

Gig Work and the Future of Employment: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: *The rapid expansion of the gig economy has significantly transformed traditional employment structures across the world. Gig work, characterized by short-term, task-based, and platform-mediated employment, has become increasingly prominent due to technological advancements and changing labour market dynamics. This systematic literature review examines scholarly research on gig work published between 2020 and 2025. The study synthesizes existing literature to identify key themes related to working conditions, benefits, challenges, regulatory frameworks, and future implications of gig employment. Following the PRISMA guidelines, peer-reviewed journal articles and institutional reports were analysed. The review reveals that while gig work provides flexibility and income opportunities, it also raises serious concerns regarding job security, social protection, and worker well-being. The study highlights significant research gaps and emphasizes the need for inclusive labour policies to ensure fair and sustainable gig employment.*

Keywords: Gig work, gig economy, platform work, employment, systematic literature review

1. Introduction

In recent years, the gig economy has emerged as a major component of global labour markets. Gig work refers to employment arrangements in which individuals engage in short-term, flexible, and task-based work, often facilitated by digital platforms such as Uber, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato, and freelance marketplaces. These platforms have altered traditional employer–employee relationships by introducing algorithmic management and on-demand labour practices.

Although gig work offers flexibility and autonomy to workers, it also presents several challenges, including income instability, lack of social security benefits, and limited legal protection. In countries like India, gig work has become an important source of livelihood for a large segment of the workforce. Given the rapid growth of this form of employment, there is a need to systematically examine existing research to understand its implications for workers, organizations, and policymakers. Therefore, this study undertakes a systematic literature review of research published between 2020 and 2025 to analyse the evolving nature of gig work.

2. Need for the study

The literature on gig work is extensive but fragmented across various disciplines such as economics, sociology, management, and labour studies. Many studies focus on specific sectors or regions, making it difficult to draw comprehensive conclusions. A systematic literature review is necessary to consolidate existing research, identify dominant themes, and highlight gaps in the literature. This study aims to provide a structured understanding of gig work and contribute to informed academic discussion and policy formulation.

3. Objectives of the Study

- 1] To review existing literature on gig work published between 2020 and 2025.
- 2] To identify the major benefits and challenges faced by gig workers.
- 3] To examine regulatory and policy issues associated with gig employment.
- 4] To identify research gaps and suggest directions for future research

Research Questions

- 1] What are the key characteristics of gig work discussed in recent literature?
- 2] What benefits and challenges do gig workers experience according to existing studies?
- 3] How do digital platforms influence working conditions and job security?
- 4] What regulatory and policy concerns are highlighted in gig work research?
- 5] What gaps exist in the current literature on gig employment?

4. Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure methodological rigor and transparency.

Data Sources

Relevant literature was collected from academic databases such as Google Scholar, Web of Science, and JSTOR. In addition, institutional reports published by organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and NITI Aayog were included.

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Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using keywords such as “gig work,” “gig economy,” “platform work,” “digital labour,” “freelance work,” and “app-based employment.”

- Research unrelated to gig or platform-based work
- Blogs, editorials, and opinion articles
- non-English publications
- Studies without full-text availability

5. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

- Studies published between 2020 and 2025
- Research focusing on gig work or platform-based employment
- Peer-reviewed journal articles and institutional reports
- Studies written in English
- Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies

Exclusion Criteria

- Studies published before 2020

6. Research Gap

The review reveals a lack of longitudinal studies examining long-term outcomes of gig employment. Additionally, limited research focuses on worker well-being, policy effectiveness, and gig work in developing countries beyond major urban centres. These gaps indicate the need for future research in diverse contexts and sectors.

7. Scope of the Study

The study is limited to literature published between 2020 and 2025 and focuses on gig work and platform-based employment. It does not involve primary data collection and includes only English-language sources.

8. Findings and Discussions

Sl. No	Title And Authors	Year	Journals / Publication	Core Focus	Key Findings
1.	<i>Systematic Literature Review on Gig Economy: Power Dynamics, Worker Autonomy, and Social Networks</i> - Pilatti et al.	2024	Administrative Sciences	Power relations, algorithmic control, worker agency	Highlights power imbalances via algorithmic management, and social networks as worker support mechanisms.
2.	<i>Work in the Platform Economy: A Systematic Literature Review</i> - Masta & Kaushiva	2024	Employee Relations	Broad review of platform work research	Synthesizes 258 studies on gig work, identifying thematic gaps and future research directions.
3.	<i>A Systematic Literature Review of the Gig Economy: Insights into Worker Experiences, Policy Implications, and Digitalization</i> - Omar & Jamil	2025	URISS	Worker well-being, legal & policy aspects, digitalization	Finds job insecurity, weak protections, need for policy interventions.
4.	<i>Gig Economy Workers: A Systematic Literature Review</i> - Yuliantina et al.	2025	PESHUM	Conceptual trends & digital impact	Maps literature showing dual effects of technology and importance of policy responses.
5.	<i>Gig Work: Bibliometric Review & Content Analysis</i> - Li S.	2025	Sustainable Human Resource Management	Bibliometric patterns in gig work literature	Reviews 145 gig work studies, integrating trends and bibliometric evidence.
6.	<i>Socio-technical Issues in Gig Economy: A Systematic Review</i> - (ASIS&T)	2024	Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology	Socio-technical conflicts in platform labour	Examines co-existence of technical systems and human challenges.
7.	<i>Systematic Review on Worker Voice in the Platform Economy</i>	2024	Human Research Management	Worker voice & organizational channels	Reviews how gig workers express grievances and voice needs under weak institutional support.
8.	<i>Analysing the Evolution and Patterns of the Gig Economy</i> - S. Vadavi	2024	Cogent Social Science	Patterns & evolution of gig work research	Identifies key variables shaping gig economy outcomes, such as labour flexibility and precarity.
9.	<i>The Influence of Digital Platforms on Gig</i>	2025	Heliyon	How digital platforms shape gig	Shows opportunities and challenges, including algorithmic control, competition, and lack of protections.

	Workers (Heliyon/Elsevier) -			worker experiences	
10.	Occupational Health Outcomes of Work in the Gig Economy - Agyemang et al.	2025	BMJ Open	Health & well-being of gig workers	Focuses on physical and mental health impacts of platform work.

9. Discussion

- This systematic review of gig work literature published between 2020 and 2025 reveals a strong convergence toward critical analyses of platform-mediated labour. Across the reviewed studies, gig work is consistently characterized by **algorithmic management and structural power asymmetries**, where platforms exercise control over task allocation, pricing, and performance evaluation while maintaining worker misclassification as independent contractors (Piatti et al., 2024; Masta & Kaushiva, 2024). Although flexibility is frequently cited as a benefit, the literature demonstrates that worker autonomy is highly constrained.
- A second dominant theme is **precarity and risk transfer**. Gig workers experience income volatility, employment insecurity, lack of social protection, and adverse well-being outcomes, including stress and health risks (Agyemang et al., 2025). These conditions reflect the shifting of economic and social risks from platforms to individuals.
- The literature further identifies **regulatory inadequacies**, as existing labour laws struggle to accommodate platform-based work, resulting in fragmented and uneven protections across jurisdictions (Omar & Jamil, 2025). While forms of worker voice and collective action are emerging, they remain weak and episodic.

Overall, the findings position gig work as a **socio-technical labour system** whose sustainability depends on stronger governance, regulation, and institutional support.

10. Conclusion

Gig work represents a fundamental shift in contemporary employment practices, offering flexibility and economic opportunities while simultaneously posing challenges related to job security and social protection. This systematic literature review provides a consolidated understanding of gig employment and emphasizes the importance of developing inclusive regulatory frameworks that balance flexibility with worker welfare.

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