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SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, WORK PATTERN AND SATISFACTION AMONG GIG WORKERS IN KANNUR DISTRICT OF KERALAM, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The growing spread of platform-based delivery services has made gig work a significant feature of the modern labour market, raising concerns related to ethics, professional standards, and worker welfare. In this context, the study examines the socio-economic characteristics, working conditions, and work-related satisfaction of delivery gig workers in Kannur district of Keralam, with particular focus on working hours, remuneration, leisure time, and job-related stress based on survey data collected from 100 delivery gig workers located in the district. The analysis makes use of descriptive statistics, mean score analysis, ranking methods, and a composite index designed to measure work-related satisfaction of gig workers. The results indicate that 70 percent of respondents fall within the 18-25 age group and 80 percent are unmarried, pointing to a high concentration of young individuals entering gig employment. 48 percent of workers reported working less than six hours per day, 94 percent earned below Rs. 20,000 per month highlighting income instability, despite flexible work arrangements. The work-related satisfaction index recorded a moderate score of 2.88, largely driven by pronounced dissatisfaction with job safety and security, as 88 percent of respondents expressed dissatisfaction in this regard. In addition, 78 percent of gig workers were not covered under provident fund schemes and 84 percent lacked any form of insurance, revealing substantial deficiencies in worker welfare. The findings emphasise the urgent need for ethical regulatory frameworks, strengthened professional standards, and inclusive welfare policies, while also pointing to future interventions focused on social security expansion, transparent algorithmic governance, and institutional protection for gig workers.



KEYWORDS: gig economy; gig worker; delivery gig workers; income instability; job stress; work-related satisfaction index; ethics; worker welfare

JEL Classification: J 22, J 28, J 31, J 32

INTRODUCTION

Ethical considerations, professional standards and worker welfare are essential in evaluating the real quality of work in order to assess whether employment ensures dignity, security, and fairness beyond income alone. Unemployment continues to be a major economic and social concern in India, affecting people across different age groups and educational levels. The unemployment situation in Keralam is particularly complex. Despite its strong performance in education, health, and social development, the state struggles to generate sufficient employment opportunities. Many educated youths find it difficult to secure suitable jobs that match their qualifications and expectations leading to migration of educated young to foreign countries. In the 15-29 age group, Keralam has the highest unemployment rate in the country, 28.7%, while the national average is 10% revealed from Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18 (Kallungal, 2024). People are searching for alternative and new sources of employment opportunities. Technologies are converting the very basis of global business. It not only helps workers to do things better and intelligently but also made significant changes in the way of doing work placing significant changes in the labour market (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). Here comes the role of gig economy, a new dimension of changing labour market.

An important aspect of changing labour market dynamics is the gig work, a new face of informal employment, which does not demand any fixed educational qualification and also there is no barriers to entry. This is totally different from the traditional employer-employee relationship providing new facet to labour market (Kumar, Kumar, & Anita, 2023). Covid-19 pandemic- led boom in online shopping and digital payments led to mushrooming job opportunities in gig economy (Mukul, 2021). Thus, the gig economy has gained prominence as an alternative employment option.

A gig worker is someone who earns income outside a conventional employer-employee arrangement, usually within the informal sector. When such work is carried out through digital platforms, these workers are referred to as platform workers (NITI Aayog, 2022). The gig economy is reshaping work culture by opening up new livelihood opportunities for people who are unable to secure regular jobs or who lack formal educational qualifications. It also offers a flexible income source for students to support their education (Sharma & Sharma, 2025). Gig economy has been a source of relief for youngsters by offering an alternative and sustainable working platform, a type of bridge employment (Kshatriya & Kurien, 2023). Gig economy in India is growing very fast and expected to create more than 90 million jobs in next decade (Chandrashekhar, 2025). From 77 lakh workers in FY 21 the gig



economy witnessed a 55% increase to 120 lakh workers in FY 25. Non agricultural gig work is projected to contribute 6.7% of the of the total workforce by 2029-30. The highest share of gig workers is witnessed in e-commerce sector, 37 lakhs (Government of India, 2026). Even though the gig economy is growing very fast accommodating huge number of workers, the working condition and earnings are not that much attractive and also, they are facing numerous problems in connection with their work environment, especially by delivery gig workers. A survey conducted among gig workers in India revealed that 57% of workers work for more than 49 hours a week and 34% experienced harassment or violence while working on platforms (Mittal, 2026). On the background of strike by gig workers in India 0on 31st December, 2025, labour ministry had published draft rules to include gig workers in labour codes only on social security not on wages, a great move as the gig economy is concerned (The Hindu, January 05, 2026). It is expected that this will be a starting point for ensuring social security measures and reasonable wages for gig workers in India.

In this situation, an examination of the socio-economic profile of gig workers, together with their earnings, working hours, work-related challenges, and levels of satisfaction, offers important insights into the functioning of contemporary employment arrangements. Differences in income levels, extended and irregular working hours, and uncertainty of employment draw attention to concerns related to fair remuneration, acceptable working conditions, and the accountability of digital platforms toward workers. The lack of clearly defined employment status and uniform employment benefits further indicates gaps in the professional standards governing gig work. By analysing the problems encountered by gig workers and their perceived satisfaction with work, the study highlights key aspects of worker welfare, including income security and access to basic social protection. Overall, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on the need to strengthen ethical practices and professional frameworks to ensure the well-being of workers in emerging and non-traditional forms of employment namely gig work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on gig economy in India are still at an early stage, especially with regard to estimating the overall size and extent of the gig workforce. Nevertheless, several studies have explored the gig economy by focusing on selected dimensions of gig work. An important aspect of changing labour market dynamics is the gig work, a new face of informal employment with no fixed educational qualification and barriers to entry (Kumar, Kumar, & Anita, 2023; Anitha, 2017). Gig work has become a primary source of employment for many and share of gig workers in total workforce increased from 0.54% in 2011-12 to 1.33% in 2019-20 (Chandrashekhar, 2025). Hafeez, Gupta, & Sprajcer (2023) analysed the coping strategies and stress in gig workers and revealed that gig workers use approach coping strategies more than avoidant strategies.



There are some studies which concentrate on the factors that motivate individuals to participate in gig work. These studies identify flexibility in working hours, opportunities for supplementary income, and low entry barriers as important reasons for the growing attraction towards gig-based employment (Salleh, Shukry, & Jokinol, 2023; Pillai & Dev, 2022). Gig economy has been a source of relief for young people by offering an alternative and sustainable working platform, some sort of bridge employment (Kshatriya & Kurien, 2022).

Gig workers encounter multiple challenges that influence their income stability, working environment, and psychological well-being. Irregular and uncertain earnings, along with the absence of job security, remain major concerns for those engaged in gig work. Moreover, limited access to employment benefits, particularly social security and insurance coverage, increases their financial vulnerability. The presence of rigid performance evaluation systems, especially platform-based rating mechanisms, adds further pressure to their work conditions (Karunakaran N, 2025). In addition, instances of customer misbehaviour and exposure to workplace violence have been reported, contributing to elevated levels of stress and dissatisfaction among gig workers. There is also strict invigilation by employers creating absence of freedom in work (Celestin & Vanitha, 2021; Jiji, 2023; Kim, Oh, Sim, Yun, & Yoon, 2023; Sharma & Sharma, 2025; Hickson, 2024). Specialised labour laws must be formulated to ensure the protection of gig worker's right (Joshi, Jain, & Gupta, 2024). Due to long working hours, lack of stable and sufficient income and absence of insurance facilities creates health issues to the gig workers (Bajwa, Gastaldo, Ruggiero, & Knorr, 2018).

Overall, the existing literature offers useful insights into different aspects of gig work, but it remains scattered and largely thematic in nature. The limited attention given in measuring the magnitude and socio-economic characteristics of gig workers and the level of work-related satisfaction underscores the need for more comprehensive empirical studies. The present study attempts to contribute to this gap by examining gig work from a broader and more integrated perspective.

METHODOLOGY

Area of the Study: The present study was conducted in Kannur district of Kerala state. Kannur was selected because of the increasing presence of delivery-based gig work and the ease of accessing active gig workers. The study focuses exclusively on delivery gig workers, as their work conditions raise important concerns related to ethics, professional standards, and worker welfare, including working hours, safety, platform control, and income stability.

Sample Size: The sample size of the study consists of 100 delivery gig workers. Only male workers were included in the sample. This was due to the limited number of female delivery gig workers available in the study area during the period of data collection, which made their inclusion insufficient



for meaningful statistical analysis.

Sampling Procedure: The population of the study includes delivery gig workers in Keralam. As a complete list of delivery gig workers was not available purposive sampling technique was administered. The workers were approached at the office or operational centres of their respective gig platforms, which helped in identifying genuine delivery workers and ensured the reliability of the data collected.

Nature and Sources of Data: Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered directly to delivery gig workers during the study period from January to February 2024. Secondary data were collected from government reports and journal articles related to the gig economy and overall employment scenario India and Keralam.

Tools for Analysis: The collected data were analysed using simple statistical tools such as percentages, cumulative percentages, mean score analysis. Graphs and charts were used for effective presentation.

To evaluate work-related satisfaction, a composite index was constructed based on four dimensions: working time, remuneration, leisure time, and job stress, giving equal weight to all four dimensions, value ranges from 1 to 5. This index enabled a comprehensive assessment of the welfare level of delivery gig workers in relation to ethical and professional working conditions.

The main objectives of the study are to examine the demographic features of gig workers, to identify the factors attracting people to gig work, to analyse the work-related satisfaction level of gig workers and to examine the challenges faced by gig workers.

RESULTS

The gig economy has emerged as a relatively new segment of the labour market, offering employment opportunities to individuals who are unable to secure formal jobs, those whose skills do not match the requirements of traditional employment and persons seeking temporary or short-term work. Owing to its flexible working hours and a certain level of autonomy in work arrangements, gig work has also become an alternative source of income for students to support their educational needs. The number of gig workers has been increasing rapidly, and gig-based activities are now extending across almost all sectors of the economy. However, comprehensive data on the number of gig workers and their classification as full-time or part-time workers remain limited. One of the first systematic attempts to address this gap was undertaken by NITI Aayog in 2022, and the findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Estimated number of gig workers in lakhs

Year	Number of gig workers (UPS)	Number of gig workers (USS)	Number of gig workers (UPSS)
2011-12	24.5	0.7	25.2
2017-18	52.1	0.5	52.6
2018-19	53.4	0.5	53.9
2019-20	67	1.1	68

Source: NITI Aayog, 2022: P:19

*UPS-Usual Principal Status, USS-Usual Subsidiary Status, UPSS-Usual Principal & Subsidiary Status.

Gig workers who spent the major part of the reference year engaged in gig work are classified under the Usual Principal Status (UPS). Their number increased from 24.5 lakh in 2011–12 to 67 lakhs in 2019–20. Similarly, gig workers who spent a shorter duration of the reference year in gig work are classified under the Usual Subsidiary Status (USS), and their number rose from 0.7 lakh in 2011–12 to 1.1 lakh in 2019–20.

Table 2: Gig workers as a share of total workforce 2011-12 to 2019-20

Year	Share of gig workers (UPS)	Share of gig workers (USS)	Share of gig workers (UPSS)
2011-12	0.57	0.18	0.54
2017-18	1.18	0.4	1.16
2018-19	1.18	0.28	1.15
2019-20	1.37	0.49	1.33

Source: NITI Aayog, 2022: P:20

*UPS-Usual Principal Status, USS-Usual Subsidiary Status, UPSS-Usual Principal & Subsidiary Status

Table 2 shows the share of gig workers as a percentage of the total workforce during the period from 2011–12 to 2019–20. The table indicates a steady increase in the proportion of gig workers in the overall workforce, rising from 0.54 per cent to 1.33 per cent over the reference period. In the case of workers under the Usual Principal Status (UPS), the share increased from 0.57 per cent in 2011–12 to 1.37 per cent in 2019–20. Similarly, the share of gig workers under the Usual Subsidiary Status (USS) rose from 0.18 per cent to 0.49 per cent, highlighting the growing importance of gig work both as a primary and supplementary source of employment.

In 2020-21, 7.7 million workers were engaged in gig economy constituting 1.5% of the total workforce

in India and employment elasticity to GDP growth for gig workers as above one during the period 2011-12 to 2019-20 (NITI Aayog, 2022). All these trends underline the growing importance of the gig economy as an emerging source of employment, and it can be expected that this pattern will gain further momentum in the coming years. It is against this background that the present study has been undertaken to examine the socio-economic profile of gig workers, the factors influencing their participation in gig work, their level of work-related satisfaction, and the major challenges they face.

Socio-demographic background of the gig workers provides valuable insight into the structural factors that determine their participation in gig employment.

Table 3: Socio-Demographic Profile of the gig workers

Socio-Demographic Profile	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age Group		
18-25	70	70
25-30	18	88
30-35	4	92
35 and above	8	100
Marital Status		
Single	80	80
Married	20	100
Educational Qualification		
Matriculation	2	2
Plus Two	46	48
Graduate	38	86
Diploma	6	92
Post Graduate	4	96
Others	4	100
Number of Family Members		
2	2	2
2-4	34	36
4-6	44	80
6-10	18	98

Above 10	2	100
Family Type		
Nuclear Family	82	82.0
Joint Family	18	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 3 shows the socio demographic condition of the respondents. The study shows that majority of the gig workers are youngsters in the age group of 18-25, that is 70. Gig economy is newly emerging economy and is rapidly gaining popularity in the job market. The study reveals that 80 percentages of workers are unmarried, showing clear preference of young unmarried workers towards gig work. While analysing the educational qualification of respondents it is revealed that majority of the respondents are having educational qualification plus two and degree. 86% of the respondents are having educational qualification degree and below. 44% of the respondents have 4-6 members in their family. 82% of the respondents are from nuclear family. Thus, the socio demographic data of the study reveals that gig work in the study area is mainly concentrated among young and unmarried workers having educational qualification graduation and below underscoring the fact that it is an easily accessible entry level job option for youngsters.

Table 4: Employment status and nature of employment of Parents

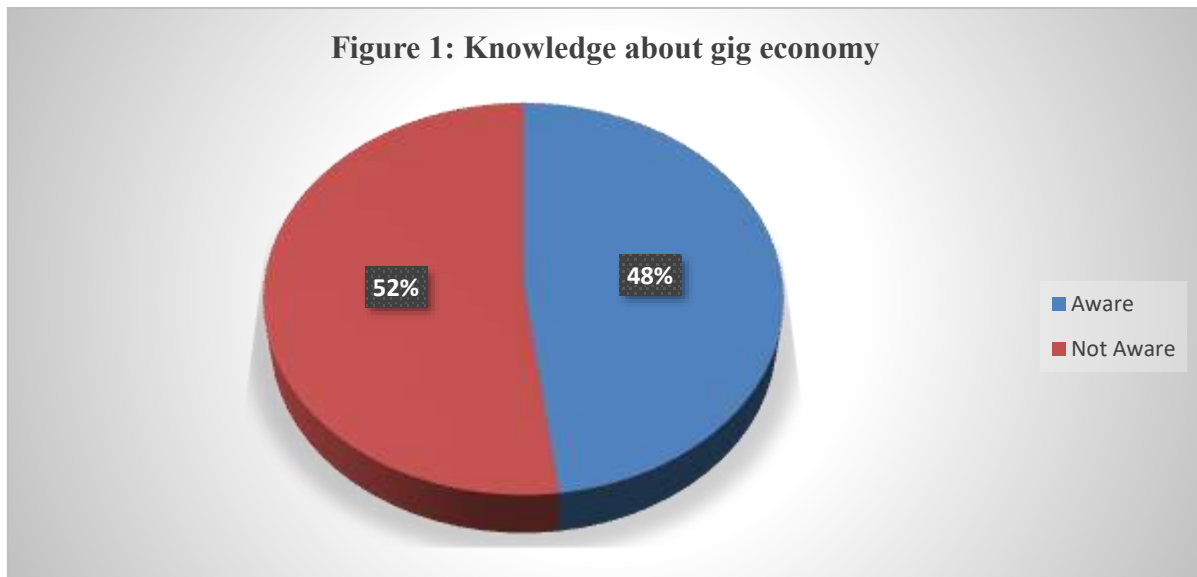
Employment status of parents	Frequency	Percent
Employed	76	76
Unemployed	24	24
Total	100	100
Nature of employment		
Private Sector	12	16
Government Sector	2	3
Self Employed	8	11
Casual work	42	55
Others	12	16
Total	76	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 4 reveals that 24% of the parents of gig workers are not employed and 76% employed. Out of the 76 employed parents, majority (55%) of parents are casual workers followed by 16% each by

private sector employees and employees of other categories. From this we can understand that majority of the gig workers do not possess sound financial background and this may be one reason for selecting any job easily available to support their family like gig work.

In the last few years, people are more informed about opportunities of gig economy and various aspects of gig economy. Anyhow, there are still segments of the population that may not be fully aware of its implications and opportunities. Even if the gig workers are part of gig economy, their awareness level may be different. That is why an attempt is made here to analyse the knowledge level of gig workers about gig economy.



Source: Survey Data

Figure 1 shows percentage of workers having knowledge about gig economy. About 52% have no idea about gig economy while 48% have knowledge about gig economy. Knowledge about opportunities and challenges of gig economy will help the gig workers to utilise the benefits of the sector in a better fruitful way.

One of the most attractive features of gig employment is the high degree of flexibility it offers. Gig workers usually have the autonomy to decide their working hours and location, which enables them to manage personal commitments and engage in more than one assignment at the same time. Similarly, since it is a time-based work, students can use this as a part time job for earning money for their study purpose.

Table 5: Distribution of gig workers by working experience, nature of work and daily working hours

Criteria	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Working Experience		
Below 1 year	64	64
1-2 years	14	78
2-3 years	6	84
3-4 years	4	88
4-5 years	6	94
5 and above	6	100
Total	100	
Nature of work		
Part time	40	34
Full time	60	100
Total	100	
Working hours in a day		
Below 5 hours	20	20
5-6 hours	28	48
6-7 hours	20	68
7-8 hours	18	86
Above 8 hours	14	100
Total	100	

Source: Survey data

Table 5 reveals that while examining working experience, it is found that majority of the respondents (64%) are freshers in this job, having less than one year of experience. 84% of the respondents are working for less than 3 years. While examining the status of job it is found that 60% are working on full time basis and only 40% are working under part time basis.

One of the chief attractions of gig work is the flexibility of working time so that this can be done on part time or full-time basis. It is found that among the respondents 48% are working for less than 6 hours a day. Only 14% work for more than 8 Hours.

Mode of transportation plays a significant role in determining the level of remuneration obtained by gig workers. As far as gig workers are concerned use of vehicle is very important since they are always in need of travelling. Possession of own vehicle is one of the essential requirements. If the



vehicle is provided by the company, then their salary may be affected by this. Let us analyse these.

Table 6: Mode of Transportation used by gig workers

Mode of Transportation	Percent
Own vehicle	78
Company provided vehicle	22
Total	100
Cost of Fuel	
Self	64
Company provided	36
Total	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 6 shows the details of mode of transportation of workers and who bears the cost of fuel used for transportation. 78 percent of workers use their own vehicle for delivery purpose. Company provided vehicles are used by 22 percent of workers. Some company provides cost for fuel. Taking the cost of fuel out of own pocket might be burdensome for workers with low level of income. When the workers have to meet vehicle charge from their remuneration, it will reduce their earning capacity.

Income of the respondents includes income from gig work and income from alternative works. It is already revealed that 34% of the respondents are part time workers which mean that they are engaging in alternative work. Let us analyse the financial capability of the respondents from various sources.

Table 7: Income from gig work

Monthly Income of the respondents (Rs)	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Monthly Income from gig work		
Below 5000	12	12
5000-10000	22	34
10000-15000	38	72
15000-20000	22	94
20000-25000	4	98
25000-30000	2	100
30000 Above	0	100
Total	100	
Alternative work doing		
Yes	22	22
No	78	100
Total	100	
Whether Studying		
Yes	18	18
No	82	100
Total	100	

Source: Survey Data

Table 7 shows the data on monthly income of respondents from gig work and also the data on whether they are doing any alternative work or studying. Only 6% of the respondents have monthly income greater than Rs. 20000. It reveals that 94% of the respondents are earning less than Rs.20000 per month. 34% of the respondents are earning less than Rs. 10000 per month. They are not at all financially sound when are depending on gig works alone. Out of the total 100 respondents, 22% are doing alternative jobs. From this table one more important observation can be made that it is because of low remuneration they are getting compared to their work load, many are leaving this job when they get another chance. It is already revealed that 78% of the respondents have less than two years of experience. (Table5)

The selection of a job especially like gig work is influenced and shaped by many factors like socio economic factors. Keralam is a state which has higher levels of educated unemployment. Gig work is a relatively new area of employment emerged within a period of ten years. Here we are analysing the reasons or factors which influenced them to the selection of gig work by respondents.

Table 8: Reasons for selecting gig work

Reasons for choosing gig work	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Flexible working hours	18	18
Freedom and independence	26	44
Better salary package	2	46
No other job	22	68
Can manage with study	18	86
Passion to travel	8	94
Others	6	100
Total	100	

Source: Survey Data

Table 8 shows the reasons for choosing gig work. The workers had chosen gig work due to various reasons. 26% of the respondents chose gig work because of freedom and independence. 22% selected this job due to the lack of other alternative employment opportunities. 2% selected this job attracted by the salary. 18% opined that they selected this as a part time job which will manage with their study and give sufficient income also. Only 8% selected this job due to passion towards this job. 6% selected this job due to other reasons like taking care of old parents etc.

Performance-based incentives like bonuses, rewards, or formal recognition play a significant role in motivating gig workers to achieve expected standards. Such incentives enhance work efficiency and service quality. When incentives are directly linked to performance, they encourage gig workers to pursue higher levels of excellence and to consistently upgrade their skills and overall work performance.

Table 9: Incentive related benefits received by gig workers

Incentives	Frequency	Percent
Getting bonus		
Yes	82	82
No	18	18
Total	100	100

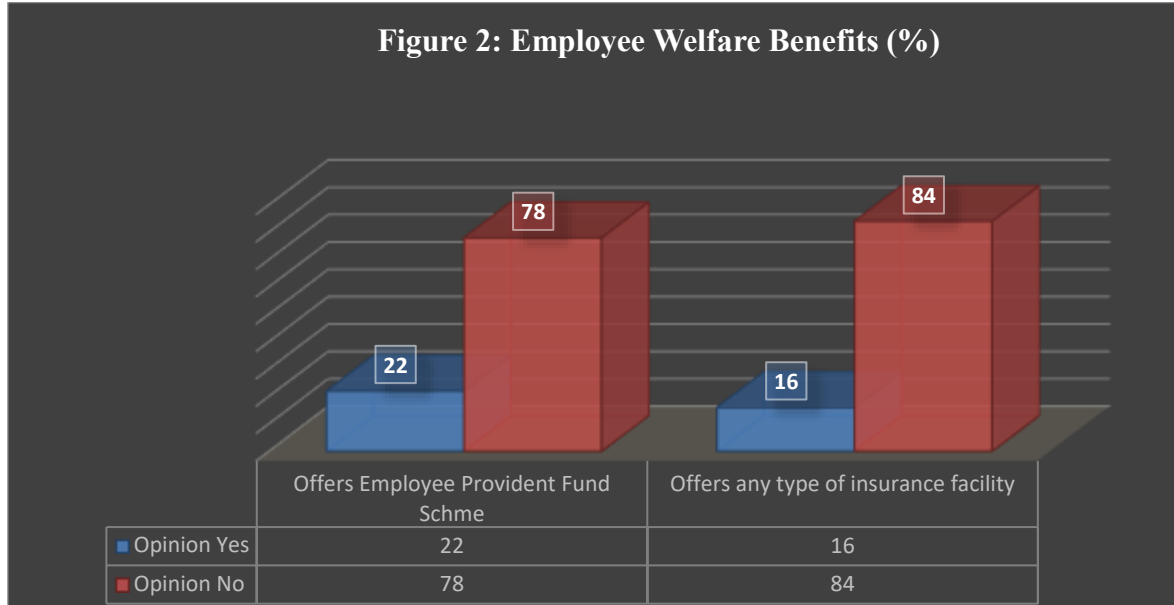


Additional pay for overtime		
Yes	46	46
No	54	54
Total	100	100
Paid sick leave		
Yes	38	38
No	62	62
Total	100	
Getting incentives on the basis of distance		
Yes	46	46
No	54	54
Total	100	

Source: Survey Data

Table 9 shows various incentives provided by gig organizations to their workers. There are many incentives which includes bonus, additional pay for overtime, sick leave etc, which give more financial support for their workers. 82% of the gig workers are getting bonus for their performance and during festival times. However, additional pay for overtime is available only for 46% of the gig workers. Majority of the workers (62%) are not getting the facility of paid sick leave and 54% of the respondents are not getting any incentive on the basis of distance. Overall, the table indicates that although bonuses are widely received, other employment benefits such as overtime compensation, paid sick leave, and distance-based incentives are accessible to only a limited share of gig workers, underscoring the insecure and uncertain nature of gig employment.

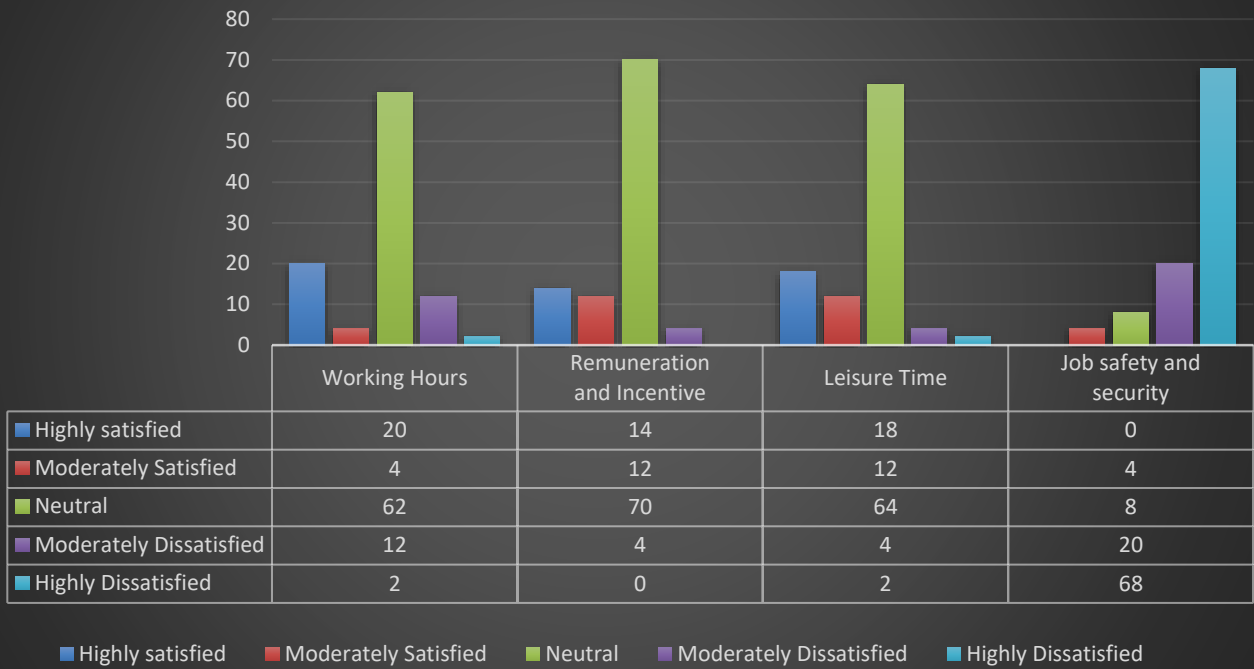
Social security measures like provident fund schemes and insurance coverage play an important role in protecting the financial well-being of gig workers. Provident funds help workers to save regularly and offer financial assistance during difficult periods such as illness or old age. Insurance facilities provide access to healthcare and reduce the financial burden arising from work-related risks, accidents, or other unforeseen situations.



Source: Survey data

It is very clear from figure 2 that majority of the gig workers are not a member of Provident Fund and not getting any type of insurance facility. They are not in a secured position. 78% of the respondents are not under EPF scheme and 84% are not getting any type of insurance facility. Overall, the chart highlights the weak coverage of essential social security measures among gig workers, which need urgent attention from the side of authorities.

Figure 3: Work-related Satisfaction Level among Gig Workers



Source: Survey data

Satisfaction plays a key role in the success and continuation of gig work, influencing both gig workers and the platforms they operate on. Customer satisfaction plays an important role in gig work and this can happen only when the gig workers are dealing with the customers in a very good manner. When gig workers are satisfied with their working conditions and earnings, they are more motivated and perform better, leading to improved service quality. This results in positive customer experiences, higher ratings, and repeat business, which in turn creates more opportunities for workers and supports the long-term growth and credibility of gig platforms.

Figure 3 shows the satisfaction level of gig workers across different aspects of their work. For working hours, most gig workers (62 percent) reported a neutral level of satisfaction, while 20 percent were highly satisfied and 14 percent were dissatisfied. This shows that although working hours are acceptable for many workers, they do not strongly contribute to overall satisfaction.

With respect to remuneration and incentives, a large majority of respondents (70 percent) expressed neutral satisfaction. Only 26 percent are satisfied. This shows that even though their remuneration

meets their basic requirements it is not highly rewarding. This indicates that earnings meet basic expectations but are not considered highly rewarding.

Regarding leisure time, 64 percent of respondents reported neutral satisfaction, while 30 percent were satisfied and only 6 percent were dissatisfied. This suggests that gig work provides a reasonable level of free time.

In contrast, job safety and security shows a high level of dissatisfaction. 68 percent of gig workers are highly dissatisfied and 20 percent were moderately dissatisfied, while only 4 percent were satisfied. This clearly highlights the insecurity and lack of employment protection faced by gig workers.

Table 10: Mean Score and Rank of work-related satisfaction level among gig workers

Work Dimensions	Mean Score	Rank
Leisure Time	3.40	I
Remuneration and Incentive	3.36	II
Working hours	3.28	III
Job safety and security	1.48	IV

Source: Calculated from figure 3

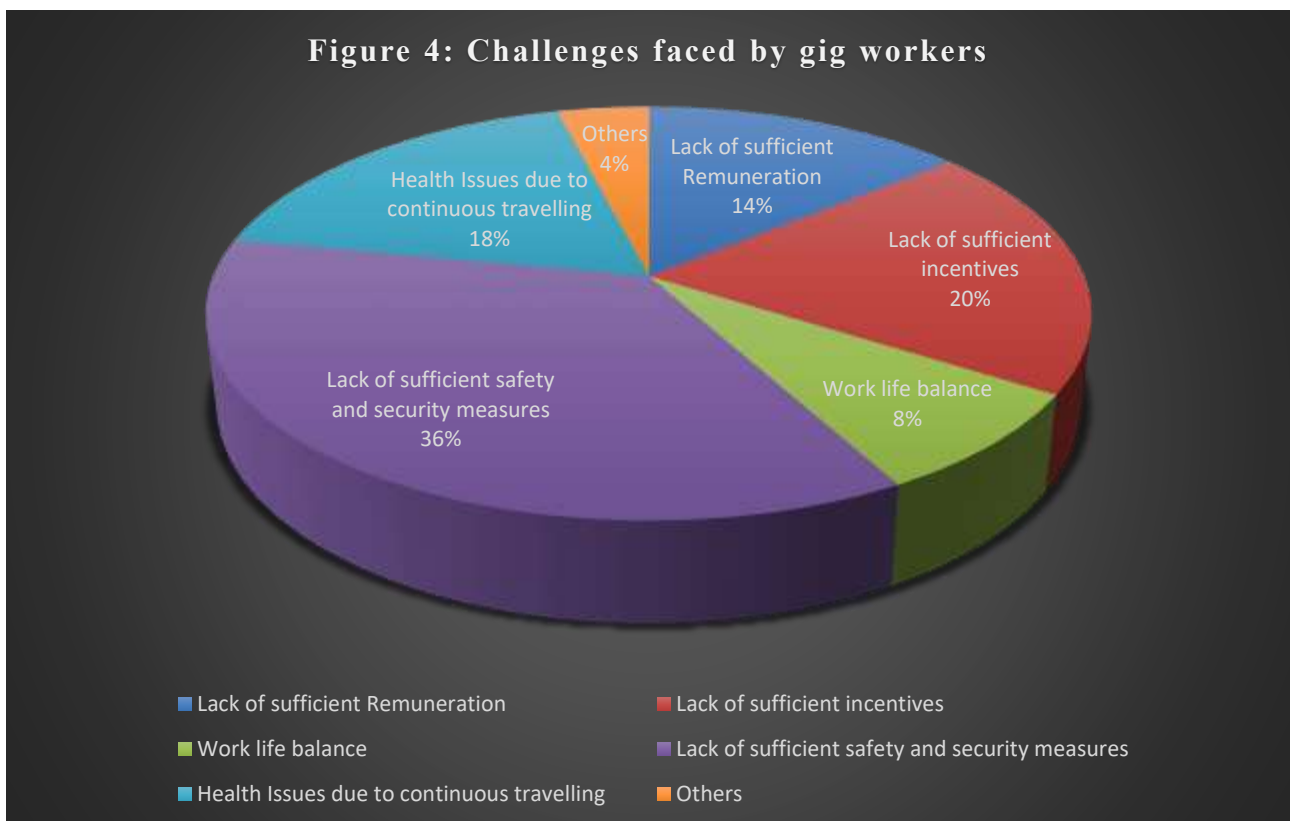
*(Ranks are assigned on descending order of mean score)

The analysis of mean score and rank reveals that leisure time secures the highest rank with a mean score of 3.40 indicating that gig work provides enough leisure time for the workers especially due to flexibility of working time. Remuneration and incentives occupy the second rank and working hours being the third place in rank. Job safety and security occupy the least mean score of 1.48 occupying the fourth rank. While leisure time, remuneration and incentive and working hours occupy moderate mean score, with respect to job safety and security it is very low, 1.48. This demands the urgent intervention of authorities to take suitable measures to ensure job safety of gig workers.

In order to assess the work-related satisfaction level of gig workers a composite index was developed combining four dimensions of work namely working time (X_1), remuneration and incentive (X_2), leisure time available (X_3) and job stress and job security (X_4). Since all these aspects are equally important in ensuring workers satisfaction level equal weights were assigned to each dimension. Since we already calculated mean score for all the four dimensions, we can directly construct the index by taking average of mean score of all four dimensions of work.

$$\text{Work-related Satisfaction Index} = \frac{X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_4}{4} = \frac{3.28 + 3.36 + 3.40 + 1.48}{4} = 2.88$$

Since the work-related index was constructed using a 5-point Likert scale, the index value ranges between 1 to 5. Calculated value of 2.88 reflects that workers experience a moderate level of satisfaction. This low value is mainly due to low mean score of job stress and security which pulled down the overall work-related satisfaction index value, highlighting the urgent need to design policies to safeguard the safety and security of gig workers since it is a booming aspect of new employment window. Gig workers face many challenges in their life and figure 4 presents these challenges. The most important challenge expressed by majority of the respondents is lack of sufficient safety and security measures (36%). Insufficient salary and insufficient incentives are another important challenge expressed by 14 and 20 percents of gig workers respectively. 18% of the gig workers opined that they are struggling due to health issues associated with continuous travelling namely back pain, allergy issues etc. 8% have issues associated with work life balance.



Source: Survey Data

CONCLUSIONS

The study presents a comprehensive assessment of the socio-economic background, working



conditions, satisfaction levels, and challenges faced by gig workers, with particular relevance to issues of ethics, professional standards, and worker welfare. The socio-demographic profile indicates that gig employment is largely concentrated among young workers, with 70% of respondents in the 18-25 age group and 80 percent unmarried. A notable share of workers is educated, as 84 percent have completed Plus Two or graduation, suggesting that gig work is increasingly absorbing educated unemployed youth. The economic background of workers points to financial vulnerability, with 55% of employed parents engaged in casual work and 24% unemployed, indicating that economic necessity plays a major role in workers' entry into gig employment. With regard to employment characteristics, 60 percent of respondents are engaged in gig work on a full-time basis, while 64% have less than one year of experience, highlighting high labour turnover in the sector. Although flexibility is often cited as a key feature of gig work, 14% of workers reported working for more than eight hours a day, and 48% worked up to six hours daily. Income levels remain low, with 94% of respondents earning below Rs.20,000 per month and 34% earning less than Rs.10,000, pointing to inadequate earnings despite considerable work effort.

The study further reveals limited employment benefits and weak social protection for gig workers. While performance-based bonuses are received by 82% of workers, only 46% receive overtime payments and 62% lack access to paid sick leave. Social security coverage is particularly inadequate, as 78% of respondents are not covered under provident fund schemes and 84% do not have any insurance protection. The overall work-related satisfaction index stands at a moderate level of 2.88. Leisure time recorded the highest mean score (3.40), followed by remuneration and incentives (3.36) and working hours (3.28), whereas job safety and security recorded the lowest mean score of 1.48, reflecting widespread dissatisfaction. The major challenges reported by workers include lack of adequate safety and security measures (36%), insufficient incentives (20%), low wages (14%), and health problems resulting from continuous travel (18%). Overall, the study demonstrates that while gig work offers short-term employment opportunities and flexibility, the lack of long-term security, stable income, and comprehensive social protection undermines worker welfare, calling for stronger ethical frameworks and regulatory interventions in the gig economy.

Despite its relevance, the study is subjected to certain limitations. First, the sample size is confined to 100 respondents, which limits the extent to which the results can be generalised. Second, the study covers only male delivery gig workers, as the number of female workers available during the period of data collection was too small to allow meaningful analysis. Third, the data were also collected over a relatively short duration of two months, which may not adequately reflect seasonal fluctuations in work availability, income, and working hours associated with gig employment. Fourthly some respondents were reluctant to provide precise information on income, incentives, and dissatisfaction due to concerns about possible repercussions from platform companies, which may have affected the



accuracy of the data. Since the study is restricted to delivery gig workers in Kannur district, caution must be exercised in extending the findings to other categories of gig workers or regions.

The findings of the study indicate several important avenues for future policy formulation, institutional intervention, and academic research in the gig economy. There is an urgent need for regulatory frameworks that ensure minimum assured earnings, rationalise working hours, and extend social security benefits such as insurance and provident fund coverage to gig workers. At the institutional level, measures to improve transparency in platform algorithms, incentive structures, and grievance redressal mechanisms are crucial for strengthening professional standards and ethical accountability. From an academic perspective, the study highlights the necessity for more extensive empirical research on gig work across different regions and platforms. Comparative studies between full-time and part-time gig workers, along with gender-based and sector-specific analyses, can provide deeper insights into the evolving nature of non-traditional forms of employment.

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