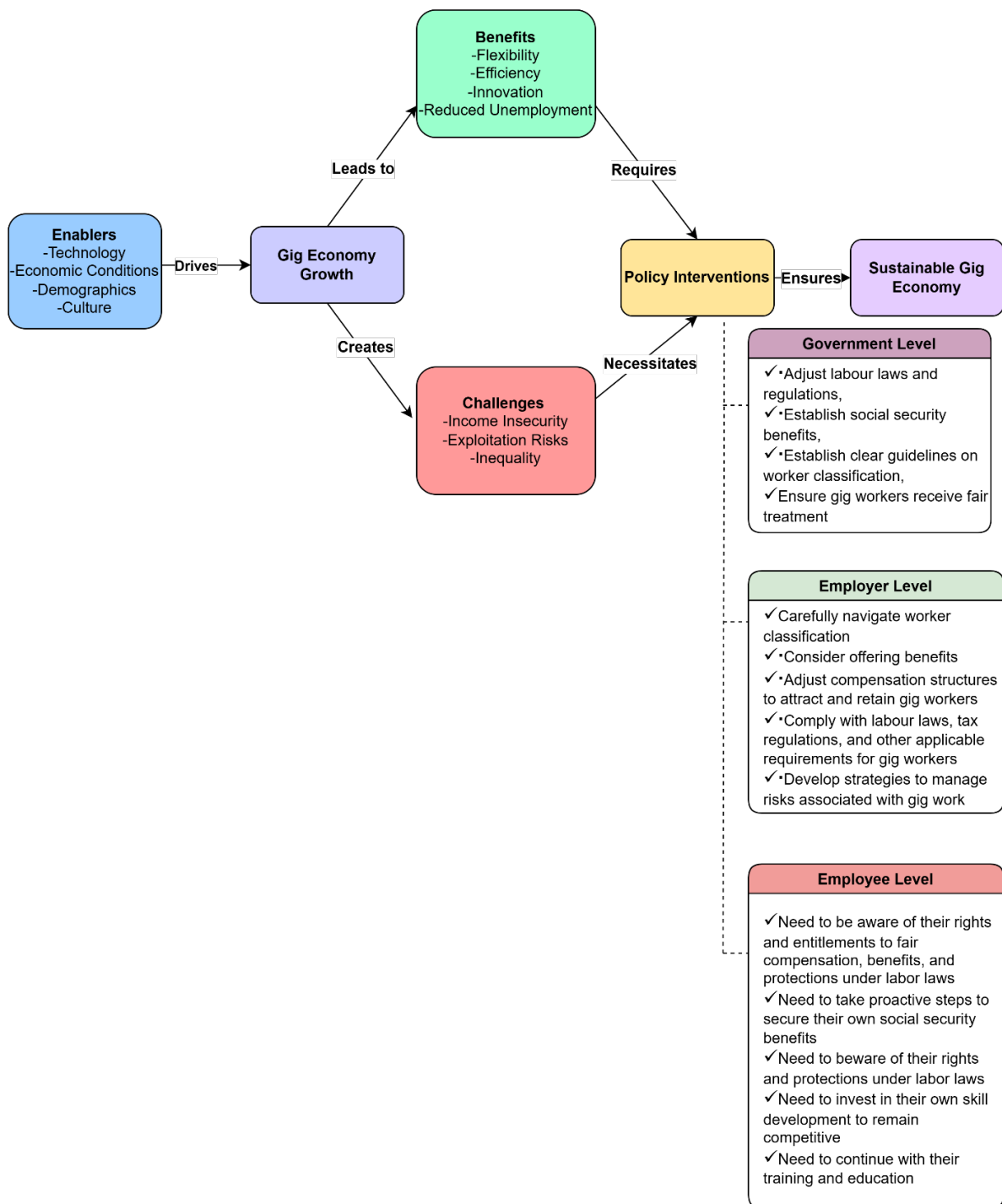
A notable consequence of this transformation is the phenomenon of virtual migration, whereby employment opportunities are digitally transmitted to workers, thereby negating the need for physical relocation (Lehdonvirta, 2018; Horton et al., 2018; Braesemann et al., 2018; Melia, 2020). The World Development Report (World Bank, 2019) acknowledges this shift as an irreversible transformation in work, urging economies to adapt institutional frameworks to integrate online freelancing while addressing its associated challenges effectively.

At its core, the gig economy involves the exchange of labor for monetary compensation through digital platforms that mediate interactions between service providers and clients, typically structured around short-term or task-specific engagements. These platforms have reconfigured the spatial organization of work, enabling individuals to offer services independently of their employer's physical location. This delocalization of labor mitigates local market constraints, enhances worker bargaining power, and may yield improved remuneration for specialized skills (Graham et al., 2017). Online outsourcing further generates new employment opportunities, particularly within developing economies. Empirical data suggests that while approximately 75% of freelance projects in developed contexts originate from domestic clients, nearly 90% of comparable work in developing regions is commissioned by overseas employers (Dunn, 2018). Digital platforms influence labor supply decisions primarily in two ways: first, by reducing entry barriers and enabling rapid access to income-generating activities without reliance on traditional recruitment processes; and second, by facilitating virtual labor migration, granting workers access to global opportunities beyond their immediate geographic constraints (Dunn, 2018).

These developments have profound implications for migration and socioeconomic development. Workers from regions with limited local employment prospects or skill mismatches can now participate in global digital labor markets, often choosing migration as an option rather than a necessity. As van Doorn and Vijay (2021) observe, the expansion of gig platforms as functional alternatives or extensions of existing migration infrastructures may have far-reaching economic and political implications, particularly in developing contexts. Younger generations have especially embraced the digital gig economy and are increasingly promoted as a development strategy to enhance employment and national income in emerging economies (Heeks, 2017). For many workers, particularly in resource-constrained settings, digital gigs represent not only a primary livelihood but also a means of economic inclusion, providing access to income streams and opportunities that were previously unattainable due to the widespread adoption of digitalization and online labor platforms.

Based on the literature review and theoretical framework, we propose the following conceptual framework for researching the gig economy (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for researching the gig economy



Source: authors

Key drivers of the gig economy include technological advancements, demand for labor flexibility, evolving worker preferences for autonomy, economic pressures, and changing regulations (Jain, 2024). These factors contribute to the rapid expansion and ongoing transformation of gig-based work structures across various industries, including ridesharing and freelance digital services. The rise of online platforms and mobile apps has enabled seamless matching between gig workers and clients, allowing instant access to work opportunities and streamlined workforce management (Sivapraksham and Jazil, 2025).

Businesses increasingly hire gig workers to manage costs, address labor shortages, and access specialized skills without the expense of full-time employment or overhead (Kuhn et al., 2021). The appeal of flexible schedules, control over work location, and the ability to balance multiple roles or side hustles attracts diverse demographics to gig work, particularly younger workers and those seeking entrepreneurial experiences (Wu and Huang, 2024). Legislative shifts in employment status have an impact on the size and structure of the gig workforce. At the same time, cultural trends — such as increased mobility and the acceptance of non-traditional career pathways — continue to drive participation (Jain, 2024). Participation in gig work has been shown to facilitate skills acquisition, capital accumulation, and the launch of new businesses, effectively serving as a springboard for entrepreneurship, especially among first-time firm founders (Wheelahan and Moodie, 2022). A recent study concluded that gig workers are more likely to start new firms, often in industries related to their gig work, and use gig income to gain experience and capital before launching their own ventures (Denes et al., 2025). Contemporary analyses indicate that advances in digital technology, combined with business demands for scalability and workers' preferences for independence and diverse experiences, remain central to the growth of the gig economy.

Additional drivers of the gig economy include ease of entry and exit, asset requirements, flexibility and autonomy, risks and vulnerabilities, and earning potential. The gig economy's primary appeal lies in its ease of entry and exit, attracting individuals seeking immediate financial relief (Friedman, 2014). Access to platforms is influenced by prerequisites such as skills, job experience, and financial resources, as well as by recruitment processes that include document verification and interviews. In gig economies, barriers to entry are reduced as requirements are minimal. In a neoliberal economy, various stakeholders assume greater financial and operational risks beyond the company itself (Singh and Kadam, 2024). Gig platforms often require workers to own or rent essential equipment, such as cars, motorcycles, makeup kits, or outfits, before they can join and start work. Gig platforms essentially aim to offer workers flexibility in choosing their schedules and compensation. Gig workers differ from traditional employees in that they are seen as partners, sharing profits with their clients (Schwellnus et al., 2019). Gig platforms have thrived in the post-Fordist era by transferring market risk from businesses to workers. Workers face vulnerability stemming from the unpredictable aspects of their contractual relationships (Singh and Kadam, 2024). One advantage of gig work compared to traditional employment is the potential to earn based on the value of the job performed (Sharma, 2024).

On the other hand, the gig economy faces several challenges and concerns. Many gig workers have significant concerns about their economic security (Salleh et al., 2023). They experience financial insecurity due to the risk of low demand and difficulties maintaining a steady income. As independent contractors, gig workers often lack the benefits and protections provided to regular employees (Friedman, 2014). They may have difficulty accessing rights to social security and wages. Freelance workers also face challenges in accessing social safety nets, such as worker protection, disability insurance, and benefits, because the same legal frameworks that govern traditional employment are absent (Behrendt et al., 2019). Gig workers frequently experience concerns about job security, opportunities for advancement, and income stability. To maintain consistent revenue, it is essential to regularly seek new opportunities and clients (Mweshya et al., 2025).

#### **4. ENABLERS OF THE GIG ECONOMY**

##### *Technology as an enabler for the gig economy*

Several studies have demonstrated that digitalization and globalization have contributed to the growth of the gig economy worldwide, offering alternative work arrangements that provide

the advantage of flexible working hours. With the advancement in technology, people's preferences for jobs have changed from traditional ones to freelance services (Davidson and Infranca, 2016; Todoli-Signes, 2017; Jarrahi and Sutherland, 2019; Soriano and Panaligan, 2019; Jain, 2024). Numerous studies have shown that the gig economy has contributed to the development of non-standardized forms of work arrangements through digital platforms, driven by the rapid expansion of technological innovations. These platforms operate with low basic pay, job insecurity and low fringe benefits. Since the jobs are contractual and flexible in nature, they often serve as a secondary income source for most gig workers. This is often termed as on-demand jobs, digital work, just-in-time work, or the shared economy, where a short-term task is assigned to an individual for which they are contractually paid, and the platforms experience high worker turnover (De Stefano, 2016; Farrell and Greig, 2016). Contingent work is digitally mediated and can be performed remotely at the customer's location (Graham and Anwar, 2018). Extant literature has also shown that technological advancements have enabled the gig workers to grasp digital skills that have surfaced in India (Huang et al., 2018, 2020; Heeks, 2017) and digitally mediated gig work has become the need of the hour for the gig workers to work without any constraint of time and location (Gandhi et al., 2018).

#### *Economic conditions and the uptake of the gig economy*

Another crucial enabling factor for the gig economy is the state of the economy. Studies have shown that the gig economy has reshaped traditional labor markets, driving economic evolution (Farrell and Greig, 2016; Kumar et al., 2018; Jain, 2024; Zimoto, 2025). It offers alternative employment opportunities for marginalized groups, such as students, retirees, and individuals in remote areas (Katz and Krueger, 2016). This inclusivity expands the labor force participation rate and reduces unemployment rates (Benmelech et al., 2020). Moreover, the gig economy facilitates economic resilience by providing individuals with supplemental income during economic downturns (Graham et al., 2017). During periods of economic uncertainty, gig work provides individuals with a means to generate income, thereby contributing to overall economic stability (Foley et al., 2019). The gig economy represents a disruptive force that is reshaping traditional employment structures, fostering innovation, and driving economic evolution. However, it also raises important questions regarding labor rights, social protections, and income inequality. As the gig economy continues to evolve, policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders must address these challenges to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth (Jain, 2024; Shaiwalini and Patnaik, 2025)

#### *Demographic-related factors and the gig economy*

Several research works have explored the impact of demographic-related factors and the gig economy (Shekawat and Saxena, 2025; Perera et al., 2025; Choudhary and Shireshi, 2022; Cook et al., 2018). The recent work of Shekawat and Saxena (2025) has investigated the impact of demographic characteristics on the stress level of gig workers. This study has highlighted that demographic factors, including gender, income levels, working hours, and educational backgrounds, are regarded as key stressors. The gig economy fosters worker flexibility, which is assumed to benefit women, who often bear family responsibilities (Cook et al., 2018). In a similar vein to what is depicted by Hinge et al. (2022), the number of women joining the Gig Economy has increased day by day, as it enables them to manage their own home and job. Indeed, women can balance their work and life, choosing their working hours and tasks (Hinge et al., 2022; Cook et al., 2018). Moreover, the McKinsey Report has stated that even a 10 percent rise in the gig economy workforce in India by 2025 will increase India's GDP rate by 16% (Mehata et al., 2020). As advocated by Hinge et al. (2022), the Gig

Economy has led to alternative arrangements for career advancement among Millennials and the Z-generation.

### ***Impact of culture and the gig economy***

There have been ongoing research studies to investigate the significance of culture within the gig economy (Shaiwalini and Patnaik, 2025; Thomas and Baddipudi, 2022; Malik et al., 2021; Roy and Shrivastava, 2020; Vallas and Schor, 2020; Morgan and Nelligan, 2018). It has been stated that cultural norms and values are important considerations within the gig economy (Shaiwalini and Patnaik, 2025). Indeed, gig professionals must be proficient in staying organized, sustaining client relationships, and meeting deadlines for overseas clients, as well as coping emotionally when working with clients from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds (Ashford et al., 2018). The role of digital platforms is crucial for introducing gig culture to developing countries and remote corners of the world (Roy and Shrivastava, 2020).

## **5. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF GIG EMPLOYMENT TO EMPLOYEES**

### ***5.1. Advantages of gig employment to employees***

#### *Flexibility and autonomy*

Since they are employed on contracts, gig employees have the flexibility to decide on the time of work, the duration of the contract, and the location of employment (Veluchamy et al., 2021). They can also manage their workload to cater to personal commitments (family and education). Furthermore, gig employees can work remotely from anywhere. These work arrangements relieve mandatory working hours (Lehdonvirta, 2018).

#### *Greater independence and multiple sources of income*

As gig workers choose their work/assignments, they tend to have more control over their decisions and methods. Compared to a dependent employee who seeks redistribution of profits, a gig employee describes their own boss, who seeks capital accumulation (Barratt et al., 2020). Considered micro-entrepreneurs, gig workers tend to be more entrepreneurial rather than adopting a worker-centric approach (Pollio, 2022). Moreover, they become more financially independent as they can generate income from multiple sources simultaneously. On the other hand, Mitchell and Decker (2021) note that gig workers exhibit income targeting such that they work less when they are close to their income goals.

#### *Multi-skilling and experience from diverse sectors*

Gig employment enables individuals to broaden their skills through their exposure to diverse industries and projects. The fact that they move in and out of the gig economy enables them to acquire new skills and competencies that are often transferable, which ultimately contribute to their employability and enhance wage negotiation (Kost et al, 2020). Nevertheless, the lack of intraorganizational development constrains them from developing higher-order skills, including managerial skills (Webster and Beehr, 2013).

#### *Work-life balance and geographic freedom*

The flexibility of deciding when to work and how much to engage in a project or assignment enables gig employees to structure their work by considering their personal priorities. Shahzadi et al. (2022) demonstrate that flexible work arrangements have a direct and significant influence on work-life balance. A study by Veluchamy et al. (2021) found that gig employees in India derive a high level of satisfaction influenced by the flexible working hours

that improve their work-life balance compared to traditional workers. The study also concluded that the increased level of satisfaction and an improved work-life balance boost gig workers' productivity and motivation at work, such that other benefits linked to full-time employees are nullified. Moreover, the fact that gig work is generally digital and online-based broadens the opportunities for gig employees.

## ***5.2. Disadvantages of gig employment for employees***

### *Income, insecurity and inadequate social protection*

Gig workers often face financial difficulties due to the lack of a guaranteed minimum income, unlike traditional workers (Nguyen Ngoc Thanh, 2025). According to Thomas et al. (2022), income insecurity can cause health and psychological distress. Additionally, gig workers often lack adequate social protection, as they are frequently excluded from benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, and retirement benefits (Ishaq and Darmawan, 2021).

### *Employment Precarity*

Gig workers who are employed as independent contractors often run the risk of being laid off or having their hours reduced (Wood and Lehdonvirta, 2021), compared to permanent job holders who have solid employment protections, such as grounds for dismissal. According to Cheng and Chan (2008), employment precarity has harmful consequences, including inability to plan future employment, stress and ill health. Moreover, Wood and Lehdonvirta (2021) revealed that precarious work can be perceived as a feeling of insecurity about the future.

### *Limited Career Development*

Gig workers typically do not receive formal training from the companies that employ them. According to Zheng et al. (2024), gig workers learn by doing or through the regular formal training provided by the online platform. The fact that gig workers are employed on short-term contracts restricts their career plans and career advancement. Since their transition is horizontal, they cannot develop higher-order skills, which restricts their propensity to be promoted to a managerial level. Gandini (2019) considers that gig workers have limited scope for personal growth and learning.

### *Lack of Unionization*

As the gig workers are classified as independent contractors, they are generally not unionized. The fact that a formal employment contract does not bind them limits their right to associate with trade unions (Martindale et al., 2024). Their self-employed workers' status acts as a barrier to collective bargaining (Daskalova et al., 2021)

## **6. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF GIG EMPLOYMENT TO COMPANIES**

### ***6.1. Advantages to companies***

#### *Cost efficiency*

Since gig workers are employed on a contractual basis, firms are not required to incur additional fixed costs related to their employment, such as benefits, bonuses, insurance, and pension policies, as well as other fringe benefits. As higher pay rates are required to maintain a large pool of workers, lower profit margins are expected (Lian et al., 2025). Moreover, Oranburg and Palagashvili (2021) consider that the rapid growth of technology and

innovation contributes to a reduction in the transaction costs associated with long-term employment.

#### *Workforce flexibility*

Gig employment enables firms to adjust their workforce size, which is often influenced by changing market conditions and seasonal demand. According to Ganapathyraman (2024), gig workers can serve as a buffer to meet unexpected fluctuations in demand and economic conditions, while Suryawanshi and Ponde (2024) enumerate the potential of gig employment to create a flexible workforce. According to Allon et al. (2023), companies benefit from labor flexibility by hiring employees on a real-time basis, i.e., employing them when needed.

#### *Access to specialized talent*

Instead of employing workers on a long-term basis, firms have the option of hiring employees as needed to meet the company's specific requirements. As the boundaryless career perspective equips employees with diverse skill sets to transition between employers, firms can easily tap into these skill sets as needed (Kost et al., 2020). Moreover, the gig economy enables firms to develop innovative talent management models by providing them with access to global talent (Satpathy et al., 2024). Additionally, firms benefit from their exposure to various settings through their short-term assignments.

#### *Increased productivity and innovation, and a reduction in training costs*

Gig workers have the potential to foster innovation based on the experiences they acquire by working in various sectors/industries. According to Talukder et al. (2025), technology-enabled integration of gig workers improves their productivity. Being self-trained and experienced, companies do not have to incur additional training costs for gig workers. Having a culture of adaptation and innovation (Celestin and Vanitha, 2023), employees invest in upskilling themselves to remain relevant and up to date (Behera and Gaur, 2022).

## **6.2. Disadvantages to companies**

#### *Lack of commitment and loyalty*

As gig employees are not emotionally tied to the organization due to the absence of long-term employment relationships, they demonstrate low organizational commitment. According to Aboobaker et al. (2022), gig workers generally lack a sense of organizational citizenship, which tends to result in them being less loyal towards their employers. In a similar vein, Zhang and Liu (2020) questioned the loyalty of "casual labourers," while Velimirovic (2023) emphasized the lack of commitment among gig economy workers. Moreover, it becomes difficult to standardize the performance level of gig workers who work independently.

#### *Reduced control and coordination*

Companies have less direct control over the performance of gig employees since they operate outside the traditional employment structures. Unlike workers employed in a substantive capacity, gig employees determine their own working schedules and work in various geographical locations, making quality control more challenging. Furthermore, the fact that various companies contract gig workers make it difficult to control their performance (Roberts and Douglas, 2022). Similarly, the employment of gig workers from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds presents significant communication challenges. In a similar vein, the absence of face-to-face interactions with the employees can lead to miscommunication. However, the use of standardized IT platforms ensures consistency in communication and streamlining of processes.

### *Data Security Issues*

As gig workers are often employed on short-term contracts and are rarely bound by strict confidentiality clauses, the risks of data breaches or sensitive data leaks are high. Since gig workers use personal devices for handling different jobs, the likelihood of data leaks and cross-contamination (that is, accidentally sharing sensitive information with third parties) exists (Adebowale and Akinnagbe, 2023)

The above challenges can affect the company's reputation, financial position and operational disruption.

## **7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This paper contributes to gig work research by theorizing the role of resource vulnerability in shaping the differential experiences of workers. As the gig economy rapidly evolves, a comprehensive policy framework is crucial for policymakers to address its multifaceted challenges and capitalize on its potential. As we have seen, while promising immense benefits in terms of innovation, work flexibility, and service provision, the gig economy also presents a host of challenges that call for a comprehensive policy approach. The policy implications of the gig economy are multifaceted and far-reaching, affecting governments, employers, and employees in distinct ways. The key considerations for multiple stakeholders are as follows:

### *For Governments:*

- **Regulatory frameworks:** Governments need to adjust labor laws and regulations to address the unique challenges of the gig economy, ensuring fair treatment and protection for gig workers.
- **Social security and benefits:** Governments may need to establish or extend social security benefits, such as unemployment insurance, healthcare, and retirement plans, to gig workers who lack traditional employment benefits.
- **Worker classification:** Clear guidelines on worker classification are essential to prevent misclassification and ensure gig workers receive fair treatment.
- **Taxation:** Governments need to develop effective taxation systems to capture income from gig work and ensure tax compliance.

### *For Employers:*

- **Worker Classification:** Employers must carefully navigate worker classification to avoid misclassification issues and potential penalties.
- **Benefits and Compensation:** Employers may need to consider offering benefits or adjusting compensation structures to attract and retain gig workers.
- **Compliance with Regulations:** Employers must comply with labor laws, tax regulations, and other applicable requirements for gig workers.
- **Risk Management:** Employers should develop strategies to manage risks associated with gig work, including worker injuries and disputes, to ensure a safe and secure work environment.

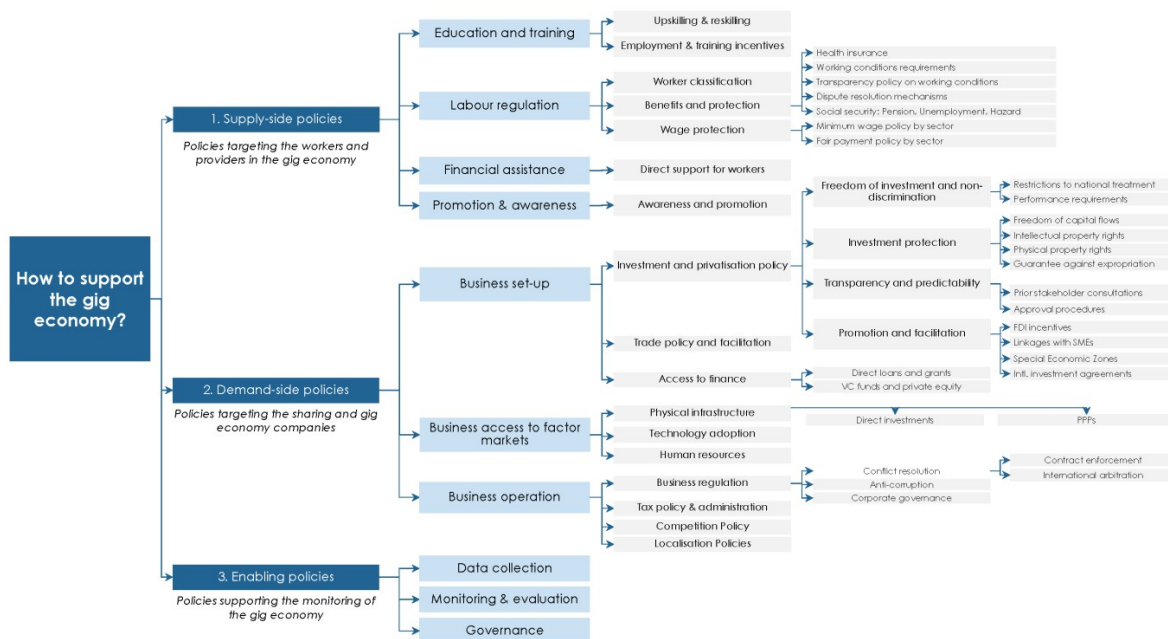
### *For Employees:*

- **Fair Compensation** Gig workers need to be aware of their rights and entitlements to fair compensation, benefits, and protections under labor laws.

- Social Security and Benefits: Gig workers may need to take proactive steps to secure their own social security benefits, such as retirement planning and healthcare insurance.
- Worker Rights: Gig workers should be aware of their rights and protections under labor laws, including the right to collective bargaining and protection against exploitation.
- Skill Development: Gig workers need to invest in their own skill development to remain competitive in the gig economy.
- Training for Gig Workers: A Systematic Review and Research Agenda by Panpan Zhang (Zhang, 2025) offers a systematic review of gig worker training, identifying competency and economic rationales behind current practices and highlighting the emphasis on skill enhancement, particularly digital proficiency, while noting gaps in addressing the impact of algorithmic management on workers' mental health and job satisfaction. Furthermore, it points out the lack of inclusive training, especially for marginalized groups such as women and immigrants.

Zhang (2025) proposes a research agenda focusing on long-term outcomes and tailored training frameworks for the gig economy, advocating for more strategic and inclusive approaches in this evolving labor landscape. Overall, the gig economy requires a coordinated response from governments, employers, and employees to ensure fair treatment, protection, and benefits for all stakeholders involved. Whiteshield's Gig Economy Policy Framework, supported by its database of global best practices, can help governments steer the gig economy to foster innovation, deliver better quality services, and provide gainful employment for their citizens (Sullivan and Homsy, 2023). As we have seen above, while promising immense benefits in terms of innovation, work flexibility, and service provision, the gig economy also presents a range of challenges that necessitate a comprehensive policy approach. Figure 2 below highlights Sullivan's and Homsy's (2023) Whiteshield's proposed policy framework, which comprises supply-side, demand-side, and enabling policies

**Figure 2.** The gig economy policy framework



Source: adapted from Sullivan and Homsy, 2023

## 8. CONCLUSION

The gig economy is a transformative force in contemporary labor markets, reshaping traditional employment structures and introducing a new model of work based on flexibility, autonomy, and digital connectivity. This shift has expanded employment opportunities and entrepreneurial pathways for a diverse range of individuals, including marginalized groups, while also enhancing economic resilience during periods of uncertainty. However, these benefits are accompanied by significant policy and social challenges, particularly regarding income instability, insufficient social protection, employment precarity, and limited career development.

To harness the benefits and address the risks of gig work, governments must develop adaptive regulatory frameworks that clarify worker classification and extend social protections to platform-based workers. Employers should innovate compensation models, support skill development, and manage the organizational risks associated with a flexible, digitally mediated workforce. For gig workers, understanding their rights, actively pursuing upskilling opportunities, and engaging in collective bargaining are crucial strategies for navigating the changing employment landscape.

The ongoing growth of the gig economy requires a multi-stakeholder approach, with coordinated efforts across policy, business, and workforce sectors to ensure fairness, security, and inclusivity. By investing in digital infrastructure, developing inclusive training programs, and promoting best practices, stakeholders can maximize the sector's potential for innovation and job creation while upholding social justice and economic sustainability. Ultimately, mutual preparedness – rooted in collaboration, forward-thinking policy, and ongoing research– will be essential for individuals, organizations, and societies to thrive in the evolving world of work shaped by the gig economy.

Ongoing research is vital; future studies should examine varied gig work experiences across regions, evaluate the long-term effects of skill development initiatives, and assess the mental health impacts of algorithmic management to better inform policy and practice. In conclusion, ensuring mutual preparedness for both individuals and organizations will maximize the gig economy's potential for sustainable innovation and job creation while minimizing its associated risks.

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