
How Technology Influences Motivation and Engagement Among Corporate Gig Workers; A Study on Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study explores how technology impacts the motivation and engagement of corporate gig workers. As gig work becomes more prevalent, understanding the role of technology is crucial due to its significant impact on worker performance and engagement. Previous research highlights technology as a key factor, but specific influences on corporate gig workers need further investigation. Researchers employ a quantitative approach using Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM PLS) to analyze data from surveys and interviews with corporate gig workers. Findings reveal several key factors influencing motivation and engagement. The perceived impact of technology on efficiency and productivity is a primary driver, suggesting that when workers feel technology enhances their performance, their motivation and engagement increase. Access to necessary technological resources is also critical, underscoring the importance of providing essential tools for success. Additionally, perceived investment in up-to-date technology by employers significantly affects worker motivation, as workers feel more valued. Comfort with technology tools and systems is another essential factor, with workers who are comfortable using these tools showing higher levels of engagement and motivation. This study offers valuable insights into how technology impacts corporate gig workers' motivation and engagement. Organizations can use these findings to better support their gig workforce by focusing on technological enhancements that boost productivity and satisfaction.

Keywords: Freelancing, Gig economy, Gig workers, Motivation, Technology

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01. Introduction

The concept of the gig economy traces its origins to the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Flanagan, 2019). Initially, the term "gig" emerged from the world of jazz music, but its integration into the business landscape resulted from technological advancements, increased connectivity, and shifts in workforce preferences. This evolution led to the introduction of various temporary and flexible employment forms within the business world. Meijerink and Keegan (2019) explain that the gig economy involves platform-enabled work where individuals perform fixed-term activities or services on-demand for firms or consumers without having traditional employment relationships. Abraham et al. (2018) have further defined the gig economy as part of the unincorporated self-employed sector, characterized by flexible jobs mediated through online platforms where workers have no long-term ties to a particular business but are hired to complete specific tasks or projects.

The gig economy areas extensive sectors such as transportation, freelance writing and content creation, online tutoring, creative services, IT services, hospitality, and delivery services (Melián-González, 2022; Al-Dossary, 2022). For example, Santiago describes how food delivery services like Deliveroo, Uber Eats, and Glovo utilize independent workers or couriers through digital platforms. In the nursing sector of Saudi Arabia, gig work offers flexibility, autonomy, and varied opportunities (Al-Dossary, 2022). These instances underscore the gig economy's versatility and its integration into various dimensions of the business world, showcasing novel work structures and opportunities.

Gig workers, also known as independent contractors, freelancers, or platform workers, are compensated based on the tasks performed rather than a traditional employment model (Apouey et al., 2020). A significant portion of gig workers comprises women, driven by economic necessity rather than choice, as they often lack access to better jobs or social services (Hunt et al., 2019). Despite the flexibility and autonomy, gig workers face challenges such as financial precarity, health risks, and limited support for growth (Apouey et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, impacting work conditions and well-being, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of these challenges and strategies for mitigation.

Over the past decade, the gig economy has experienced immense global growth, initially gaining traction in the USA and spreading to countries like the UK, Italy, Africa, Russia, and Sri Lanka. Platforms like Uber and freelancing websites have become popular, attracting both workers and customers, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the shift towards remote work options (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020; Hunt et al., 2019). This global expansion reflects the gig economy's influence across various industries and regions, transforming contemporary employment structures. The researchers have found various factors that affect gig worker motivation and engagement. However, this study specifically focuses on technology.

Technology's role has become increasingly prominent, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic forced a dramatic shift towards remote work and digital interactions. The reliance on technology has made it a basis of the gig economy, enabling platforms that facilitate the matching of gig workers with job opportunities and providing the tools necessary for efficient

task completion. The increased use of technology has significantly influenced the motivation and engagement of gig workers, making it a critical area of study.

In Sri Lanka, the gig economy is becoming a significant source of income and employment, particularly for the digitally adept population. Increased internet usage has facilitated online freelancing and gig work, offering auxiliary income streams for the unemployed, underemployed, and those in the informal sector (Madadeniya, 2022). The Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) has attempted to measure the gig economy's extent and value, emphasizing its importance amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted job security and spurred a shift towards remote work and online services. The gig economy also addresses work-life balance issues, notably for women, providing flexible working conditions that cater to their needs (Madadeniya, 2022).

This study aims to explore how technology influences the motivation and engagement of corporate gig workers, especially in the context of the increased reliance on technology due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Gig workers mostly operate remotely, making technology a crucial component of their work environment. By using a quantitative approach with the SEM PLS statistical technique, the researchers analyze data collected (50 data points) through surveys and interviews to understand the role of technology in this context. The findings will offer valuable insights into optimizing the gig workforce strategy, focusing on technological improvements and resources that enhance productivity and satisfaction.

02. Research Problem

Despite the increasing prevalence of gig work, the specific impact of technology on the motivation and engagement of corporate gig workers remains insufficiently understood. This gap in existing research is particularly crucial considering the growing confidence in digital platforms and tools, especially increased by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, platforms like Slack, Zoom, and Trello have become integral in facilitating communication, collaboration, and project management among gig workers (Wood et al., 2019). However, the effects of these technologies on workers' motivation and engagement are not well-documented (Apouey et al., 2020). Understanding how technology influences gig workers' motivation and engagement is essential for organizations to effectively support their gig workforce and optimize productivity.

Research Objective:

RO: To identify the impact of technology on corporate gig worker motivation and engagement.

Research Question:

RQ: How does technology impact corporate gig worker motivation and engagement?

03. Review of the Relevant Literature

The gig economy, characterized by work conducted through digital platforms, has significantly transformed the employment landscape in recent years. This transformation is driven by technological advancements that enable a diverse array of gig work. A central role in facilitating gig work, enabling remote gig workers to conduct a variety of tasks ranging from data entry to programming (Bose, 2021). The proliferation of digital platforms has significantly expanded the gig economy, with approximately 70 million digital platform users registered worldwide (Bose, 2021). Artificial intelligence (AI) technology has emerged as a key enabler of efficiency and productivity in the gig economy. Knight et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative study analyzing the impact of AI-enabled guidance on gig workers, revealing its potential to improve efficiency while also highlighting challenges such as algorithm aversion.

The central role of technology in the gig economy necessitates an examination of its impact on gig workers' motivation. As technology mediates work processes and interactions, it shapes workers' experiences and engagement with their tasks. This leads to the formulation of the first hypothesis:

H1: Technology has a significant impact on gig worker motivation.

Understanding how technology influences motivation is crucial because it directly affects workers' performance and satisfaction. Technological platforms, while offering flexibility and autonomy, also introduce challenges such as low pay and irregular working hours. Algorithmic management, facilitated by online labor platforms, has become prevalent in the gig economy, shaping the experiences of workers in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Wood et al., 2019). While algorithmic control offers flexibility and autonomy, it also presents challenges such as low pay and irregular working hours, highlighting the dual nature of algorithmic management in the gig economy.

The influence of technology on gig workers' motivation and engagement is a critical area of study. Kassi and Lehdonvirta (2018) found that gig workers relying on algorithm-mediated tasks may experience fluctuations in engagement with their work. While algorithmic management has the potential to boost productivity, concerns arise regarding its impact on workers' autonomy and job satisfaction. Stefano (2016) emphasizes the role of technological platforms in providing gig workers with flexibility and autonomy, contributing to the emergence of new employment models. Additionally, studies investigating gig work in Canada underscore the heterogeneous nature of gig workers and the importance of competition policies in shaping their experiences (Stefano, 2016).

However, motivation is a critical driver of gig worker engagement. Engagement reflects the degree to which workers are involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work. Also, motivation plays a pivotal role in driving gig workers' behavior and performance within the gig economy. Graham et al. (2017) highlight the desire for autonomy and flexibility as key motivators for gig workers, enabling them to customize their work arrangements to align with their preferences and lifestyle requirements. Financial incentives also play a significant role in attracting individuals to gig opportunities, particularly in regions facing economic uncertainties (Mollick, 2014). However, intrinsic motivators such as the chance to enhance

skills and have meaningful work experiences are essential for sustaining long-term engagement and satisfaction among gig workers (Lee & Hong, 2016). This interplay between motivation and engagement leads to the second hypothesis.

H2: Gig worker motivation has a significant impact on gig worker engagement.

By investigating these hypotheses, this study aims to deepen the understanding of how technological advancements and motivational dynamics interact to shape gig workers' experiences. This exploration is essential for developing interventions and policies that foster positive and fulfilling work environments within the gig economy. The subsequent sections of this literature review will delve into the existing research on technology's impact on motivation and the consequent effects of motivation on engagement, providing a comprehensive overview of the current knowledge in this domain.

In summary, the literature underscores the complex relationship between technology, motivation, and engagement in the gig economy. While technology enables gig work and enhances productivity, it also presents challenges such as algorithmic control and fluctuating engagement levels. Motivation, driven by factors such as autonomy, financial incentives, and intrinsic rewards, plays a central role in shaping gig workers' experiences and performance within the gig economy. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing interventions and policies that promote positive and fulfilling work experiences for gig workers.

In this study, the researchers define the variables as technology, motivation & engagement. Technology plays a pivotal role in the gig economy, serving as the foundational infrastructure that connects workers to clients, facilitates logical transactions, and provides essential tools for efficient work execution. This encompasses digital platforms that match gig workers with job opportunities, communication tools that enable remote work, and digital payment systems that ensure timely compensation.

Motivation within the gig economy can be described in many perceptions, stemming from a variety of sources. Primarily, it includes financial rewards, where gig workers earn income based on completed tasks or services. Moreover, motivation is driven by the autonomy and flexibility inherent in gig work, allowing workers to choose their schedules and projects independently. Satisfaction derived from meaningful tasks and positive client feedback also contribute significantly to motivational factors among gig workers.

Engagement refers to the depth of connection and commitment that gig workers feel towards their work and the platforms they operate on. It encompasses both emotional attachment to the tasks performed and a sense of belonging to the gig economy community. High engagement levels are often associated with increased productivity, job satisfaction, and loyalty to the platform, influencing overall job performance and retention rates.

This detailed description of the variables—technology, motivation, and engagement—provides a comprehensive framework for understanding their interplay within the context of corporate gig workers. These variables not only shape the operational dynamics of the gig

ectiveness of gig workers in their roles. Figure 1 shows the Conceptual framework built through the literature review.

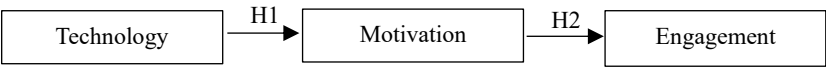


Figure 01: Conceptual Framework

04. Methods

The research methodology for studying How Technology Influences Motivation and Engagement Among Corporate Gig Workers: Study on Sri Lanka” follows a structured and systematic approach, beginning with a positivist research philosophy. This philosophy prioritizes objective and measurable data, enabling the use of quantitative methods like surveys and statistical analysis to uncover patterns and trends in gig worker motivation. The study employs a deductive research approach, starting with established theories on motivation to develop hypotheses. These hypotheses are tested through a mono-method quantitative strategy, using surveys to collect data. A cross-sectional time horizon is chosen to capture data at a single point, providing immediate insights into gig worker motivation and engagement. The target population consists of Sri Lankan gig workers, divided into platform-based and non-platform-based categories. Given the hidden nature of this population, a snowball sampling technique is used to ensure diverse and comprehensive representation. The sample size is 50, determined based on feasibility and scope considerations.

Data collection is conducted through a well-structured questionnaire designed to gather insights on factors such as job autonomy, remuneration, social connection, and technology. Pre-testing ensures the questionnaire's reliability and effectiveness. Operationalization of variables includes accurate validation processes. Variables such as job autonomy, remuneration satisfaction, social connection, and technology impact are assessed for reliability and validity using established scales and methodologies. For data analysis, the study utilizes SMART PLS statistical software, chosen for its user-friendly interface and suitability for handling small sample sizes and non-normal data distributions. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique is applied to explore complex relationships among variables, facilitating the examination of causal relationships and predictions.

A pilot study involving face-to-face interviews helped refine the questionnaire. Preliminary data analysis using SPSS tests for multicollinearity, reliability, and validity, ensuring the dataset's suitability for further analysis with PLS-SEM. This rigorous methodological approach ensures the accuracy and reliability of the research findings on gig worker motivation and engagement in Sri Lanka. Below data analysis section below will further provide detailed outputs of the reliability and the validity of the variables in this research study.

05. Data Analysis

The researchers conducted this study by collecting 50 data points. The demographics of the sample population in this research study offer a diverse representation across various factors. In the pilot study with 50 respondents, there were 34 male participants and 16 female participants, showcasing a gender discrepancy. The age distribution ranged broadly, with the majority falling between 25 to 34 years old, followed by those aged 15 to 24. The geographical spread across provinces of Sri Lanka indicates a higher representation from the Western province, while other provinces also contribute to the sample. Educational qualifications vary among participants, with a significant portion holding degrees followed by HND/Diploma holders. Additionally, a notable percentage of participants are pursuing professional qualifications. Many participants are engaged in permanent/full-time employment alongside gig work, while some solely rely on gig work for income. The majority of participants have less than 1 year of experience in gig work, followed by those with 1 to 5 years of experience.

In conclusion, the sample population represents a diverse mix across age, gender, provinces, educational backgrounds, employment statuses, and levels of experience in gig work. This diversity enriches the study's findings, providing insights into the dynamics of the gig economy across different demographic segments and highlighting the comprehensive nature of work arrangements.

5.1. Measurement Model Assessment

Table 1: Measurements of Model Assessments

Latent Variable	Indicators	Outer Loadings	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Engagement	Flexible effort	0.811	0.900	0.852	0.693
	Proactive Problem solving	0.882			
	Organizational commitment	0.839			
	Collaborative Engagement	0.797			
Motivation	Drive for high performance	0.838	0.891	0.817	0.732
	Fulfillment	0.925			
	Desire for professional growth	0.798			
Technology	Productivity	0.860	0.910	0.868	0.868
	Access to necessary technology	0.856			
	Up-to-date technology	0.873			

Latent Variable	Indicators	Outer Loadings	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
	Comfort in technology	0.796			

Source: Author's Illustrations (2024)

Table 1 provides a comprehensive view of the research model's results, highlighting each indicator's strong contribution to its respective latent variable through robust outer loadings. This analysis validates the measurement model, enhancing our understanding of the relationships between indicators and latent variables. Across all variables, composite reliability scores consistently exceed the threshold of 0.7, indicating reliable measurement by their respective indicators and demonstrating the model's consistency and dependability. High Cronbach's alpha scores further confirm internal consistency within each construct, reinforcing the overall reliability of the measurement model and boosting confidence in its validity. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures validate the constructs' robustness, with all exceeding the 0.5 threshold for good validity.

Regarding specific constructs, Engagement indicators like Flexible effort, Proactive problem solving, Organizational commitment, and Collaborative engagement show strong loadings, effectively capturing various engagement facets among corporate gig workers in Sri Lanka. The Engagement construct exhibits good internal consistency (composite reliability = 0.900, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.852), though its AVE is slightly below 0.7, suggesting some indicator variability.

Motivation is captured through indicators such as Drive for high performance, Fulfillment, and Desire for professional growth, all showing strong loadings on the Motivation latent variable. This indicates comprehensive coverage of motivational aspects relevant to gig workers, with good reliability (composite reliability = 0.891, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.817) and solid convergent validity (AVE = 0.732).

Technology indicators—including Productivity, Access to necessary technology, Up-to-date technology, and Comfort in technology—demonstrate strong loadings on the Technology latent variable. This suggests effective measurement of technology-related influences on engagement and motivation among gig workers. The Technology construct shows strong reliability (composite reliability = 0.910, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.868) and excellent convergent validity (AVE = 0.868).

In summary, the integrated analysis of reliability and validity metrics underscores the credibility and robustness of the research study's findings on how technology influences motivation and engagement among corporate gig workers in Sri Lanka.

5.2. Structural Model Assessment

Table 2 below represents the details of the results obtained.

Table 2: Structural Model Assessment

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation	t-value	P-value	Decision
H1	Technology & Motivation	0.429	0.126	3.412	0.001	Significant
H2	Motivation & Engagement	0.644	0.071	9.124	0.000	Significant

Source: Author’s Illustrations (2024)

H1: Technology has a significant impact on gig worker motivation

Similarly, the relationship between technology and motivation demonstrates a significant positive association, with a path coefficient of 0.429. This is supported by a high t-value of 3.412 and a low p-value of 0.001, both below the conventional threshold for significance. In this situation also, the findings strongly support the hypothesis that technology significantly influences motivation in the gig economy despite moderate variability which is shown by a 0.126 standard deviation.

H2: Gig worker motivation has a significant impact on the gig worker engagement

Finally, the analysis reveals a highly significant positive relationship between motivation and engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.644. This is supported by a high t-value of 9.124 and an extremely low p-value of 0.000, well below the conventional threshold for significance. Even though there is relatively low variability as the standard deviation of 0.071 is recorded, the findings strongly support the hypothesis that motivation significantly predicts engagement among gig workers in the gig economy. Figure 02 shows the Smart PLS Results of the study.

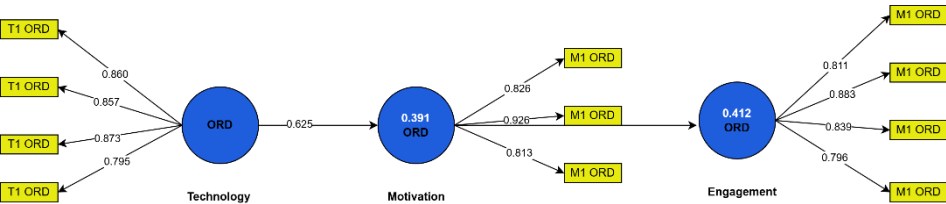


Figure 02: Smart PLS Results (2024)

06. Results and Discussions

The results of the study provide valuable insights into the relationship between technology, motivation, and engagement among corporate gig workers, aligning with previous literature highlighting the positive significance of technological advancements in the gig economy. The findings verify Bose's (2021) identification of technology as a central facilitator of gig work, with nearly 70 million digital platform users registered worldwide, emphasizing the widespread adoption of digital platforms in remote gig work. Furthermore, the study supports Knight et al. (2023) qualitative analysis, demonstrating the positive impact of AI-enabled guidance on gig workers' efficiency and productivity. Importantly, this study found that gig workers utilizing AI technology reported enhanced task performance and standardized service deliveries, indicating the potential of AI to improve gig worker outcomes in the on-demand economy.

Algorithmic management, a prevalent feature of online labor platforms, has been a subject of debate in previous literature. Wood et al. (2019) highlighted both the benefits and challenges associated with algorithmic control, including flexibility, autonomy, and task complexity, alongside concerns such as low pay and irregular working hours. The study confirms these findings, indicating that while algorithmic management offers gig workers autonomy and flexibility, it also poses challenges such as irregular working hours. However, overall, the results suggest a positive perception of algorithmic management among gig workers, particularly regarding its role in enhancing task variety and complexity.

In terms of motivation, this study aligns with previous literature emphasizing the importance of autonomy, financial incentives, and fundamental rewards in driving gig workers' engagement and satisfaction. Graham et al. (2017) highlighted autonomy as a key motivator for gig workers, enabling them to customize their work arrangements and schedules. The findings support this, with gig workers expressing high levels of satisfaction with their ability to control their work schedules and locations with the help of technology. Additionally, Mollick (2014) emphasized the role of financial incentives in attracting individuals to gig opportunities, particularly in regions facing economic uncertainties. Here, with the comfort that the technology provides to the gig workers, they have been able to get the maximum use of the financial rewards that they are obtaining through gig work. This study confirms that technology helps to enhance the benefits of others reward as financial rewards, job autonomy, and flexibility that the gig working culture offers.

Furthermore, innate motivators such as the opportunity to enhance skills and have meaningful work experiences were found to be essential for sustaining long-term engagement among gig workers, consistent with Lee and Hong's (2016) findings. This study underscores the importance of fundamental rewards in driving gig workers' commitment and satisfaction, suggesting that a combination of extrinsic and fundamental motivators is necessary for fostering a positive work environment in the gig economy.

Overall, the results align with previous literature, emphasizing the positive significance of technology and motivation in shaping the experiences of corporate gig workers. By understanding these dynamics, organizations can develop strategies to optimize gig worker outcomes and enhance overall productivity and satisfaction in the gig economy.

07. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between technology, motivation, and engagement among corporate gig workers. Through a comprehensive analysis of past literature and empirical findings, several key conclusions emerge regarding the significance of these factors in shaping the experiences of gig workers in the contemporary workforce landscape.

Firstly, technology plays a pivotal role in facilitating gig work, with digital platforms enabling remote gig workers to access a wide range of opportunities and tasks. The widespread adoption of technology, as evidenced by the increasing number of digital platform users, underscores its central importance in the gig economy. AI-enabled guidance and algorithmic management have emerged as key features of online labor platforms, offering gig workers enhanced efficiency and productivity while also presenting challenges such as algorithm aversion and irregular working hours. However, overall, this study suggests a positive perception of technology among gig workers, with participants expressing satisfaction with the opportunities for autonomy and task variety afforded by technological advancements.

Secondly, motivation emerges as a critical factor influencing gig workers' engagement and satisfaction. Autonomy, financial incentives, and fundamental rewards play significant roles in driving gig workers' commitment to their work. The flexibility to control work schedules and locations, coupled with the promise of higher earnings and income flexibility, attracts individuals to gig opportunities, particularly in regions facing economic uncertainties. Additionally, fundamental motivators such as the opportunity for skill enhancement and meaningful work experiences sustain long-term engagement among gig workers, highlighting the importance of a balanced approach to motivation in the gig economy.

Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics shaping the experiences of corporate gig workers, emphasizing the positive significance of technology and motivation in optimizing gig worker outcomes. By leveraging technological advancements and fostering a supportive and rewarding work environment, organizations can enhance gig workers' productivity, satisfaction, and overall well-being in the evolving gig economy landscape. Future research should continue to explore the nuanced relationships between technology, motivation, and engagement, taking into account the diverse needs and preferences of gig workers in different contexts and industries. By addressing these complexities, it is possible to strive towards a more equitable and empowering gig economy for all stakeholders involved.

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