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DRIVERS AND BARRIERS OF WORK PERFORMANCE OF GIG WORKERS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of gig economy has transformed labour markets by creating flexible, technology-mediated employment opportunities across sectors such as ride-hailing, food delivery, logistics, and online freelancing. Gig work provides autonomy, flexibility, and income-generating opportunities. However, gig work is also associated with several challenges that may affect workers' performance. This systematic literature review examines major factors that facilitate or constrain the work performance of gig workers. Using the PRISMA 2020 framework, this review synthesises evidence from 32 peer-reviewed studies published between 2018 and 2026 and identified through Scopus, Web of Science, Dimensions, and Google Scholar. The findings indicate that work motivation, job autonomy, flexible working arrangements, digital skills, platform support, fair compensation, and organisational commitment are important factors associated with gig-work performance. In contrast, algorithmic control, job insecurity, income uncertainty, occupational stress, customer-related challenges, inadequate social protection, work-life imbalance, and regulatory uncertainty may adversely affect gig workers' performance. The review highlights important research gaps, particularly the limited empirical evidence from India and the scarcity of research specifically examining gig workers in Kerala. The study contributes to the growing literature on the gig economy by synthesising existing evidence on the factors and by providing a direction for future research and policy development.

KEYWORDS: Gig economy, Gig workers, Work performance, Drivers, Barriers, Systematic literature review, PRISMA, Platform work.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the gig economy has reshaped contemporary employment by expanding work arrangements beyond traditional long-term employment relationships towards flexible, task-oriented and digitally facilitated forms of employment. Gig work generally involves individuals undertaking temporary, independent or project-based tasks, frequently through digital platforms that facilitate connections between workers, customers and organisations. The growth of digital platforms has

expanded opportunities for flexible participation and income generation, but it has also generated concerns about employment security, income stability, access to social protection and working conditions (Vallas & Schor, 2020; Banik & Padalkar, 2021).

Digital platforms play a central role in organising and facilitating activities within the gig economy. These platforms facilitate the matching of labour supply with demand, distribute work assignments, support communication between workers and customers, and frequently monitor or assess worker performance. Although platforms-based work can provide workers with flexibility and autonomy, platforms may simultaneously exercise control through algorithmic systems, rating mechanisms, incentive structures and automated decision-making processes. Kellogg et al. (2020) identify algorithmic management as a contested form of workplace control, while Duggan et al. (2020) demonstrate its implications for employment relations and human resource management. Wood et al. (2019) similarly show that gig workers may simultaneously experience autonomy and algorithmic control.

Work performance represents an important outcome in platform-mediated employment because the effectiveness of gig workers can influence productivity, service quality, customer satisfaction and overall platform performance. Previous studies suggest that factors such as work motivation, organisational commitment, job autonomy, flexibility, digital capability and social support may contribute positively to gig-worker performance (Amin, 2024; Wood et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2025). However, gig worker performance cannot be explained solely by individual characteristics, as workers operate within broader technological, organisational, economic and regulatory environments.

A range of occupational and structural barriers may adversely influence gig workers' performance. Job insecurity and uncertainty regarding income remain important concerns associated with gig work (Ashford et al., 2018; Ravenelle, 2019). Occupational stress and fatigue may further impair workers' capacity to perform their task effectively (Bajwa et al., 2018; Jaydarifard et al., 2024). Customer-related difficulties, limited access to social protection and regulatory uncertainty may impose additional demands on gig workers.

Algorithmic management has emerged as a significant issue because it influences on gig workers can produce both beneficial and adverse outcomes. Although algorithmic may improve task allocation and operational efficiency while also increasing monitoring, performance pressure and perceived control (Kellogg et al., 2020; Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023). Recent studies have extended this discussion by examining how algorithmic management relates to worker behaviour, job crafting, and customer-related challenges, and safety concerns (Liu & Yin, 2024; Zhao et al., 2026; Zhu et al., 2026).

The gig economy has also experienced substantial growth in the Indian labour market. Kerala represents a relevant setting for examining gig work because platform-mediated employment is expanding and academic interest in the experience of gig workers within the state is increasing. Studies conducted in Kerala have investigated opportunities associated with platform work, Generation Z participation in the gig economy, and the challenges experienced by women gig workers (Kavitha & Parvathy, 2023; Bhagavathi & Kumar, 2025; Chengodan & Jamsheer, 2025). However, the existing literature does not yet provide an integrated assessment of the factors that promote or constrain the work performance of gig workers.

Accordingly, the present review synthesises evidence concerning motivational, individual, technological, platform - related, occupational, institutional factors associated with gig-worker performance. The review also identifies deficiencies in the existing evidence and provides a foundation for future empirical investigation of gig-worker performance in Kerala.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

The review has the following objectives:

1. To identify the major drivers influencing the work performance of gig workers.
2. To identify the major barriers affecting gig-worker performance.
3. To examine the role of individual, job-related, organisational and technological factors in gig-worker performance.
4. To synthesise existing evidence on algorithmic management and platform-mediated work.
5. To identify research gaps relating to gig-worker performance, particularly in India and Kerala.
6. To propose an integrated framework for future empirical research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to systematically identify, assess, and synthesise existing evidence on the factors that influence the work performance of gig workers. The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to ensure a transparent, systematic, and reproducible review process.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A systematic literature review was adopted because it facilitates the structured identification, critical assessment, and synthesis of relevant research addressing a defined research question or topic. By applying predefined procedures for searching, screening, and selected studies, this approach can reduce a potential review bias and provide a structured synthesis of the available evidence.

SEARCH STRATEGY

Relevant publications were identified through a systematic search of four academic information sources: Scopus, Web of Science, Dimensions, and Google Scholar. The search strategy incorporated combinations of keywords and related terms, including “gig economy,” “gig workers,” “platform work,” “work performance,” “drivers,” “barriers,” “digital labour,” “algorithmic management,” and “flexible employment.” The Boolean operators AND and OR were applied to combine search terms and improve the relevance of the retrieved records.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The review included peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2018 and 2026. Studies examining gig workers, platform-mediated employment, work performance, and the factors associated with worker performance were considered eligible for inclusion. Conference proceedings, book chapters, theses, reports, duplicate records, non-English publications, and studies that did not address the review objectives were excluded.

STUDY SELECTION

The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 framework. A total of 420 records were identified. Following the removal 85 duplicate records, 335 unique records remained for screening stage. Screening of titles and abstracts resulted in the exclusion of 265 records that did not meet the preliminary eligibility requirements. The remaining 70 publications were subjected to full-text assessment, after which 38 were excluded based on the specified eligibility criteria. Finally, 32 studies were included in the systematic review.

PRISMA study selection

stage	Number of record
Records identified	420
Duplicates removed	85
Records after duplicates	335
Records screened	335
Records excluded	265
Full-text articles assessed	70
Full-text articles excluded	38

Studies included	32
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RESULT AND THEMATIC SYNTHESIS

1. Work performance of gig workers

Work performance is the main outcome examined in this review. Amin (2024) examined the relationship between work motivation, organisational commitment and the performance of Gojek drivers. Wu and Huang (2024) highlighted individual, work-related, platform level and technological factors as important determinants of productivity among platform worker. Wendra et al. (2023) examined the relationship between work characteristics, worker wellbeing and performance. Zhao et al. (2025) further demonstrated the relevance of social support and psychological mechanisms in expanding gig-worker performance. Taken together, these findings suggest that gig-worker performance is multidimensional and emerges from the interaction of personal resources, work characteristics, platform conditions and social resources.

2. Work motivation

Work motivation emerged as an important driver of gig worker performance. Higher levels of motivation may encourage workers to demonstrate greater persistence, engagement and commitment to their assigned tasks. Amin (2024) provides empirical evidence regarding the relationship between motivation and performance among Gojek drivers. Ashford et al. (2018) similarly emphasise the role of personal resources and motivation in helping individuals navigate non-traditional forms of employment.

3. Job Autonomy and Flexibility

Job autonomy and flexibility are among the most frequently identified advantages associated with gig work. Wood et al. (2019) demonstrate that platform workers may experience considerable autonomy while simultaneously being subject to algorithmic forms of control. Therefore, autonomy may contribute positively to work performance, whereas excessive technological control may weaken the benefits associated with worker autonomy.

4. Digital Skills and Platform Factors

Digital competence has become increasingly important because platform workers rely on mobile applications, digital communication, navigation technologies, electronic payment systems, ratings mechanisms and algorithm- mediated task allocation. Alauddin et al. (2024) and Dedema and Rosenbaum (2024) highlight the significant role of technologies and socio-technical systems in shaping the nature and experience of gig work.

5. Algorithmic Management

Algorithmic management emerged as one of the most important significant themes in the reviewed literature. Algorithms system can be used to allocate tasks, monitor performance, administer incentives and influence worker behaviour. Kellogg et al. (2020) conceptualise algorithmic management as an emerging domain of workplace control. Duggan et al. (2020) likewise discuss the implications of algorithmic management for employment relations and human resource management. Meijerink and Bondarouk (2023) emphasise the dual nature of algorithms can facilitate work and generate value while also restricting worker autonomy. Liu and Yin (2024) examine the influence of algorithmic management on job crafting, while Zhu et al. (2026) draw attention to its potential implications for worker safety.

6. Income and Financial Security

The opportunity to generate income represents an important motivation for participation in gig work. However, the absence of predictable earnings can create financial insecurity. Ravenelle (2019) and Pillai and Dev (2022) illustrate the complex relationship between income opportunities and experiences of gig workers.

7. Job Insecurity and Income Uncertainty

Job insecurity and income uncertainty emerged as major barriers affecting gig-worker experiences and performance. In contrast to conventional employment arrangements, gig work may provide limited assurance of stable earnings and continuing employment relationships. Ashford et al. (2018), Ravenelle (2019) and Shaiwalini and Patnaik (2025) identify uncertainty as an important structural challenge within the gig economy.

8. Occupational Stress, Fatigue and Wellbeing

Worker well-being is closely connected with the ability to maintain sustainable work performance. Bajwa et al. (2018) highlight a range of occupational health challenges experienced by workers in the global gig economy. Jaydarifard et al. (2024) identify fatigue as an important concern among taxi, ridesharing workers. Wendra et al. (2023) further examine the links between work characteristics, worker well-being and performance.

9. Customer related challenges

Interaction with customers constitute an important aspect of many forms of platform -mediated work. Customer complaints, rating systems, and experiences of perceived injustice may increase the emotional and occupational demands placed on gig workers. Zhao et al. (2026) examine the role of algorithmic governance in supporting gig workers when dealing with customer-related injustice.

10. Social Support

Social support can provide emotional and practical resources to gig workers particularly when they have limited access to conventional workplace relationships. Zhao et al. (2025) indicate that multidimensional social support may influence gig-worker performance through emotional and autonomy-related mechanisms.

11. Work life Balance

Although flexible work arrangement may facilitate work–life balance, the absence of clearly defined working hours may also encourage extended or irregular working patterns. Thus, flexibility may have both beneficial and adverse implications, provide greater autonomy while potentially contribute to fatigue and difficulties in maintaining work–life balance.

12. Regulatory and social Protection Factors

Limited access to employment - related protections represents an important structural concern within the gig economy. Vallas and Schor (2020) examine how digital platforms are reshaping employment relationships, while Broughton et al. (2018) highlight concerns related employment conditions, job security and worker protections. Accordingly, effective social protection mechanisms and greater regulatory clarity are important for promoting sustainable forms of gig work.

13. Gender and Socio- Economic Conditions

Socio-economic characteristics may shape both participation in gig work and workers' experiences within the sector. Chengodan and Jamsheer (2025) examine the challenges experienced by women gig workers in Malappuram District, Kerala. Kavitha and Parvathy (2023) provide evidence regarding opportunities associated with platform-based work in Kerala. Regional research, including the study by Sindhu et al. provides additional insights into the socio-economic conditions and work patterns and satisfaction of gig workers.

14. Gig Work Participation and Attitudes

Bhagavathi and Kumar (2025) investigated Generation Z's participation in Kerala's gig economy using the Theory of Planned Behaviour as the underlying theoretical framework. Their findings highlight the relevance of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control in explaining individuals intentions and participation in gig-work.

The reviewed literature identifies the following major factors as potential drivers of gig worker performance:

Major Drivers

- Work motivation
- Job autonomy
- Flexible working arrangements
- Digital skills
- Organisational commitment
- Social support
- Platform support
- Fair compensation
- Positive work characteristics
- Access to income opportunities

Major Barriers

- Algorithmic control
- Job insecurity
- Income uncertainty
- Occupational stress
- Fatigue
- Customer-related problems
- Lack of social protection
- Work–life imbalance
- Regulatory uncertainty
- Excessive performance monitoring

The synthesis indicates that several factors associated with gig work can have both beneficial and adverse effect. Flexibility may enhance workers' autonomy and control over their schedules while simultaneously encouraging irregular or extended working patterns. Digital platforms can facilitate efficiency and coordination while also increasing algorithmic monitoring and managerial control.

Research Gaps and Future Research

The reviewed literature identifies several important research gaps. A substantial portion of the reviewed studies focus on employment conditions, platform governance, or worker well-being or specific aspects of gig work, with comparatively limited attention to an integrated examination of the drivers and barriers associated with work performance. The review indicates that empirical evidence from India remain relatively limited, while studies specifically examining the determinants of gig – worker performance in Kerala are particularly scarce. The existing literature also appears to place

greater emphasis on ride-hailing and food-delivery workers, with comparatively less attention given to logistics workers, home-service providers, and online freelancers. Future research should develop integrated models that examine motivational, technological, organisational, and institutional factors simultaneously. Longitudinal and comparative studies across different sectors and regions are also needed to provide a deeper understanding of gig workers' work performance.

DISCUSSION

This systematic literature review synthesised evidence from 32 peer-reviewed studies to examine the drivers and barriers influencing the work performance of gig workers. The review demonstrates that gig workers' performance is shaped by a combination of individual, organisational, technological, and institutional factors. Across the reviewed literature, work motivation, job autonomy, flexible working arrangements, digital skills, platform support, fair compensation, and organisational commitment emerged as recurring factors associated with gig - work performance. Collectively these factors may create favourable conditions for productivity, service quality, customer satisfaction, and worker engagement.

In contrast, the review identifies several barriers that may constrain gig worker performance and adversely affect their work experiences. Algorithmic management, job insecurity, income uncertainty, occupational stress, customer-rating systems, work-life imbalance, and inadequate social protection are associated with increased work demands and may adversely influence workers well-being and performance. Although digital platforms create employment opportunities, they also transfer significant risks and responsibilities to workers, making employment conditions more uncertain.

A major finding of this review is the growing influence of algorithmic management on gig workers' performance. While digital platforms improve efficiency through automated task allocation and performance monitoring, excessive algorithmic control may reduce worker autonomy, increase stress, and negatively influence job satisfaction. Therefore, platform companies should adopt transparent and fair algorithmic practices that balance operational efficiency with worker well-being.

The review also reveals important research gaps. Existing studies primarily focus on developed countries, while empirical evidence from India remains limited. Furthermore, research specifically examining gig workers in Kerala is scarce. Future studies should investigate sector-specific and region-specific factors influencing work performance and examine how policy interventions, social protection, and digital governance affect gig workers' long-term well-being and productivity.

Overall, the findings highlight the need for collaborative efforts among policymakers, platform companies, and researchers to improve employment conditions, strengthen worker protection, and

promote sustainable growth in the gig economy.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review examined the principal drivers and barriers associated with gig-worker performance by synthesising evidence from 32 studies published between 2018 and 2026. Guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, the review provides a structured synthesis of the factors associated with work performance in the gig economy.

The synthesis identifies work motivation, job autonomy, flexible working arrangements, digital skills, platform support, fair compensation, and organisational commitment as important factors associated with gig-worker performance. Conversely, algorithmic control, job insecurity, income uncertainty, occupational stress, customer-related challenges, inadequate social protection, work–life imbalance, and regulatory uncertainty emerged as important barriers that may adversely affect workers’ well-being and performance.

The review also highlights significant gaps in the existing evidence, particularly the limited empirical research on gig-worker performance in India and the scarcity of studies specifically examining the drivers and barriers of performance in Kerala. The literature also appears to place greater emphasis on ride-hailing and food-delivery work, with comparatively limited attention to other categories of gig workers and platform-mediated occupations.

The study contributes to the growing literature on the gig economy by integrating evidence on the major factors that may facilitate or constrain gig-worker performance. The findings have implications for researchers, policymakers, and platform companies seeking to strengthen worker protection, support well-being, and develop management and policy practices conducive to sustainable platform-based employment.

Future research should prioritise sector-specific, region-specific, comparative, and longitudinal studies to develop a deeper understanding of gig-worker performance across diverse contexts. In particular, empirical research in Kerala can build on the findings of this review by examining how individual characteristics, job demands, platform resources, digital competencies, social support, compensation, algorithmic management, and institutional conditions interact to shape gig-worker performance.

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