

Fueling the future: unveiling what drives gig worker motivation and engagement in Sri Lanka's corporate landscape

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Abstract

Purpose – The gig economy has rapidly grown due to economic trends supporting flexible work and digital platforms, leading to increased demand for corporate gig workers. Although numerous studies have explored various aspects of the gig economy, research on the motivational and engagement factors of gig workers remains relatively rare. This study aims to investigate the factors that influence corporate gig workers' motivation and engagement in the geographical context of Sri Lanka. Specifically, job autonomy, remuneration, social connection and technology and investigated here.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative study, employing a deductive research approach, was conducted with data gathered through a survey designed using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. Respondents were conveniently selected from Sri Lankan corporate gig workers. A total of 397 responses were obtained through a snowball sampling technique. The collected data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling, providing a robust framework for evaluating the hypothesized relationships.

Findings – The findings revealed that job autonomy, remuneration, social connection and technology significantly influence corporate gig worker motivation, whereas motivation significantly influences the engagement of corporate gig workers in Sri Lanka.

Research limitations/implications – This study faced common limitations. Due to challenges in identifying the framework for the population, a snowball sampling technique was employed. One key limitation is the study's narrow focus on motivation factors within the Sri Lankan context, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the geographic focus and uneven sample distribution could limit the broader applicability of the conclusions. Future research should adopt a cross-cultural approach to explore the influence of social commerce adoption, enhancing the generalizability of the results.

Practical implications – A comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the corporate gig worker motivation and engagement is provided, facilitating the decision-makers to gain insight to enhance worker motivation and engagement by adapting strategies. This can lead to higher productivity and job satisfaction among gig workers.

Originality/value – Examination of the motivational and engagement factors specific to corporate gig workers in Sri Lanka, a context that has received limited attention in previous research. Also, it contributes to the existing literature by providing a deeper understanding of the gig economy and gig work, particularly in a non-Western setting.

Keywords Gig economy, Gig workers, Motivation, Engagement, Independent contractors, Freelancing, Moonlighting, Job autonomy, Remuneration, Social connection, Technology

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

The gig economy is a term that has gained a significant pull in recent years although its origins can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Flanagan, 2019). The gig economic

labour market is characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work which takes the opposite nature from the traditional work conditions (Graham *et al.*, 2017). Due to technological advancements and evolving nature of employee preferences, the gig economic model has expanded from a niche phenomenon into a significantly broader market of the global workforce. According to Djurovic (2023), around 36% (57.3 million) of the workforce was in the pre-pandemic period of the gig economy. Moreover, as evidenced by Melián-González (2022) and Al-Dossary (2022) gig economy encompasses a diverse range of occupations as transportation, freelance, writing and content creation, online tutoring, creative services, IT services, hospitality services and delivery services. However, corporate gig workers represent a distinct segment within this domain as corporate gig workers differ from other gig workers in that they typically engage in white-collar, professional tasks, often requiring specialized skills and expertise (Batmunkh and Lakner, 2023). Unlike their corresponding gig workers, who may perform more transactional or commoditized services, corporate gig workers are often involved in project-based work that aligns with their professional careers. This distinction is crucial as it influences the motivational and engagement factors that drive these individuals. Furthermore, various forces like technological advancements, increased connectivity, flexible work arrangements and integration of digital platforms have sharpened the gig economy globally (Kässi and Lehtonvirta, 2018). Over time gig economy has grown immensely where the initial pull was in the USA and spreading to countries like the UK, Italy, Africa, Russia and Sri Lanka. Moreover, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic which accelerated the shift toward remote work options which boost the interest in gig work within people (Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2020; Hunt *et al.*, 2019). Djurovic (2023) predicts that over 50% of the US workforce is likely to participate in the gig economy by 2027. Additionally, the gig economy's growth has been documented extensively, with Abraham *et al.* (2018) noting its expansion and the challenges in measuring its true scope. The nature of gig work can vary significantly, with (Melián-González, 2022) highlighting the differences in consumer perceptions between gig economy delivery services and professional service companies. Al-Dossary (2022) investigated the feasibility of applying the gig economy framework in specific professions, suggesting the adaptability of this model across various sectors.

In Sri Lanka, the gig economy has seen significant growth, particularly in the online freelancing sector, providing opportunities for income generation and employment diversification (Galpaya and Laleema, 2018; Perampalam, 2015). The nature of gig work in Sri Lanka mirrors global trends, with an increasing number of professionals leveraging digital platforms to find gig work that suits their skills and schedules (Madadeniya, 2022). Therefore, understanding the factors that influence corporate gig workers motivation and engagement is crucial for several reasons. First, as the gig economy continues to expand, organizations must adapt their management strategies to attract and retain top talent within this segment (Meijerink and Keegan, 2019). Second, the performance and commitment of gig workers are influenced by their perceptions of trust and the fulfillment of their psychological contracts (Campagna and Griffith, 2023; McDonald and Makin, 2000). Additionally, the well-being and job satisfaction of gig workers are closely linked to their work-life balance and autonomy, which in turn affect their engagement and productivity (Golden and Cheryl, 2007; Khoshnaw and Alavi, 2020). However, in Sri Lanka, as in other parts of the world, the gig economy presents both opportunities and challenges. For corporate gig workers, the flexibility and autonomy associated with gig work can lead to increased job satisfaction and motivation (Kidane and Xuefeng, 2021). However, issues such as financial unstableness and lack of social interaction can pose significant barriers to their effectiveness and well-being (Apouey *et al.*, 2020; Deepa *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to delve into the factors that motivate and engage corporate gig workers to ensure their integration into the workforce is beneficial for both the individuals and the organizations they serve. The expansion of the gig economy in Sri Lanka has led to an increased reliance on gig workers; however, there remains a significant gap in understanding the factors that drive and sustain their engagement within the corporate landscape (Janadari and Preena, 2020).

This knowledge gap presents a substantial obstacle, discouraging many from considering gig work as a viable employment option. It is essential for both organizations and prospective gig workers to identify and understand the motivational factors and elements that contribute to job satisfaction and engagement in gig work (Jabagi *et al.*, 2019; Sini and Drishya, 2022). By illuminating these aspects, more informed decisions can be made, thereby fostering an environment that supports the ongoing growth of the gig economy in Sri Lanka (Priyankara, 2021). Addressing this gap is crucial not only for the future trajectory of gig work but also for ensuring that the gig economy offers sustainable opportunities and benefits for both workers and businesses (De Stefano, 2016). Moreover, this study aims to identify a comprehensive set of variables relevant to the engagement and motivation of gig workers and to subsequently establish a robust conceptual framework based on the research findings. The primary objective is to assess how different factors influence gig worker motivation and engagement within the gig economy. Additionally, the study seeks to evaluate the significance of specific factors, such as job autonomy, remuneration, social connections and technology, on gig worker motivation, as well as to assess the impact of motivation on their level of engagement.

This study is well structured, it begins with a comprehensive literature review of the identified variables and relevant theories. It then discusses the methodology, covering sampling techniques, data collection methods and the validation of measurement instruments. Finally, the study presents the results of the quantitative research, providing a detailed analysis of the findings.

Literature review

Globally, the gig economy has captured significant attention for its potential to change the labour market by both creating new job opportunities and transforming established work structures. While Janadari and Preena (2020) provide a detailed exploration of the gig economy's benefits. There are notable gaps in their analysis. For instance, the discussion primarily focuses on the positive aspects of gig work, such as flexibility and independence, but does not sufficiently address the gig workers' motivations.

Job autonomy

One important aspect of gig employment is job autonomy (Umair *et al.*, 2023). Given its potential to improve employee performance, job autonomy has gained substantial attention in organizational behaviour and human resource management (Khoshnaw and Alavi, 2020). Job autonomy is defined as the extent to which workers have decisions and control over their tasks (i.e. it gives employees the freedom to set their own schedules) (Kidane and Xuefeng, 2021; Umair *et al.*, 2023).

Wood *et al.* (2019) provide an in-depth examination of the global gig economy, emphasising the different points of view of gig workers who have a great deal of autonomy over their work but are also subject to strong algorithmic limitations. According to Khoshnaw and Alavi (2020), job autonomy is a key component that significantly impacts employee motivation and performance. It can also raise employee engagement and trust in management, which in turn improves job performance. Frate and Bido (2024) demonstrate how motivation and autonomy are closely related, with increased autonomy resulting in higher levels of motivation. Nevertheless, Jabagi *et al.* (2019) explore the motivation of gig workers in the context of the gig economy. It takes the incorporation of concepts such as the self-determination theory (SDT) and the job characteristics theory to explore how the arrangement of digital labour platforms might affect the motivation of gig workers. According to Manganeli *et al.* (2017), SDT highlights the crucial role that job autonomy contributes to motivation, demonstrating how increased worker job autonomy can boost their motivation. Ashford *et al.* (2018) discuss the relationship between job autonomy and motivation in the context of gig work. According to their findings, it shows the high level of job autonomy that gig workers have, while it can improve the significance of the task and

increase motivation and satisfaction. Based on the explanation the below hypothesis is proposed.

H1. Job autonomy significantly influences motivation among corporate gig workers.

Remuneration

Remuneration can be an effective instrument for motivating workers to perform better and take an active part in attaining organizational objectives (Darmawan, 2021). Butschek *et al.* (2019) examine how payment plans affect the performance of independent contractors who provide services on the Internet and mention that gig workers are primarily motivated by financial gain. According to Butschek *et al.* (2019), their findings emphasize the importance of understanding the motivations of gig workers, suggesting that platforms should consider these motivations when designing compensation structures to optimize labour supply and performance. According to Darmawan (2021), remuneration affects employee motivation. Through a perspective of the gig economy, Moorman *et al.* (2024) examined the motivational foundations of organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Moorman *et al.* (2024) emphasize how social exchange ties are crucial to traditional OCB models, and how employees' willingness to participate in OCB is greatly motivated by their perceptions of fair treatment and rewards. Korlén *et al.* (2017) have conducted an exploratory qualitative case study of a patient-choice reform in specialized orthopaedics in Sweden that included financial incentives. The findings demonstrate how managers used alignment tactics to increase employee motivation through the incentive model. Furthermore, Noor *et al.* (2020) conducted a study on the importance of employee motivation and the effect of reward systems on workers' motivation, satisfaction and performance. Based on the information gathered from the survey, most workers believe that inadequate incentive programs are the reason for low employee motivation. Employees believe that promotions, bonuses and job recognition can boost their motivation (Noor *et al.*, 2020). The below hypothesis is proposed based on the explanation.

H2. Remuneration significantly influences motivation among corporate gig workers.

Social connection

According to Çiğdem (2022), gig workers often work alone on computers, which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Consequently, to build strong relationships and form social connections outside of work, gig workers must put in extra effort (Çiğdem, 2022). Social interaction has a greater impact on gig workers' perception and motivation (Myhill *et al.*, 2021). Unlike employees in traditional organizations, employees in online labour marketplaces typically operate alone without face-to-face interactions with employers or coworkers (Fest *et al.*, 2021). Swain *et al.* (2020) explore the impact of social media and ubiquitous technologies on the well-being and productivity of remote workers in a post-pandemic world. Swain *et al.* (2020) mentioned that lack of social interaction affects motivation. However, gig worker's motivation factors have not been addressed in their study. Cao *et al.* (2013) use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to understand the motivations behind the continued use of social networks. According to Maslow (1943), human needs are arranged in a hierarchy that moves from safety and social requirements to esteem and self-actualization, having completed with fundamental physiological needs. Cao *et al.* (2013) tie Maslow's framework to motivation theory, suggesting that the fulfilment of social and self-actualization needs drives users' motivation to continue using social networks. Jabagi *et al.* (2019) suggest that platform design, including the integration of social media tools like social networking and social badging, can help support workers' self-motivation in environments where traditional supervision is absent a crucial aspect of being a gig worker is having the motivation to network and form relationships, which is frequently a must (Çiğdem, 2022). There is strong evidence from the studies that social networks can increase motivation (Fulk and Yuan, 2013). Yang *et al.* (2020) investigate how utilizing an online social network would affect employee motivation and how employee motivation will affect the sharing

of organizational information. According to [Yang et al. \(2020\)](#), their findings show that social networks impact on employees' motivations. Based on the above explanation, the below hypothesis is proposed.

H3. Social connection significantly influences motivation among corporate gig workers.

Technology

Transforming gig workers into the organization needs the use of technology ([Mahato et al., 2021](#)). According to [Dunn \(2020\)](#), digital platforms can influence how employees feel about their employment and how motivated they are to take on gig work. [Skrzek-Lubasinska and Szban \(2024\)](#) claim that identifying the HR roles within digital platforms may affect the labour market, platform management, social interactions in general and on specific jobs and gig workers' motivation. [Lee et al. \(2015\)](#) investigate the effects of sequentially introducing different types of motivation on technology acceptance, specifically in the context of knowledge-sharing systems and its findings show the technology adoption's motivating factors.

[Parry and Battista \(2023\)](#) examine the facts regarding how new technologies are affecting the workplace and how the human resources department can support businesses and people in responding to these changes. The findings of the evidence and their discussion suggest that new technologies that could have a big impact on work and employees include wearables, blockchain, Verifiable Randomness (VR) and Accountability and Responsibility (AR), robotics, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technology. However, their study has not addressed how technology affects gig workers' motivation. [Choi \(2021\)](#) discusses the adoption of AI in employee service systems and examines how employees perceive and accept AI technologies in service encounters while stating that the user's motivation to adopt AI-based technology is positively associated with their willingness to accept such technology.

Furthermore, [Janadari and Preena \(2020\)](#) highlight how technology has made the gig economy possible, other research has criticized platform corporations for controlling gig workers often to their disadvantage. This contrast implies that although there are a lot of potential in the gig economy, there are also a lot of hazards that must be carefully controlled. Accordingly, below is the hypothesis proposed.

H4. Technology significantly influences motivation among corporate gig workers.

Motivation

Motivation is a process of decision-making that allows people to select the results they want and then initiate the appropriate behaviors to achieve those desired outcomes ([Chen et al., 2019](#); [Ryan and Deci, 2018](#)). Motivation is presented as a crucial factor influencing performance and well-being in the workplace, particularly in the context of gig work ([Jabagi et al., 2019](#)). [Jabagi et al. \(2019\)](#) distinguish between intrinsic motivation, which is linked to psychological well-being and creativity and extrinsic motivation, which may lead to temporary behaviour changes without fostering long-term commitment. It emphasizes that understanding and leveraging intrinsic motivation can enhance job satisfaction and organizational functioning, especially in non-traditional work contexts like the gig economy. The concept of motivation has gained widespread recognition as a component that can stimulate an individual to execute desirable actions, indicating that individuals are motivated ([Ryan and Deci, 2018](#); [Chen et al., 2019](#)). [Keith et al. \(2020\)](#) make a distinction between the push and pull motivating factors that influence participation in the gig economy. Pull motives are internal aspirations for freedom, autonomy or happiness, whereas push motivations are external influences like family pressure or a lack of money. Comprehending this motivation can impact significant results like the health and happiness of employees.

A study conducted by [Salleh et al. \(2023\)](#) examined on a sample of gig workers primarily earning income from food delivery services indicating that flexibility is a critical factor influencing their work experience. These gig workers appreciate the autonomy afforded to

them in determining their work schedules and locations, which enables them to fulfill other obligations. This autonomy, in turn, contributes to increased job satisfaction and overall contentment in their work. However, factors such as inconsistency of earnings, absence of fair labor contracts and lack of benefits especially from emerging economies may give rise to more disengagement than engagement. Even, positive feelings toward clients or among colleagues as well as client satisfaction help enhance commitment and loyalty such as in friendly relationships in spite of the shortcomings of economies driven by gigs.

Furthermore, Kurian and Madhavi (2024) emphasize the direct influence of motivation on the engagement and well-being of gig workers. Factors such as flexibility, autonomy and opportunities for skill development significantly enhance the activity levels of gig workers in their roles, leading to increased dedication and improved performance. Nevertheless, some factors such as job instability and shift patterns without an established order can reduce motivation and engagement levels. The focus of the work is on the significance of enhancing job resources to provide for motivation, which is essential in increasing the level of engagement and the quality of life of the gig workers. There is a clear inter-relationship between motivation and engagement; when gig workers are more motivated, they tend to be more engaged and contented with their work. Accordingly, the below hypothesis is proposed.

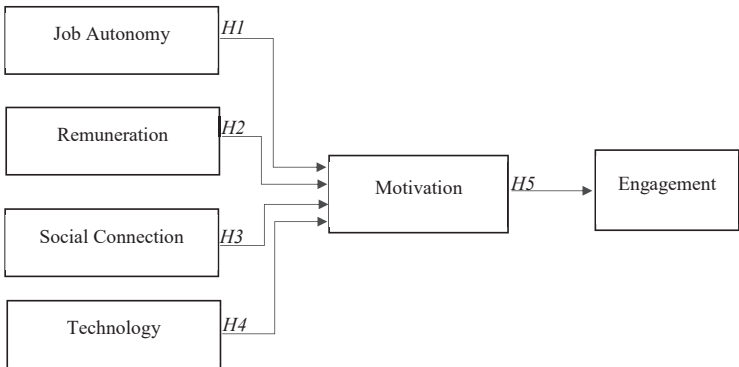
H5. Motivation significantly predicts engagement among corporate gig workers.

Moreover, Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework of the factors that influence the corporate gig worker motivation and engagement identified through a comprehensive literature review. Moreover, the hypothesis that was tested in the study will be as follows.

Methodology

Research design

The research study is grounded with the philosophy of positivism that highlights the importance of objective and measurable data. This is followed by the deductive approach, where the foundation is established upon the theoretical aspects and the existing literature to arrive to the hypothesis, that is tested against empirical data, ensuring that the study is systematic and grounded in scholarly work. Mono-method quantitative strategy is employed as the study is focused on quantitative data which is collected through surveys. Further, a cross-sectional time horizon has been chosen for the research, allowing for the immediate collection and analysis of data to reflect the current state of the gig worker landscape. Holistically, the research design is structured to collect timely data and to achieve the objectives of uncovering



Source(s): Based on authors' observation

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

consistent patterns (Wisenthige, 2023) and trends that offer a clear depiction of the dynamics of the gig economy in Sri Lanka.

Participants and procedures

This study analyzes data collected from corporate gig workers in Sri Lanka. Although gig workers form a distinct segment of the workforce, accurately determining the size of this population is challenging due to the lack of official data or registries in Sri Lanka (Madadeniya, 2022). Similar to other regions, gig workers often remain part of an 'invisible' workforce that is not easily identifiable unless they choose to self-report their work status (Meijerink and Keegan, 2019; Sutherland *et al.*, 2020). This issue is compounded by the gig economy's informal nature, where workers operate outside traditional employment structures, making them difficult to track (De Stefano, 2016). Given this challenge, we employed the snowball sampling method, a technique commonly used for accessing hidden populations, relying on referrals from participants to identify additional respondents (Sadler *et al.*, 2010; Heckathorn, 2011).

Moreover, before administering the questionnaire, explicit informed consent is obtained from the participants, and strict measures are in place to protect their confidentiality. This demonstrates a commitment to maintaining ethical standards throughout the data collection process. Further, the accurate response rate of 94.52% was obtained with 397 accurate responses taken for analysis where 420 responses were collected in total during the eight-month data collection period from the end of January to the end of August in 2024.

Indicators

The researchers developed a structured questionnaire with three main sections. The first section sought the respondents' consent, confirming their willingness to participate and complying with ethical guidelines. The second section gathered demographic details. The third section, designed with a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), focused on collecting insights into various factors influencing the motivation and engagement of gig workers. Each variable was assessed through specific, carefully chosen indicators, which were adapted from well-established scales in the existing literature to ensure validity and reliability within the context of gig work. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of each variable's indicators alongside the corresponding questions, offering a comprehensive view of how each construct was operationalized and measured in alignment with prior research.

Moreover, to ensure the questionnaire's reliability, accuracy and validity of the relationships between observed indicators and latent variables, a pilot study was conducted with 50 corporate gig workers as part of a thorough development process. Through this, the final questionnaire was redefined by removing the outer loadings below 0.5 (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were further confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and AVE. These metrics met the thresholds outlined in (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The variables showed high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.765 to 0.872 and high reliability, with composite reliability values ranging from 0.844 to 0.901 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Accordingly, the finalized 39-item questionnaires were used to assess the variables.

Data analysis

The study utilizes the partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) technique with SMART PLS software. PLS-SEM is a statistical method that enables the exploration of complex relationships among multiple variables simultaneously especially between the observed and latent variables (Wong, 2013). Moreover, PLS-SEM is well-suited for small sample sizes and non-normal data distributions (Magno *et al.*, 2024). SMART PLS, known for

Table 1. Overview of variables, indicators, literature references and survey items

Variables	Indicators	Links
Motivation	Drive for High Performance	Wani (2022) Locke and Latham (2002) Legault (2017)
	Fulfillment	Maslow (1943) Tan (2013) Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000)
Engagement	Desire for Professional Growth	Tadayon and Bijandi (2012)
	Proactive Engagement	Crant (2000) Parker <i>et al.</i> (2010) Sonnentag (2003)
	Flexible Effort	Hakanen <i>et al.</i> (2008)
	Proactive Problem Solving	Crant and Bateman (2000) Grant and Ashford (2008) Frese and Fay (2001)
	Organizational Commitment	Meyer and Allen (1991) Schaufeli and Baker (2004) Mathieu and Zajac (1990)
	Collaborative Engagement	West and Anderson (1996) Salas <i>et al.</i> (2005) Emmerik (2005)
		Eisenberger <i>et al.</i> (1999)
Remuneration	Incentive Opportunities	Wani (2022)
	Perceived Fairness of the Salary	Locke and Latham (2002) Rynes <i>et al.</i> (2005) Adams (1965)
	Financial Stability	Diener and Biswas-Diener (2002) Hysa and Mansi (2020)
Social connection	Strength of Social Relationship	Baumeister and Leary (1995) Maslow (1943) Walton <i>et al.</i> (2011)
	Enjoyment of Social Interaction	Ryan and Deci (2000)
	Sense of belongingness	Maslow (1943)
	Opportunities for collaboration	Tjosvold (2007)
	Valuation from Peers	Eisenberger <i>et al.</i> (1986) Baumeister and Leary (1995)
Technology	Productivity	Woldesenbet (2018) Brynjolfsson and Hitt (2000) Tarafdar <i>et al.</i> (2011)
	Access to Necessary Technology	Van Dijk (2005) Hargittai (2001) Na (2005)
	Up-to-Date Technology	Turner (2007) Cascio and Montealegre (2016)
	Comfort in Technology	Venkatesh <i>et al.</i> (2003) Davis and Davis (1989) Tarafdar <i>et al.</i> (2007)
		Hackman and Oldham (1976)
		Warr (1990)
Job Autonomy	Observed Job Autonomy	Frese and Fay (2001) Bindl and Parker (2010)
	Initiative in Job Task	Ryan and Deci (2000)
	Flexibility in work method	Spreitzer (1995)
	Empowerment in Work Projects	Chong and Gagné (2019)
	Work Schedule Autonomy	Parker <i>et al.</i> (2001) Golden (2001)

its user-friendly interface, is widely employed in social sciences and business research. Which supports advanced statistical analysis, model building, validation and hypothesis testing (Purwanto *et al.*, 2021).

Results

Based on the demographic analysis, most respondents were male, with 55.16% male and 44.84% female participation. The age distribution of participants spans various groups, with most falling within the 25–34 age range, making up 44.84% of the respondents. The survey also examined the geographical distribution of participants across the provinces of Sri Lanka, which is crucial for the generalizability of our research findings. The Western Province had the highest representation, accounting for 35.77% of the respondents. Additionally, many respondents hold a degree, making up 40.81% of the total. Regarding professional qualifications, 43.32% of participants are currently pursuing such credentials, while 56.68% are not. Lastly, the distribution of participants based on their experience in gig work shows that the majority of 50.38% have 1–5 years of experience. Table 2 provides extensive demographic information about the respondents for clarity.

Measurement model assessment

The validity and reliability of the latent variables and their associated indicators were assessed through the measurement model evaluation. Table 3 presents the results of the model, which were derived from 397 data points.

According to the evaluation of the measurement model, the outer loadings of indicators were all above the recommended threshold of 0.5, with values ranging from 0.528 to 0.732, indicating that all indicators were retained (Hair *et al.*, 2017) and with those above 0.6

Table 2. Demographic analysis

Measure	Item	Count	Column <i>N</i> %
Age	15 to 24	127	31.99%
	25 to 34	178	44.84%
	35 to 54	55	13.85%
	55 to 64	32	8.06%
	Above 65	5	1.26%
Gender	Male	219	55.16%
	Female	178	44.84%
Province	Central	79	19.90%
	Eastern	17	4.28%
	North Central	40	10.08%
	Northwestern	83	20.91%
	Sabaragamuwa	8	2.02%
	Southern	28	7.05%
	Western	142	35.77%
Highest Level of Education	Advance Level	62	15.62%
	Degree	162	40.81%
	HND/Diploma	64	16.12%
	Master's and above	58	14.61%
	Ordinary level	51	12.85%
Are you following any professional qualification?	No	225	56.68%
	Yes	172	43.32%
Experience as a corporate gig worker	1–5 years	200	50.38%
	Less than 1 year	90	22.67%
	More than 5 years	107	26.95%

Source(s): Survey data

Table 3. Measurement model assessment

Latent variable	Indicators	Item code	Outer loadings	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
Engagement	Proactive Engagement	E1	0.631	0.795	0.678	0.4376
	Flexible effort	E2	0.664			
	Proactive Problem solving	E3	0.690			
	Organizational commitment	E4	0.664			
	Collaborative Engagement	E5	0.657			
Job Autonomy	Observed Job Autonomy	J1	0.639	0.770	0.627	0.4032
	Work Schedule Autonomy	J2	0.673			
	Initiative in Job Task	J3	0.588			
	Empowerment in Work Projects	J4	0.560			
	Flexibility in Work Methods	J5	0.703			
Motivation	Drive for high performance	M1	0.729	0.770	0.553	0.5276
	Fulfillment	M2	0.732			
	Desire for professional growth	M3	0.718			
Remuneration	Perceived fairness of salary	R1	0.682	0.782	0.631	0.4734
	Financial Stability	R2	0.715			
	Financial Satisfaction	R3	0.675			
	Incentive Opportunities	R4	0.680			
Social Connection	Strength of social relationships	S1	0.620	0.768	0.623	0.4002
	Sense of belonging	S2	0.681			
	Enjoyment of social interactions	S3	0.690			
	Opportunities for collaborations	S4	0.528			
Technology	Valuation from peers	S5	0.631	0.775	0.613	0.4623
	Productivity	T1	0.703			
	Access to necessary technology	T2	0.691			
	Up-to-date technology	T3	0.680			
	Comfort in technology	T4	0.644			

Source(s): Authors' representation based on Smart PLS statistic results

contributing positively to the construct validity. Moreover, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha consistently exceeding the thresholds of 0.7 and 0.6, respectively, across all indicators signifies an acceptable reliability and validity of the model (Hair *et al.*, 2019; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Although some AVEs fall below the ideal threshold of 0.5, they are still considered acceptable in the context of exploratory research as the AVE values greater than 0.4 for all constructs suggest moderate convergent validity, especially when supported by strong composite reliability (Magno *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, the discriminant validity is assessed through Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) and Fornell-Larcker

requirements. Even though the Fornell-Larcker criterion indicates that the discriminant validity is satisfactory except for job autonomy and remuneration which is shown in Table 4, whereas the HTMT criterion does not for all the variables as shown in Table 5.

The square root of each construct's AVE is greater than its correlation with any other construct, but the HTMT value is greater than the threshold of 0.9 (Magno *et al.*, 2024). However, these overlaps are acceptable as the distinctiveness of the indicators reflected in good variance inflation factor (VIF) values shown in Table 6 which is below the threshold of 3.

Even though the HTMT analysis shows that the indicators exhibit a higher level of overlap, the theoretical expectations are consistent. The relationship between job autonomy and engagement (HTMT:1.005) aligns with SDT, which links autonomy to enhancing engagement (Forner *et al.*, 2020; Ashford *et al.*, 2018). The Motivation and Job Autonomy connection (HTMT: 1.029) also supports SDT, indicating that autonomy boosts motivation (Lee *et al.*, 2015; Forner *et al.*, 2020). The overlap between Remuneration and Job Autonomy (HTMT: 1.135) reflects how financial rewards enable greater autonomy and, consequently, increased motivation and engagement (Fest *et al.*, 2021). Social Connection's associations with Engagement (HTMT: 0.955), Job Autonomy (HTMT: 0.980) and Motivation (HTMT: 0.956) are consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, emphasizing the importance of social relationships by Myhill *et al.* (2021). Additionally, the link between Social Connection and

Table 4. Fornell–Larcker assessment

Construct	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$	Engagement	Job autonomy	Motivation	Remuneration	Social connection	Technology
Engagement	0.662						
Job Autonomy	0.635	0.659					
Motivation	0.726	0.599	0.607				
Remuneration	0.688	0.616	0.699	0.571			
Social	0.633	0.62	0.612	0.593	0.517		
Connection							
Technology	0.680	0.659	0.669	0.601	0.61	0.552	

Source(s): Authors' representation based on Smart PLS statistic results

Table 5. HTMT assessment

Latent variable	HTMT
Engagement vs Job Autonomy	1.005
Engagement vs Motivation	0.976
Engagement vs Remuneration	0.940
Engagement vs Social Connection	0.955
Engagement vs Technology	1.015
Job Autonomy vs Motivation	1.029
Job Autonomy vs Remuneration	1.135
Job Autonomy vs Social Connection	0.980
Job Autonomy vs Technology	1.074
Motivation vs Remuneration	0.956
Motivation vs Social Connection	1.001
Motivation vs Technology	1.024
Remuneration vs Social Connection	0.829
Remuneration vs Technology	0.976
Social Connection vs Technology	0.885

Source(s): Authors' representation based on Smart PLS statistic results

Table 6. VIF assessment

Indicator	VIF
Proactive Engagement	1.189
Flexible effort	1.250
Proactive Problem solving	1.259
Organizational commitment	1.243
Collaborative Engagement	1.228
Observed Job Autonomy	1.187
Work Schedule Autonomy	1.256
Initiative in Job Task	1.125
Empowerment in Work Projects	1.127
Flexibility in Work Methods	1.259
Drive for high performance	1.165
Fulfillment	1.189
Desire for professional growth	1.121
Perceived fairness of salary	1.331
Financial Stability	1.357
Financial Satisfaction	1.151
Incentive Opportunities	1.154
Strength of social relationships	1.193
Sense of belonging	1.256
Enjoyment of social interactions	1.229
Opportunities for collaborations	1.114
Valuation from peers	1.134
Productivity	1.275
Access to necessary technology	1.155
Up-to-date technology	1.208
Comfort in technology	1.161
Source(s): Authors' representation based on Smart PLS statistic results	

Remuneration (HTMT: 0.829) highlights how financial stability can strengthen social ties (Yang *et al.* (2020). Finally, Technology’s relationships with Engagement (HTMT: 1.015), Job Autonomy (HTMT: 1.075), Motivation (HTMT: 1.025), Remuneration (HTMT: 0.976) and Social Connection (HTMT: 0.885) reflect its role in facilitating work efficiency and opportunities, Swain *et al.* (2020). These theoretical considerations support the validity of the higher HTMT values by illustrating the natural interrelationships among the constructs.

In conclusion, the theoretical alignment with the theoretical frameworks of SDT and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs further emphasize the natural connection between variables, but the strength is further supported by the absence of multicollinearity as indicated by the VIF values along with acceptable validity and reliability.

Structural model assessment

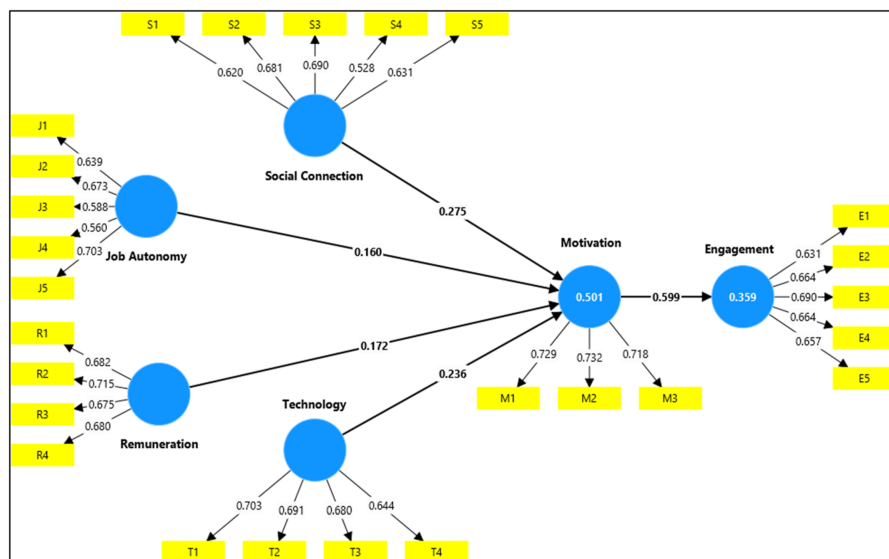
The researchers of the study analyzed the data by evaluating the significance and strength of the relationships. They focused on path coefficients, standard deviations, t-values and p-values to assess these relationships (see Table 7).

The results presented in the structural model table reveal several statistically significant relationships among the constructs, while Figure 2 further illustrates the output of the analysis. Accordingly, all the path coefficients, t values and the p values reveal positive and significant relationships that support our hypothesis. Here, higher t values and lower p values highlight the supporting nature of the hypothesis. Moreover, the model’s explanatory power is reflected in the R² values: 0.359 for engagement, indicating that 35.9% of the variance in engagement is explained, and 0.5 for Motivation, showing that 50.0% of the variance in motivation is explained. Both R² values are supported by high t-values and low p-values, demonstrating the

Table 7. Structural model assessment

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Job Autonomy and Motivation	0.1604	0.0604	2.6572	0.0079	Supported
H2	Remuneration and Motivation	0.5992	0.0323	18.5631	0.0000	Supported
H3	Social connection and Motivation	0.1723	0.0540	3.1933	0.0014	Supported
H4	Technology and Motivation	0.2749	0.0445	6.1791	0.0000	Supported
H5	Motivation and Engagement	0.2363	0.0535	4.4184	0.0000	Supported

Source(s): Authors' representation based on Smart PLS statistic results



Source(s): Based on authors' observation

Figure 2. Smart PLS results

model's effectiveness in explaining variance. Finally, model fit is analysed with Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) values are 0.072 for the saturated model/ideal fit and 0.095 for the estimated model, suggesting a generally acceptable fit with room for improvement. Generally, the model demonstrates good explanatory power and a satisfactory fit, though further adjustments could enhance its performance.

In summary view, the results of the study demonstrate that the measurement model has strong reliability and validity, with all indicator loadings above 0.5 and composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha exceeding the necessary thresholds. While some AVE values are below the ideal 0.5, they remain acceptable for exploratory research. Discriminant validity was confirmed through the Fornell-Larcker criterion, though HTMT values were higher for certain variables, which can be explained by theories like SDT and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The

structural model shows that 35.9% of the variance in engagement and 50.0% in motivation is explained, with significant positive relationships between the variables, supporting the hypotheses.

Discussion

The growing nature of the gig economy in Sri Lanka has created a significant opportunity to explore the factors influencing corporate gig worker motivation and engagement. The study provides a clear understanding of these factors which include job autonomy, remuneration, technology and social connection, and their significant positive relationship with gig worker motivation and engagement. These findings are interpreted within the context of existing literature, providing both theoretical and practical implications for organizations employing gig workers.

By demonstrating that job autonomy significantly influences motivation among corporate gig workers (Hypothesis H1). Job autonomy is an important aspect of gig employment [Umair et al. \(2023\)](#), and findings align with the job autonomy significantly impacts employee motivation and performance ([Khoshnaw and Alavi, 2020](#)). In line with the SDT describes the need of job autonomy. Gig workers in the gig economy value the flexibility to manage their schedules, and the freedom to choose their tasks and determine how to complete them. This autonomy aligns with the intrinsic motivation and need for self-determination, as outlined in self-determination theory ([Ryan and Deci, 2000](#)). Furthermore, findings show that job autonomy is one of the fundamental elements of any employment that promotes commitment, motivation and improved performance and shows a positive relationship between job autonomy and motivation ([Khoshnaw and Alavi, 2020](#)).

The findings empirically support that social connection significantly influences motivation among corporate gig workers (Hypothesis H2). The findings of the study indicate that for corporate gig workers in Sri Lanka, social interaction and social networks are drivers of gig worker motivations. In contrast to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, social belonging may play an earlier role in the gig worker's motivation. The findings align with social interaction has an impact on gig workers' motivation ([Myhill et al., 2021](#)). Traditional employees have face-to-face interaction and online labour marketplaces typically operate alone without face-to-face interactions ([Fest et al., 2021](#)). The findings align with [Swain et al. \(2020\)](#), that a lack of social interaction affects motivation, which leads to demotivation. The social network is a crucial factor for gig workers' motivation ([Jabagi et al., 2019](#)). The evidence aligns with [Fulk and Yuan \(2013\)](#), that social networks can increase motivation.

The current investigation confirms that remuneration significantly influences motivation among corporate gig workers (Hypothesis H3). Gig workers are primarily motivated by financial gain ([Butschek et al., 2019](#)). According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, remuneration fulfils the basic physiological and security needs that are foundational for motivation. Competitive pay is necessary for gig workers to meet the basic requirements, and it enables them to seek higher-order needs. The findings of [Darmawan \(2021\)](#) align with the result that remuneration affects on employee motivation. Insufficient reward schemes are the cause of low employee motivation ([Noor et al., 2020](#)). The findings align with [Noor et al. \(2020\)](#), in which promotions, bonuses and job recognition can boost employee motivation.

The present research demonstrates that technology significantly influences motivation among corporate gig workers (Hypothesis H4). Technology serves as a significant factor in the gig worker's motivation, providing the platforms through which workers access tasks, communicate with clients and monitor their performance. The digital platforms' effect on gig worker motivation [Dunn \(2020\)](#), and the findings align with the present study. Cutting-edge technologies such as AI-powered tools can help gig workers improve their workflows and gain insights into their performance. The findings of [Choi \(2021\)](#) highlight that the

adoption of AI is positively associated with employee motivation and this aligns with the present study.

While the current study's findings on the factors influencing corporate gig worker motivation and engagement in Sri Lanka largely align with past literature, there are areas where contrasting details emerge, offering a more complex picture of the gig economy. Moreover, the insights gained are applicable to a broader global context. Many of the factors influencing motivation and engagement such as job autonomy, social connection, remuneration and technology are universal motivators across diverse gig economies. For instance, the foundational principles of SDT [Ryan and Deci \(2000\)](#), which underpin the role of autonomy, competence and relatedness in motivation, have been shown to resonate globally, suggesting that job autonomy is a fundamental need irrespective of geographic or demographic differences. This study's emphasis on job autonomy aligns with the Job Characteristics Model by [Hackman and Oldham \(1976\)](#) and confirms that autonomy, along with the flexibility afforded by technology, fosters intrinsic motivation and engagement universally.

Practical and theoretical implications

This study presents significant implications for corporate employers, technology platforms and policymakers operating within Sri Lanka's gig economy, with broader applications to international gig contexts. By examining job autonomy, remuneration, social connection and technology, our findings not only offer actionable insights but also challenge traditional theoretical perspectives on gig worker motivation and engagement.

On the practical side, our analysis suggests that promoting job autonomy is essential for maintaining gig workers' motivation. Corporate employers can support autonomy by providing flexibility in task selection and scheduling, aligning with workers' intrinsic desire for independence. Establishing transparent psychological contracts that clarify expectations and boundaries around autonomy is equally crucial, as it nurtures commitment and engagement.

For remuneration, this study underscores the critical role of fair, transparent and timely compensation. Both employers and platform operators must ensure equitable remuneration practices, as financial stability is a primary motivator for gig workers, particularly in developing regions like Sri Lanka. Such practices not only satisfy financial needs but also build trust, aligning with Equity Theory's emphasis on fairness in perceived rewards ([Adams, 1965](#)).

When it comes to social connection, our findings point to the importance of reducing isolation to boost engagement. Employers and platform operators can foster community through virtual gatherings, communication channels or professional networks, helping workers feel a sense of belonging. This emphasis on social ties builds a collaborative culture within the gig workforce, reinforcing motivation through connectedness, as suggested by Job Characteristics Model ([Hackman and Oldham, 1976](#)).

Technology emerges as a powerful driver of engagement and efficiency. Beyond merely facilitating tasks, platforms should incorporate community-building and transparent communication tools, which can enhance autonomy and provide needed support. This study confirms that technology, as per the Conservation of Resources Theory ([Hobfoll, 1989](#)), functions not only as a practical tool but also as a motivational resource that strengthens worker satisfaction.

On the theoretical aspect, our findings provide valuable contributions by highlighting the unique motivational dynamics within a developing country's gig economy, offering an alternative view to traditional, Western-centric models. Through the lens of SDT ([Ryan and Deci, 2000](#)), this study underscores the importance of autonomy while also demonstrating that remuneration and technology can sometimes overshadow intrinsic motivators in developing economies, inviting further examination of these variables in similar contexts.

This study also contributes to Equity Theory by showing that perceived fairness in remuneration is integral to sustaining gig workers' motivation, especially in regions where financial stability is highly valued. Additionally, our exploration of social connection reinforces the Job Characteristics Model, as it demonstrates the significant impact of social ties on motivation, countering the isolation often experienced by gig workers.

Finally, this research highlights technology as a key enabler of both motivation and engagement, aligning with the Conservation of Resources Theory. By positioning technology as a dual resource both functional and motivational. This study opens new avenues for examining technology's role in gig work across diverse cultural and economic landscapes.

Limitations

The research provides significant insights into the factors influencing corporate gig worker motivation and engagement in the geographical context of Sri Lanka. While the study demonstrated a comprehensive analysis of the various factors that influence corporate gig worker motivation and engagement, several limitations should be considered. (1) The research solely focused on corporate gig workers in Sri Lanka, limiting its applicability to other geographical regions. Corporate gig workers in Sri Lanka may have unique characteristics which come from the Sri Lankan culture, working expectations and the economic nature of Sri Lanka. Therefore, the findings may not be easily generalised for other geographical regions. (2) The focus of the study is solely on corporate gig workers, whereas there are some other gig workers such as drivers and food deliveries for Uber and Pickme, which will again not easy through generalize the findings for the whole population of gig workers. (3) The study specifically focused on the significance between job autonomy, remuneration, social connection and technology with motivation and the significance between motivation and engagement. But there might be some other important relationships between variables which may influence the corporate gig worker motivation and engagement. (4) The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish the causality. As the data is collected at a single point of time, it is difficult to determine whether one variable causes change in another.

Conclusion

This study explored the key factors influencing motivation and engagement among corporate gig workers in Sri Lanka, focusing on the roles of job autonomy, remuneration, social connection and technology. The findings of the study indicate that all four factors significantly impact on corporate gig worker's motivation and engagement which also aligns with the past literature. Despite the growing nature, the study also highlights the fact that challenges like job availability and long-term security remain, impacting both motivation and engagement levels. However, the importance of paying attention to keeping corporate gig workers motivated and engaged is prominently highlighted while making the way for more future studies to examine other contextual factors, such as cultural and sectoral differences, to enhance the generalisability of these results across broader gig work environments.

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