
GIG ECONOMY AND FLEXIBLE WORK MODELS: A STUDY ON STUDENT PARTICIPATION, ACADEMIC BALANCE, AND INCOME GENERATION.

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ABSTRACT

The rapid emergence of the gig economy and flexible work models has significantly reshaped traditional employment patterns, especially among students. With the increasing accessibility of digital platforms and freelancing opportunities, students are actively engaging in part-time, remote, and project-based work alongside their academic commitments. This study aims to examine the extent of student participation in gig work, its influence on academic balance, and its contribution to income generation and financial independence.

The research adopts a quantitative method, collecting primary data through structured questionnaires administered to college students involved in various forms of flexible work. The study analyzes key variables such as motivations for participation, types of gig work undertaken, time allocation, stress levels, academic performance, and financial outcomes. Findings suggest that the primary drivers for student involvement in the gig economy include the need for financial support, desire for independence, and opportunities for skill development and real-world exposure.

While gig work offers several advantages, including flexible schedules, income generation, and enhanced employability skills, it also presents notable challenges. Increased work hours and poor time management may lead to academic stress, reduced focus on studies, and potential declines in academic performance. Additionally, the lack of structured work

environments can further complicate students' ability to maintain a healthy balance between education and employment.

KEYWORDS: Gig Economy, Flexible Work, Students, Academic Balance, Income Generation.

FULL PAPER

1. INTRODUCTION:

The global labour market is undergoing a significant transformation with the rise of the gig economy, characterized by short-term, flexible, and freelance work arrangements. In India, the growth of digital platforms such as Swiggy, Zomato, Uber, and freelancing websites has created new income opportunities, especially for students.

Students today are increasingly engaging in gig work to earn income, gain experience, and develop skills. Flexible work models allow them to balance academic responsibilities with employment, making gig work an attractive option.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze student participation in gig and flexible work
- To examine the impact on academic balance
- To study the role of gig work in income generation
- To identify challenges faced by student gig workers

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Gig Economy

- Sundararajan (2016) defined the gig economy as a system of peer-to-peer exchange facilitated by digital platforms, emphasizing flexibility and independence but highlighting the lack of employment security.
- De Stefano (2016) discussed the legal challenges of gig work, noting that gig workers often fall outside traditional labor protections, leading to issues of job insecurity and lack of benefits.
- Wood et al. (2019) examined working conditions in the gig economy and found that while workers enjoy autonomy, they are subject to algorithmic control and income instability.

- Kalleberg and Dunn (2016) highlighted the rise of non-standard work arrangements, stating that gig work contributes to labor market flexibility but increases precarity among workers.
- Broughton et al. (2018) found that gig workers value flexibility but face challenges such as inconsistent income, lack of social security, and limited career progression.

Flexible Work Models

- Hill et al. (2008) found that flexible work arrangements improve work-life balance and job satisfaction, especially among individuals managing multiple responsibilities.
- Allen et al. (2013) emphasized that flexible work options reduce work-family conflict and enhance employee well-being and productivity.
- Kossek and Michel (2011) discussed how flexible work practices enable better control over time and location, leading to improved performance outcomes.
- Gajendran and Harrison (2007) showed that flexible work arrangements, including remote work, positively impact employee autonomy and satisfaction.
- Bloom et al. (2015) found that flexible working conditions can increase productivity but require self-discipline and effective management.

3.3. Student Participation in Gig Work

- Curtis and Williams (2002) found that students engage in part-time work primarily for financial reasons, but excessive work hours negatively affect academic performance.
- Robotham (2012) reported that student employment helps develop transferable skills but may lead to stress and time constraints.
- Perlin (2011) highlighted that students increasingly rely on temporary and gig work for financial independence and career preparation.
- Ashford et al. (2018) emphasized that gig work provides students with opportunities for skill development, adaptability, and career readiness.
- Smith (2016) found that young individuals, including students, actively participate in gig work through online platforms for income and flexibility.

3.4. Academic Balance

- Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) introduced the concept of role conflict, explaining how competing demands (study and work) can affect performance.

- Nonis and Hudson (2006) found that students who work long hours tend to experience lower academic performance due to reduced study time.
- Crede and Kuncel (2008) highlighted that time management and study habits are strong predictors of academic success.
- Butler (2007) emphasized that balancing multiple roles can lead to stress, affecting both academic and personal outcomes.
- Trockel et al. (2000) found that lifestyle factors, including work commitments, significantly influence students' academic performance.

3.5 Theoretical Framework

3.5.1. Work-Life Balance Theory

- Greenhaus and Allen (2011) defined work-life balance as the ability to effectively manage multiple roles without conflict.
- Clark (2000) proposed the Work-Family Border Theory, explaining how individuals manage boundaries between work and personal life.
- Frone (2003) found that imbalance between roles leads to stress and reduced well-being.
- Guest (2002) emphasized the importance of balance in improving satisfaction and performance.
- Voydanoff (2005) linked work-life balance to psychological well-being and role efficiency.

3.5.2. Human Capital Theory

- Becker (1964) proposed that education and work experience enhance individuals' productivity and earning potential.
- Mincer (1974) emphasized the role of experience and skills in determining income levels.
- Schultz (1961) highlighted investment in education and training as key to economic growth.
- Psacharopoulos (1994) found that skill development leads to higher returns in the labor market.
- Sweetland (1996) reinforced that human capital development improves employability and career success.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Descriptive research design

Data Collection: Primary data using structured questionnaire

Sampling Unit: College students engaged in or aware of gig work

Sampling: Convenience sampling

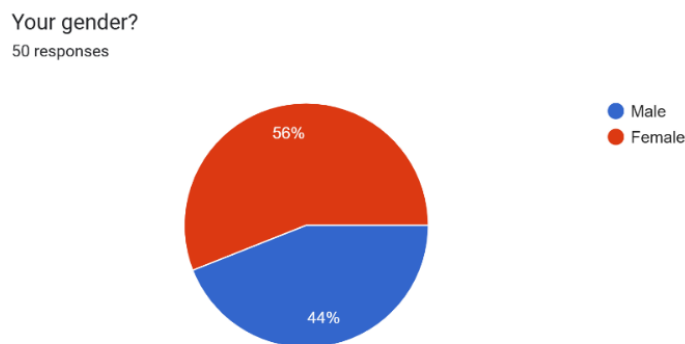
Area: Mangalore

Sample size: 50 students

Sampling technique: Convenience sampling via google forms

5. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

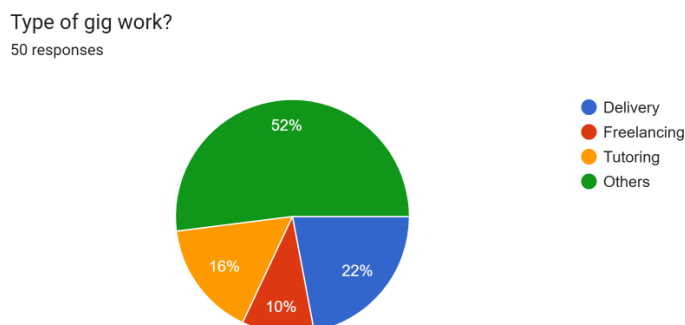
Figure: 5.1



Source: Primary Source

Majority of the respondents, 56% are female while 44% of the respondents are male. Female participants are marginally slightly higher in this sample.

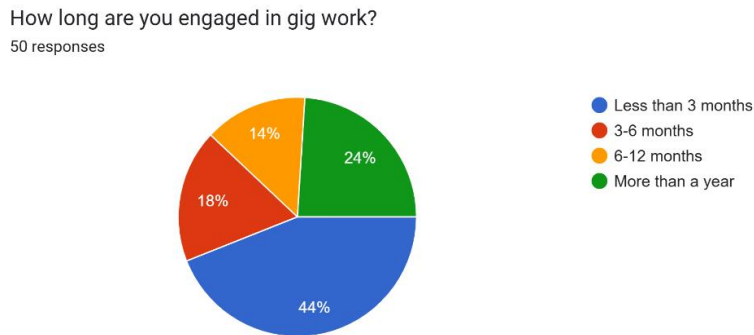
Figure: 5.2



Source: Primary Source

More than half of the respondents selected “Others,” which includes fields such as catering, content creation, and similar areas.

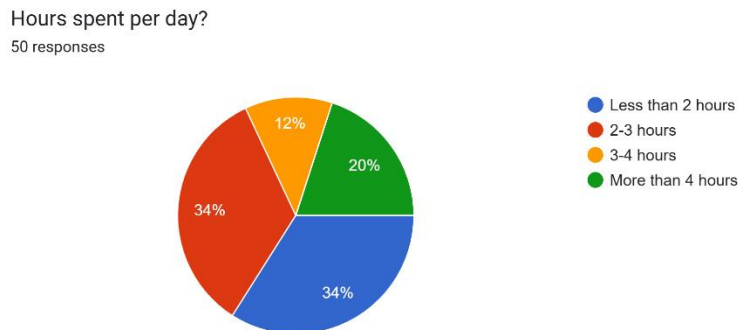
Figure: 5.3



Source: Primary Source

The data shows that most respondents, 44%, have been engaged in gig work for less than 3 months, indicating a high number of new entrants in the sector.

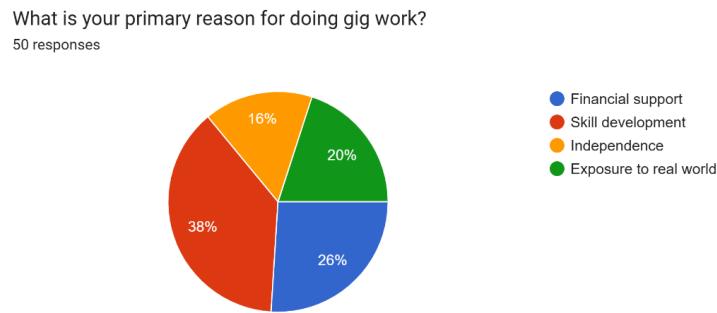
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Source: Primary Source

A majority of participants engage in gig work for limited hours daily, with 34% each in the "less than 2 hours" and "2-3 hours" categories.

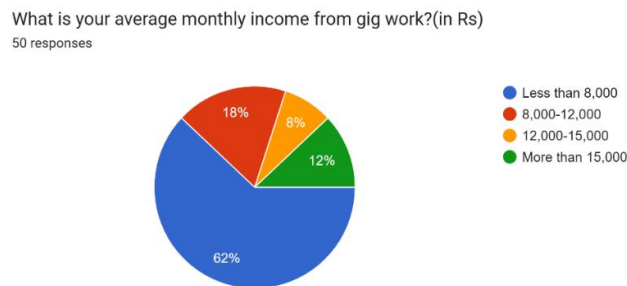
Figure: 5.5



Source: Primary Source

Skill development is the primary reason for doing gig work, chosen by 38% of respondents, followed by financial support at 26%. This shows most participants see gig work as a way to build skills while earning.

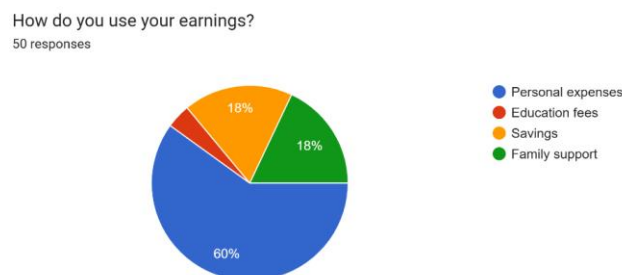
Figure: 5.6



Source: Primary Source

The majority of respondents, 62%, earn less than Rs 8,000 per month from gig work, showing that for most students it provides only a modest supplementary income.

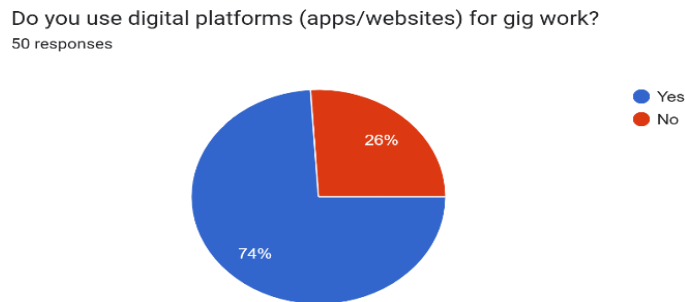
Figure: 5.7



Source: Primary Source

A majority of respondents, 60%, use their gig work earnings for personal expenses, while 18% each allocate it to savings and family support. Only a small portion use it directly for education fees.

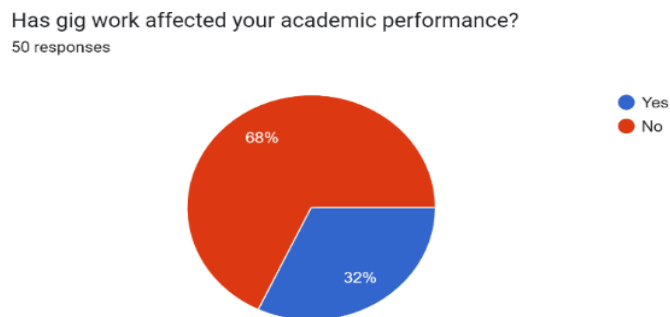
Figure: 5.8



Source: Primary Source

A large majority of respondents, 74%, use digital platforms like apps or websites for gig work, while 26% do not. This shows that app-based work dominates the gig sector among students.

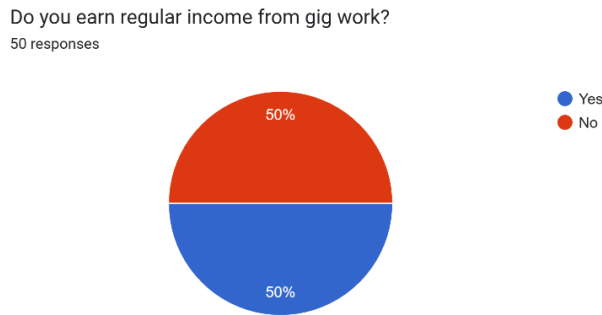
Figure: 5.9



Source: Primary Source

The majority of respondents, 68%, said gig work has not affected their academic performance, while 32% said it has. This suggests most students are able to balance work and studies.

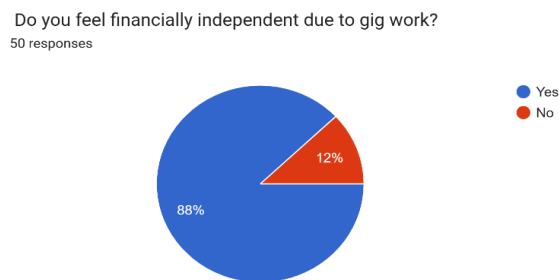
Figure: 5.10



Source: Primary Source

Responses are evenly split, with 50% earning regular income from gig work and 50% not. This shows that income consistency in gig work varies greatly among students.

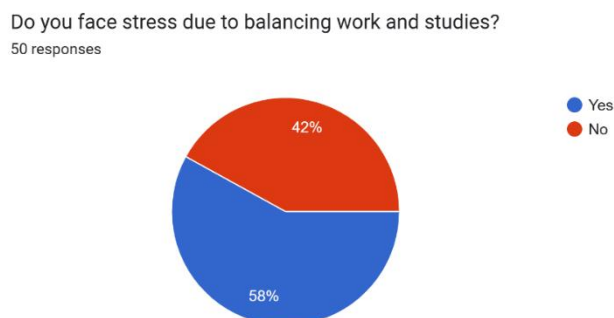
Figure: 5.11



Source: Primary Source

A strong majority, 88% of respondents, feel financially independent due to gig work, while only 12% do not. This shows gig work gives most students a sense of financial control.

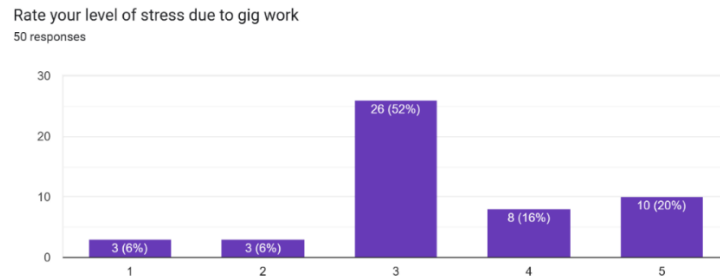
Figure: 5.12



Source: Primary Source

A majority of respondents, 58%, face stress due to balancing work and studies, while 42% do not. This shows that managing academics alongside gig work is challenging for most students.

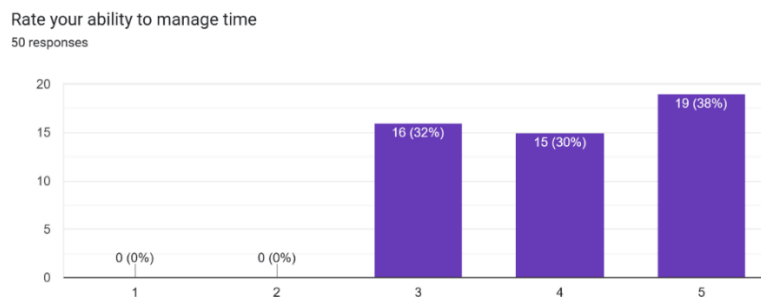
Figure: 5.13



Source: Primary Source

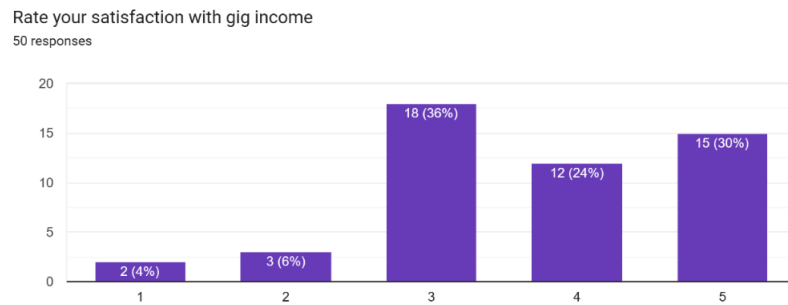
The data shows that stress levels are mainly moderate, as 52% chose level 3. However, 36% of students experience high stress (levels 4 and 5), indicating that gig work creates significant pressure for over a third of respondents.

Figure: 5.14



Source: Primary Source

Most respondents rate their time management ability positively, with 38% choosing 5 and 30% choosing 4 on a scale of 1-5. No one rated themselves 1 or 2, and 32% rated 3.

Figure: 5.15

Source: Primary Source

Satisfaction with gig income is mixed, with 36% rating it 3, 30% rating it 5, and 24% rating it 4. Only 10% reported low satisfaction (1 or 2), showing most students are neutral to highly satisfied.

6. KEY FINDINGS

- Many students are actively involved in gig work.
- Most participants are new to the gig economy.
- Skill development is the main reason for participation.
- Gig work provides only a small supplementary income.
- Students feel financially independent despite low earnings.
- Flexible working hours help manage studies and work.
- Most students maintain academic performance.
- A significant number experience stress while balancing roles.
- Digital platforms are the primary source of gig work.
- Income from gig work is often irregular.
- Students show moderate to high satisfaction with earnings.
- Time management skills are generally rated positively.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Introduction of learn and earn programs
- Students should prioritize effective time management to balance work and studies.
- Colleges should provide flexible academic schedules for working students.
- Institutions should conduct workshops on stress management and mental well-being.

- Students should choose gig work that aligns with their career goals.
- Financial literacy programs should be introduced for better money management.
- Digital platforms should ensure fair and timely payments to workers.
- Students should limit working hours to avoid academic pressure.
- Career guidance should be provided to maximize skill development through gig work.
- Awareness programs should highlight both benefits and risks of gig work

8. LIMITATIONS

- The study is based on a small sample size.
- The research is limited to a specific geographic area.
- Convenience sampling may reduce accuracy.
- The study is conducted over a short period.
- Data is based on self-reported responses.
- The findings may not apply to all students.
- Only limited factors were considered in the study.
- No comparison with non-working students was made.
- Responses may be affected by personal bias.
- Income and stress levels may vary over time

9. CONCLUSION

The study on gig economy and flexible work models highlights the growing involvement of students in part-time and freelance work alongside their academic pursuits. It is evident that gig work has become an important avenue for students to gain financial independence, develop practical skills, and gain real-world exposure. The findings show that most students participate in gig work primarily for skill development and supplementary income, with digital platforms playing a major role in providing such opportunities.

At the same time, the study reveals that gig work has both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, flexible working hours enable many students to manage their academic responsibilities effectively, and a majority report that their academic performance is not significantly affected. Additionally, students experience a sense of financial independence and improved confidence through their work experience. However, several challenges persist, including stress, time management issues, irregular income, and lack of structured work

environments. A considerable number of students face moderate to high levels of stress while trying to balance multiple responsibilities.

Overall, the study concludes that gig work serves as a beneficial supplementary activity rather than a primary source of income for students. While it enhances employability and personal growth, it also requires careful planning and self-discipline to avoid negative academic and mental health impacts. Therefore, with proper guidance, institutional support, and better work practices, students can effectively leverage the opportunities offered by the gig economy while minimizing its challenges.

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