

THE GIG ECONOMY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN EMPLOYMENT: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF GIG WORKERS IN MYSURU CITY

Nagendrakumar P. M.

Associate Professor

Department of Sociology, Govt. First Grade College, Chamarajanagar

ABSTRACT

The gig economy has emerged as an important component of urban employment, offering flexible work opportunities while simultaneously creating concerns regarding job stability, working conditions, and social protection. The present study examines the transformation of urban employment through gig work, with particular reference to gig workers in Mysuru City. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 60 gig workers engaged in diverse forms of platform-based and task-oriented employment through a structured interview schedule. Secondary data were obtained from government reports, labour and employment publications, scholarly literature, and relevant policy documents. The data were analysed using frequency, percentage, cross-tabulation, and Pearson's Chi-square test. The findings indicate that irregular income (65.0%), lack of social security (63.3%), and lack of paid leave (60.0%) are major challenges faced by respondents, while flexible working hours (71.7%) and additional income opportunities (66.7%) are the principal benefits. The hypothesis testing revealed a statistically significant association between working conditions and job satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 27.510$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the first hypothesis. Similarly, access to social security benefits was significantly associated with perceived employment security ($\chi^2 = 21.012$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the second hypothesis. The study concludes that although gig employment enhances flexibility and accessibility, strengthening social protection, income security, occupational safety, and institutional support is essential for promoting more secure and sustainable urban employment.

Keywords: Gig Economy; Urban Employment; Social Security; Job Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world of work is undergoing significant transformation due to technological advancement, digitalisation, changing consumer behaviour, and the expansion of platform-based economic activities. One of the most visible outcomes of these changes is the emergence of the gig economy, which refers to a labour market characterised by short-term, flexible, task-based, and often digitally mediated employment. Unlike conventional employment relationships, gig work generally provides workers with greater flexibility in determining when and how they undertake work, while simultaneously creating new forms of uncertainty regarding income, employment continuity, social protection, and workplace rights.

The expansion of smartphones, internet connectivity, digital payment systems, and online platforms has accelerated the growth of gig employment in urban areas. Individuals can now obtain work through digital platforms in areas such as food and grocery delivery, transportation, online services, customer support, promotional activities, data collection, event-related work, and other task-oriented occupations. For many workers, gig employment serves as a primary source of livelihood, while for others it provides supplementary income or an opportunity to participate in the labour market with

relatively fewer entry barriers. Thus, the gig economy has become an important component of the changing structure of urban employment.

From a sociological perspective, the growth of gig work represents more than a technological or economic development. It reflects changing employer–worker relationships, patterns of labour control, occupational identities, and forms of economic insecurity. Although flexibility and autonomy are often presented as major advantages, gig workers may encounter irregular earnings, extended or unpredictable working hours, absence of paid leave, occupational risks, platform-based performance pressures, and limited access to social security. These conditions can influence workers’ perceptions of job satisfaction and employment security and may contribute to the emergence of new forms of labour vulnerability.

Mysuru City, as an expanding urban centre with a growing service and digital economy, provides an important context for examining these transformations. The increasing presence of platform-based and task-oriented employment creates a need to understand the socio-economic experiences of gig workers and the changing nature of urban labour relations. The present study, titled “The Gig Economy and the Transformation of Urban Employment: A Sociological Study of Gig Workers in Mysuru City,” therefore examines the working conditions, employment patterns, job satisfaction, social security, and perceived employment security of gig workers. The study also analyses the association between working conditions and job satisfaction and between access to social security benefits and perceived employment security. Through this analysis, the study seeks to contribute to a sociological understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and broader implications of gig employment in contemporary urban society.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The conceptual framework provides a systematic basis for examining how the gig economy is transforming urban employment. It is based on the sociological perspective that technological development, changing labour-market structures, and new employment relationships influence workers’ economic conditions, work experiences, and employment security.

- **Gig Economy and Urban Employment:** The gig economy represents a shift from conventional employment towards flexible, temporary, task-based, and digitally mediated forms of work, creating both opportunities and vulnerabilities for urban workers.
- **Socio-Demographic and Employment Characteristics:** Age, gender, education, type and duration of gig work, working hours, monthly income, and dependence on gig income influence workers’ employment experiences.
- **Working Conditions and Job Satisfaction:** Working conditions include income stability, workload, working hours, occupational safety, work-related expenses, platform pressures, and access to leave. Favourable working conditions are expected to contribute to higher **job satisfaction**.
- **Social Security and Employment Security:** Access to health and accident insurance, welfare provisions, retirement benefits, and other social protection measures may reduce workers’ vulnerability and enhance perceived employment security.

Gig employment provides flexibility, additional income, independence, and accessibility to work. However, irregular income, inadequate social protection, occupational risks, lack of paid leave, and platform pressures create significant challenges. The interaction of these dimensions reflects the dual nature of gig employment. While it expands employment opportunities and flexibility, it may also generate new forms of economic and employment insecurity. Thus, the framework focuses particularly

on the relationships between working conditions and job satisfaction and between social security access and perceived employment security.

STATEMENT OF THE STUDY

The emergence of the gig economy represents a significant transformation in the structure and organisation of urban employment. Unlike conventional employment, gig work is generally characterised by temporary, flexible, task-based, and platform-mediated work arrangements. Digital platforms have enabled individuals to access employment opportunities without necessarily entering into traditional employer–employee relationships. In Mysuru City, the expansion of delivery services, app-based work, customer support, data collection, promotional activities, and other forms of gig employment has created new avenues of livelihood for different sections of the urban workforce. At the same time, gig workers may experience irregular income, extended working hours, limited employment protection, occupational risks, and inadequate social security. The present study, titled “*The Gig Economy and the Transformation of Urban Employment: A Sociological Study of Gig Workers in Mysuru City*,” focuses on these changing employment relationships and the socio-economic experiences of gig workers. The study examines their working conditions, job satisfaction, access to social security, and perceived employment security to understand the broader implications of gig employment for urban workers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Wood et al. (2019) conducted an empirical study on gig workers across Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, using survey data from 679 online platform workers. The study examined worker autonomy and algorithmic control in the gig economy. The findings revealed that gig work provides flexibility and autonomy but is simultaneously associated with income insecurity, intensive work, and algorithmic control. The study highlighted the contradictory nature of gig employment, where flexibility coexists with new forms of labour control and insecurity. The study is relevant to the present research as it demonstrates the importance of working conditions in understanding gig workers’ employment experiences.

Asfahani et al. (2023) empirically examined the relationship between human resource practices, job satisfaction, and career sustainability among 344 gig workers in Saudi Arabia. Using quantitative research methods, the study found that supportive human resource practices positively influenced gig workers’ job satisfaction and career sustainability. The findings emphasised the importance of organisational support, fair treatment, and appropriate employment practices in improving workers’ experiences. The study is relevant to the present research because it establishes an empirical relationship between employment conditions and job satisfaction. However, it was conducted outside India and did not specifically examine social security and employment security among urban gig workers.

RESEARCH GAP

The existing empirical literature demonstrates that the gig economy has significantly altered the nature of employment by providing flexibility, autonomy, and alternative income opportunities. However, previous studies have largely focused on platform control, worker autonomy, job satisfaction, and career sustainability, with considerable attention to individual sectors such as food delivery and online platform work. There remains limited empirical research examining the gig economy from a comprehensive sociological perspective within Indian urban contexts, particularly at the city level. Further, relatively little attention has been given to the relationship between working conditions and job satisfaction and the association between access to social security benefits and perceived

employment security among gig workers. Existing studies also tend to examine specific categories of gig workers rather than workers engaged in diverse forms of gig employment. In the context of Mysuru City, systematic empirical evidence on the socio-economic characteristics, working conditions, employment challenges, social security access, job satisfaction, and employment security of gig workers remains limited. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap by providing an empirical sociological analysis of gig workers in Mysuru City and examining the interrelationship between working conditions, job satisfaction, social security, and perceived employment security.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The rapid expansion of gig employment has created both opportunities and challenges within the contemporary urban labour market. Although gig work provides flexibility, additional income, and relatively accessible employment opportunities, the absence or limited availability of conventional employment protections can expose workers to economic and social insecurity. Issues such as unstable earnings, lack of paid leave, occupational safety concerns, platform-related pressures, and inadequate social security require systematic sociological investigation. In Mysuru City, where the urban economy is undergoing changes associated with digitalisation and service-sector expansion, there is a need to understand how gig employment is influencing the experiences and perceptions of workers. The study is therefore significant for examining whether improved working conditions contribute to job satisfaction and whether access to social security is associated with greater employment security. An empirical study of these dimensions can contribute to the understanding of emerging forms of urban employment and changing labour relations. The findings may also assist policymakers, labour institutions, and digital platforms in developing appropriate measures for social protection, income security, occupational safety, and sustainable employment conditions for gig workers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the working conditions, employment patterns, and job satisfaction of gig workers in Mysuru City.
2. To analyse the relationship between access to social security benefits and perceived employment security among gig workers in Mysuru City.

Hypothesis of the study

- ❖ There is a statistically significant association between working conditions and job satisfaction among gig workers in Mysuru City.
- ❖ There is a statistically significant association between access to social security benefits and perceived employment security among gig workers in Mysuru City.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the transformation of urban employment through the emerging gig economy and to analyse the working and employment conditions of gig workers in Mysuru City. The study draws upon both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected from 60 gig workers through a structured interview schedule using purposive sampling. The respondents represented diverse forms of gig employment, including food and grocery delivery, remote customer support, event logistics, promotional work, task execution, data collection, and FinTech and app-based work. The schedule covered socio-demographic characteristics, employment patterns, working conditions, job satisfaction, social security, employment security, problems, benefits, and suggestions. Secondary data were obtained from government publications, labour and employment reports, books, scholarly journals, research articles, policy

documents, and credible institutional sources. The collected data were systematically coded, classified, tabulated, and analysed using frequency, percentage, cross-tabulation, and Pearson's Chi-square test. The hypotheses were tested at the 5 per cent level of significance ($p < 0.05$).

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The present section analyses and interprets the primary data collected from 60 gig workers in Mysuru City. The analysis focuses on their socio-demographic characteristics, employment patterns, working conditions, job satisfaction, social security, and perceived employment security. The collected data are systematically classified and presented through appropriate tables using frequency and percentage analysis. Cross-tabulation and Pearson's Chi-square test are employed to examine the hypothesised relationships between the major study variables. The findings are interpreted from a sociological perspective to understand the changing nature and challenges of urban employment in the gig economy.

Table 1: Socio-Economic and Employment Profile, Work Characteristics, Major Problems and Suggestions of Gig Workers in Mysuru City (N=60)

Variable	Category/Response	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	42	70.0
	Female	18	30.0
Age	18–25 years	18	30.0
	26–35 years	24	40.0
	36–45 years	12	20.0
	Above 45 years	6	10.0
Gender	Male	42	70.0
	Female	18	30.0
Educational Qualification	Secondary	8	13.3
	PUC	15	25.0
	Graduate	27	45.0
	Postgraduate	10	16.7
Marital Status	Married	31	51.7
	Unmarried	29	48.3
Type of Gig Work	Food and Grocery Delivery	12	20.0
	Remote Customer Support	8	13.3
	Event Logistics	7	11.7
	Promotional Work	6	10.0
	Task Execution	7	11.7
	Data Collection	6	10.0
	FinTech & App Gigs	8	13.3
	Other Gig Work	6	10.0
Duration of Gig Work	Less than 1 year	12	20.0
	1–3 years	25	41.7
	4–6 years	15	25.0
	More than 6 years	8	13.3
Average Working Hours per Day	Below 4 hours	7	11.7
	4–6 hours	18	30.0
	7–9 hours	24	40.0
	More than 9 hours	11	18.3
Monthly Income	Below ₹15,000	14	23.3
	₹15,001–₹25,000	25	41.7
	₹25,001–₹35,000	14	23.3
	Above ₹35,000	7	11.7
Role of Gig Income	Only source of income	32	53.3

	Main source of income	17	28.3
	Supplementary income	11	18.3
Awareness of Social Security Schemes	High	14	23.3
	Moderate	27	45.0
	Low	19	31.7
Major Problems Faced	Irregular/unstable income	39	65.0
	Lack of social security	38	63.3
	Long/irregular working hours	35	58.3
	Lack of employment security	34	56.7
	High work-related expenses	32	53.3
	Platform/algorithmic pressure	29	48.3
	Lack of paid leave	36	60.0
	Occupational safety concerns	27	45.0
	Limited career progression	28	46.7
	Customer-related difficulties	25	41.7
Perceived Benefits of Gig Work	Flexible working hours	43	71.7
	Additional income opportunity	40	66.7
	Easy entry into employment	36	60.0
	Independence in work	34	56.7
	Digital work opportunities	31	51.7
	Ability to combine multiple jobs	29	48.3
Suggestions for Improvement	Social security benefits	45	75.0
	Health and accident insurance	44	73.3
	Minimum/guaranteed income protection	41	68.3
	Paid leave and sickness benefits	39	65.0
	Grievance-redressal mechanism	38	63.3
	Transparent platform policies	37	61.7
	Better occupational safety	36	60.0
	Reduction in platform commissions	35	58.3
	Retirement/pension support	33	55.0
	Skill-development programmes	29	48.3

Source: Primary data

Table 1 presents a comprehensive profile of the 60 gig workers selected for the study in Mysuru City, covering their socio-demographic characteristics, employment patterns, working conditions, major problems, perceived benefits, and suggestions. The findings indicate that 70.0% of respondents are male and 30.0% are female, reflecting male predominance in the selected gig workforce. The largest age group is 26–35 years (40.0%), followed by 18–25 years (30.0%), indicating greater participation of younger working-age groups. Educationally, 45.0% are graduates, while 25.0% have completed PUC, suggesting a comparatively educated workforce. About 51.7% are married.

With regard to the nature of employment, Food and Grocery Delivery accounts for the largest category (20.0%), followed by Remote Customer Support and FinTech & App Gigs at 13.3% each. This demonstrates that gig employment in Mysuru extends beyond traditional delivery services to include diverse digital, service-oriented, and task-based occupations. In terms of experience, 41.7% have worked in the gig economy for 1–3 years, while 25.0% have 4–6 years of experience. Further, 40.0% work 7–9 hours per day and 18.3% work for more than nine hours, indicating substantial dependence on gig employment.

The income distribution shows that 41.7% earn ₹15,001–₹25,000 per month, while 23.3% earn below ₹15,000. Significantly, gig work is the only source of income for 53.3% of respondents, highlighting

its importance to household livelihoods. Nevertheless, respondents reported considerable employment-related difficulties. Irregular income (65.0%) was the most prominent problem, followed by lack of social security (63.3%), lack of paid leave (60.0%), and long or irregular working hours (58.3%). Lack of employment security was also reported by 56.7%.

At the same time, gig employment offers important advantages. Flexible working hours (71.7%), additional income opportunities (66.7%), and easy entry into employment (60.0%) were the major perceived benefits. However, respondents strongly demanded improved protection, particularly social security benefits (75.0%), health and accident insurance (73.3%), guaranteed income protection (68.3%), and paid leave (65.0%). Overall, the findings highlight the dual nature of gig employment: while it enhances flexibility and employment accessibility, it also exposes workers to economic insecurity, inadequate social protection, and uncertain employment conditions.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1: There is a statistically significant association between working conditions and job satisfaction among gig workers in Mysuru City.

Table 1: Association between Working Conditions and Job Satisfaction among Gig Workers in Mysuru City

Working Conditions	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Total
Favourable	15	4	1	20
Moderate	10	7	5	22
Unfavourable	1	3	14	18
Total	26	14	20	60

Source: Primary data

This table shows a clear pattern: workers reporting favourable working conditions tend to report higher job satisfaction, while those reporting unfavourable conditions tend to report dissatisfaction.

Chi-square Results

Test	Value
Pearson Chi-square (χ^2)	27.51
Degrees of freedom (df)	4
Sample size (N)	60
p-value	< 0.001
Significance level	0.05

The Pearson Chi-square test yielded $\chi^2 = 27.51$, with $df = 4$ and $p < 0.001$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a statistically significant relationship between access to social security benefits and perceived employment security among gig workers in Mysuru City.

Therefore, the hypothesis is supported at the 5% significance level.

Hypothesis 2: There is a statistically significant association between access to social security benefits and perceived employment security among gig workers in Mysuru City.

Table 2: Association between Access to Social Security Benefits and Perceived Employment Security among Gig Workers in Mysuru City

Access to Social Security Benefits	High Employment Security	Moderate Employment Security	Low Employment Security	Total
High	15	4	1	20
Moderate	8	7	7	22
Low	2	4	12	18
Total	25	15	20	60

Source: Primary data

The table indicates a clear pattern. Among workers with high access to social security benefits, 15 out of 20 respondents report high employment security. In contrast, among workers with low access to social security benefits, 12 out of 18 report low employment security.

Chi-square Results

Statistical Test	Value
Pearson Chi-square (χ^2)	21.012
Degrees of freedom (df)	4
Sample size (N)	60
p-value	< 0.001
Significance level	0.05

The Chi-square analysis reveals a statistically significant association between access to social security benefits and perceived employment security among gig workers in Mysuru City ($\chi^2 = 21.012$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$). The results indicate that gig workers with higher access to social security benefits are more likely to perceive their employment as secure, whereas workers with limited access to social security are more likely to experience employment insecurity. Since the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. A significant association was found between working conditions and job satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 27.510$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$). Gig workers with favourable working conditions reported higher satisfaction, supporting Hypothesis 1.
2. : Access to social security benefits was significantly associated with perceived employment security ($\chi^2 = 21.012$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$). Workers with better social security access generally experienced greater employment security, supporting Hypothesis 2.
3. The study found that irregular income (65.0%), lack of social security (63.3%), and lack of paid leave (60.0%) were the major problems faced by gig workers, indicating considerable employment vulnerability.
4. Flexible working hours (71.7%) and additional income opportunities (66.7%) were the major benefits identified by respondents. Thus, gig work provides flexibility and accessible employment opportunities despite its limitations.
5. The highest proportion of respondents suggested social security benefits (75.0%), health and accident insurance (73.3%), and guaranteed income protection (68.3%), highlighting the need for stronger institutional support.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

1. Expand social security coverage through health insurance, accident insurance, pension, and other welfare benefits.
2. Introduce income-protection measures to address irregular and unstable earnings among gig workers.
3. Improve working conditions through reasonable working hours, occupational safety, rest periods, and paid leave.
4. Strengthen platform regulation by ensuring transparent payments, fair commissions, and effective grievance-redressal mechanisms.
5. Promote skill development and awareness programmes to improve workers' employability, financial security, and long-term employment prospects.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the transformation of urban employment through the emerging gig economy, with particular reference to gig workers in Mysuru City. The findings demonstrate that gig employment provides important opportunities through flexible working hours, additional income, and relatively easy access to employment. However, these advantages coexist with significant vulnerabilities, particularly irregular income, inadequate social security, lack of paid leave, occupational risks, and limited employment security. The empirical analysis confirms that working conditions have a statistically significant association with job satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 27.510$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting the first hypothesis. Similarly, access to social security benefits is significantly associated with perceived employment security ($\chi^2 = 21.012$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the second hypothesis. Overall, the study concludes that gig work represents both an opportunity and a source of employment insecurity. Strengthening social protection, income security, occupational safety, transparent platform practices, and skill-development opportunities is therefore essential for ensuring more equitable, secure, and sustainable urban employment in Mysuru City.

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