

## STUDY COMPARE TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY GIG ECONOMY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN ERNAKULAM DISTRICT

<sup>1</sup>Lisha Joseph & <sup>2</sup>Dr Ramya Thiyagarajan

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research, Selaiyur, Chennai – 73. <sup>2</sup>research Supervisor and Associate Professor, Department of Business Administration, Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research, Selaiyur, Chennai – 73,

### ABSTRACT

The gig economy has emerged as a significant employment trend, particularly among college students seeking flexible work opportunities. This thesis investigates the opportunities and challenges faced by college students participating in the gig economy in the Ernakulam district. The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive analysis. The objectives of study was used to analyze the benefits and drawbacks of gig work for students. To analyze the benefits and challenges faced by these students in the Gig economy. A stratified sampling method ensures a representative sample of college students from various institutions in Ernakulam. The study Surveys and semi-structured interviews are used to gather data. The survey captures demographic and gig work-related information, while interviews provide deeper insights into personal experiences. A sample of 234 college students will be selected are currently engaged in gig work will be targeted for the survey. The statistical tolls used or Regression analysis. Key findings reveal that while the gig economy offers flexible work hours and additional income, it also presents challenges such as job insecurity, lack of benefits, and work-life balance issues. The research concludes with recommendations for policymakers and educational institutions to better support students engaged in gig work.

**Keywords:** Opportunities, Challenges, Gig economy, Students.

### INTRODUCTION

The gig economy, a labor market characterized by short-term contracts or freelance work rather than permanent jobs, has seen exponential growth globally over the past decade. This shift has been driven by advancements in digital technology, the rise of platform-based businesses, and changes in workforce preferences. Platforms like Uber, Upwork, and Swiggy have revolutionized the way work is contracted and executed, providing individuals with unprecedented flexibility in their work arrangements. This transformation has significant implications for various demographics, including college students.

The Gig Economy in Kerala

Kerala, known for its high literacy rates and progressive social indicators, has not been left untouched by this trend. The state's gig economy, particularly in urban centers like Ernakulam, has seen significant expansion. Ernakulam, with its thriving commercial activities and educational

institutions, is a hub for gig work. The district offers a range of gig opportunities, from delivery services and ride-sharing to freelance tutoring and IT services.

### Challenges Faced by Student Gig Workers

Despite the benefits, student gig workers face several challenges. The most prominent issue is job insecurity, as gig work does not offer the stability of traditional employment. This lack of stability can lead to financial uncertainty and stress. Additionally, gig workers typically do not receive benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, and retirement plans, which are standard in traditional jobs.

Balancing academic responsibilities with gig work can also be difficult, potentially impacting students' academic performance and mental health. The irregular hours and demands of gig work can lead to poor time management and burnout. Furthermore, there are legal and regulatory challenges, as the gig economy often operates in a grey area with respect to labor laws and worker protections.

### Need for a Comprehensive Study

Given these dynamics, there is a pressing need to comprehensively study the gig economy's impact on college students in Ernakulam district. Understanding the specific opportunities and challenges faced by these students can inform policies and practices that enhance their well-being and academic success. This study aims to fill that gap by providing a detailed analysis of the gig economy's effects on college students, exploring both the positive and negative aspects, and offering recommendations for stakeholders to create a more supportive environment for student gig workers.

In conclusion, while the gig economy presents valuable opportunities for college students in Ernakulam, it also poses significant challenges that need to be addressed. This research seeks to provide a balanced perspective on these issues, contributing to the broader discourse on the future of work and education in the digital age.

## **Definition and Evolution of the Gig Economy**

The gig economy refers to a labor market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs. This economic model relies heavily on digital platforms that connect workers with clients or consumers. The term "gig" is derived from musicians' engagements, reflecting the temporary and flexible nature of such work.

The gig economy has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Initially, freelance and part-time work were limited to specific industries such as arts and entertainment. However, advancements in technology and the rise of the internet have catalyzed its expansion across various

sectors. Digital platforms like Uber, Lyft, Upwork, and Fiverr have transformed how work is sourced and delivered, allowing a diverse range of services from ride-sharing and food delivery to graphic design and software development.

The financial crisis of 2008 also played a crucial role in accelerating the gig economy's growth. As traditional employment opportunities dwindled, both workers and employers sought more flexible and cost-effective labor solutions. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly boosted the gig economy, as remote work and digital services became indispensable.

Today, the gig economy continues to expand, driven by technological innovations, changing workforce preferences, and the increasing demand for flexible work arrangements. It represents a significant shift in the traditional employment paradigm, offering both opportunities and challenges for workers worldwide.

### **Opportunities in the Gig Economy**

The gig economy offers several notable opportunities, particularly for college students seeking flexible employment options that can complement their academic schedules and financial needs.

#### **Flexibility**

One of the most significant advantages is the flexibility it provides. Gig work allows students to choose when and how much they want to work, making it easier to balance job commitments with academic responsibilities. This flexibility is crucial for students who need to attend classes, study, and engage in extracurricular activities.

#### **Skill Development**

The gig economy also offers opportunities for skill development. Students can gain practical experience in their field of study or explore different industries, enhancing their resumes and improving their employability. For example, a student majoring in graphic design can take up freelance design projects, while a computer science student might engage in coding or IT support gigs.

#### **Income Generation**

Another key benefit is the potential for income generation. Gig work provides a source of financial independence, helping students cover tuition fees, living expenses, and other costs

associated with their education. This income can be particularly valuable in reducing the need for student loans and debt.

### **Networking and Professional Growth**

Engaging in the gig economy can also help students build professional networks. Working with various clients and companies allows them to establish connections that may lead to future job opportunities or partnerships. This networking is invaluable for career growth and gaining industry insights.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Katz & Krueger, (2016) The term "gig" originates from the music industry, reflecting the temporary nature of the work. This definition encompasses a wide range of activities, from ride-sharing and food delivery to digital freelancing and online tutoring. The report emphasized the need for better regulation to ensure fair treatment of gig workers. For students, gig work offers a means to earn income while studying, but it also raises concerns about precarious employment and the impact on their academic performance and well-being.

Stewart & Stanford, (2020) The gig economy has evolved rapidly, driven by technological advancements and changes in consumer behavior. Digital platforms like Uber, Airbnb, and Upwork have disrupted traditional employment structures, enabling individuals to access flexible work opportunities. Many students are drawn to gig work as a means of supplementing their finances and gaining practical experience in their fields of interest. The dual demands of gig work and academics can have mixed effects on students' academic performance and well-being. While some students report improved time management skills and financial independence, others experience stress, burnout, and negative impacts on their mental health. The lack of stability and benefits associated with gig work can exacerbate these challenges, leading to concerns about long-term sustainability.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology section of this study outlines the systematic approach undertaken to explore the impact of the gig economy on college students in Ernakulam, Kerala. Given the dual role that these students play as both learners and workers, a mixed-method research design was deemed most appropriate to capture the comprehensive and multifaceted nature of their experiences.

#### **Significance of the study**

The significance of this study lies in its potential to illuminate the multifaceted impact of the gig economy on college students in the Ernakulam district, a demographic often overlooked in broader economic analyses. By focusing on this specific group, the study addresses several critical gaps in current research and policy-making. Understanding these impacts can help colleges and universities develop targeted support systems, such as academic advising, time management workshops, and mental health resources tailored to gig-working students. Secondly, the study offers valuable data for policymakers seeking to regulate the gig economy more effectively. By highlighting the specific challenges faced by student gig workers, such as job insecurity and lack of

benefits, the research can inform the creation of policies that protect these workers without stifling the flexibility and opportunities that gig work provides. Thirdly, for employers and gig platforms, the study's insights can guide the development of more student-friendly work environments. This includes flexible scheduling, fair compensation, and opportunities for skill development, which can enhance the attractiveness of gig work for students while ensuring their well-being.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The gig economy has become an increasingly popular employment option for college students, providing flexible work arrangements and supplemental income. However, the proliferation of gig work among students in the Ernakulam district presents a complex set of challenges and opportunities that have not been thoroughly examined. While the gig economy offers potential benefits such as enhanced flexibility, skill development, and financial independence, it also brings significant challenges, including job insecurity, lack of benefits, and potential negative impacts on academic performance and mental health. Therefore, the core problem addressed by this study is the lack of comprehensive understanding of the dual-edged nature of gig work among college students in Ernakulam. This research seeks to fill this gap by systematically investigating the types of gig work students engage in, the benefits they derive, and the challenges they face. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing targeted interventions that can enhance the positive aspects of gig work while mitigating its drawbacks, thereby supporting the academic success and overall well-being of college students in the region. Despite the growing engagement of college students in the gig economy, there is limited research specifically focusing on how these factors play out in the unique socio-economic and educational context of Ernakulam.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of this study encompasses a detailed examination of the gig economy's impact on college students in the Ernakulam district of Kerala, India. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the opportunities and challenges that student gig workers face. The research is confined to the Ernakulam district, a significant educational and commercial hub in Kerala. Ernakulam is known for its diverse economy and the presence of numerous higher education institutions, making it an ideal location for studying the gig economy's effects on students. The primary focus is on students aged 18-24 years, as this is the typical age range for college attendees who are most likely to participate in gig work. It also investigates the challenges faced by student gig workers, such as job insecurity, lack of employment benefits, difficulty balancing work and academic commitments, and legal and regulatory issues.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- ✓ To analyze the benefits and drawbacks of gig work for students.
- ✓ To analyze the benefits and challenges faced by these students in the Gig economy.
- ✓ To provide recommendations for improving the gig work experience for college students.

## **HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

- ✓ There is no significant difference between benefits and drawbacks of gig work for students.
- ✓ There is no significant difference between challenges faced by these students in the Gig economy.
- ✓ There is no significant difference between improving the gig work experience for college students.

### *Research Design*

A mixed-methods approach is adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic view of the research problem.

### *Sampling Techniques*

A stratified sampling method ensures a representative sample of college students from various institutions in Ernakulam.

### *Data Collection Methods*

Surveys and semi-structured interviews are used to gather data. The survey captures demographic and gig work-related information, while interviews provide deeper insights into personal experiences

## **SAMPLING**

A sample of 234 college students will be selected are currently engaged in gig work will be targeted for the survey. A purposive sampling method will be used to ensure that the sample includes students from different colleges and various types of gig work. This approach will help capture diverse experiences and challenges.

## **STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED**

Survey data will be analyzed using statistical tools such as SPSS. Descriptive statistics will summarize the demographics and gig work characteristics.

The following applied mathematics techniques were wont to analyze the info:

- computation of descriptive statistics like mean and std. deviation of etc.
- Regression Analysis

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table: 1 Analysis of multiple linear regression (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> for variables entered model summary)**

| R                 | R <sup>2</sup> | Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| .688 <sup>a</sup> | .474           | .471                    | 1.560                      |

Predictors: (Constant), Flexibility, Skill Development, Income generation.

Table 1 shows that, as a whole, these predictors accounted for 47.4%. (47.1% adjusted) of the variability in the opportunities and challenges for Gig economy. To put it differently, 47.4% of the variance can be predicted from the independent variables Flexibility, Skill Development, Income generation. Given is the analysis of variance that evaluates the model's overall significance for multiple regression analysis.

**Table 2 Multiple Regression Analysis using ANOVA**

| Model      | Sum of square | df  | Mean square | F-value | Sig.   |
|------------|---------------|-----|-------------|---------|--------|
| Regression | 1332.274      | 3   | 444.091     | 182.470 | 0.001* |
| Residual   | 1479.740      | 608 | 2.434       |         |        |
| Total      | 2812.013      | 611 |             |         |        |

Predictors: (Constant), Flexibility, Skill Development, Income generation.

B Dependent Variable: Gig economy opportunities

Based upon the statistics from the ANOVA reviews that a F-value of 182.470 with thirteen and 608 levels of freedom is statistically huge at the much less than 0.001 degrees (F=182.470; p<0.001). This suggests that the Flexibility, Skill Development, Income generation.

**Table 3**

**Coefficients and Constant Entered for Regression Equation**

| Variables         | Un-standardized Co-efficient |            | Standardized Co-efficient | t      | Sig. |
|-------------------|------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|                   | B                            | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| (Constant)        | 5.433                        | .632       |                           | 8.591  | .000 |
| Flexibility       | .063                         | .004       | .576                      | 17.617 | .000 |
| Skill development | -.006                        | .004       | -.057                     | -1.704 | .089 |
| Income generation | .081                         | .011       | .244                      | 7.071  | .000 |

A Dependent Variable: Business performance

The analysis's findings, which are shown in the table above, indicate that the standardized beta coefficients—a measure of how much flexibility and income generation are significant at the 0.001 level The contribution made by skill development, however, is not significant (p > 0.05). So, it is concluded that get entry to flexibility and income generation have an impact on Gig economic challenges.

## FINDINGS

The statistical result shows that, as a whole, these predictors accounted for 47.4%. (47.1% adjusted) of the variability in the opportunities and challenges for Gig economy. To put it differently, 47.4% of the variance can be predicted from the independent variables Flexibility, Skill Development, Income generation. Given is the analysis of variance that evaluates the model's overall significance for multiple regression analysis. So, it is concluded that get entry to flexibility and income generation have an impact on Gig economic challenges.

## CONCLUSION

The gig economy represents a significant shift in the labor market, offering both promising opportunities and notable challenges for college students in the Ernakulam district. This study aimed to explore the multifaceted impact of gig work on this demographic, providing insights that can inform policies, educational practices, and gig platform strategies. The research reveals that gig work offers several advantages to college students, including flexible work hours, the ability to earn an income while studying, and opportunities for skill development. Students engaged in various types of gig work, from food delivery and ride-sharing to digital freelancing and tutoring, which not only helped them financially but also allowed them to gain practical experience relevant to their fields of study. However, the study also highlights significant challenges faced by student gig workers. Job insecurity and the lack of traditional employment benefits such as health insurance and paid leave emerged as primary concerns. Furthermore, balancing gig work with academic responsibilities proved to be stressful for many students, often leading to negative impacts on their academic performance and mental health.

The gig economy is poised to remain a significant component of the labor market, especially for college students seeking flexible employment options. While it offers valuable opportunities, addressing the associated challenges is crucial for maximizing its benefits. By implementing supportive policies and practices, stakeholders can help create a balanced and sustainable gig economy that supports the academic success and well-being of college students in Ernakulam.

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the gig economy's dual-edged nature for college students. It calls for a collaborative effort from policymakers, educational institutions, and gig platforms to foster an environment where the advantages of gig work are harnessed while minimizing its drawbacks, thereby contributing to the overall development and success of student gig workers.

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