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**Exploring the Work Perceptions and Experiences of Gig Workers
Globally: A Scoping Review**

Sameera Hussain

Student number: 213547129

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Howard College

Supervisor: Dr Shanya Reuben


Co-Supervisor: Prof Anna Meyer-Weitz

28 February 2025

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I, Sameera Hussain, declare that:

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2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs, or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Signed: 

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ABBREVIATIONS:

COVID-19 – Coronavirus Disease 2019

FDW – Food Delivery Workers

GWCI – Gig Worker Challenges Inventory

ILO – International Labour Organization

LMI – Low and Middle Income (countries)

PCC – Population, Context, and Concept

PRISMA – Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

PRISMA-ScR – PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews

UKZN – University of KwaZulu-Natal

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The gig economy is seen as a form of employment that comprises of jobs that are generally platform or app-based and short-term in nature such as part-time work, temporary help agency, contract company employment, contingent work, and independent contracting (Kalleberg, 2000; Katz & Krueger, 2019; Pereira et al., 2022; Wood et al., 2019). However, the classification of gig workers as ‘employees’ remains a contentious issue across many regions thereby affecting their inclusion in labour governing legislation and therefore resulting in a disadvantage to these workers. Nevertheless, this growing economy remains attractive to many workers due to the flexibility it allows when compared to other traditional forms of employment which younger generations seem to be drawn towards the most as highlighted by Basid and Atmaja (2022). Gig work therefore seems to hold a promising future in the global economy.

The perceptions and experiences of gig workers have been studied by scholars including the most recent scoping review by Bajwa et al. (2018), however there have been significant developments since 2018, which then highlights the need for updated research on this topic. These developments include technological advancements that have evolved the nature of work significantly. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unexpected challenges to the global economy at large. Moreover, with younger generations entering the workforce, they bring unique preferences and trends which influence the labour market.

Gig workers’ perceptions and experiences are likely to differ geographically noting the unique socioeconomic and cultural factors at play. For instance, according to Rani and Furrer (2020), it takes longer for workers from the global south to establish their reputation and land well-paying employment, and they are frequently prohibited from doing specific activities or do not receive better-paying jobs. As a result, workers in the global north and those in the global south earn very different amounts despite working on the same platform (Rani & Furrer, 2020). For instance, on sites like Amazon Mechanical Turk, American workers make between \$6 and \$7 per hour, whereas Indian workers make less than \$2, indicating a large wage gap (Rani & Furrer, 2020). Furthermore, gig workers in lower income countries have uneven access to technology which is vital for gig work which is predominately technological in nature. This highlights the regional inequities and structural disadvantages that affect gig workers located

in different parts of the world. Different demographics also experience work differently including women and people with disabilities, for instance, women are often discriminated against, especially in male-dominated roles. The study by Rani and Furrer (2020), shows that gig workers in the US and other global north nations have better access to the technology they need and are more likely to land higher-paying employment faster whilst workers in nations like India, Kenya, and the Philippines, struggle with a lack of internet infrastructure, earn far less, and experience longer delays in developing their reputations. These differences highlight the ongoing systemic obstacles and financial injustices present in the global gig economy. This global focused study will therefore provide a more nuanced understanding of gig work and how it is perceived and experienced by workers.

Mental and physical health of gig workers also remain areas of concern. For instance, the lack of social security across regions for gig workers excludes them from medical aid insurance and other related benefits (Anuar et al., 2023), and this is concerning especially during high-risk situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic where these workers were not afforded sufficient protection and support (Ran & Zhao, 2023). The overall job insecurity and exclusion result in mental health implications for gig workers (Patulny et al., 2020). Additionally, research highlights social isolation to be a significant contributor to the poor mental health of gig workers (Wood et al., 2019). It is therefore important to consider the mental and physical health of gig workers when exploring their experiences.

It can be seen that digital platforms connecting workers and consumers have fundamentally transformed the job landscape, generating new forms of freelancing and contingent work while altering traditional employment structures (Chaudhary & Niroula, 2024). The platform economy serves as a mediator between supply and demand, but it also raises concerns about the displacement of traditional jobs, potential job insecurity, and growing inequality (Vallas & Schor, 2020). Gig work has implications for work-life balance, affecting employment opportunities, causing delayed wage penalties, and offering inconsistent income (Mazzolini, 2020). Economic impacts are contingent on macroeconomic factors, technological shifts, and legal considerations (Huang et al., 2020), necessitating further research and policy adaptations.

Gig work involves the remote provision of digital services mediated by online labour platforms (Wood et al., 2019). Gig work has a profound impact on employment relations, customer and worker expectations, and the development of digitally mediated work (Duhaime & Woessner, 2019; Joshi et al., 2024; Kaine & Josserand, 2019). However, it also brings about employment

insecurity and a lack of social safety for gig workers, which highlights the need for governments to operate responsibly and provide social protection (Behrendt & Acevedo-Garcia, 2019). On the plus side, studies indicate that gig work provides flexibility, improves self-efficacy, and increases job satisfaction amongst others (Behl et al., 2021).

To protect workers' rights, employee relations should be upheld and the use of gig work should be well-controlled (Collier et al., 2017; Lei, 2021). Corporate social responsibility, digital initiatives, unions, and relation-building have parts to play in addressing conflict resolution and gig workers' experiences (Burbano, 2019; Fan et al., 2018; Kahancová et al., 2020). Research calls for the development of policies and interventions that ensure the rights and well-being of gig workers are upheld and the shifting structural employment divide, calling for new categories of employment and a clear definition of employers and employee relations (Chen, 2023; Chueri et al., 2023; Stewart & Stanford, 2017).

OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The gig economy continues to grow rapidly around the world highlighting the need for more research in this field as this has direct implications for policy makers and platform owners. This study aims to build on a previous review by Bajwa et al. (2018) by exploring the perceptions and experiences of gig workers in more recent years noting the many changes that have taken place around the world including technology advancements, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and the entrance of newer generations in the workforce since the previous review was done. Additionally, it is important to consider regional, cultural and socio-economic factors, as these shape access to protections and opportunities differently across regions. Therefore, this study adopts a global focus to gain a deeper understanding of gig work and subsequently provide recommendations that are universal yet contextual and affects policymakers, platform owners and researchers. By analysing gaps and limitations in existing research, future researchers can then contribute to the development and sustainability of this emerging field which is important because a fair and well-supported gig economy can improve workers' lives, ensure better protections, and create more sustainable job opportunities.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to explore the work perceptions and experiences of gig workers in a global context. The following objectives will be the focus of the study:

- To map out existing evidence related to the work perceptions and experiences of gig workers globally.

- To identify existing research gaps and limitations in relation to the perceptions and experiences of gig workers from the available research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. According to existing research, what are the job perceptions and experiences of gig workers globally?
2. What research gaps and limitations exist in relation to the perceptions and experiences of gig workers in the available research?

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter One: This chapter provides a brief background to the topic; the purpose and aims of the study as well as a review of existing literature on the gig economy globally.

Chapter Two: This chapter presents the journal manuscript comprising of the introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion as well as the implications for practice, policy and study, together with recommendations for gig employers/companies and policymakers to improve working conditions for gig workers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining the Gig Economy

Workers were traditionally categorized as either self-employed or employees, with the former managing their own enterprises, and employees working according to the schedule set by their employers (Schultz, 2020). However, technology developments and the industry's shift toward a service-oriented economy have increased employment opportunities beyond these classifications, enabling workers to work as freelancers, independent contractors, or online platform workers, which are collectively classified as “gig workers” (Schultz, 2020). However, there still appears to be some disparity in how scholars choose to define gig work.

For instance, some scholars define the gig economy as “an economic model where companies temporarily hire individuals as independent contractors to complete ‘gigs’ as demand, via digital applications, dictates” (Burtch et al., 2018; Devinatz, 2019; Minter, 2017; Sargeant, 2017, as cited in Taylor et al., 2023, p. 1). This definition refers to gig workers as independent contractors, which is not completely accurate as it is more exhaustive. Therefore, a more inclusive definition which will be used as the context for this paper is that gig economy can be described as a form of employment that comprises of jobs that are generally platform or app-based and short-term in nature such as part-time work, temporary help agency and contract company employment, contingent work, and independent contracting (Kalleberg, 2000; Katz

& Krueger, 2019; Pereira et al., 2022; Wood et al., 2019). The concept of gig employment is quickly trending all around the world because of its flexible nature when compared to conventional employment.

These platform or app-based jobs are controlled by algorithms. Algorithmic control can be defined as the use of computers for process management and regulation (Gruber & Hargittai, 2023). A range of industries, including beauty services, domestic services, ride-hailing, freelancing, and delivery use algorithmic systems to assign tasks, evaluate performance, and enforce standards (Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024). Online platforms serve as digital middlemen that connect supply and demand, mostly through the socio-technical phenomenon of algorithmic management, sometimes referred to as management-by-platform (Wang et al., 2021; Jabagi et al., 2021, as cited in Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024). According to Scholz and Schneider (2016, as cited in Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024), the platform-mediated gig economy is a socio-technical system that unites three primary user groups: those who sell their labour on the platform, those who look to buy it, and those who own, operate, and manage the platform. The gig economy offers workers high levels of flexibility, autonomy, and task variety which is often controlled by algorithms (Wood et al., 2019). In terms of flexibility and autonomy, gig workers are allowed to choose when and where they want to work, for instance, in e-hailing services, most platforms like Uber allows drivers to choose to accept or decline a request based on their preferences, whilst other platforms such as In-Drive additionally allow workers to negotiate amount charged for trips with clients. In terms of task variety, gig work platforms such as Taskrabbit, offer a variety of gig work options for workers to choose from, including furniture moving or cleaning services, depending on their skill and preference (Kaldahl, 2020). However, this algorithmic control is also seen as problematic particularly as it plays a significant role in the precarious working conditions that workers face.

There has been an increase in alternative gig work arrangements, including temporary help agency workers, on-call workers, contract workers, and independent contractors or freelancers (Katz & Krueger, 2019). Gig workers engage in various types of work, such as service providers, goods providers, data providers, agency workers, and traditional workers (Watson et al., 2021). Gig work is therefore broad as there are various categories that workers can choose from. Exploring category-specific perspectives and experiences can therefore provide useful insight.

The gig economy has also quickly gained media attention for its role in driving inevitable change to the relationship between workers and businesses (Pangrazio et al., 2021). For instance, gig workers are not seen as employees but rather as independent contractors and therefore jobs are generally short-term when compared to the permanent employee status of traditional employees. According to the Online Labour Index, the demand for online freelancing has seen an 11% annual growth in the last 5 years and this is due to the rise of digital communication technologies through which remote work has gained momentum in online labour platforms (Kassi et al., 2021). According to Joshi et al. (2024), data shows that by the year 2025, the gig economy is likely to be contributing to almost half of the labour market in certain parts of the world. As a result of the fact that gig work is tech-intensive, it can be proposed that young people are the ones who are most likely to take up such work.

Whilst the gig economy has its benefits, it is important to acknowledge the associated challenges that workers face in this domain which will be unpacked in the sections to follow. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has made suggestions to assist nations in bolstering the gig economy in response to the increasing difficulties that come with gig work (Smit, 2023). The following section will elaborate on these suggestions.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Gig Economy

The gig economy is seen as a fast-growing industry that presents both opportunities and challenges to gig workers by the ILO (Smit, 2023). These challenges include the lack of labour rights, social insecurity and, most commonly, job insecurity (Rahman et al., 2022). The ILO has therefore advocated for the protection of gig workers by emphasizing decent working conditions through 4 key elements which include stable jobs, protection of workers, fair work environment, and communication between stakeholders. The aim is to encourage fair working conditions for gig workers (Smit, 2023).

Generational Dynamics in the Gig Economy

According to Valickas and Jakstaite (2017), three generations partake in the labour market namely, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y/ Millennials. However, there is also a newer generation that has entered the workforce, which is Generation Z. Generation Y and Z are commonly categorised together as the Net generation.

Baby Boomers are born between 1943 and 1960 and are admired for their work ethic as they are known to put a lot of effort into their work; and Generation Xers are born between 1961 and 1981 and are known to be direct in their speech but also cautious of situations and people

(Valickas & Jakstaite, 2017). The Net generation refers to those individuals that are born between 1982 and 2010, more specifically, the Millennials (1982–2001) and Generation Z (2002–2012). The Net generation is known for their competency with technology and their preference for flexible work (Valickas & Jakstaite, 2017) and this is supported by global statistics which show that 64% of freelancers in the global gig economy are between the ages of 18 and 34 years (TeamStage, 2023). This is followed by Generation X, aged between 35 to 54 years, who comprise 32% of the gig workforce. Lastly, Baby Boomers, aged 55 to 65 years, are in the minority, comprising 5% of the gig workforce. Sixty-three percent of Generation X gig workers in the US report having financial difficulties, the largest percentage of any group (TeamStage, 2023). Men are more likely to participate in the gig economy than women, who also earn significantly less. The statistics further indicate that the most common gig jobs are in construction, installation and repair services, especially among Millennials, who also engage in personal care, art, design, sales, and media/communication roles. Generation Xers, focus on business, finance, media, communications, and IT, while Boomers are more involved in less skilled gig work and sales (TeamStage, 2023). According to Basid and Atmaja (2022), Generation Z is drawn to the gig economy, mainly due to its flexible nature, aligning with their desire for work-life integration. This generation sees the gig economy as a platform to engage in flexible work using digital tools, with work-life integration being a significant factor influencing their participation in this type of work (Basid & Atmaja, 2022). In this review, we explore the perceptions and experiences across the different age groups and respective generational categories. As the gig economy continues to grow, the experiences of gig workers appear to vary depending on their respective countries, especially in terms of economic status.

Global Perspectives on the Gig Economy and Income Disparities

The gig economy is viewed as an alternative to traditional forms of employment for low and middle-income regions with progressive growth potential (Kuek et al., 2015), because many workers in these locations have had little opportunity to benefit from institutionalized employment (Anwar & Graham, 2020). A 2022 survey conducted by McKinsey and Company, found a significant increase, from 27% to 36%, from their American respondents who have engaged in independent forms of work since 2016 (McKinsey & Company, 2023).

According to Kalleberg (2000), occupations in the gig economy are considered as employees' entrance into standardized employment opportunities with significant growth potential especially in less developed countries. For example, in seven of the eight nations where survey data was available, namely Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South

Africa, an estimated 4.8 million African employees reported earning money via gig employment (Smit et al., 2019). Anwar and Graham (2019) noted the existence of an income disparity of gig workers across different countries. Although gig workers from low and middle-income countries earn better than they would in other jobs, they continue to earn less than those workers in high-income countries (Anwar & Graham, 2019).

Different nations have reacted to the gig economy in different ways, with varying legislation and policies. For instance, the EU has started making attempts to deal with the challenges that the gig economy presents (Tan et al., 2021). In Canada, driving for Uber is regarded as supporting the traditional capitalist narrative of hard work and success (Peticca-Harris et al., 2018). The gig economy in some African nations can be seen to create employment prospects but also commodifies and informalizes work, creating hazardous circumstances (Anwar et al., 2022). It is evident that these hazards are not experienced equally when viewed through Crenshaw's (1991) intersectional theoretical perspective. Race, gender, legal status, and class are some of the factors that contribute to the diverse and overlapping kinds of disadvantage that women, migrants, and low paid workers frequently experience. These factors make them more susceptible to algorithmic bias, a lack of legal protections, and hazardous working conditions. For instance, platforms do not include gender-sensitive safety procedures, despite the fact that female gig workers in Nigeria are harassed during rides and deliveries (Anwar et al., 2022). According to Peticca-Harris et al. (2018), migrant Uber drivers in Canada frequently obtain lower ratings because of customer bias and language problems, which limits their ability to get better-paying rides. These examples show how varied experiences in platform work are shaped by overlapping identities. Research on how these changes address the exacerbated vulnerabilities of intersecting identities is lacking, despite the fact that legislative initiatives in South Africa and Kenya seek to protect gig workers, for instance, in South Africa, amendments were made to the Labour Act of 1995 in 2018 which focused on providing equal rights and support to gig workers similar to traditional workers (Adekoya et al., 2023). This highlights a particular gap in the literature which is the absence of intersectional analysis that look at how platform governance and design incorporate structural inequities and how this manifests differently for different social groups. Thus, applying the intersectionality framework of analysis highlights both the uneven reach of policy measures as well as the distinct vulnerabilities in the gig economy.

The organization of gig workers varies depending on institutional factors in different nations, such as labour flexibility and language proficiency (Ostoj, 2021). Many gig workers are attracted to gig work for the perceived benefits which will be discussed in the section to follow.

Benefits of the Gig Economy

Some studies highlight the benefits of gig labour, including its potential for greater flexibility and autonomy (Shibata, 2019). The gig economy has been viewed as a way for people to have greater control over their jobs and schedules, enabling them to pursue different income streams and balance work and personal obligations (Sessions et al., 2023). This element of flexibility and autonomy is a key factor that drives many workers to transition from traditional employment to gig work as there is a growing spotlight on the importance of work-life balance. However, the benefit of flexibility and autonomy are not always experienced equally, for instance, gig workers from low-income countries may see gig work as more of a necessity to earn a living amidst precarious circumstances (Wood et al., 2019). Another benefit of this flexibility is that it promotes diversity and inclusion, enabling marginalized groups like ethnicized youth, female caregivers, remote residents, and disabled individuals to join the labour market (Alanzi, 2021; Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024). This subsequently contributes to addressing issues of unemployment that many countries continue to face as gig work offers easier access to employment when compared to traditional forms of employment, thereby also contributing to economic development (Khanal & Khanal, 2024). Although this might be the case in some situations, access to quality employment and long-term financial security are not always correlated, especially in situations where discrimination is still practiced or regulatory frameworks are insufficient (Chen, 2020). Therefore, despite these benefits, the gig economy is also riddled with challenges which will be discussed further in the section below.

Challenges Faced by Gig Workers

Several studies highlight the risks associated with gig economy activities, which include the increased casualization and commodification of work (Joshi et al., 2024; Undari & Sugiyama, 2024). Gig workers face challenges related mainly to job insecurity and the absence of employment benefits compared to those in traditional jobs (Davidson et al., 2023). According to the 2022 American Opportunity Survey, many self-employed people do not have access to fundamental human needs such as inexpensive healthcare, healthy food, convenient housing, transportation, and childcare (McKinsey & Company, 2023). For example, half of all permanent workers obtain health insurance via their companies or unions, whereas only 32% of independent workers do (McKinsey & Company, 2023). This therefore has implications for

their general well-being which may be impacted as a result of increased financial vulnerability and instability (Li et al., 2022). In addition, issues with social security, such as restricted access to social protection and retirement planning, may be exacerbated by the structure of the gig economy and a lack of legal monitoring (Anuar et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023). When creating policies and interventions to enhance the well-being and social security of gig workers, it is essential to take into account their specific requirements and situations (Lin et al., 2022).

Gig workers in less developed countries also encounter difficulties, as evidenced by the rise in protests among delivery and transport drivers in this sector (Bessa et al., 2022). Additionally, gig workers see a decline in their working conditions and labour standards, exacerbating the challenges faced by an already structurally constrained workforce in their local labour markets (Anwar & Graham, 2020). The gig economy is often associated with issues such as job insecurity, low wages, social isolation, erratic working hours, and exhaustion due to work overload, which is also due to the algorithmic nature of many gig jobs (Wood et al., 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened some of the challenges that gig workers experience such as irregular income, limited access to labour rights and social protection, mental health and well-being issues, inadequate working conditions, lack of autonomy and social security, complex legal status, and the need for self-protective measures (Au & Tsang, 2022; Muszynski et al., 2022; Ran & Zhao, 2023; Ye, 2021;). These are discussed in detail, below.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, gig workers encountered several challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the pre-existing challenges that gig workers face, such as unpredictable pay and limited access to labour rights and social protection (Ran, 2023). For example, according to Mehta (2022), Ola drivers in India have experienced a detrimental influence on the cab sector and financial difficulties among others.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a significant influence on gig workers' mental health and well-being, with reports of increased loneliness and psychological stress (Ye, 2021). The financial insecurity was heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic which contributed to feelings of stress and anxiety among gig workers (Xiong et al., 2022).

Gig workers often use third-party websites to build a sense of community and identity (Schmidt et al., 2022). This need for community arises because the gig economy has intricate legal rules, causing gig workers to feel uncertain about their job status and the absence of standard worker protections (Au & Tsang, 2022). Consequently, gig workers adopt self-protective strategies to reduce potential risks and safeguard their interests due to this legal uncertainty (Au & Tsang,

2022). In summary, it can be seen that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted issues about the lack of labour rights, poor mental health and well-being, poor working conditions and the need for self-protective measures.

Theoretical Frameworks

In this study, two theories are used to explore specific aspects of gig work namely, the Theory of Intersectionality by Crenshaw (1991) and the Theory of Social Exchange by Homans (1958) and Blau (1964).

The Theory of Intersectionality focuses on how one's multiple social identities and the related systems of power and subordination interlock in ways that affect a person and the opportunities available to them (Crenshaw, 1991). This theory is useful in analysing how multiple identities intersect within systems of power to shape varied gig worker experiences. It is crucial to recognize that including intersectionality into a scoping review has significant difficulties because the approach depends on secondary data that might not have been gathered with intersectionality in mind before. Therefore, the extent to which studies documented overlapping identities and disparities limits the researcher's use of an intersectional framework throughout the analysis.

The Theory of Social Exchange posits that interactions are based on a reciprocal relationship with a cost and reward system whereby individuals want to gain the most that they can from interactions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This theory will be useful in understanding the reciprocal nature of gig work, specifically the interactions between gig workers and their non-traditional employers which is explored in this study.

Conclusion:

It is the demand for more flexibility in work arrangements that draws most people towards gig work, particularly younger workers in the labour market. Furthermore, gig work seems to offer vulnerable groups of people easier access to employment when compared to conventional employment. However, challenges persist which include that employees face job insecurity; access to labour rights is limited; and working conditions are precarious. All these challenges were compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially regarding mental health. It is therefore important to explore how workers feel about their work and what their lived experiences are in order to contribute to the development of policies and procedures that better support gig workers. By mapping existing research findings from the year 2018 to 2024, the researcher was able to obtain an in-depth understanding by looking at the latest findings on

how gig work is perceived and experienced around the world. This is important noting the new wave of technological advancements, new work paradigms that COVID-19 pandemic has brought, and the incorporation of new generations into the workforce which has implications for policymakers and platform owners.

Methodology background of a scoping review

According to Colquhoun et al. (2014), scoping reviews have gained popularity as they advance research and practice by exploring secondary data. Scoping reviews therefore enable researchers to map out and integrate existing data about a specific topic, clarifying working definitions and conceptual boundaries of a certain topic, field, or discipline (Peters et al., 2015). In the context of conducting a scoping review around the work perceptions and experiences of gig workers globally, the researcher explored all relevant studies that fit the inclusion and exclusion criteria which allowed for a clear summation of available data.

The researcher chose a scoping review design as it is known to provide a systematic and effective process for the examination, clarification and summation of research findings (Colquhoun et al., 2014). To strengthen the study, multiple research designs together with grey literature were included in this study (Colquhoun et al., 2014). This design therefore guided the achievement of the aforementioned research objectives. The next chapter will provide further details.

CHAPTER TWO:

**JOURNAL MANUSCRIPT:
SA Journal of Industrial Psychology**

**Exploring the Work Perceptions and Experiences of Gig Workers
Globally: A Scoping Review**

Corresponding Author: Sameera Hussain (sameerahussain211@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

Background: The gig economy is growing rapidly all around the world, which highlights the significance of more research in this field noting the possible ramifications for platform owners and legislators. Despite extensive global research, a synthesis of the current results is required as the last review was conducted in 2017 and is now outdated. By providing a current overview of the latest information, this review aims to close this gap.

Objectives: This scoping review explores the current state of the perceptions and experiences of gig workers on a global scale in order to update the findings from the previous review by Bajwa et al. (2018). This review followed the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews) guidelines. Insights essential for the development of more robust policy and support strategies for gig workers globally will be provided.

Eligibility criteria: Full-text research, in the English language, on the perceptions and experiences of gig workers around the world from 2018 to 2024 were included. Every study design and piece of grey literature was taken into account. Non-English, full-text unavailable, studies without pertinent content, and those published prior to 2018 were excluded.

Sources of evidence: A comprehensive search was conducted across multiple electronic databases, including EBSCOhost, Scopus, Sage, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley, and Google Scholar. Relevant grey literature and policy documents were also retrieved from websites such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank, and National Bureau of Economic Research.

Charting methods: Data from the included 26 studies were extracted and organized using a descriptive charting process based on the requirements of a standard scoping review methodology. Key information such as authors, publication year, country, study aims, methodology, and findings on gig workers' perceptions and experiences were systematically recorded and analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

Results: In keeping with the findings of the previous review by Bajwa et al. (2018), this review found that gig workers, especially younger generations, enjoy the freedom and flexibility that is associated with gig work which remain attractive features of the gig economy. However, gig workers continue to face numerous challenges, some of which have been worsened by the

COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges include social isolation, absence of employment benefits, increased competition for jobs, algorithmic control implications, job insecurity, as well as mental health issues. Additionally, this review offered insights into the role of education and skills development in relation to job satisfaction as it was found that those workers who possess higher education levels, experience greater job satisfaction in comparison to those with lower levels of education. Findings also highlighted that geographic and gender disparities play a role in the perceptions and experiences of gig workers, specifically in lower-income countries such as sub-Saharan Africa.

Conclusions: This study highlights how crucial it is that platform owners and legislators develop improved rules, practices, and actions to improve gig workers' working conditions and the available psychosocial support.

Keywords: Gig work, gig workers, gig economy, perceptions, experiences, challenges, opportunities, scoping review.

INTRODUCTION:

Workers were traditionally categorized as either self-employed or employees, with the former managing their own enterprises, and employees working according to the schedule set by their employers (Schultz, 2020). However, technology developments and the industry's shift toward a service-oriented economy have increased employment opportunities beyond these classifications, enabling workers to work as freelancers, independent contractors, or online platform workers, which are collectively classified as “gig workers” (Schultz, 2020). However, there still appears to be some disparity in how scholars define gig work.

For instance, some scholars define the gig economy as “an economic model where companies temporarily hire individuals as independent contractors to complete ‘gigs’ as demand, via digital applications” (Burtch et al., 2018; Devinatz, 2019; Minter, 2017; Sargeant, 2017, as cited in Taylor et al., 2023, p. 1). This definition refers to gig workers as independent contractors, which is not completely accurate as it is more exhaustive. Therefore, a more inclusive definition which will be used as the context for this paper is that gig economy as a form of employment that comprises of jobs that are generally platform or app-based and short-term in nature such as part-time work, temporary help agency and contract company employment, contingent work, and independent contracting (Kalleberg, 2000; Katz & Krueger, 2019; Pereira et al., 2022; Wood et al., 2019). These include online food delivery services, transport services, consultancy, and buyers and sellers among others such as Uber, Bolt,

TaskRabbit etc. According to Cropanzano et al. (2023), gig work is defined as short-term labour that is contracted out and paid to businesses or individual clients via an external labour market. In recent years, gig work has grown exponentially around the world mainly due to its appealing flexible nature when compared to traditional forms of employment.

The gig economy is seen by the ILO as a fast-growing industry that presents both opportunities and challenges to gig workers (Smit, 2023). The gig economy has also quickly gained media attention for its role in driving inevitable change in the relationship between workers and businesses (Pangrazio et al., 2021). For instance, in some cases, gig workers are not seen as employees but rather as independent contractors and therefore their jobs are generally short-term when compared to the permanent employee status of traditional employees.

According to the Online Labour Index, the demand for online freelancing has seen an 11% annual growth in the last 5 years and this is due to the rise of digital communication technologies through which remote work has gained momentum in online labour platforms (Kassi et al., 2021). According to Joshi et al. (2024), the gig economy is predicted to reach nearly half of the identified labour market by the year 2025. Taking into account the fact of technology's dominance in gig work, such occupation types would be far more attractive to the younger generation.

According to the TeamStage (2023), globally, a majority of 64% of freelancers are aged between 18 to 34 years (Net generation) and this is because of their inclination to independent flexible work and technological competence. Generation X, aged between 35 to 54 years, make up 32% of freelancers, whilst Boomers, who are aged 55 years and above, account for 5% of freelancers. Sixty-three percent of Generation X gig workers in the U.S. report having financial difficulties, the largest percentage of any group (TeamStage, 2023).

When looking at representation by gender, men are seen to dominate the gig economy whilst their female counterparts are in the minority and are earning significantly less. The most common gig jobs are seen in construction, installation, and repair services, especially among Millennials, who also engage in personal care, art, design, sales, and media/communication roles. Generation Xers tend to focus more on business, finance, media, communications, and information technology, while Boomers are more involved in less skilled gig work and sales (TeamStage, 2023).

When exploring geographic involvement in the gig economy, low and middle-income regions tend to view this workforce as an alternative to traditional forms of employment with a potential

for growth (Kalleberg, 2011; Kuek et al., 2015). This is due to the limited traditional employment opportunities that these regions have to offer (Anwar & Graham, 2020). For instance, in seven of the eight African nations where survey data was available, namely Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa, an estimated 4.8 million African employees reported earning money via gig employment (Smit et al., 2019). However, there is an evident income disparity of gig workers across different countries (Anwar & Graham, 2019). Although gig workers from low and middle-income countries earn better than they would in other jobs, they continue to earn less than those workers in high-income countries (Anwar & Graham, 2019).

Additionally, the response from policymakers regarding gig work also varies across regions. For instance, the EU has started making attempts to deal with the challenges that the gig economy presents (Tan et al., 2021). In Canada, driving for Uber is regarded as supporting the traditional capitalist narrative of hard work and success (Peticca-Harris et al., 2018). The gig economy in some African nations can be seen to create employment prospects but also commodifies and informalizes work, creating hazardous circumstances (Anwar et al., 2022). It is evident that these hazards are not experienced equally when viewed through Crenshaw's intersectional theoretical perspective. Race, gender, legal status, and class are some of the factors that contribute to the diverse and overlapping kinds of disadvantage that women, migrants, and low paid workers frequently experience. These factors make them more susceptible to algorithmic bias, a lack of legal protections, and hazardous working conditions. For instance, platforms do not include gender-sensitive safety procedures, despite the fact that female gig workers in Nigeria are harassed during rides and deliveries (Anwar et al., 2022). According to Peticca-Harris et al. (2018), migrant Uber drivers in Canada frequently obtain lower ratings because of customer bias and language problems, which limits their ability to get better-paying rides. These examples show how varied experiences in platform work are shaped by overlapping identities. Research on how these changes address the exacerbated vulnerabilities of intersecting identities is lacking, despite the fact that legislative initiatives in South Africa and Kenya seek to protect gig workers, for instance, in South Africa, amendments were made to the Labour Act of 1995 in 2018 which focused on providing equal rights and support to gig workers similar to traditional workers (Adekoya et al., 2023). This highlights a particular gap in the literature which is the absence of intersectional analyses that look at how platform governance and design incorporate structural inequities and how this manifests differently for different social groups. Thus, applying the intersectionality framework of

analysis highlights both the uneven reach of policy measures as well as the distinct vulnerabilities in the gig economy.

The potential for flexibility and autonomy are seen by many as the main benefits of gig work (Shibata, 2019). Individuals are drawn to this workforce due to the potential to have greater control of their job and work schedules, the ability to earn multiple incomes at once and most importantly the work-life balance which is becoming increasingly valued by employees (Sessions, 2023). This element of flexibility and autonomy is a key factor that drives many workers to transition from traditional employment to gig work as there is a growing spotlight on the importance of work-life balance. However, the benefit of flexibility and autonomy are not always experienced equally, for instance, gig workers from low-income countries may see gig work as more of a necessity to earn a living amidst precarious circumstances (Wood et al., 2019). Another benefit of this flexibility is that it promotes diversity and inclusion, enabling marginalized groups like ethnicized youth, female caregivers, remote residents, and disabled individuals to join the labour market (Alanzi, 2021; Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024). This subsequently contributes to addressing issues of unemployment that many countries continue to face as gig work offers easier access to employment when compared to traditional forms of employment, thereby also contributing to economic development (Khanal & Khanal, 2024). Although this might be the case in some situations, access to quality employment and long-term financial security are not always correlated, especially in situations where discrimination is still practiced or regulatory frameworks are insufficient (Chen, 2020). Therefore, despite these benefits, the gig economy is also riddled with challenges which will be discussed further in the section below.

Several studies highlight the risks associated with gig economy activities, which include the increased casualization and commodification of work (Joshi et al., 2024; Undari & Sugiyama, 2024). Job insecurity and the lack of employment benefits are seen as major challenges when compared to traditional jobs (Davidson et al., 2023). According to the 2022 American Opportunity Survey, access to basic human needs is a challenge for self-employed individuals which include access to basic housing, affordable food and healthcare, child support and transport (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Additionally, the lack of social security such as retirement plans and paid leave is seen as a direct result of the lack of legal regulations around gig work highlighting the need for it (Anuar et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023). It is therefore important for policymakers to consider the specific requirements and situations of gig workers

when designing policies and interventions that aim to improve the social security and well-being of gig workers (Lin et al., 2022).

In less developed countries, gig workers also encounter a unique set of challenges, as seen by the rise in protests among e-hailing and delivery drivers due to unfavourable working conditions which are seen to worsen their challenges noting the already limited employment opportunities (Anwar & Graham, 2020; Bessa et al., 2022). Overall, the gig economy is often associated with issues such as job insecurity, low wages, social isolation, erratic working hours, and exhaustion due to work overload, which is also due to the algorithmic nature of many gig jobs (Wood et al., 2019). Algorithmic control can be defined as the use of computers for process management and regulation (Gruber & Hargittai, 2023). A range of industries, including beauty services, domestic services, ride-hailing, freelancing, and delivery use algorithmic systems to assign tasks, evaluate performance, and enforce standards (Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024). Online platforms serve as digital middlemen that connect supply and demand, mostly through the socio-technical phenomenon of algorithmic management, sometimes referred to as management-by-platform (Wang et al., 2021; Jabagi et al., 2021, as cited in Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024). According to Scholz and Schneider (2016, as cited in Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024), the platform-mediated gig economy is a socio-technical system that unites three primary user groups: those who sell their labour on the platform, those who look to buy it, and those who own, operate, and manage the platform. The gig economy offers workers high levels of flexibility, autonomy, and task variety which is often controlled by algorithms (Wood et al., 2019). In terms of flexibility and autonomy, gig workers are allowed to choose when and where they want to work for instance, in e-hailing services, most platforms like Uber allows drivers to choose to accept or decline a request based on their preferences, whilst other platforms such as In-Drive additionally allow workers to negotiate amount charged for trips with clients. In terms of task variety, gig work platforms such as Taskrabbit, offer a variety of gig work options for workers to choose from, including furniture moving or cleaning services, depending on their skill and preference (Kaldahl, 2020). However, this algorithmic control is also seen as problematic particularly as it plays a significant role in the precarious working conditions that workers face.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerabilities that gig workers experience such as irregular income, limited access to labour rights and social protection, mental health and well-being issues, inadequate working conditions, lack of autonomy and social security, and complex legal status (Au & Tsang, 2022; Ran & Zhao, 2023; Ye, 2021). Consequently, gig

workers adopt self-protective strategies to reduce potential risks and safeguard their interests due to this legal uncertainty (Au & Tsang, 2022).

It is the demand for more flexibility in work arrangements that draw most people towards gig work, particularly the younger workers in the labour market. Furthermore, gig work seems to offer vulnerable groups of people easier access to employment when compared to conventional employment. However, challenges persist which include that employees face job insecurity; access to labour rights is limited; and working conditions are precarious. All these challenges were compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the impact on mental health. Whilst a previous review by Bajwa et al. (2018) did explore the perceptions and experiences of gig workers, it is important to explore more recent findings noting the changes around the world including technology advancements, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the entrance of newer generations in the workforce. In this review, gig workers are defined as workers who engage in jobs that are digital-based and short-term in nature when compared to traditional forms of employment and, by focusing on studies published between 2018 and 2024, this review builds on the previous review. The perceptions and experiences of gig workers were explored in a global context by taking into account regional, cultural and socio-economic factors, and this allowed for a deeper analysis. Subsequently, this study provides recommendations that are universal yet contextual and effective for policymakers, platform owners and researchers. By analysing gaps and limitations in existing research, future researchers can then contribute to the development and sustainability of this emerging field. Overall, this review aims to contribute to improving the working conditions of gig workers and the psychosocial support available.

METHODS

This study aimed to gather global insights, therefore a scoping review was chosen due to its ability to sift through a large volume of existing research and highlight patterns and gaps, which can inform future studies, policies, and practices (Westphaln et al., 2021). The methodology followed the 5-step framework established by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and later refined by Colquhoun et al. (2014). These steps include identifying relevant studies, selecting studies for inclusion, charting the data, and then summarizing and organizing the findings for reporting. To enhance the reliability and quality of the process, the researcher followed recommendations by Levac et al. (2010) which include: clarifying and linking the goal and research question; considering the feasibility, scope, and comprehensiveness of the scoping process; selecting studies and extracting data. The study adhered to the Preferred Reporting

Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines to ensure consistency throughout the process and the careful selection of relevant literature (Page et al., 2021; Tricco et al., 2018). In terms of quality appraisal, the quality of included papers is usually not evaluated by authors of scoping studies (Levac et al., 2010). This is because the primary goal of a scoping review, as per the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR), is to map the body of existing literature thoroughly and identify research gaps rather than critically evaluate the methodological quality of included studies. This method enables a wide range of information to be included in order to fully reflect the spectrum of research on the experiences and perspectives of gig workers. The World Health Organization stresses that to protect the rights, dignity, and welfare of participants, ethical approval is required for any health research (Mkumbwa, 2024). This idea also applies to scoping and systematic reviews, as the original studies that are included in reviews generally make use of human participants and therefore require ethical consideration (Yesuf, 2024). Therefore, for this review, the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) received and approved a review procedure, providing ethical approval (refer to Appendix E for the letter of ethical clearance).

Identifying the research questions

The Population, Context and Concept (PCC) framework by Joanna Briggs Institute for Scoping Reviews provides the researcher with essential components for consideration when determining a research question for a scoping review which include the 'who' (population), 'what' (concept) and 'where' (context) aspect of the study (Peters et al., 2015). The PCC framework is shown in Figure 1 below. The search strategy was informed by inclusion criteria as illustrated in Appendix B. The primary research question of this scoping review is:

1. What are the work perceptions and experiences of gig workers globally?

The study included a sub-research question which was:

2. What research gaps and limitations exist in relation to the perceptions and experiences of gig workers in the available research?

Figure 1: PCC Framework

Criteria	Determinant
Population	Gig workers OR gig economy OR freelance workers OR platform economy
Concept	Work perceptions OR attitudes OR opinions AND Experiences OR Challenges
Context	Global OR worldwide OR globally

Searching for relevant studies

In order to identify all studies which were applicable to this scoping review's research questions, the researcher conducted a comprehensive search on various electronic databases which included: EBSCOhost (including Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Masterfile Premier, Open Dissertations, and Regional Business News), Scopus, Sage, Springer, Taylor and Francis, Wiley, and Google Scholar. Websites like the ILO, The World Bank, and the National Bureau of Economic Research were also used to gather statistics, policies and guidelines regarding the gig economy.

Data was extracted by first specifying initial parameters including year range (2018 to 2024), peer-reviewed journal papers with primary studies that had a transparent empirical foundation and used a qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method research design, as well as grey literature which can sometimes provide valuable information despite not having been published. Thereafter, primary keywords were broadly searched such as perceptions, experiences, challenges, attitudes, opinion, gig workers, gig economy, platform economy, freelance workers and independent contractors. The primary keywords were determined based on a primary search and analysis of available research (Green et al., 2006). In order to separate the keywords, Boolean terms were utilized (AND, OR). Articles published between the year range of 2018 and 2024 were selected to focus on more recent findings when compared to the previous review by Bajwa et al. (2018). From 25 March 2024 until 20 April 2024, databases were searched for articles. Additional limiters used included academic journals and full-text articles as well as articles in the English language only. The researcher reviewed the reference lists of the publications to locate any further relevant research. The aptness of the chosen databases and keywords was checked over a pilot of the search strategy (refer to Appendix A).

Study selection

A search of the titles, abstracts and screening of full-text was conducted by the researcher to identify which articles to include in the study. The researcher was then required to remove studies that did not relate to the primary research question, as indicated by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), which was done through the use of inclusion and exclusion criteria (refer to Appendix B for this criteria). Additionally, the inclusion and exclusion criteria enhance the study's credibility and lessen the chances of any potential bias or error (Madlabana, 2020). All of the previously mentioned databases were thoroughly checked using the chosen keywords. The researcher utilized the Zotero library to keep track of all references which were required for the screening phase as this software enhances transparency by organizing citations, allowing for easy retrieval, and ensuring all studies can be traced back to their sources. The researcher then used a PRISMA chart to report on the screening results as seen in Figure 2 below (Page et al., 2021; Tricco et al., 2018).

Charting data

The findings of the collected data were summarised using a descriptive charting process. The following descriptive markers were used to obtain relevant information: the author(s), publication year and country of study, aims of the study, methodology, perceptions and experiences of gig workers, study limitations and recommendations for future research. The aforementioned data charting information was collated onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet document in a tabulated format (refer to Appendix D). Microsoft Excel offered more effective and efficient ways to manage and analyse large sets of data in a tabulated format with formulas and filter options, among other functions, which proved effective for this scoping review when compared to a Microsoft Word document which has limited features for data analysis purposes.

RESULTS

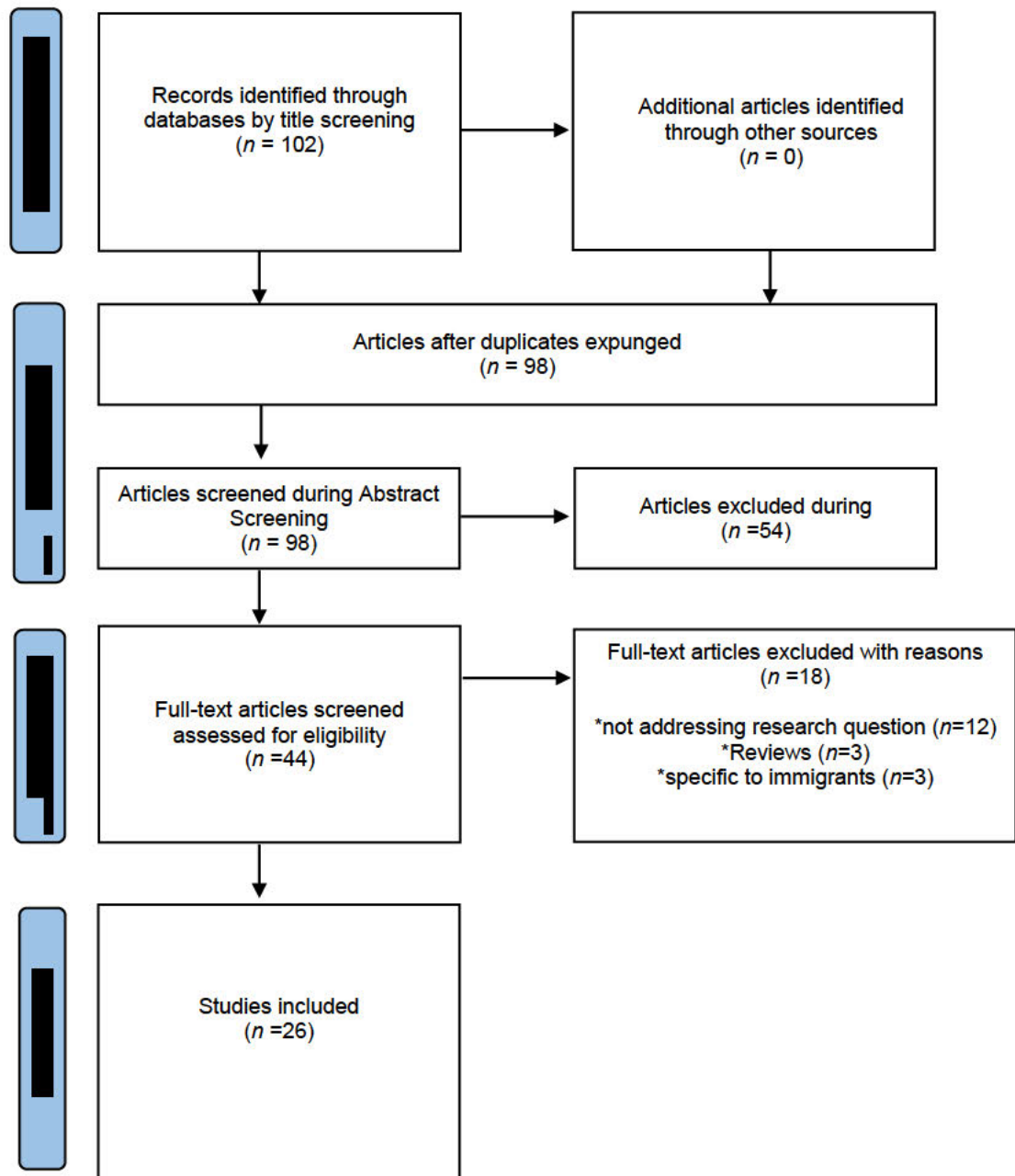
This section provides an overview of gig workers' work perceptions and experiences from the scoping review undertaken to identify international research on the topic. The review included both qualitative and quantitative studies, which allowed the researcher to provide insight into the work-life conditions of gig workers in different contexts.

While discussing some items, attention will be paid to the major themes that have been identified during the analysis, thus providing a strong groundwork for a deeper discussion in further sections of the thesis.

Study selection

The initial search across databases yielded 1986 studies, EBSCOhost (n=30), Sage Journals (n=100), Taylor & Francis (n=172), Springer (n=1468), Wiley (n=141), Google Scholar (n=57), and Scopus (n=18). Thereafter, studies were screened by their title relevance resulting in 102 studies (n=102). Using Zotero software, which is a tool used to store, organise and cite research publications, 4 duplicate studies were identified and removed (n=4), resulting in 98 articles (n=98) remaining. During the abstract screening phase of this study, 54 articles were removed (n=54) which resulted in 44 articles remaining and being assessed for eligibility (n=44). Thereafter, based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria that were determined for this study (refer to Appendix B), a further 18 studies were excluded (n=18). Of these 18 articles that were excluded from the study (n=18), 3 were reviews (n=3), 12 did not address the research questions (n=12), and 3 were specific to immigrants (n=3). As a result, 26 articles remained for inclusion in this review (n=26). The following PRISMA chart illustrates the aforementioned process (Figure 2).

Figure 2: PRISMA Flow Diagram



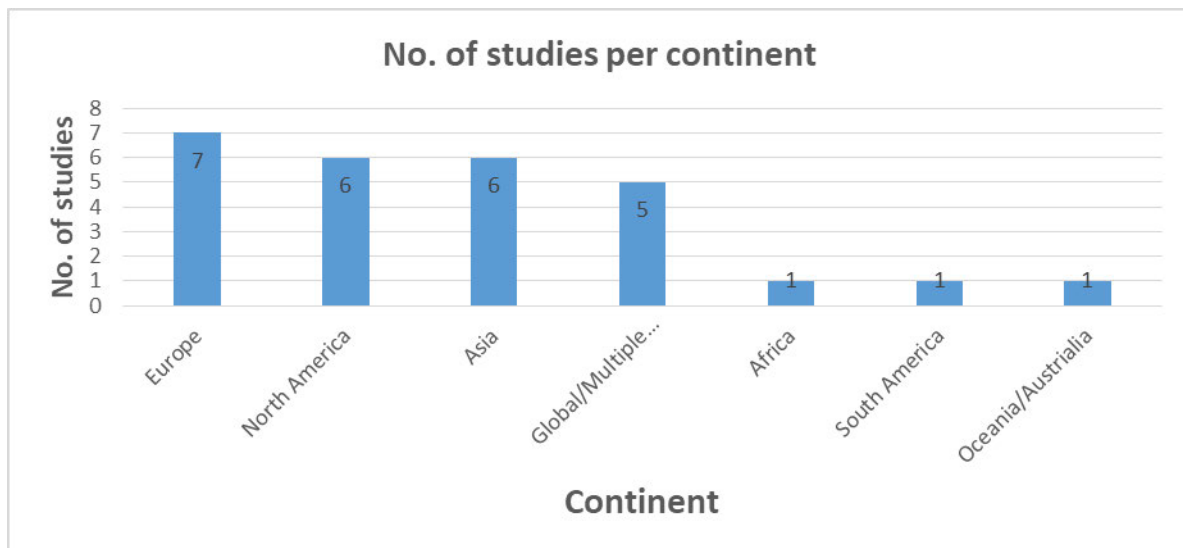
Study design of included studies

Majority of the included studies (n=14) adopted a qualitative approach [1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 25], seven of the studies followed a quantitative approach studies (n=7) [3, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 24], whilst five studies (n=5) made use of a mixed-methods approach [8, 16, 21, 22, 26].

Geographical focus

The studies included in this scoping review demonstrate a broad geographic distribution, with locations grouped by continent for a more effective analysis of the data (refer to Figure 3 below). The majority of research on gig workers' perceptions and experiences was conducted in Europe (n=7) [4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 16, 19], Asia (n=6) [9, 10, 18, 22, 25, 26] and North America (n=6) [6, 11, 14, 17, 20, 24] with the United States accounting for a significant portion of these studies (n=5) [11, 14, 17, 20, 24], whilst Africa (n=1) [1], Australia/Oceania (n=1) [15], and South America (n=1) [2] had limited available research on the topic. Furthermore, 5 studies were conducted across multiple countries (n=5) [3, 5, 13, 21, 23], which offers a broader, comparative analysis of gig work across different contexts.

Figure 3: Geographical Distribution of Studies Included



Participant characteristics

The kind of gig work undertaken by participants in the studies was diverse (refer to Appendix C), as is the nature of the gig economy. The distribution of gig work types reveals that freelancing (n=8) and crowd work (n=6) are the two dominant forms of gig work, as most of the studies in this review (n=14) focused on these types of gig workers. In terms of age distribution, the studies show that the majority of gig workers are in the 25-34 age range (38%) and 35-44 (25%) age range, with 20% falling within the 18-24 age group. The minority groups of gig workers are the older individuals falling within the 55 and over age group (7%) and 45-54 (10%) age group.

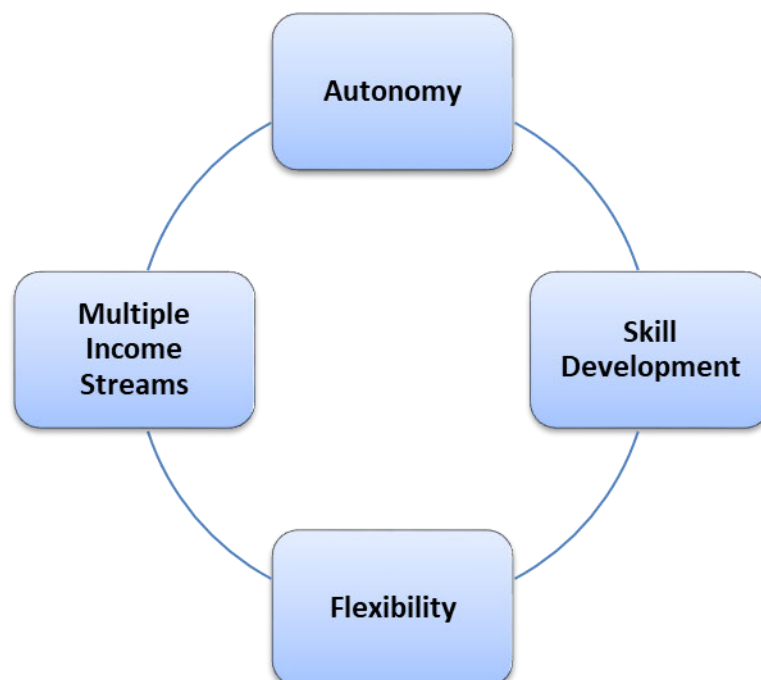
The distribution of the participants by gender in the included studies demonstrated a higher prevalence of males accounting for 72% of participants whilst their female counterparts took

up 28% of participants. When looking at gender distribution specific to the type of gig work, 63% of participants who engaged in freelance-type gig work were males whilst 35% were females and 2% were not indicated; 59% of participants were male crowd workers with their female counterpart accounting for 41%; 80% of ride-hailing were males with merely 20% being females; similarly, 89% of participants engaged in food delivery were males with 11% females. Additionally, participants from other sectors of gig work such as the selling of goods and services had a composition of 72% males and 28% females.

Positive Aspects of Gig Work

Twenty-four (n=24) of the included studies shed light on the factors which contribute to positive perceptions and experiences of gig work (refer to Figure 4 below). Twenty-two of these studies (n=22) highlighted how autonomy and flexibility are key attractions to gig work [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26]. It was found that gig workers value the flexibility associated with gig work due to their ability to adjust work hours and commitments based on their personal needs. Eight (n=8) of the studies highlighted that some workers enjoy being able to have multiple income streams which contributes to a sense of job security [3, 4, 9, 12, 14, 16, 20, 22]. Nine (n=9) of the studies noted the potential for skills development in the gig sector which can lead to improved career prospects for workers [1, 4, 10, 9, 12, 13, 20, 21, 26]. The impact of skills development highlights the role of education in shaping the experience of gig workers.

Figure 4: Advantages of Gig Work for Gig Workers



The Influence of Education and Skills Development on Job Satisfaction

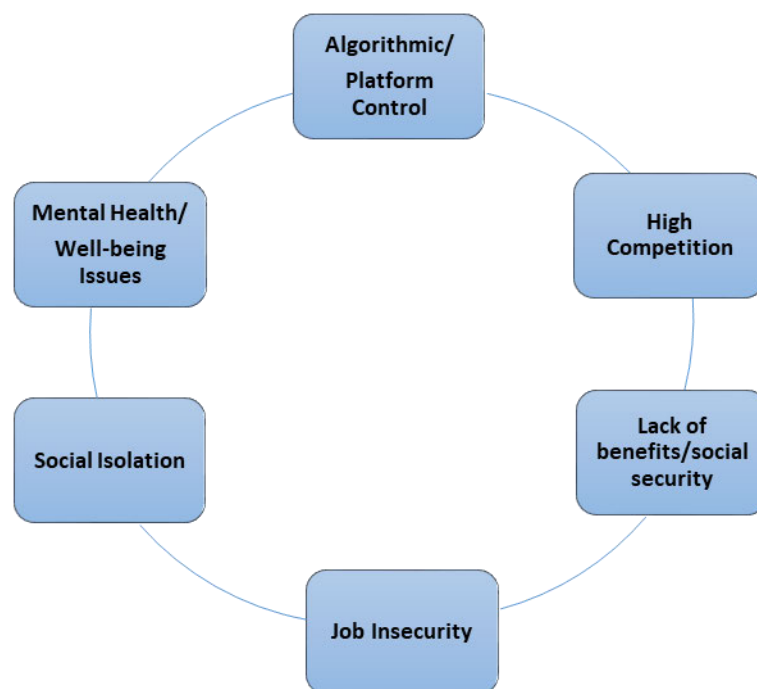
Three (n=3) of the included studies explored the influence of the level of education on gig workers' experience and job satisfaction [1, 3, 10]. It was found that the level of education influences the type of gig work individuals qualify for which further impacts their level of job satisfaction. This was due mostly to the level of autonomy associated with the type of gig work. For instance, higher-educated employees are more likely to perform skilled gig work like freelancing, consultancy, or creative work and enjoy higher autonomy whilst those with a secondary level of education engage mostly in ride-hailing and delivery and experience lesser autonomy (Caza et al., 2021) [3]. The studies reveal that while gig workers are satisfied with their employment, there are sources of job dissatisfaction related to income security threats and self-employment expectations. These factors of dissatisfaction not only reveal the unstable nature of gig work but also emphasize the possible mental health effects on workers.

Challenges Faced by Gig Workers

All 26 studies (n=26) in this review reported on the challenges experienced by gig workers (refer to Figure 5 below). Twenty-one studies (n=21) found that job insecurity is a major concern for gig workers due to irregular pay, unstable employment and difficulty to plan financially [1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26]. For instance, according to Ray (2024) [18], many gig workers depend on familial, communal, and peer relationships for a social safety net, most especially at times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic as these networks make up for the shortcoming of more formal protections. Additionally, some of these studies highlighted the changes in the availability of work and financial implications due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, it was found that while the demand for food delivery services rose, work availability decreased, especially in the ride-hailing and crowd-work industries (Arriagada et al., 2023) [2]. Eleven (n=11) studies reported on the lack of benefits from employers and governments in this job sector which include lack of health insurance, retirement plans, and paid vacation and, limited access to social security which includes government-related benefits in relation to retirement, disability and unemployment [1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18]. Consequently, leaving workers feeling unprotected, affecting their well-being and financial security. Thirteen (n=13) studies reported on the high levels of competition experienced by gig workers which leads to job scarcity, lower income and reduced bargaining power of workers [1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26]. Nineteen (n=19) studies reported on the impact of algorithmic controls on gig workers [1, 2, 3,

4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26]. Algorithmic control refers to the use of computer systems known as ‘algorithms’ for process management and regulation (Gruber & Hargittai, 2023). It was found that freelancers and consultant platform workers generally have a higher autonomy as there is lower algorithmic management which contributes to higher job satisfaction. On the other hand, ride-hailing platform workers and delivery service workers have lower autonomy due to higher algorithmic management resulting in lower work satisfaction. It was also found that most platforms did not provide adequate measures or support to workers during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of social isolation on gig workers was examined in ten (n=10) studies, with a focus on loneliness and lack of social support [1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 16, 18, 19, 23, 26]. The stress that gig workers endure as a result of the combination of the aforementioned difficulties and experiences affects their mental health and has been documented in nineteen (n=19) studies [1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26]. Some studies highlighted the mental health challenges associated with the pandemic which include stress, anxiety and uncertainty amongst other aspects. According to Ilhan and Furedi (2023) [8], while participants expressed concern over employment insecurity, suggestions were that they worried more about working in harsh conditions with little or no employment privileges, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, it was found that the COVID-19 pandemic not only worsened existing challenges but added to them.

Figure 5: Challenges Associated with Gig Work for Gig Workers



DISCUSSION

In order to expand on the findings of the review by Bajwa et al. (2018), which explored the perceptions and experiences of gig workers globally, 26 articles which fit the criteria for this paper were examined. Whilst some of the initial findings remained, additional valuable results emerged. Some of the themes from the results section have been further broken down into sub-themes in this section for a deeper analysis.

Geographical and Economic Disparities

In keeping with the findings of the previous review by Bajwa et al. (2018), it is evident that experiences in the gig economy vary greatly depending on geographic location and economic context with higher engagement seen in developed countries. Majority of the reviews were conducted in Europe, Asia and North America whilst Africa, Australia/Oceania, and South America had limited available research on the topic. However, research from the World Bank indicates that although developed countries now hold a larger part of the gig economy, the demand for gig employment is beginning to rise in developing countries. For instance, the statistics showed that job posts on one of the biggest digital job websites increased by 130% in Sub-Saharan Africa but only 14% in North America (World Bank Group, 2023). In developed countries, workers are paid more money, but they have to deal with stricter platform policies and harder work. On the other hand, in developing countries, many regard gig work as one of their few employment opportunities, since formal jobs are extremely limited. Moreover, access to resources and technology may be somewhat limited. Many of these workers take lower pay and fewer rights, and that all leads to lower job satisfaction. The disparity between regions underscores the broader economic forces at play, with workers in wealthier countries often viewing gig work as a choice, whilst those in poorer nations may see it as a necessity. A gap found in this review is that more research is required from less represented regions, like Africa and Australia, for more effective analysis. To ascertain a deeper understanding of gig worker perceptions and experiences, this review explored the participation rate of gig workers by age group across different categories of gig work globally from the included studies.

Age and Participation Rate in the Gig Economy

The findings of this review regarding the demographics of the gig economy align with previous findings by Bajwa et al. (2018) indicating the predominance of younger individuals, with the majority under the age of 35. The participants' ages in the included studies ranged from early adulthood to the elderly. In the age distribution, the results indicate that the majority of the

participants belong to the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups of the gig working population which ties in closely with global statistics by Beckman (2024) indicating that Generation Z accounts for 50% of gig workers, with 44% being Millennials. It can be concluded that gig work is appealing to early and mid-level career workers, those who give importance to the flexibility and autonomy of the gig work. However, more research is needed to understand the perceptions and experiences of older gig workers noting their underrepresentation in this study. Future studies can therefore explore this age group exclusively. Another important demographic that has been explored is that of gender and the impact on gig work.

The Role of Gender in Gig Work

The findings reveal that the majority of participants (72%) were male gig workers, with a much lower representation of female workers (28%). This trend aligns with the findings of the review by Bajwa et al. (2018) and is also characteristic of the broader global gig economy where women are in the minority making up about 42% of online gig workers, which is still higher than their typical labour market participation rate of 31.8% (Datta et al., 2023) and this has been linked to gender inequality. In order to explore this further, the author has utilized the intersectional framework developed by Crenshaw (1991). The theory of intersectionality is used to understand gender inequality in the gig economy because intersectionality focuses on how one's multiple social identities and the related systems of power and subordination interlock in ways that affect a person and the opportunities available to them (Crenshaw, 1991). By showing how gender interacts with other elements like class, education, caregiving responsibilities, and platform regulations to impact women's experiences in gig employment, intersectionality helps to go beyond a gender-only perspective. When it comes to evaluating gender differentiation in gig work, it is clear that the inequality which is observed is not merely due to gender-based discrimination, but also the combination of platform design and client choice. These frequently serve to reinforce gendered exclusion when mediated through intersecting identities. For instance, exacerbated prejudices and a lack of work flexibility may make it more difficult for women with lower levels of education or single mothers to benefit fully from gig work.

Although gig work may provide women with more flexibility to manage a family and a job, it is also plagued by discrimination and inequity in pay. Studies found that women working in the gig economy are worse off when it comes to high-risk factors because they earn less than men, their contracts are less secure, and they do not have health coverage or social security (Kaine & Josserand, 2019). Certain groups of women are made even more vulnerable when

these disadvantages are compounded by the intersection of gender with other social positions, such as low educational attainment or migrant status. According to research, migrant Uber drivers in Canada, for example, frequently receive poorer ratings because of customer bias and language challenges, which restricts their ability to obtain higher-paying positions (Peticca-Harris et al., 2018). Similar to this, platform design fails to address gender-specific safety concerns, which increases the danger of harassment for female gig workers in nations like Nigeria (Anwar et al., 2022). These instances show how various experiences of platform employment are shaped by the intersections of gender, racism, and legal status. Conversely, women are also vulnerable in strategic gig economy subsectors like cleaning services, and babysitting making them the most prone to poor wages and exploitative working conditions (Milkman et al., 2021). Because of intersectionality, black, working-class, and immigrant women bear a double or triple burden of exploitation. This is because these sectors are not only feminized but also racialized and class-based. Gender inequalities stem from platform design and regulation because tasks are assigned according to some form of prejudice making the situation worse for women. These prejudices often relate to the perceptions that women are less capable than men in certain tasks; that they are required to be home-makers most of the time which limits their availability to take on jobs, as well as assumptions that women cannot or should not engage in categories of work that are dominated by their male counterparts. For instance, women were getting fewer, high-paid assignments, or discriminated against by clients in areas mainly male-dominated (Barzilay, 2019). Women are also seen to be locked out of specific high-remunerative gig industries through low representation. But at the same time, gig work offers women freedom and employment that allows them to balance work and personal family obligations (Mouazen & Hernández-Lara, 2023). However, intersectionality serves as a reminder that, depending on one's place in social hierarchies, this "flexibility" is not always liberating and may even come at the expense of job stability.

Thus, despite the potential for flexibility and work-life balance, women remain in the lower paying jobs and are underrepresented in the higher-paying field contributing to their feelings of discontent. The gig economy, for all the praise of flexible work and income, thus reproduces traditional gender inequalities. In order to further explore these inequalities, the intersectional theory is adopted. An examination of intersectionality reveals that this is a systemic pattern influenced by overlapping systems of gender, economic inequality, and digital labour control rather than merely being about prejudice against individuals. With minimal indication of gender-sensitive or migrant-inclusive policy design, platform governance frequently reflects

and perpetuates systemic injustices, as demonstrated in the research (Anwar et al., 2022; Peticca-Harris et al., 2018). This emphasizes how crucial it is to apply an intersectional perspective when examining both user experiences and the systemic factors that sustain those inequalities. Therefore, the theory of intersectionality provides a useful framework for the development of policies and psychosocial support since it can be used to address intersecting forms of discrimination. The lack of proper policies and regulations around gig work is a major concern and has the potential to address many of the existing issues. For instance, regarding gender inequality, formally regulating equal pay for equal work regardless of gender can prove effective.

Additionally, imposing gig platforms to report on gender-based task distribution and wage gaps, will ensure transparency and accountability by platform owners. Whilst the lack of benefits affects both males and females in this industry, it is important to acknowledge benefits that are specific to women such as paid maternity leave which regulations should address. Furthermore, intersectional thinking explains why women may be disproportionately denied access to even these safeguards in informal or low-income settings. However, research indicates that even in cases when policies are in place, such as when South Africa's Labour Act was amended to provide gig workers with more protections, their implementation and reach are still inconsistent (Adekoya et al., 2023). In the absence of a more thorough intersectional approach to platform governance and regulation, systemic disparities might persist. Additionally, whilst it has been proposed that regulatory authorities ensure proper anti-discrimination laws are in place, the counterargument is that given the nature of online labour, it may be difficult to prove unfair treatment (Barzilay & Ben-David, 2016). According to recent statistics from UN Women (2023) which focused on gender equality trends and gaps, it was found that commitments made to address the inequality faced by females globally are not being fulfilled, “no country has all relevant laws to prohibit discrimination, prevent gender-based violence, uphold equal rights in marriage and divorce, guarantee equal pay, and provide full access to sexual and reproductive health” (UN Women, 2023). Therefore, whilst the development of policies and regulations has the potential to address gender imbalances in the gig economy, it will probably take a lot of time and effort noting the current state of affairs globally surrounding gender equality as found by UN Women (2023).

With regards to research gaps, the gender representation in gig work is dominated by male workers noting the underrepresentation of females therefore identifying opportunities to focus on a gender microanalysis of gig workers, for instance by exploring how gender biases in

platform algorithms contribute to income disparities, or how the lack of benefits impact long term financial security for women. Further investigation is required to examine the ways in which intersecting identities, such as belonging to a lower-income group, being a woman of colour, or being a migrant, exacerbate disadvantage in gig employment. Additionally, investigating sector-specific issues could be beneficial such as exploitative conditions in caregiving and cleaning gig work as highlighted by Milkman et al. (2021).

These findings highlight the importance of intersectionality in analyzing gender inequality as well as the ways that structural disparities based on race, class, and immigration status are ingrained in the governance and design of gig platforms. Despite these challenges, gig work continues to grow noting the benefits associated with gig work.

Positive Aspects of Gig Work

In keeping with the review by Bajwa et al. (2018), flexibility and autonomy remain key attraction areas for gig workers. This review expands on previous research by exploring the role of gig work in skills development, career advancement, and inclusivity.

Flexibility and Autonomy

Flexibility has long been viewed as the major benefit of gig work for those who traditionally struggle in the labour market, including women, immigrants, and people with disabilities (Alanzi, 2021). Gig workers value the freedom they have in their working environment, together with the flexibility to manage working and personal commitments as highlighted by 85% of the included studies [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26]. This sentiment is echoed in multiple studies that reveal a consistent theme: some employees using these platforms enjoy irregular working hours and are, therefore, able to attend to personal matters while responding to work commitments (De La Vega et al., 2023; Ravenelle, 2019; Wood et al., 2019) [5, 17, 26]. It also increases the fluidity of workers' workloads to accommodate the market, thus affording them great control over it (Anwar & Graham, 2020) [1]. Additionally, numerous gig workers indicate that they have considerable satisfaction with their work since the gig arrangements provide them with a certain degree of freedom and flexibility which includes undertaking multiple jobs. However, it is noted by Wood et al. (2019, p. 70) [26] that "the autonomy resulting from algorithmic control can lead to overwork, sleep deprivation and exhaustion as a consequence of the weak structural power of workers vis-a-vis clients." Therefore, whilst flexibility and autonomy can be beneficial, they can also contribute to the precarity of gig work and affect the well-being of workers. One of

the ways in which gig workers attempt to deal with precarity, more specifically income instability, is by looking to generate income from multiple sources.

Multiple income streams

It is also evident that reinvention and working to generate more than one source of income is an added strength in the gig economy. This was highlighted by 31% of the included studies [3, 4, 9, 12, 14, 16, 20, 22]. Some gig workers find it useful that they can work on other gigs, earn more income and have more economic security (Anwar & Graham, 2020) [1]. Noting the high job insecurity among these workers, having multiple income streams from gig work decreases possible financial risks (Sessions, 2023). However, one is mindful of the anticipated increase in gig work competition which may make acquiring multiple incomes a challenge to obtain and maintain. However, some consider that generating multiple incomes from gig work can be easier for those gig workers who are more skilled than others (Schor et al., 2020) [20].

Skills Development

Of the included studies, 35% highlighted the potential for skills development in the gig sector which can lead to improved career prospects for workers [1, 4, 10, 9, 12, 13, 20, 21, 26]. Gig work requires workers to perform various tasks, implying that it develops skills that can help in the job market (Caza et al., 2021) [3]. The diversified tasks present in gig platforms promote competencies development (Wood et al., 2019) [26]. Studies found that skilled workers earn more money doing gig work compared to local jobs and enjoy greater flexibility (Anwar & Graham, 2020; Sutherland et al., 2019; Wood et al., 2019) [1, 21, 26]. However, the precarious nature of gig work may deter some workers from focusing on skills development. Additionally, existing platforms prioritize task completion over personal growth which limits the available opportunities for skills development (Mouazen & Hernández-Lara, 2023). Therefore, platforms as well as governments, need to invest in the skills development of gig workers to enhance their career trajectory and earning potential. By investing in the skills development of gig workers, platforms can also benefit in many ways which include having a skilled and motivated workforce which leads to workers and businesses performing well (Abdel-Wahab et al., 2008). The social exchange theory which was initially developed by Homans (1958) and later expanded on by Blau (1964) is also useful when exploring this aspect. According to this theory, interactions are based on a reciprocal relationship with a cost and reward system whereby individuals want to gain the most that they can from interactions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In this context, when looking at the relationship between gig workers and platforms, gig workers will benefit from skills development provided by platforms in terms of their personal

growth and as a result, they will respond in a positive manner such as through hard work, commitment and dedication. This also contributes to reduced turnover rates as it is noted by Bercu (2017) that employees are more satisfied when they receive required training that equips them for the job which leads to higher employee retention in organizations. Governments can play a crucial role in supporting the skills development of gig workers by providing financial support through the allocation of grants to gig platforms, as well as through assisting in the development of recognised training programs by working with relevant institutions. Building on the importance of skills development, the role of education further shapes the experiences and opportunities of gig workers.

The influence of Education and Skills Development on Job Satisfaction

In alignment with the review by Bajwa et al. (2018) noting that education influences gig work, this review expands on this aspect by providing a deeper analysis highlighting how a higher educational level contributes to job satisfaction and job security. Of the included studies, 12% explored the influence of the level of education on gig workers' experience and job satisfaction [1, 3, 10]. In analysing the literature, it was clear that the effect of gig work on job satisfaction is not straightforward. Numerous gig workers indicate that they have considerable satisfaction with their work since the gig work arrangements provide them with a certain degree of freedom and flexibility. The studies show that educational background significantly affects participation and success in gig work noting that higher educated employees are more likely to perform skilled gig work like freelancing, consultancy, or creative work tenancy (Anwar & Graham, 2020) [1]. These workers' ratings are generally higher because the type of job responsibilities that are provided to them are more challenging, self-organized, and task-oriented. For example, among freelance internet workers, particularly those in technology and creative fields in higher education, 80% described their jobs as satisfactory as they provide a societal value using skills and knowledge gained (Anwar & Graham, 2020) [1]. Studies also recognize that gig work pays better than traditional employment for smart and educated workers in LMI countries, providing them with a way to achieve financial security (Anwar & Graham, 2020; Sutherland et al., 2019; Wood et al., 2019) [1, 21, 26]. This discrepancy highlights the stratification within the gig economy, where education and skill levels significantly influence workers' experiences and perceptions. Whilst there are positive aspects to gig work, gig work is also riddled with negative perceptions and experiences of its workers.

Challenges of Gig Work

Despite the booming gig economy across the world, there are several challenges associated with gig work which was highlighted by all the included studies in this review. In comparison with the previous review by Bajwa et al. (2018), both reviews found significant challenges around job insecurity and the lack of benefits. However, this review additionally found that algorithmic control limits worker autonomy thereby contributing to stress and reduced job satisfaction among workers. Additionally, since this review was conducted post the COVID-19 pandemic, when compared to the review by Bajwa et al. (2018), it provides insight into how the pandemic affected these workers and guidance for addressing these issues. The pandemic is seen to have worsened most of these challenges that already existed whilst additionally bringing about a new set of challenges for gig workers which will be discussed below.

Job Insecurity

Similar to the review by Bajwa et al. (2018), job insecurity is seen as a major issue of concern among gig workers simply because gig workers are yet to be accorded job security like income and job stability, good remuneration and steady benefits. This was evidenced by 81% of the included studies [1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26]. Additionally, this lack of job security was found to be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Studies found that gig workers, albeit those who work in developed countries, experience job insecurity, unequal wages, and no access to medical health or pensions. There is no guarantee in terms of workflow which subsequently means an unpredictable income leading to workers feeling financially insecure and exposing them to periods of unemployment and the inability to plan financially or fulfil their financial obligations (Anwar & Graham, 2020; Ravenelle, 2019; Wood et al., 2019) [1, 17, 26]. Such instability increases financial risk or pressures the workers are likely to bear, which has implications for their well-being. The nature of working in a gig economy and limitations related to digital platforms restrict their security, power and accessibility towards benefits.

According to Jaafar and Mat (2023) [9], gig work gained popularity as it proved to be a useful source of income for many during the uncertain time of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because many traditional sector workers who experienced income or job losses as a result of the pandemic, resorted to gig work as it was seen as an easier way to earn an income. Lockdowns and limitations caused demand for certain industries, like contract and freelance work, to decline, whereas the food delivery and transportation services experienced an

increased demand for work (Boning et al., 2023). The latter, in most cases, can be seen as an advantage however, most of these workers did not feel this way due to the lack of protection from platforms and governments in terms of unsafe working conditions and lack of social benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic (Arriagada et al., 2023) [2]. The increase in the demand for some forms of gig work was paralleled with increased competition, making work more precarious, especially for those who engaged in gig work as a primary source of income.

Similar to those workers from traditional forms of employment, gig workers also experienced cases of layoffs and job losses in certain sectors of gig work. The authorities made strict restrictions as well as quarantine regulations that led to the growing cancellation of the relative markets such as ride-hailing. A 2020 survey noted that during the COVID-19 outbreak, over half of gig economy workers experienced pay insecurity due to job losses whilst others struggled financially due to decreased job availability (Statista, 2024).

Therefore, gig work can be seen as a double-edged sword during the pandemic noting that despite offering opportunities to some workers, others were greatly disadvantaged. Additionally, gig workers' mental health has been greatly impacted as the unpredictability of earnings created much stress (Xiong et al., 2022). The pandemic therefore highlighted the importance of employee benefits and social security for non-traditional workers too.

Lack of Benefits and Social Security

The lack of traditional benefits and social security is considered a major concern for gig workers as highlighted by 42% of the included studies [1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18] which aligns with the findings of the review by Bajwa et al. (2018). This review expands on this topic by providing a deeper analysis of how this affects long-term financial security and highlights the need for policy intervention.

Gig workers are often not covered by health insurance, pension plans and other social protections usually extended to regular employees in case of a health or financial emergency (Arriagada et al., 2023; Myhill et al., 2021; Patulny et al., 2020) [2, 12, 15]. The exclusion points to the limited social security available to gig workers whereby this attracts several implications during crises amounting to serious well-being and financial consequences (Anwar & Graham, 2020; Wood et al., 2019) [1, 26]. However, this is due to the contentiousness of the status of gig workers being classified as independent contractors or consultants versus traditional employees. Numerous legal issues have centred on this misclassification as platforms attempt to evade the expenses related to employee benefits (Wardhana et al., 2020).

Other studies have found that some gig platforms have begun to recognise gig workers as employees and provide limited perks, such as retirement savings plans or health insurance alternatives, though frequently at the expense of the workers (Kajwang, 2022; Minter, 2017).

Research conducted by Fairwork (2020), focused on exploring the support that was available to gig workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was conducted across 120 platforms and 23 countries including regions such as Europe, North America, South America, Asia and Africa. This report found that despite attempts by platforms to implement policies such as limited contact during delivery and minimum sick pay, the overall support to workers was not sufficient. Additionally, governments did not provide sufficient support schemes which intensified global economic pressures. Most of these workers did not benefit from traditional employment benefits such as access to pension funds or funding support from employers and governments. For instance, in South Africa, despite amendments to the Labour Relations Act in 2018 aiming to support gig workers (Adekoya et al., 2023), the government rolled out what was called the Temporary Employee-Employer Relief Scheme (TERS) to assist companies in compensating workers who contributed to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) which, unfortunately, gig workers and informal employees did not fit the criteria. There is therefore no proper establishment for the provision of such benefits to gig workers highlighting the need for this especially in preparation for unprecedented times of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. This will ensure that gig workers are also afforded protection, especially during times of crisis.

Competition for Work

It was found that high competition results in reduced wages and contributes to heightened levels of job insecurity among gig workers, aligning with the review by Bajwa et al. (2018). This common theme of competing for work was found in 50% of the included studies [1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26]. This review additionally notes that workers who engaged in lower-skilled roles, experienced increased financial instability and reduced bargaining power.

The problem is worsened by the high levels of competition within the gig economy, with many workers competing to secure jobs that are driving wages down for everyone (Sutherland et al., 2019) [21]. Such conditions essentially disengage the ability of gig workers to bargain and keep work or their income relatively steady (Caza et al., 2021) [3].

Given the favourable economic potential of the gig economy, one may argue that governments can consider investing in job creation in this sector which will then provide more opportunities. However, some studies argue that governments may fear investment due to the precarious nature of this sector which raises concerns about sustainability and exploitation (Malik et al., 2021; Montgomery & Baglioni, 2020). Additionally, limited access to digital infrastructure makes it challenging for governments in lower-income countries to invest in the digital economy (Khethisa et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2023). Therefore, this option requires the development of policies to address the aforementioned issues before investment is undertaken by the government. However, on the plus side, some workers do not mind the competition as they feel a sense of accomplishment when they get gigs (Nemkova et al., 2019) [13], and this feeling is very rare in their line of work noting the absence of managers or employers to provide such recognition, as much of the job is controlled by algorithms.

Algorithmic/Platform Control

Whilst both reviews note the control of algorithmic control as a significant issue due to the high level of power and control by platforms, this review elaborates on this by highlighting how the algorithmic control reduces worker autonomy and consequently reduces job satisfaction specifically in the delivery and ride-hailing services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, technology was integrated into the general lives of gig workers in a significant way. The impact of algorithmic controls on gig workers was highlighted in 73% of studies in this review [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26]. Two of the most important aspects of the platform's architecture involve, on the one hand, algorithmic control and, on the other hand, the distribution of work. Whilst flexibility is the term often used to attract personnel by gig platforms, it is algorithms that govern work allocation, pay rates and performance metrics that may largely make it impossible for them to exercise any autonomy over their jobs or schedules (Arriagada et al., 2023; Popan, 2021; Wood et al., 2019) [2, 16, 26]. Research shows that 70% of gig workers understand that their decision-making is constrained by platform algorithms explaining when, where, or how they will perform their jobs (Wood et al., 2019) [26]. According to Dedema and Rosenbaum (2024), by operating with more transparency, gig platforms may enable employees to understand how the algorithms work which may contribute to a sense of inclusion and commitment. It was further suggested by Wiener et al. (2021) [24] that platforms obtain regular feedback from workers regarding their concerns which may allow them to address issues whilst concurrently promoting a sense of inclusion.

Even though the gig economy is presented as a model that provides flexibility, workers are tightly managed through algorithms and ratings systems leaving little room for worker control (Ray, 2024) [18]. These systems dictate pay and job availability therefore these workers struggle because unions do not exist and they can be retaliated against (Arriagada et al., 2023) [2]. This proved more challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic as workers struggled with job and income instability as well as lack of support, leaving them with little or no formal way to lodge their grievances with platforms when compared to their traditional worker counterparts.

Some platforms took measures of safety to protect the workers and help them deal with the new complications caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as passing through financial implications. However, the overall support was found to be insufficient as platforms did not adequately address the health and safety concerns of gig workers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fairwork, 2020). Despite the efforts made by digital platforms to support workers, significant challenges persist and there are still no adequate comprehensive health benefits and job security implemented in the current gig organizations, highlighting the precarious nature of gig work and the ongoing issues of job insecurity which is mainly due to the algorithmic nature of gig work. The exclusion from such benefits contribute to a sense of exclusion and isolation among gig workers which will be further explored in the section to follow.

Social Isolation

The impact of social isolation on gig workers was examined in 38% of the included studies [1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 16, 18, 19, 23, 26]. This review also highlights that most forms of gig work, such as remote and app-based roles, are found to contribute to feelings of isolation among gig workers due to limited social interactions when compared to traditional workplaces. This review expands on findings by highlighting the psychological impact of social isolation, specifically around mental health, including the worsened impact during the pandemic due to further restrictions.

The general lack of social contact in jobs, which is characteristic of gig work due to the algorithmic nature of work results in feelings of loneliness (Popan, 2021) [16]. The extent of automation means that isolation is rife since one may work for many hours without interacting with another person unlike conventional workplaces (Caza et al., 2021) [3]. This minimizes chances of interaction for cohesion and contact and most gig workers complain of feeling

isolated as they do not get to interact with other people every day as their traditional counterparts do (Anwar and Graham, 2020; Duggan et al., 2023) [1, 6].

Due to the nature of their work, gig workers are depicted as being at the forefront of social isolation, meaning that even before the pandemic, they had limited social contact. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in lockdowns with many restrictions, mainly directed to limit social contact. As a result, gig workers, who already had limited social interactions due to the nature of their jobs, experienced a further limitation on whatever little social interaction they had access to. Social contact is an important phenomenon in the workplace as it contributes to a supportive environment for workers that contributes to employees being more engaged and performing well (Winslow et al., 2019). During times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, workers relied on their families, friends and communities for social support (Ray, 2024) [18]. These networks make up for the shortcomings of more formal protections. While the pandemic exacerbated many issues already experienced by gig workers, it was also witnessed that digital platforms influenced their work-related experiences during the said challenging time.

Existing research proposes the effectiveness of the development of communities including social media groups whereby gig workers can communicate regularly offering each other emotional and general support and aid in the development of social identities (Mohd Shakil, 2024; Yao et al., 2021). Such forums can be created by the platforms or by workers themselves. Additionally, the lack of social contacts makes it difficult for workers to develop connections and form networks such as representative unions or even social support groups which is an imperative area that requires attention (Arriagada et al., 2023) [2]. Overall, the lack of social interaction contributes to the mental health effects such as anxiety and lower self-esteem (Kelly et al., 2019).

Mental Health Implications

The impact of gig work on the mental health status of gig workers was highlighted by 73% of the included studies [1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26]. This review expands on the previous review by Bajwa et al. (2018) by providing a more in-depth analysis regarding the mental health challenges and implications of the nature of the job on gig workers including during the time of the pandemic. This review explores the link between stress, isolation and, financial insecurity to mental health risks.

It was found in this study that participants reported high levels of stress in their everyday working experience. This high-performance pressure to get gigs is also felt psychologically and in their well-being (Anwar & Graham, 2020) [1]. Money insecurity and employment uncertainty are significant sources of pressure (Wood, et al., 2019) [26], and the constant need to search for more jobs constitutes a highly stressful working model (Ravenelle, 2019) [17]. The other factor that aggravates more stress and anxiety is fluctuating work schedules. At some point, these aspects manifest as poor financial stability and this affects their mental health in the long run (Patulny et al., 2020) [15]. The availability of a new gig also increases the enormous pressure that gig workers encounter as they look for the next job to make a living (Ravenelle, 2019) [17].

Because gig work is characterized by volatility and the absence of conventional workplace resources, it may increase someone's risk of mental illness. According to research by Wang et al. (2022), gig workers have been found to have worse mental health issues than typical workers in other conventional jobs. Gig workers endure financial insecurity which results in an increased rate of mental disorders among them (Wang et al., 2022)

Employers and platforms can play a key role in enhancing the mental health of gig workers. This can be done by providing access to mental health services which include counselling services and support groups (Apouey et al., 2020; Hafeez et al., 2022). Additionally, encouraging work-life balance may help prevent stress (Hafeez et al., 2022). This can be done by implementing limitations on excessive overtime hours. Of course, improving working conditions can be the most effective way to enhance the mental health of gig workers but as discussed above this requires fervent efforts from regulatory authorities.

Gig work comes with significant risks. Most workers have to endure the continual fear of job insecurity, not knowing how much, or how little, they will get paid, and if they will have any work at all. With all the job competition and algorithmic control by digital platforms, the worker has little power to negotiate for better conditions or higher pay. For the less skilled or platform workers, like Uber drivers and delivery personnel, there is no access to the social benefits necessary for financial stability, such as health insurance, pensions, and paid time off. These kinds of workers can rarely do any long-term financial planning because their income is not consistent, they have to take unpaid vacations and, they are not saving for retirement.

As a result, many gig workers suffer from mental health issues like stress, anxiety, and depression. Not only is there an income insecurity but also a social isolation factor along with

sporadic work schedules, all of which contribute to an increase in stress levels. Additionally, there are no social benefits or support available to help alleviate these mental health issues. A lot of gig workers feel isolated from the regular job force and feel somewhat ostracized. These mental health implications were further impacted by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic which had a multifaceted impact on the gig economy. Available research indicates that the mental health of gig workers during the COVID-19 pandemic was severely affected. Algorithmic control was seen as a challenge even before the COVID-19 pandemic and continued to leave workers feeling frustrated and dissatisfied even during the COVID-19 pandemic thereby having a negative effect on their well-being (Popan, 2021) [16].

Among the toughest obstacles for gig workers is job insecurity and subsequent financial stress (Arriagada et al., 2023; Caza et al., 2021; Ray, 2024) [2, 3, 18]. In contrast to traditional employees, gig workers don't have set wages or permanent job roles and are always uncertain about their financial situation. Many workers live pay cheque to pay cheque and have difficulty providing for their families, which leads to mental health problems including stress and anxiety. As a result, they are always searching for new contracts.

Weak employment security and the possibility of falling ill while working have worsened stress levels (Arriagada et al., 2023; Ilhan & Füredi, 2023) [2, 8]. Furthermore, there are certain cultures where gig work is being looked down upon, and this perception has worsened during the pandemic highlighting the social influence on gig workers decision to engage in gig work (Jaafar & Mat, 2023) [9]. Jaafar and Mat (2023) reported that workers were ashamed of receiving unfair criticism for persisting in their perceived high-risk work. Overall, the mental health implications of the pandemic can be seen to have worsened existing issues whilst introducing others.

STUDY STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

By adopting a global focus for this review, the researcher was able to explore the opinions and experiences of a diverse scope of gig workers, providing a deeper understanding of the trends and difficulties in this fast-growing economy. Furthermore, the inclusion of qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method studies enhances the validity of the findings. However, a limitation of this review is that only studies published in English were considered, which means that valuable data from other languages and cultures may have not been considered especially since the study aimed to provide a global study.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This study revealed several gaps that can guide future research and contribute to the available knowledge on gig work. Firstly, more research is required to understand the perceptions and experiences of the older aged gig workers noting that they formed a small portion of the study sample. However, whilst it may be a representation of their broader underrepresentation in the gig economy, it can provide insights into the challenges that they experience as a minority group and can potentially lead to changes that may result in their higher involvement and enable them to benefit more from this expanding gig economy. Secondly, future scoping reviews can include migrant gig workers which will help to further analyse their unique or shared perceptions and experiences. Thirdly, when looking at the geographical representation of this study, limited research was available for Africa and Australia highlighting the need for more studies in these continents, which can contribute to tailored efforts being made for these workers noting that perceptions and experiences vary based on geographic location and culture amongst other factors. Fourthly, researchers can focus on exploring existing policies that have been developed for gig workers in recent years and then make updated recommendations which can be done in the form of a scoping review. Fifthly, researchers can study what mental health interventions have been developed to cater for remote workers and gig workers and contribute to the knowledge by aiding in the development of more effective interventions. Sixthly, researchers can explore the mental health of gig workers post the pandemic to determine if there has been any improvement. Lastly, researchers can investigate studies in other languages to provide more insight into this topic.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Policymakers can start by acknowledging and recognizing gig workers as employees and thereafter focus on the development of policies that cater for their needs. This study, together with Fairwork (2020) found that the support offered to gig workers during the COVID-19 pandemic was insufficient. It is therefore critical that policymakers provide for the safety and support of gig workers, especially during unprecedented times like the COVID-19 pandemic and other possible crisis such as a global economic recession. According to Josephs (2025), business and investors are facing tough times due to poor economic growth, trade tension and inflation. This highlights the risks of global economic challenges and is therefore a crucial point for consideration to ensure that in the event of unforeseen circumstances, there are measures in place to protect all workers. These should include the implementation of minimum standards of safety, access to health support as well as financial support. For instance, in times of crisis,

governments may establish dedicated relief funds just for gig workers, which would be comparable to the unemployment benefits provided to regular employees. Platforms that operate in particular nations should also be obliged to provide these emergency safety nets.

The study further highlighted how the lack of social benefits concerns gig workers, therefore governments should develop policies that provide social protection to gig workers such as retirement and health benefits. Job and income insecurity also require attention from policymakers for gig workers and measures to address this can include reasonable minimum wage agreements for gig workers as well as imposing the need for platforms to afford them a minimum number of set jobs per month which may allow for some stability. For example, in South Africa, a new worker classification model or the expansion of UIF (Unemployment Insurance Fund) coverage may provide a legal avenue to resolve such vulnerabilities. Global regulatory organizations like as the ILO, on the other hand, can assist in creating international frameworks or rules that promote minimum standards across platforms, especially for digital gig work that is conducted across borders. Policymakers should also focus on the development of guidelines that will aid in preventing unfair treatment through algorithmic control and this can be done by requiring platforms to be more transparent in how they distribute work and determine pay. These can include platform industries such as beauty services, domestic services, ride-hailing, freelancing, and delivery services which are heavily controlled by algorithms. Governments can achieve this by requiring platform transparency audits, which require platforms to make important algorithmic decision-making criteria publicly available. Gig workers themselves would be consulted as stakeholders to make sure that these policies are based on their real-world experiences. Policymakers should also consider allowing gig workers to join representative unions that can aid in addressing their growing concerns more efficiently.

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

By using psychological principles, Industrial/Organizational Psychologists contribute to the efficiency and improvement of productivity and employee well-being. This involves the study of human behaviour in the workplace, improving job satisfaction, and the implementation of strategies that contribute to the functioning of employees which subsequently enhances the company's effectiveness (Ssemugenyi et al., 2019). This study offers valuable insights into Industrial/Organizational Psychology in several ways. One key aspect is how the gig economy, with its non-traditional employment structure, shows the impact of relying on algorithms and technology to manage workers, particularly in terms of their well-being and job satisfaction.

This is an important avenue for Industrial/Organizational Psychologists to explore noting the rise in technology advancements which is transforming the world of work, and which directly affects their role in creating fair and healthy work environments. Secondly, Industrial/Organizational Psychologists have for much of their time focused on mental health and well-being initiatives for employees in traditional forms of employment, therefore there is a need to develop and tailor interventions for remote workers like gig workers, ensuring they receive effective psychosocial support. For instance, it has been proposed that online support services can provide efficient help to gig workers such as online counselling and support services through eHealth platforms (Alanzi, 2021; Kaushik et al., 2024). Thirdly, Industrial/Organizational Psychologists are also very focused on diversity and inclusion, they can therefore conduct more research and make recommendations to address the gender inequality that female gig workers are exposed to. Therefore, gig work employers and platforms can work closely with Industrial Psychology professionals to effectively address many of the issues that these workers face. For instance, Industrial/Organizational Psychologists can help platforms create bias audits and inclusive rules for algorithmic fairness, especially to lessen regional or gender inequalities in employment distribution. Additionally, the development of interventions aimed at improving job satisfaction, mental health and well-being, and access to skills development can be useful. Industrial Psychologists can also advise employers and platforms on ways in which they can support and enhance the experiences of gig workers through fair pay practices, open channels of communication and feedback to workers.

CONCLUSION

This review provides a comprehensive overview of the perceptions and experiences of gig workers in a global context by expanding on the previous review by Bajwa et al. (2018). The gig economy is revolutionizing the world of work both positively and negatively. Although, the latter can be improved with fervent efforts from policymakers and platform owners. This review has also explored various aspects of gig work. The findings highlight that workers' perceptions and experiences are influenced by factors such as geographic location, gender, education level, and the nature or type of gig work. While many workers tend to enjoy the flexibility and independence that gig work offers, aspects such as job insecurity, competition, algorithmic control, education level-related opportunities and the lack of benefits are seen to significantly affect workers' well-being and their level of job satisfaction. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic is seen to have worsened pre-existing concerns, especially around job

insecurity, whilst additionally exposing the mental health challenges faced by gig workers, with financial fears and emotional distress being heightened during this period. The resulting stress, anxiety, and isolation reveal inadequate protections for gig workers. Whilst some efforts have been made to improve the working conditions of gig workers post the pandemic as seen by the Fairworks (2020) project, it is still not considered sufficient and gig workers continue to experience a lack of job security as well as mental health concerns. Therefore, to improve the experiences and perceptions of gig workers, more effective policies and measures are needed. These efforts must address the unique nature of gig work compared to traditional employment, with a focus on geographic disparities, gender, education level, mental health, and stronger protections against job insecurity. These measures and interventions can include ensuring more equitable wages for gig workers as well as social security such as medical aid and retirement plans. Equally important are mental health initiatives which may include online counselling to help workers manage their stress and isolation among others. Additionally, efforts must be made to differentiate between localized policy solutions that take into account local economic, legal, and social circumstances and global recommendations—such as minimum standards and protections advocated by international organizations. By operating with more transparency, platforms can establish a trustworthy relationship with the workers thereby improving working conditions. Gig workers should also be allowed to form trade unions which offer representation in relation to labour issues. In keeping with the recommendations by the ILO, countries need to make efforts to ensure the protection of employees, secure work, social justice and social dialogue (Smit, 2023). Additionally, as highlighted by Fairwork (2020), there is an urgent need for stronger and standardized protections for gig workers globally, especially during times of crisis.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Declaration is made by the author that there are no personal or financial relationships that may have inappropriately influenced the formulation of this review.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

The first author, Sameera Hussain, was responsible for the design and conceptualization of this research paper. She was responsible for the data collection and analysis and authored the article. Supervised by Professor Anna Meyer-Weitz and Dr Shanya Reuben, who reviewed and provided constructive feedback. The review forms part of the research requirement for the degree in Master of Social Science in Industrial/Organizational Psychology.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study consist of publicly available articles and datasets, accessible through open-access repositories like Google Scholar. Other data was accessed via the university library databases which require institutional access, these databases include EBSCOhost, Scopus, Sage, Springer, Taylor and Francis, and Wiley.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this review are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of affiliated institutions.

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APPENDIX:

APPENDIX A: Results of Pilot Database Search

Full search strategy for EBSCOhost

(TI(perceptions OR attitudes OR opinions) OR AB(perceptions OR attitudes OR opinions))
AND
(TI(experiences OR challenges) OR AB(experiences OR challenges))
AND
(TI("gig workers" OR "gig economy" OR "freelance workers" OR "platform economy") OR AB("gig workers"
OR "gig economy" OR "freelance workers" OR "platform economy"))
AND
(LA English)
AND
(DT 20180101-20241231)

Explanation

TI() — searches within the article title
AB() — searches within the abstract
OR — includes any of the listed keywords
AND — all groups must be true for a hit
" " (quotes) — phrases must appear exactly
LA English — limits to articles in English language
DT 20180101-20241231 — limits to publication date from Jan 1, 2018 to Dec 31, 2024

APPENDIX B: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language: Availability in the English language• Format: Availability in a full-text format• Content: Studies that show evidence of perceptions and experiences of gig workers• Timeline: Published between 2018 to 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language: Studies that are published in another language except for English• Format: Studies that are not available in full-text• Content: Studies that have no evidence of the perceptions and experiences of gig workers• Timeline: Studies that have been published prior to 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Location: Studies related to all countries and regions will be included to provide a global context• Study Design: All study designs will be considered (quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods)• Literature type: Grey literature and peer-reviewed articles will be considered	

APPENDIX C: Participant Characteristics

Category of Gig Work	No. of Studies	Age Range	Gender Distribution (n)	% of Gender Distribution
Freelancers (Consulting, Design, Writing, etc.)	8	18 – 60	Male: 154 Female: 85 NI: 6	Male: 63% Female: 35% NI: 2%
Crowd workers (Online Tasks like Data Entry)	6	14-71	Male: 640 Female: 445	Male: 59% Female: 41%
Ride-Hailing Drivers (Transport Services like Uber)	4	18-60	Male: 847 Female: 206 Other: 2	Male: 80% Female: 20% Other: 0.2%
Food Delivery Workers (Drivers for Food Delivery)	3	18-45	Male: 410 Female: 50	Male: 89% Female: 11%
Other (Selling Goods/Services, e.g., eBay)	5	18-60	Male: 77 Female: 35	Male: 69% Female: 31.2%
Total	26		Male: 2128 Female: 821	Male: 72% Female: 28%

NI=Not indicated

APPENDIX D: Data Chart

Author(S), Publication Year & Country	Aims/ Research questions	Methodology	Perceptions and Experiences of Gig Workers	Limitations	Recommendations
1. Anwar & Graham, (2020) - Africa (South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Uganda)	The aim of the research is to examine the impact of the gig economy on labour in Africa by analysing the experiences of workers from five African countries in platform-based remote work.	<p>Study design: Qualitative: In-depth interviews</p> <p>Population target: Upwork gig workers</p> <p>Sample size: 65</p> <p>Age: 18–24 years: 15 25–29 years: 29 30 and above years: 21</p> <p>Sex: Male: 40 Female: 25</p>	<p>Benefits of gig work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled workers can earn more money doing gig work compared to local jobs • There are other websites like Upwork that bring down the barriers to entry to participation. • Despite the stigma, the income from gig work is valued • Gig work is also valued for the flexibility associated with choosing when and where to work • Decision-making power is dependent on skills and reputation. <p>Challenges of gig work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High costs of internet and technologies are some of the challenges around gig work. • The global competition reduces wages. • Social stigma and the lack of recognition are experienced by gig workers • They experience pressure, absence of social protection and minimised bargaining ability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited sample and generalizability: This study was done with respect to certain regions in Africa as well as different types of gig jobs. • Potential bias: Such approach meant the research relied on the answers from the participants, which increases methodological bias. • Lack of information on term impact: It might not be easy to list down all these effects and how they will change when measured over a large period because the gig employment is an emerging market. • Limited perspective: This research could have also provided a voice for the various stakeholders such as the platform firms and policymakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of regions and kinds of gig work to increase the generalizability of results. • Another reason is to employ other data collection techniques that will minimize the effects of self-reported data. • Carry out research which will map the effects of gig work in the future. • Engage both, platform companies and the policy makers to get a holistic view.
2. Arriagada et al. (2023) - Santiago, Chile.	Aims to explore platform work in Chile, with a focus on gig workers' experiences and conditions, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and to evaluate the effectiveness of regulatory measures in protecting labour rights.	<p>Study Design: qualitative - interviews</p> <p>Population Target: Gig workers in Chile who are engaged in platform-mediated work, such as delivery, ride-hailing, and other related services.</p> <p>Sample Size: 35 gig workers</p> <p>Age: varied from 24 to 59 years old.</p> <p>Sex: Male: 31 Female: 4</p>	<p>Impact of COVID-19: The pandemic generated demand for gig workers particularly delivery services exposing them to health risks without proper platform support or protective resources.</p> <p>Worker-Platform Relationship: gig work involves a dependent and insecure arrangement with platforms noting there are no contractual agreements or benefits which contribute to feelings of isolation.</p> <p>Lack of Platform Support: Several workers complained that the platforms provide them with inadequate resources and communication especially during times of need such as accidents or disputes.</p> <p>Flexibility and Control: Even though gig economy is presented as a model that provides flexibility, those workers are tightly managed through algorithms and ratings systems, which dictate pay and job availability.</p> <p>Labour rights: Gig workers whose goal is to force companies to improve their working conditions struggle because unions do not exist and workers can be retaliated against.</p> <p>Isolation and Support: Independent contractors are lonely, but they have created informal support groups for safety that are especially important when working in environments which are high risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow Focus – Limited to delivery and ride-sharing sectors. • Geographical Bias – Data from mainly urban areas. • Small Sample – Sample size restricts generalization. • Self-Reported Data – This may introduce bias. • Short Time Frame – No long-term trends captured. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include more gig industries (freelance, digital). • Include rural and developing regions. • Broaden the participant pool for better accuracy. • Assess changes over time using longitudinal studies • Study algorithmic management's effects. • Analyze new labour laws on gig workers.

Author(S), Publication Year & Country	Aims/ Research questions	Methodology	Perceptions and Experiences of Gig Workers	Limitations	Recommendations
			<p>Migrant Worker Challenges: Migrant workers face multiple challenges including legal, financial and social challenges in addition to gig work that pays low wages and are precarious in nature.</p> <p>Need for Regulation: As a result of the recent labour reforms in some countries, there are high demands to strengthen the legal requirements regarding fair payment and rights of gig workers.</p>		
3. Caza et al. (2021)- Global	Aims to create and validate the Gig Worker Challenges Inventory (GWCI), a tool that gauges the main challenges faced by gig workers.	<p>Study 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study design: Quantitative Survey: Likert Scale • Population: crowd workers (Amazon Mturk) • Sample size: 56 • Age: NI • Gender: Male: 29 Female: 24 <p>Study 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study design: Quantitative Survey: Likert Scale • Population: crowd workers (Amazon Mturk) • Sample size: 227 • Age: NI • Gender: Male: 111 Female: 116 <p>Study 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study design: Quantitative Survey: Likert Scale • Population: crowd workers (Amazon Mturk) • Sample: 476 • Age: NI • Gender: Male: 277 Female: 199 <p>Study 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study design: Quantitative Survey: Likert Scale 	<p>Job insecurity: Gig work is seen as unstable due to the inconsistent income and jobs</p> <p>Control and Autonomy: Digital platforms monitor workers closely leaving them to feel a lack of autonomy in their work</p> <p>Emotional challenges: Gig workers experience stress, social isolation and difficulty maintaining a professional identity</p> <p>Work type disparities: Non-professional gig workers experience more challenges compared to professionals, especially emotionally and organizationally.</p> <p>Flexibility: While gig workers value flexibility, the precarious nature of the job remains a concern</p> <p>Multiple challenges: The experiences of gig workers are complex due to the several challenges they experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-sectional data: inability to make causal inferences over time • Limited insight: the data analysis does not provide adequate details into demographic, geographic and industry variations in gig work • Technology: the impact thereof on gig workers needs more research • Diversity: need for research for diverse populations • Validity: reverse scoring impacts the validity of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the effect and cause patterns over time to maximize findings with the help of longitudinal studies. • Perform further analysis to investigate the effect of specific demographic, geographic and industry variations. • Explore how technology influences worker control and freedom • Analyse various characteristic features of workers in connection with gig work • Explore other ways to improve the validity of reverse-scoring

Author(S), Publication Year & Country	Aims/ Research questions	Methodology	Perceptions and Experiences of Gig Workers	Limitations	Recommendations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population: crowd workers (Amazon Mturk) • Sample: 302 • Age: NI • Gender: Male: 165 Female: 137 <p>Study 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study design: Quantitative Survey: Likert Scale • Population: various online gig work forums and professional freelance mailing lists • Sample: 343 • Age: NI • Gender: Male: 129 Female: 214 			
4. De La Vega et al. (2021) – United Kingdom	Aims to understand freelancers’ perceptions of freelancing platforms and their experiences with these sociotechnical systems	<p>Study design: Qualitative: thematically analysed posts with comments from subforums on Reddit.</p> <p>Population target: Freelance workers</p> <p>Sample size: 528 posts with 7499 comments from four relevant subforums on Reddit.</p> <p>Age: NI</p> <p>Sex: NI</p>	<p>Competition: It is difficult to establish a strong profile to work in platforms such as Upwork due to the competitive nature of gig work.</p> <p>Precarity: Despite the opportunities provided by platforms, they also bring vulnerability and control concerns that freelance workers also do not want to be dependent on.</p> <p>Control and Autonomy: Independents appreciate flexibility but suffer in platform-regulated constraints, hence restraining their freedom.</p> <p>Networking Difficulties: Whilst platforms mitigate the requirements of conventional networking, it creates barriers to establishing and nurturing client relationships.</p> <p>Mitigating Precarity: Reducing the risks of platform dependency can be done by focusing on multiple sources of income, as well as building personal portfolios.</p> <p>Platform Design Recommendations: It is suggested that platforms should provide transparent rating systems, support for professional development, and increase freelancer control.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampling Bias: Information gained through investigations in Reddit does not cover all the freelancers. • Language and Geographic Limitations: Reddit organized by the English language can be also lacking in the views of the people of other languages and countries. • Temporal Constraints: Most of the findings may not hold for any other year other than 2019. • Generalizability: results may not generalize for the entire population because of sampling and other constraints in the present study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include data from other platforms or surveys. • Included translated data from other languages • analyse data from other periods • Include diverse samples
5. De La Vega et al. (2023)- Participants were located	Aims to explore the work practices and challenges of online freelancers	<p>Study design: An in-depth qualitative approach, combining a 14-day diary and semi-</p>	<p>Adapting to Platforms: Freelancers adapt the usage of platforms to their characteristics to create distinctive assignments, influencing work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Sample Size: The research target sample was relatively scanty and international thus not very 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand Geographic Diversity to capture platform experiences across regions.

Author(S), Publication Year & Country	Aims/ Research questions	Methodology	Perceptions and Experiences of Gig Workers	Limitations	Recommendations
across 10 countries	as well as the impact of platform features on their everyday lives.	structured interviews with 15 online freelancers using Upwork Population target: Online freelancers using the platform Upwork Sample size: 15 Age: Range 18 - 52. Sex: Male: 6 Female: 9	Flexibility vs. Constraints: These give a lot of flexibility to the platforms while at the same time give certain complexities such as international competition and higher surveillance which impacts the satisfaction among workers. Role of Work Norms: Organizational norms such as handling customers and distribution of workload predetermine the perception of work. Platform Design Impact: Such tools limit the hours available for work and help to oversee performance, which decreases workers' perceptions of control and well-being regarding the platforms. Regional Differences: These variability results indicate that the design of platform interfaces and formulation of policies must address place-based circumstances.	representative of larger benchmarks. • Limited Geographical Diversity: The participants although they did not represent the complete cross section of persons from across the world, were able to give their common international experiences. • Focus on One Platform: It was done without considering other structures of the platform and has covered only freelancers and employers on Upwork. • Narrow Scope of Work-Life Management: The data on work- life management practices is systematic and selective and refers to people's experiences.	• : More research should be conducted between work- life practice and the different types of platforms irrespective of their origin so as to cover locally developed platforms. • Further the research to involve more users primarily focusing on platform design for a more inclusive results policy. • Find out how different structures of other platforms, apart from Upwork affect freelancers' work-life arrangements, with a focus on certain industries such as food delivery.
6. Duggan et al. (2023) - Major cities in the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States.	Aims to examine app-workers' perceptions of algorithmic HRM control and the role of multiple parties in shaping this system of control.	Study Design: Qualitative: in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Population Target: App-workers in food delivery and ridesharing sectors of the gig economy. Sample Size: 56 interviews total: 32 with food delivery workers & 24 with rideshare workers. Age: Food Delivery: range 20 to 45 years Rideshare: range 28 to 68 years Sex: Food Delivery: Males: 26 Females: 6 Rideshare: Males: 15	Algorithmic control: Algorithmic HRM systems closely monitor workers leaving them to feel somewhat uncomfortable. Emotional strain: The use of rating systems on most platforms leads to feelings of anxiety regarding income and job performance. Autonomy: The aspect of autonomy is ambiguous as gig work offers some level of flexibility whilst at the same time algorithms seem to have more control over gig work Precarity: Job insecurity and unstable income are major features of gig work Unsatisfied: Due to impersonal management by platforms, gig workers feel insecure and easily replaceable.	• Limited generalizability: limited focus on specific sample and gig sectors • Study design: the use of qualitative design does not allow for diverse insight into gig work • Limited insight: different stakeholders may have different roles to play in gig work.	• Expand the study to explore the views of all other parties that are involved in algorithmic HRM control. • Conduct longitudinal studies to explore the changes in experiences and motivations over time for gig workers. • Explore gender dynamics in the experiences of gig workers.

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		Females: 9			
7. Durward et al. (2020) - Germany	Aims to explore how the interaction between perceived task characteristics and financial compensation affects perceived satisfaction and identification of crowd workers	<p>Study design: Quantitative Surveys from May to July 2015</p> <p>Population target: Crowd workers from various online platforms</p> <p>Sample size: 434</p> <p>Age: range: 14-71 years</p> <p>Sex: Male: 226 Female: 208</p>	<p>Platform variability: Gig worker experiences differ depending on the type of platform and kind of gig work being done.</p> <p>Motivation and satisfaction: Intrinsic factors (e.g., task variety) and extrinsic factors (e.g., financial compensation) jointly impact satisfaction and identification.</p> <p>Compensation and Motivation: High level of pay also enhance motivation since it recognizes effort of the employee and competency of the employee.</p> <p>Satisfaction: Identity and autonomy enhance satisfaction, and high income leads to high satisfaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of time: the study did not focus on the temporal dynamics of satisfaction and identification regarding the characteristics of tasks. • Task relationships: The relationships between these task characteristics and the actual task performance were not observed. • Psychological aspects: Psychological outcomes as a function of work performance were not examined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longitudinal research should explore how perceptions of task characteristics evolve over time. • Examine how task characteristics and financial compensation affect actual task performance. • Investigate the link between performance and psychological outcomes to improve task design and enhance worker performance.
8. Ilhan and Füredi (2023) - Hungary	Aims to explore the employment status of food delivery workers (FDW) in Hungary and their perceptions regarding uncertainty of employment contracts, employment benefits especially during the pandemic.	<p>Study design: Mixed Methods Approach (qualitative and quantitative): combines in-depth interviews, social media surveys with closed-ended questions, and participant observation</p> <p>Population target: Hungarian food delivery workers (FDW)</p> <p>Sample size:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth Interviews: NI • Social Media Surveys (Facebook group): 150, 250, and over 100 responses (per question- 3 questions). Additionally, 13 personal comments were considered. • Participant observation: NI <p>Age: range 25-40 years</p> <p>Sex: NI</p>	<p>Ambiguity of employment status Most of the FDWs are not quite clear of their employment status because they are hired under a contractor status but are used as employees.</p> <p>Perception Of Gig Work As Temporary FDW are full-time workers, but consider the job temporary due to low pay and unhealthy/unsafe working conditions which heightens their anxiety.</p> <p>Support from institutions This means that courier workers are not protected by labour unions; they become vulnerable, and thus require new forms of assistance.</p> <p>Working conditions While the participants expressed concern over employment insecurity, suggestions were that they worried more about working in harsh conditions with little or no employment privileges. Some of these concerns were realized during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Governance The study points to the mission of developing sharp distinction criteria for workers within the sharing economy to fight for their rights and avoid unfair treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Barriers: Inability to write responses to non-English comments. • Poll Deletion Conflicts: Polls were deleted because there were conflicts between admins and moderators in the community. • Access Issues with Participants: The challenges that arise when trying to access the participants because the platform owners are usually very reluctant. • Poll Visibility Problems: Problems connected with the visibility of the polls and their filling. • Limited Geographic Focus: Explicitly and quantitatively most oriented to Hungary and with a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore working conditions to understand why workers report dissatisfaction in this regard. • Explore the understanding of employment benefits among foreigners • Study the perceptions of FDW from other countries • Work with social media platforms to enhance data collection.

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9. Jaafar and Mat (2023) – Malaysia	Aim to explore the job perceptions among gig workers, focusing on online sellers’ perspectives.	<p>Study Design: Qualitative: online interviews</p> <p>Population Target: Online sellers on platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, and Facebook, specifically those acting as middlemen (“dropship sellers”) between suppliers and customers.</p> <p>Sample Size: Not specified. The study used snowball sampling, where respondents were recruited based on referrals from existing participants until data saturation was achieved. Therefore, the sample size may vary depending on when data saturation occurred.</p> <p>Age: Not specified</p> <p>Sex: Not specified</p>	<p>Financial Independence: To the gig workers, the flexibility enables them to receive an additional income to fulfil the requirements of a household.</p> <p>Technology Challenges: Lack of internet connectivity and the constant need to upgrade skills can be considered as the main barriers to business success especially in areas with limited resources.</p> <p>Flexibility and Autonomy: The feature of flexible timing and self-organizing with one’s personal goals is most appreciated in contrast with traditional employment.</p> <p>Self-Evaluation: Due to profit-related incentive systems, the workers always evaluate the performance based on incomes maintaining high personal responsibility levels.</p> <p>Support Networks: This study highlighted possible difficulties for gig workers when participating in gig platforms and pointed out the necessity of community and positive mentorship relationships to overcome them.</p> <p>Skill Development: Gig works foster skill development, which is crucial for career growth</p> <p>Income Uncertainty: Unstable jobs result in unstable income for gig workers. There is a dire need to improved resources to manage challenges of gig work.</p> <p>Economic Contribution: Many gig workers acknowledge that they are contributing to the development of economies</p> <p>Social Influence: Family and friends play a huge role in their decision to engage in gig work.</p> <p>Policy Support: Gig workers share a need for higher protection from platforms and policymakers</p>	<p>relatively brief discussion on other countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited scope: only online sellers included • Context: limited area of research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include other types of gig workers for a broader scope • Explore the role of gig work in sustainability. • Explore how effective the current support systems are for gig workers.
10. Jin et al. (2024) – China	To examine the relationship between working hours and job satisfaction using unique data from on-demand delivery couriers,	<p>Study Design: Quantitative Cross- sectional design –Survey using data from the 2020 New Career Youth Studies (NCYS).</p> <p>Population Target: Workers in emerging industries, particularly on- demand delivery couriers in China.</p>	<p>Job Satisfaction: Gig workers experience reduced levels of job satisfaction and well-being when they engage frequent overtime as they are also limiting leisure time due to the need to earn an income.</p> <p>Algorithm and work-life balance: Platform incentives compel workers to work longer hours which have a poor impact on their work-life balance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited Generalizability: Focuses on delivery couriers only • Self-Reporting Bias: may result in poor reliability • Endogeneity Concerns: Despite using instrumental variables, some endogeneity issues remain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use longitudinal studies to explore changes over time in job satisfaction. • Include other gig workers for a broader scope • Explore the impact of algorithms on work-life balance.

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	specifically those operating within the emerging industries in China.	<p>Sample Size: Final 4945</p> <p>Age: range 18 to 45</p> <p>Sex: Female 297 Male: 4,648</p>	<p>Policy: It is important therefore that regulatory standards be put in place to protect health and employment opportunities of workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-Sectional Data: Lacks insight into long-term changes in job satisfaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how local contexts influence job satisfaction among gig workers.
11. Marquis et al. (2018) - USA	The study aims to investigate the relationship between perceived behaviour control, emotional labour, and job satisfaction among gig economy workers, specifically focusing on Uber drivers.	<p>Study Design: Quantitative Survey</p> <p>Population Target: Uber drivers.</p> <p>Sample Size: 108</p> <p>Age: Average age of 32.77 years.</p> <p>Sex: NI</p>	<p>Control and satisfaction: Job satisfaction is negatively impacted by high levels of platform control such as Uber.</p> <p>Emotional Labour and Job Satisfaction: The way gig workers manage their emotions (through surface or deep acting) influences their job satisfaction. Emotional labour acts as a mediator in this relationship.</p> <p>Rating systems and satisfaction: Gig workers feel pressurized due to the rating systems and therefore feel the need to adjust their emotional expressions which impact their overall job satisfaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalization: findings are limited to Uber drivers • Limited scope: no other control mechanisms apart from rating systems were explored • Reliability: Self-reported data may present with bias • Study design: Long-term impacts are not considered due to cross-sectional study design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include more categories of gig workers in the sample • Explore other mechanisms of platform control • Use qualitative study design for deeper insight • Explore long-term impact using longitudinal studies
12. Myhill et al. (2021) – Central Scotland	Aims to explore the quality of gig work, particularly within Scotland's emerging Fair Work Framework, and to understand the subjective experiences of gig workers.	<p>Study design: Qualitative: semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Population target: gig workers via digital app-based platforms undertaking hospitality, courier and taxi driving employment</p> <p>Sample size: 32</p> <p>Age: range 18-60 years</p> <p>Sex: Male: 26 Female: 6</p>	<p>Income instability & lack of support: Some issues that related to gig work include; unstable earnings and lack of benefits.</p> <p>Benefits: Benefits of gig work include flexibility</p> <p>Job Security: employees feel secure when they experience a steady flow of jobs</p> <p>Work Autonomy/ flexibility: Despite the constant monitoring by algorithms, there is appreciation for flexibility in the scheduling.</p> <p>Control: Gig work is seen to offer more control of work when compared to traditional employment is closely monitored</p> <p>Income Dependence: perceptions of gig workers vary depending on whether their income from gig work is a primary or secondary source</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalizability: Limited sample and industry range limit generalizability. • Geographical Context: Findings are specific to a particular location and political climate. • Lack of Longitudinal Data: No insights into how experiences change over time. • Reliability: Results may be skewed by a higher proportion of secondary income earners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include larger and more diverse samples across various industries and locations. • Examine how gig workers' experiences evolve over time using longitudinal studies. • Differentiate between the experiences of primary versus secondary income earners. • Conduct in-depth interviews (qualitative) for richer insights.
13. Nemkova et al. (2019) – Global	Aims to acquire an in-depth understanding of design freelancers' subjective experience and perception of	<p>Study design: qualitative – semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Population target: Freelancers, clients, platform owners and industry experts based in different parts of the world</p>	<p>Flexibility and Autonomy: Some of the perceived advantages of gig work reported by many gig workers include; flexible working hours and schedule.</p> <p>Unstable Income: Due to the stable nature of gig work, the income is not fixed</p> <p>Client Relationships: Interactions with clients differ; it is either they are kind or they expect the impossible from you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample limitations: lack of demographic and gig work diversity within sample limits generalizability • Bias: self-reported data may result in bias 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a more diverse sample representative of broader demographics and gig work. • Explore changes in perception over periods of time using longitudinal studies.

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	meaningful work on digital freelancing platforms	<p>Sample size: 40 (26 freelancers from 17 countries, 9 clients, 2 industry experts, and 3 platform owners)</p> <p>Age: NI</p> <p>Sex: Male: 27 Female: 13</p>	<p>Lack of Support: The lack of benefits and job security leaves gig workers feeling insecure especially since traditional workers have these benefits</p> <p>Competition: Competition for gig work is high which leads to inconsistent work</p> <p>Skills Development: Some people see gig work as a pathway to professional development.</p> <p>Peer Support: The support gained from networking with other freelancers is important to gig workers</p> <p>Meaningfulness: While some find fulfilment in gig work, others feel disconnected from the purpose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated: the gig economy is changing rapidly which may lead to results being outdated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broader samples can allow for comparative studies of varying experiences • Using a mixed-method approach can allow for deeper findings • Explore how policies can play a role in enhancing support for gig workers
14. Norlander et al. (2021) - Chicago, USA.	Aims to explore gig workers' perceptions of control and motivation under technological supervision, comparing Uber drivers to traditional taxi and limousine drivers.	<p>Study Design: Quantitative: Survey questionnaires</p> <p>Population Target: taxi drivers, UberX drivers and Limousine drivers operating in the Chicago area.</p> <p>Sample Size: For Study 1, a total of 60 taxi and UberX drivers were interviewed using a structured questionnaire.</p> <p>In Study 2, the sample size includes 41 drivers in the limousine condition and 38 drivers in the Uber condition.</p> <p>Additional analyses were conducted on subsets of the data, such as owner-operators, with smaller sample sizes.</p> <p>Age: NI</p> <p>Sex: NI</p>	<p>Control and satisfaction: The surveyed limousine drivers are revealed to have a significantly higher degree of perceived market control and increased work satisfaction levels while using Uber operations system than the traditional system.</p> <p>Motivation: Extrinsic motivation and needs fulfilment have remained essentially unchanged from traditional driving jobs, despite high perceptions of control of Uber drivers</p> <p>Control and motivation: The variance in perceived control and motivation between Uber drivers and incumbent drivers might not be linked with platform management processes but rather with selection of workers.</p> <p>Supervision: Technological monitoring for workers in gig markets improves the feelings of control and enjoyment with their work and does not erode their intrinsic motivation.</p> <p>Regulation: The study underlines the need to reconsider specific issues of gig work regulation since the management platforms are quite distinct from the conventional types of employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalizability: limited due to specific geographical focus • Sample Size: relatively small, need to expand • Gig work types: did not consider other types of gig work • Findings: Some participants felt uncomfortable discussing control dynamics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replicate the study in other regions. • Use bigger samples • Include other types of gig workers for comparison. • Adapt and validate measures specifically for the gig economy.
15. Patulny et al. (2020) – Australia	Aims to examine the emotions experienced by workers from varying educational backgrounds and precarious	<p>Study design: Quantitative: using existing data from mail-out surveys called the Australian Social Attitudes Survey (AUSSA) for the period 2015-2016.</p>	<p>Emotional Experiences of Gig Workers: Emotional Well-being: The study shows that highly precarious work, such as gig work, leads to low well-being with most of the studied emotions being tiredness and confusion, and negative emotions being prevalent.</p> <p>Emotion Management: This study finds that surface acting is used by precarious workers with reference to the gig workers, and compromised well-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample Size/Demographics: Limited representation of the population. • Self-Report Bias: Possible inaccuracies noting social desirability or possible inaccuracies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using bigger and more diverse samples will allow for more generalizability of findings • Using longitudinal studies will enable researchers to

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	employment situations and the strategies and success with which workers engage in Emotion Management.	<p>Population target: Australian adults engaged in one of 4 categories of meaningful or precarious work, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure meaningfully • Risky meaningful • Safe but alienating • Highly precarious – gig workers fit this category <p>Sample size: Total Sample Size: 5,000 Respondents After Cleaning: 1,211 Final Working Sample: 999</p> <p>Age: Range 18 – 35: 350 Range 36 – 55: 449 Range 56 plus: 200</p> <p>Sex: Male: 470 Female: 529</p>	<p>being is experienced for lower-middle-class workers through education, family status, and employment type.</p> <p>Life Satisfaction: Highest in well paid and secure employment; lowest in very low paid and severely precarious work such as gig work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-Sectional Design: Limits causal conclusions. • Generalizability: Findings may not apply elsewhere 	<p>assess cause-and-effect relations overtime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider adding objective data alongside the self-reported data. • Replicating the study in different settings will allow for testing of the generalizability of findings.
16. Popan (2021) - Manchester	Aims to contribute to knowledge towards the affective experiences and practices emerging from operating in "smart" work environments and from being subjected to algorithmic management of work	<p>Study Design: mixed-methods approach, combining participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and online research of a WhatsApp group</p> <p>Population Target: Deliveroo couriers working in Manchester, specifically those engaged in organizing strikes and participating in the WhatsApp group under investigation.</p> <p>Sample Size: WhatsApp group had 130 members, and the study conducted two interviews, one with a strike organizer and another with a group member, suggesting a relatively small sample size.</p> <p>Age: NI</p>	<p>Precarity/ lack of control: Due to algorithmic forms of management, Deliveroo riders lack control over their work, encountering physical and psychological challenges.</p> <p>Support: The use of WhatsApp groups makes it easier for the riders to stay in touch, be united and to be able to deal with the risks.</p> <p>Resistance: Instead, #slaveroo shows that riders deal with exploitation through humour.</p> <p>Supplement income: Many gig workers experience job insecurity and undertake multiple jobs to maximize their earnings.</p> <p>Pay: Majority of the riders are paid meagre wages and do not get necessities such as minimum wages and holiday wages.</p> <p>Collective Action: Although many riders conform to platform rules, many actively challenge them through strike action.</p> <p>Emotional Dynamics: the disparity between platform expectations versus the reality of gig workers' experiences results in gig workers feeling frustrated and powerless</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample: lack of diverse sample • Platform: limited to Deliveroo workers reduces generalizability • Bias: Subjective interpretations of qualitative results could affect reliability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include more types of gig workers/platforms • Analyse changes in worker experiences over time using longitudinal studies • Use quantitative data as well • Explore the effects of labour law changes on gig workers.

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Sex: NI					
17. Ravenelle (2019) – New York, USA.	Aims to use McGregor’s Theory X (strict supervision needed) and Theory Y (work is natural, workers seek responsibility) to compare TaskRabbit and Kitchensurfing and explore how their management assumptions impact workers’ perceptions of their entrepreneurial roles.	<p>Study Design: Qualitative interviews</p> <p>Population Target: Active participants in the sharing economy, specifically TaskRabbit workers and Kitchensurfing chefs. These workers offer various services such as home repairs, cleaning, and cooking.</p> <p>Sample Size: 41 participants in total: 22 TaskRabbit workers and 19 Kitchensurfing chefs.</p> <p>Age: Range 20 – 35: 16 Range 36 – 60: 25</p> <p>Sex: Male: 27 Female: 14</p>	<p>Loss of Autonomy (Theory X): The increased level of control on TaskRabbit resulted in worker frustration and a change in perception from being entrepreneurs to employees</p> <p>Job Dissatisfaction (Theory X): When strict metrics are applied to TaskRabbit, coercion and dissatisfaction are inevitable.</p> <p>Psychological Contract Violation (Theory X): Workers felt betrayed when they noticed changes in their pay and expectations which were not communicated with them prior.</p> <p>Inconsistent Treatment (Theory X): Lack of strict and equal enforcement of rules on TaskRabbit led to dissatisfaction among workers</p> <p>Poor Management (Theory X): The micromanagement by TaskRabbit was seen as poor governance.</p> <p>Reward-Based Management (Theory Y): Reward-based system of Kitchensurfing supported worker autonomy and job satisfaction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative limitations: The use of qualitative methodology limits the generalizability of findings. • Diverse sample: The diversity of the sample is seen to complicate the analysis of data • Management insights: The lack of insights from management limits understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct ethnographic studies to better explore the changes that take place in management for newer gig sectors. • Examine how theories x and y impact gig workers and algorithms. • Explore how gig markets can support the self- employed • Examine gig-based corporate entrepreneurship from the worker’s point of view. • Explore how changes to gig platforms affect the management of workers and their organisational autonomy.
18. Ray (2024) – India (Ranchi and Kolkata)	Aims to provide an integrative understanding of workers’ experiences in Southern gig economies, particularly focusing on India	<p>Study Design: Qualitative: telephonic interviews</p> <p>Population Target: Existing and former app-based ride-hailing and delivery drivers in 2 cities of India (Ranchi and Kolkata) between August 2020 and April 2021.</p> <p>Sample Size: 55</p> <p>Age: NI Sex: NI</p>	<p>Support: Many gig workers depend on familial, communal, and peer relationships for a social safety net, most especially at times of crises like COVID-19. These networks make up for the shortcoming of more formal protections.</p> <p>Migration status: The experiences observed are believed to differ with the migration statuses of the workers. Short-term migrants regard rural regions as sources of safety, while vulnerable, newcomer migrants see themselves as confined in cities because they lack protection.</p> <p>Precarity and Informality: Gig workers experience their labour market as uncertain and demanding with costs and consequences transferred onto them.</p> <p>Autonomy: Some gig workers depend on others in order to gain access to platforms for instance bank loans or vehicle owners. This limits their autonomy and reinforces inequality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic limitation: the focus on Kolkata and Ranchi reduces generalizability • Focus: This study focuses more on informal networks, with limited discussion on formal state or platform regulation. • Sector-Specific: limited focus on drivers and delivery workers, neglecting other gig economy sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how and to what extent formal regulation is supplemented with some form of informal support. • Include gig workers from other regions for a broader perspective. • Gather data about the socio-spatial relationships and migration impact on the gig worker’s sustainability of income.

Author(S), Publication Year & Country	Aims/ Research questions	Methodology	Perceptions and Experiences of Gig Workers	Limitations	Recommendations
			<p>Diverse Experiences: socio-economic status, migration history, and access to networks influence the experience of gig workers.</p>		
19. Rydzik & Bal (2023) - UK	<p>Aims to explore the experiences of student-workers on zero-hour contracts in hospitality and how these experiences influence their perceptions of job security and future employment plans.</p>	<p>Study design: Qualitative –semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Population target: Zero-hour contract hospitality workers</p> <p>Sample size: 35</p> <p>Age: ranged between 18- 27</p> <p>Sex: Male: 6 Female: 29</p>	<p>Social exclusion: Student-workers (SW) feel unrecognized and unappreciated when they are excluded from team events.</p> <p>Job Insecurity: SW experiences job insecurity due to limited flexibility and feeling replaceable and unappreciated. This also affects their education and career prospects.</p> <p>Positive experiences: SW feel good when they are recognized and accommodated by employers.</p> <p>Career Prospects: Most student take up gig work due to limited employment opportunities and a need to earn an income which then has a negative impact on their career prospects and how they view it.</p> <p>Economic influence: Experiences are tied to economic trends in the labour market which heightens insecurity.</p> <p>Management: By improving HR practices, employers can better support student-workers and improve their working conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample limitations: does not have a diverse representation of gig workers which limits generalizability • Bias: self-reported data may result in bias • Design: limited ability to explore causal relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a more diverse sample for broader generalizability • Conduct longitudinal studies to explore the long-term effects of gig work • Using a mixed-method approach can allow for deeper findings • Explore solutions to support gig workers
20. Schor et al. (2020) – Boston, USA	<p>To investigate the experiences of workers in the sharing economy facilitated by digital platforms, focusing on platform dependency, variations across platforms, and implications for workers' satisfaction and economic well-being.</p>	<p>Study Design: Qualitative: semi-structured interviews and short surveys.</p> <p>Population Target: Users of digital labour platforms like Airbnb, TaskRabbit, Uber, Lyft, Postmates, Favor, and Turo.</p> <p>Sample Size: 112</p> <p>Age: Range 18-24 Average: 28.6 years</p> <p>Sex: Male: 77 Female: 35</p>	<p>Income disparity: Pay in gig work economy is also skewed where a few people earn most of the money (like 1% folks using Uber or Etsy).</p> <p>Algorithm vs. Human Management: Platform human intervention is still key as systems become digital.</p> <p>Supplementary Income: Gig workers depend on multiple income sources to ensure that platform work offers stability when compared to traditional employment.</p> <p>Benefit and challenge: Since platform work is seen to benefit the educated workers more, it exacerbates inequality whilst also reducing stigma associated with engaging in physical labour.</p> <p>Regulations: Latest developments in the regulatory policy entail seeking to reclassify gig workers as employees which will transform the gig economy.</p> <p>Future Dynamics: The current changing economic conditions, mainly as a result of the COVID-19 may increase dependency on gig work hence increasing cases of contract exploitation and low job satisfaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample Size: Limited size and diversity. • Platform Focus: specific platforms. • Data Type: Qualitative data may limit generalization • Context: Findings may vary by context. • Exit Reasons: reasons for workers leaving not explored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quantitative research using a bigger sample • Include more gig platforms. • Explore changes over time. • Explore reasons for worker exits. • Study effects of regulatory changes on worker experiences.

Author(S), Publication Year & Country	Aims/ Research questions	Methodology	Perceptions and Experiences of Gig Workers	Limitations	Recommendations
21. Sutherland et al. (2019)- Global	Aims to understand how gig workers address the general challenges of gig working as a form of precarious work as well as how these workers generate key literacies for working on digital platforms.	<p>Study design: Mixed methods: Data collected from 4 sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and help documents from Upwork • Semi-structured interviews with freelancers • Semi-structured interviews with clients • Walkthrough analysis through direct observation of the website <p>Population target: Upwork gig workers & clients</p> <p>Sample size: 39 participants: 20 freelancers & 19 clients</p> <p>Age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 participants are aged 30 and under. • 23 participants are aged above 30. • 1 participant's age is unspecified. <p>Sex: Male: 26 Female: 13</p>	<p>Precarious: Gig workers view their work as precarious due to a lack of organizational support and challenges in relation to personal branding as well as market interaction.</p> <p>Platform Literacies: Gig workers learn how to use platforms tools such as algorithms and ratings through trial and error and from their peers.</p> <p>Autonomy and Control: While autonomy is valued, platform controls limit it for gig workers, as a result, some choose to work outside the system to regain control</p> <p>Flexibility and skill: Skilled freelance enjoy more flexibility than lower skilled gig workers due to the differences in algorithmic control.</p> <p>Career Development: Developing strong and long-term relationships with clients is valued for personal branding and career stability.</p> <p>Support systems: Freelancers create their own support systems and networks to navigate instability and competition.</p> <p>Navigating ambiguity: Gig workers balance multiple clients and responsibilities with the uncertainty and flexibility of independent work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalizability: The underrepresentation of diverse forms of gig work limits generalizability • Changing Trends: Rapid changes in gig work may affect study relevance • Reliability: self-reported information has the potential of bias • Narrow Focus: Limited scope may miss broader implications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the sample size and include a diversity of gig work • Longitudinal studies can help analyse evolving trends. • Combine self-reports with objective data to enhance reliability.
22. Tang & Hao (2023) – Nanjing, China	Aims to explore the distinctions among rural migrant workers, urban migrant workers, and local urban workers concerning their socioeconomic attributes, living and working conditions, and future prospects.	<p>Study Design: Mixed-methods: questionnaire survey & face-to-face interviews from December 2020 to April 2021</p> <p>Population Target: Platform-based workers in Nanjing, including Food delivery personnel, express couriers, and on-demand drivers.</p> <p>Sample Size: 411 platform-based food delivery workers were surveyed, with 20 individuals interviewed.</p>	<p>1. Socioeconomic Divide</p> <p>Rural Migrants: Migrant workers participate in gig work due to limit employment opportunities elsewhere which makes them work for many hours leaving little time for themselves. Due to insufficient and vulnerable jobs opportunities, they opt for food delivery type gig work.</p> <p>Urban Migrants: Urban migrants experience less discrimination when compared to rural migrants as they seek a temporary solution from gig work</p> <p>Urban Locals: Take on gig work as a side hustle and to manage family commitments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited generalizability: underrepresentation of diverse gig workers • Reliability: Surveys and interviews might introduce biases affecting reliability. • Study design: Findings may reflect specific conditions, suggesting a need for longitudinal studies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider additional forms of gig jobs for a broader scope • Conduct longitudinal studies to explore the career growth of gig workers • Explore the impact of regulations on gig workers • Explore the role of ethnicity and education regarding migration status

Author(S), Publication Year & Country	Aims/ Research questions	Methodology	Perceptions and Experiences of Gig Workers	Limitations	Recommendations
		<p>Age: average 31 years old</p> <p>Sex: Male: 368 Female: 43</p>	<p>2. Gender and Flexibility: Workers enjoy having control over their working hours, especially females due to the need to balance family responsibilities. Although migrant female workers are underrepresented.</p> <p>3. Job insecurity Rural migrants deal with unstable jobs with intense hours which affect their well-being.</p> <p>Whilst urban migrants are also exposed to financial instability, they are more optimistic towards securing better opportunities.</p> <p>Urban locals engage in gig work as a temporary measure and therefore experience less pressure.</p> <p>5. Career Aspirations Rural Migrants: Regard gig work as no more than a dead-end scenario one that offers almost no prospects of promotion.</p> <p>Urban Migrants: Try to move to more secure occupations.</p> <p>Urban Locals: Many times view gig work as only temporary measure while at the same time tending to household needs.</p>		
23. Waldkirch et al. (2021) – Global	Aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how workers perceive and make sense of HRM on digital platforms	<p>Study Design: Qualitative: analysed comments from Upwork (a Global platform) users on an online platform called Reddit</p> <p>Population Target: Gig workers on the digital work platform Upwork.</p> <p>Sample Size: final record of 12'091 posts from a total of 1'311 authors</p> <p>Age: NI</p> <p>Sex: NI</p>	<p>Algorithms: Algorithms function as unseen managers by monitoring workers behaviour. Platforms also pay more attention to satisfying algorithms more than clients.</p> <p>Power: Power is largely imbalanced between platforms, workers and clients, with workers facing the most pressure from both clients and algorithms.</p> <p>Challenges: Gig workers experience little social interactions and don't know what exactly to expect from their jobs which makes it difficult to meet the demands of platforms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus limited: Findings are specific to Upwork, thereby reducing the ability of generalizing the results to other gigs platforms. • Qualitative Focus: concentration of perception data limits generalization regarding other substantive variables such as the performance of workers. • Reliability: This may in part be due to worker perceptions which may not necessarily reflect actual HRM policy. • Methodology: The dictionary which was used in the study was developed by the research staff and thus it might not be very effective when it is used across platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore diverse gig work platforms. • Examine HRM Policies and strategies. • Explore the relationship between HRM policies, job performance and satisfaction.
24. Wiener et al. (2021) – USA	The aim is to explore how gatekeeping and guiding	<p>Study Design: Quantitative: Online survey</p> <p>Population Target:</p>	<p>Autonomy: Freelancers like the freedom of working independently but gatekeeping algorithmic control (AC) can cause irritation and demoralization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-Sectional Design: Limits causal explanations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include roles of technology, designers, and management.

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	<p>accountability controls (AC) influence gig workers' legitimacy judgments and to examine how these judgments impact their intention to continue and their use of workarounds.</p>	<p>The target was active Uber drivers in the United States.</p> <p>Sample Size: 621</p> <p>Age: Average: 36 years</p> <p>Sex: Male: 420 Female: 199 Other: 2</p>	<p>Platform Transparency: The open and apparent AC systems help in employees to build trust in organizations. A lack of transparency on the other hand brings about feelings of insecurity as well as feelings of unfairness.</p> <p>Algorithmic control: In order for workers to be satisfied and stick to the rules, AC need to be applied fairly.</p> <p>Feedback: AC feedback that is regular is appreciated by gig workers, improving job satisfaction and engagement.</p> <p>Job Security: The strict system of monitoring workers leave workers feeling anxious and stressed which is associated with perceptions of job insecurity and can lead to workers trying to find ways around the surveillance.</p> <p>Behavioural Influence: It is clearly seen that the implementation style of AC applied in the working environment has a heavy impact on the reactions of workers. Thus, gatekeeping, as a rule, stirs up resistance whereas guiding AC generates compliance.</p> <p>Support: Aspects of AC influence perceptions of community of gig employment. Job satisfaction and loyalty is enhanced by having support systems in place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus: limited platform focus (Uber only) • Measurement Limitations: Focus on only two forms of AC may oversimplify the complexity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture real-time worker experiences with AC. • Explore worker perceptions through different frameworks. • Test findings across diverse cultural and national contexts. • Examine AC in various platforms and traditional organizations. • Develop refined typologies and scales to capture AC nuances.
<p>25. Wood & Lehdonvirta (2022)- USA/UK & Philippines</p>	<p>The aim of the research is to examine how platform-based rating systems disrupt traditional reputation mechanisms in the remote gig economy, understand workers' responses to this disruption, and explore how they try to reintegrate reputation within interpersonal relations and digital communities.</p>	<p>Study Design: qualitative: interviews & participant observation</p> <p>Population Target: remote gig workers engaged in digital labour via online platforms.</p> <p>Sample Size: interviews with 70 remote gig workers.</p> <p>Age: USA/UK: average age 35 Philippines: average age 34.</p> <p>Sex: USA/UK: Female: 30 Male: 40</p> <p>Philippines: Female: 34 Male: 36</p>	<p>Reputational Insecurity: Gig workers face uncertainty due to platform-driven ratings, which influence their behaviour to secure positive reviews.</p> <p>Unpaid Labour: Workers often perform unpaid extra tasks or refunds to protect their ratings and long-term income.</p> <p>Emotional Management: Building rapport with clients helps workers avoid negative ratings, even when work quality is lower.</p> <p>Community Support: Online gig worker communities offer support, helping resist unpaid labour and providing advice on screening clients.</p> <p>Client Screening: Workers use community insights to filter out problematic clients who might give poor ratings.</p> <p>Support: Gig worker communities foster collective strategies to manage reputational pressure and resist platform exploitation.</p> <p>Platform Impact: Platform systems replace traditional reputation norms, creating instability and vulnerability for workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalizability limited: sample focus on freelancers in creative and tech fields only. • Geographical limitations: data from specific regions (e.g., Philippines, UK, US). • Self-Reported Data: may result in bias and poor reliability • Limited sample: Excludes gig work outside formal online platforms. • Study design: lack of longitudinal study insight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include workers from diverse sectors. • Study gig workers in more regions, including underrepresented areas. • Explore challenges outside digital platforms. • Investigate how strategies evolve over time. • Understand client perceptions of rating systems and unpaid labour expectations.

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26. Wood et al. (2019) – South East Asia (SEA) & Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)	Aims to identify common job quality across two remote gig platforms in six countries and analyze how organizational forms like Taylorist and algorithmic controls, shaped by power and technology, explain these patterns.	<p>Study design: mixed method: semi-structured interviews and a cross-regional survey</p> <p>Population target: Remote gig workers active on online labour platforms in Southeast Asia (SEA) and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)</p> <p>Sample size:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face semi-structured interviews: 107 workers were interviewed. • Cross-regional survey: Initially, 853 responses were collected. After exclusions, the final sample consisted of 679 workers. <p>Age: NI</p> <p>Sex: Face-to-face semi-structured interviews: Gender balance was maintained, but specific numbers NI</p> <p>Cross-regional survey: Male: 407 Female: 272</p>	<p>Flexibility and Control: Whilst gig work is seen as flexible, client demands override this flexibility in instances such as demands at irregular hours, limiting worker control</p> <p>Competition and insecurity: The rise in gig work has resulted too many workers and fewer jobs which increases competition, contributing to feelings of job insecurity.</p> <p>Education and income: Higher-skilled gig workers tend to earn better than low-skilled workers resulting in the latter facing financial difficulties</p> <p>Platform: in addition to skills, the reputation of platforms contributes to worker experiences.</p> <p>Algorithmic control: Despite some room for autonomy, gig work often leads to overwork, lack of sleep and limited control over working conditions.</p> <p>Social isolation: The nature of gig work is solitary, resulting in social isolation of workers which affects their well-being and work-life balance negatively.</p> <p>Regional Disparities: Workers in lower-income regions face greater financial insecurity and job scarcity compared to those in higher income regions which exacerbates global inequalities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalizability: limited geographical focus • Reliability: Self-reported data may result in bias • Skill clarity: the study does not deeply differentiate between high- and low-skilled gig work • Study design: Cross-sectional design limits understanding of changes over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand geographic scope for a broader view • Conduct longitudinal studies to explore experiences overtime • Explore how the level of skill impacts experiences. • Examine long-term effects of algorithmic control on autonomy • Study how gender roles and social factors affect gig work participation

NI = Not Indicated

APPENDIX E: Ethical Clearance Letter:



02 October 2023

Miss Sameera Hussain (213547129)
School of Applied Human Sciences
Howard College

Dear Miss Sameera Hussain,

Original application number: 00023543
Project title: Scoping Review: Exploring the Work Perceptions and Experiences of Gig Workers Globally

Exemption from Ethics Review

In response to your application received on 24 Sept 2023 granted EXEMPTION FROM ETHICS REVIEW, your school has indicated that the protocol has been

Any alteration/s to the exempted research protocol, e.g., Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment/modification prior to its implementation. The original exemption number must be cited.

For any changes that could result in potential risk, an ethics application including the proposed amendments must be submitted to the relevant UKZN Research Ethics Committee. The original exemption number must be cited.

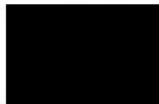
In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE:

Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity to wish you everything of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Lauren Eva Dyll
Academic Leader Research
School of Applied Human Sciences

UKZN Research Ethics Office
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag 254001, Durban 4000
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/research-ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

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