



Exploring the Gig Worker's Work Life Balance and Productivity

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of the gig economy, driven by digitalization, has reshaped employment structures, offering flexibility and diverse opportunities in the service sector. This study explores work-life balance and productivity among gig workers in Kerala's Palakkad district, focusing on online food delivery platforms such as Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats. A sample size of 120 gig workers was utilized for this quantitative research, employing structured surveys and interview to assess how work-life balance impacts productivity and to investigate gender-based differences in work-life balance perceptions. A significant positive relationship between work-life balance and productivity was confirmed, indicating that improvements in work-life balance can enhance productivity. Gender differences in work-life balance perceptions were not statistically significant, suggesting that gender does not play a major role in shaping work-life balance among gig workers in this sector. The study provides recommendations for enhancing gig workers' work-life balance and productivity through flexible working hours, regular breaks, health initiatives, and ongoing training. Future research should explore long-term impacts and policy frameworks to support gig workers' rights and well-being.

Keywords: Gig Economy, Gig Workers, Work Life Balance, Productivity, Gender Difference.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid digitalization and the advent of innovative digital technologies have given rise to a new economic paradigm known as the gig economy. This economy is characterized by a workforce engaged in short-term, often temporary, employment primarily within the service sector. Unlike traditional employment, which typically offers long-term stability and benefits, the gig economy provides workers with flexibility that falls outside the conventional norms of permanent employment. This flexibility is particularly appealing to those who prefer not to adhere to the traditional 9-to-5 job structure, allowing them to better align their work with their personal life demands.

The gig economy is prominently visible in various online services, such as ride-sharing platforms like Uber, food delivery, freelance writing, and graphic design. It encompasses a wide range of activities, from renting out rooms on a short-term basis to tutoring, writing code, or creating freelance articles. Even in the academic sector, adjunct and part-time professors represent a segment of the gig workforce, hired on a contractual basis rather than holding tenure-track positions. This approach allows educational institutions to reduce costs and tailor their staffing to specific academic needs, with some savings potentially passed on to consumers in the form of lower prices.

In India, the gig economy is a recent trend bolstered by robust internet connectivity and rapid advancements in communication infrastructure. It has emerged as a vital source of employment in both rural and urban areas. The gig economy in India has enabled millions to secure jobs with minimal requirements, such as a motorbike, a smartphone, and internet connectivity. According to the NITI Aayog report (June 2022-), the gig economy in India is rapidly growing, with an estimated 7.7 million workers currently engaged in gig work. This number is projected to expand to 23.5 million by 2029-30. Gig workers earn supplementary income through flexible, task-specific jobs, choosing their schedules and working with multiple contractors. This model increases female labour participation and attracts skilled professionals seeking agile work and skill development, meeting future workplace demands. In India, approximately 47% of gig work involves medium-skilled jobs, around 22% comprises high-skilled jobs, and about 31% consists of low-skilled jobs (NitiAyog report, 2022).

As the gig economy continues to expand in India, it is increasingly socially accepted and presents substantial opportunities for future growth. However, this expansion also brings significant challenges, including the need for enhanced labour protections and equitable work conditions for gig workers. While the gig economy offers notable flexibility, allowing workers to set their own schedules and manage multiple gigs, it also introduces challenges such as a lack of job security, benefits, and labour rights. These issues underscore the trade-offs between the flexibility of gig work and the stability of traditional employment.

One critical aspect that demands attention in the evolving gig economy is the necessity of work-life balance for gig workers. Although the flexible nature of gig work enables workers to arrange their schedules around personal commitments, it often leads to blurred boundaries between work and personal life. This can result in overwork, burnout, and challenges in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Addressing these concerns is essential for ensuring that the gig economy remains a viable and sustainable employment model. Therefore, balancing flexibility with adequate support mechanisms is crucial for enhancing the overall well-being and productivity of gig workers in India.

This research article explores the relationship between work-life balance and productivity among gig workers in online food delivery platforms operating in Kerala's Palakkad district, including Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats. Existing literature suggests a strong positive relationship between work-life balance and productivity in traditional employment settings. However, there is a significant gap in understanding how work-life balance affects productivity specifically for gig workers. While previous studies have explored these concepts in conventional job roles, there is limited research focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by gig workers, particularly in the context of the gig economy's flexible and often precarious nature. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating how work-life balance influences productivity among gig workers.

The scope of this research is centered on Palakkad, Kerala, where the rise of online food delivery platforms such as Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats has been notable. This study investigates the influence of work-life balance on the productivity of gig workers within this environment. The objective is to provide insights that will help enhance both worker satisfaction and the effectiveness of these platforms.

The Introduction establishes the research context by examining the significance of the gig economy, with a specific focus on its implications for work-life balance and productivity. The Literature Survey provides a comprehensive review of existing research, highlighting gaps in current knowledge and setting the stage for the study. The Research Objectives clearly articulate the aims of the study. The Research Methodology section details the methodological approach, including data collection techniques and analytical procedures. The Results section presents the empirical findings of the research. The Discussion and Implications section interprets these findings, explores their implications for work-life balance and productivity, and offers recommendations for practice and future research. The article concludes with The Conclusion, summarizing the study's key findings, their significance, and suggesting directions for further investigation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of gig workers' work-life balance has emerged as a critical area of research, highlighting various challenges and proposing strategies for improvement. This literature review synthesizes findings from recent studies to provide insights into the complex dynamics affecting gig workers globally. Bajwa et al. (2018) recognized three primary vulnerabilities among gig workers: occupational vulnerabilities, precarity, and platform-based vulnerabilities. This research focuses specifically on the occupational vulnerabilities faced by gig workers. During the investigation of this topic, a significant gap was identified in the existing literature regarding the workloads of gig workers.

An extensive search across multiple academic platforms, including ResearchGate and Google Scholar, revealed only a handful of articles addressing this issue. Bhuvanesh and Kalailakshmi (2024) conducted a study on the challenges faced by Indian online food delivery workers. The study reveals that gig workers encounter various challenges, including unclear payment structures, lack of safety training, and unfair rating systems. The paper suggests several improvements: ensuring transparent payment structures, implementing income guarantees during peak times, providing safety training, making rating systems fairer, educating customers on the impact of ratings, and improving app usability. It argues that addressing these issues demands cooperation among platforms, policymakers, and stakeholders and highlights the need for ongoing research into innovative solutions and the long-term impacts of gig work.

Kim et al. (2023) discussed work-life balance of gig workers, emphasizing that employment insecurity and poor working conditions are major issues. It calls for policy changes to enhance worker protections and improve work environments. Additionally, the study recommends that future research focus on demographic differences and explore both physical and digital gig work for a deeper understanding of the gig economy. Sanoj et al. (2022) conducted a Kerala based study focusing on the problems encountered by online food delivery executives and found that this group, largely characterized by youth and limited professional experience, faces numerous adversities. The study highlights that these workers endure substandard working conditions, low wages, and a notable deficiency in labour protections. The problems identified include excessive working hours, difficult delivery conditions, absence of benefits, restricted career advancement opportunities, and insufficient training and support from management.

Veluchamy et al. (2021) explored the impact of work schedule flexibility on gig workers' work-life balance and finds it to be a key factor in job satisfaction. The study reveals that while flexibility enhances balance between work and personal life, factors like motivation and income do not significantly affect productivity. The paper recommends that to improve both motivation and productivity, companies should implement incentives, invest in technology, and focus on work-life integration. Support during uncertain times is also crucial for building confidence among gig workers. The study advocates for a holistic approach that includes flexible hours, better incentives, and technological improvements to address gig workers' challenges. Warren (2021) conducted a comprehensive study on the work-life balance of gig workers, emphasizing that traditional work-life balance models fail to fully capture their experiences. He advocates for a more expansive and inclusive approach that integrates both gender and class considerations. This new framework aims to address the unique challenges faced by gig workers, such as job instability and blurred work-life boundaries, and to promote gender equality and improved working conditions in this evolving sector.

Benavides Rincón and Montes Martínez (2020) analysed how flexibility in work schedules and a collaborative approach among various stakeholders can improve work-life balance for workers. It reveals that while gender inequities and structural challenges persist, efforts to provide flexible work

arrangements and benefits are essential for better work-life integration. The study advocates for a future-focused approach that includes technological advancements and supportive policies to address the work-life balance needs of gig workers and other employees.

From this literature it is evident that no study has tried to study the interaction of work-life balance of Gig workers on their productivity towards work, more evidently on Indian context. Drawing from these research gap, the study framed out the following research objectives.

1. To assess the current state of work-life balance among gig workers engaged in online food delivery services in Kerala.
2. To investigate how gig workers' work-life balance impacts their productivity on online food delivery platforms.
3. To perform a gender-based comparison of work-life balance experiences among gig workers in the online food delivery sector in Kerala.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative methodology to provide a comprehensive analysis of the work-life balance of gig workers on online food delivery platforms and its impact on their productivity. Through structured surveys administered to online food delivery workers, the study collects data on their perceptions of work-life balance and how it affects their productivity, thereby offering an in-depth understanding of these dynamics.

The research design is both descriptive and analytical in nature. The descriptive component aims to portray the characteristics of the gig worker population and their work-life balance experiences. It focuses on detailing the conditions and challenges faced by the workers without influencing their responses. The analytical component seeks to identify and evaluate the relationships between work-life balance and productivity, as well as to explore how gender influences work-life balance experiences.

By integrating these two approaches, the study not only describes the current state of work-life balance among gig workers but also investigates how it correlates with productivity and examines gender-based differences in work-life balance experiences. This design facilitates the formulation of hypotheses and provides foundational insights for addressing key issues in the gig economy.

Data collection for this study employs a comprehensive approach, integrating both primary and secondary sources to ensure a robust and well-rounded examination of the research topic. Primary data is gathered through direct interviews using a structured questionnaire administered to employees working on online food delivery platforms in the Palakkad district of Kerala. This method allows for the collection of firsthand insights into their work-life balance and productivity experiences, providing valuable primary evidence for the study. Secondary data is sourced from a diverse array of materials including books, magazines, scholarly articles, academic papers, and reputable online resources. This literature review offers additional context and supports the findings from the primary data, enriching the overall analysis with a broader perspective on existing research and theoretical frameworks. This dual approach ensures a comprehensive examination of the work-life balance and productivity of gig workers, integrating direct feedback with established research to provide a thorough understanding of the subject matter.

The sampling procedure for this study involved using convenience sampling to engage gig workers at various food delivery points in Palakkad. Data for the study were gathered from a sample of 120 participants, providing insights into work-life balance among gig workers. The researcher approached gig workers waiting for food deliveries, administered a structured questionnaire, and conducted interviews to collect data on work-life balance and productivity. This method was chosen because no comprehensive list or data on the population size was available. While effective for this study, convenience sampling may limit the representativeness of the sample.

The study conceptualizes work-life balance as the independent variable, which is hypothesized to influence productivity, the dependent variable. To capture the nuances of these variables, a 5-point Likert scale was utilized for measurement, with the development of survey items guided by expert opinions in the field. This methodological approach allows for a nuanced analysis of how variations in work-life balance impact productivity levels.

To analyze the data, mean and standard deviation were first employed to evaluate the respondents' levels of work-life balance. Following this, a simple linear regression analysis was utilized to examine the relationship between work-life balance and productivity. Furthermore, an ANOVA test was performed to investigate whether gender differences influenced the work-life balance experiences of the respondents.

4. RESULTS

In this study, a variety of data analysis methods were applied to achieve the research objectives and derive meaningful conclusions from the collected data. The analysis began with a demographic analysis to explore the sample population's characteristics. Mean and standard deviation measures were then used to examine work-life balance perceptions and productivity self-assessments. To explore the relationship between work-life balance and productivity, simple linear regression analysis was conducted. Additionally, an ANOVA test was performed to evaluate whether gender differences influenced work-life balance experiences among the gig workers.

4.1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The demographic profile of the respondents reveals a predominantly male cohort, with 83.3% of the participants identifying as male and 16.7% as female. Age distribution shows that the majority of respondents are between 31 and 40 years old, accounting for 45% of the sample. This is followed by

38.3% of respondents aged 26 to 30 years, 9.2% aged less than 25 years, and 7.5% aged above 40 years. In terms of educational qualifications, nearly half of the respondents (47.5%) have completed SSLC, while 46.7% have completed Plus Two, and a smaller proportion (5.8%) hold a Bachelor's degree. Employment status data indicates that 64.2% of the respondents are employed full-time, whereas 35.8% are engaged in part-time employment. This demographic distribution provides insight into the predominantly young and male composition of the study sample, with a significant portion possessing secondary-level education and full-time employment status.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Particulars		Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	100	83.3%
	Female	20	16.7%
Age	Less than 25	11	9.2%
	26-30	46	38.3%
	31-40	54	45%
	Above 40	9	7.5%
Education Qualification	SSLC	57	47.5%
	Plus Two	56	46.7%
	Bachelor's Degree	7	5.8%
Employment Status	Part Time	43	35.8%
	Full Time	77	64.2%

4.2. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Table 2 presents the results of a descriptive analysis, which includes the calculation of the mean and standard deviation. This analysis evaluates the work-life balance of gig workers in online food delivery platforms and assesses their perception of productivity in their work.

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation

	Work Life Balance	Productivity
Mean	3.3782	3.6158
Standard Error	.06064	.05350
Median	3.3000	3.5000
Mode	3.20	3.20
Standard Deviation	.66155	0.58611

The descriptive statistics on work-life balance among gig workers in online food delivery platforms reveal insightful perceptions. The mean score of 3.3782 suggests a moderately positive view of work-life balance, slightly above neutrality. This is supported by a median of 3.3000, indicating a balanced distribution of perceptions around this midpoint. The mode of 3.20 aligns with these findings, indicating a prevalent perception around a neutral stance. A moderate standard deviation of 0.66155 signifies variability in individual experiences, underscoring the diversity in how gig workers perceive their work-life balance.

Regarding productivity, gig workers perceive their productivity positively with a mean score of 3.6158, positioning their perceptions above the scale's midpoint. The high precision of the mean estimate, reflected in a standard error of 0.05350, enhances reliability in this assessment. The median score of 3.5000 aligns closely with the mean, suggesting a balanced distribution of productivity perceptions. However, a mode of 3.20 indicates concentrated lower perceptions despite the overall positive average. A moderate standard deviation of 0.58611 underscores variability in individual assessments.

4.3. RESULT OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 3 provides a comprehensive depiction of the model summary derived from the regression analysis meticulously conducted to explore the intricate relationship between work life balance of gig workers and their productivity towards work. Following hypothesis have been formulated for the same:

H₁: Work-life balance has a significantly positive influence on the productivity of gig workers.

Table 3 Model summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Durbin-Watson	F	Sig.
1	.389	.151	1.701	20.841	.000**

**Significant at 0.01 level

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Work Life Balance
- b. Dependent variable: Employee Productivity

From the table 3, it can be interpreted that the value of the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.389, indicating a moderate positive correlation between the predictor variables and the dependent variable. This suggests that as the predictor variables increase, the dependent variable tends to increase as well. The R Square (coefficient of determination) value of 0.151 implies that approximately 15.1% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the predictor variables included in the model. Although this indicates a modest explanatory power, it suggests that other factors not included in the model may also influence the dependent variable. The Durbin-Watson statistic value of 1.701 falls within an acceptable range (typically between 1.5 and 2.5) and suggests that there is no significant autocorrelation in the residuals of the regression model, indicating that the model's assumptions regarding the independence of errors are likely met. The F-statistic value of 20.841 is substantial, indicating that the overall regression model is statistically significant, and assesses whether the model provides a better fit to the data than a model with no predictors. The significance (Sig.) value of .000 (noted as .000**) indicates a highly significant result, far below the conventional alpha level of 0.05, confirming that the overall regression model significantly predicts the dependent variable. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is supported and thus retained.

Table 4

Regression Coefficients

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient (β)	T Value	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
					Tolerance	VIF
(Constant) (2.450)			9.397	.000**		
Work Life Balance	.346	.389	4.565	.000**	1.000	1.000

**Significant at 0.01 level

Furthermore, as depicted by table 4, the T-value of 4.565, accompanied by a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000**, indicates a highly statistically significant relationship between work-life balance and the dependent variable. This result substantiates the conclusion that work-life balance is a significant predictor of the dependent variable. The collinearity statistics, with a tolerance of 1.000 and a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 1.000, suggest that there are no multicollinearity issues. These values indicate that work-life balance is an independent predictor in the regression model, free from redundancy among the predictors.

4.4. INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST

Table 5 presents the results of an independent sample t-test conducted to evaluate the impact of gender on gig workers' perceptions of work-life balance, with a specific focus on online food delivery platforms. The primary objective of this analysis was to determine whether there are significant differences in work-life balance perceptions between male and female respondents. This test sought to uncover any notable variations in how male and female gig workers perceive their work-life balance within the context of online food delivery services. The hypothesis was formulated to explore and substantiate these potential gender-based distinctions, thereby enhancing the understanding of gender differences in attitudes towards work-life balance in this sector.

H₂: There is a significant difference in work-life balance perceptions between male and female gig workers in the online food delivery platform sector.

Table 5

Independent Sample t-test (Gender)

Variable	Gender	Size	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.	Inference
Work Life Balance	Male	100	3.3687	.66909	.357	.730	Not supported
	Female	20	3.4250	.63733			

The independent sample t-test results reveal that there is no significant difference in work-life balance perceptions between male and female gig workers in the online food delivery platform sector. The mean scores for work-life balance are slightly higher for female gig workers ($M = 3.4250$) compared to male gig workers ($M = 3.3687$), but this difference is not statistically significant, as evidenced by the t-value of 0.357 and a p-value of 0.730. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which posited no significant difference in work-life balance perceptions by gender, is not rejected. This finding suggests that gender does not play a significant role in shaping perceptions of work-life balance among gig workers in this sector. Therefore, it can be concluded that the proposed hypothesis is not validated, and the gender of the workers does not have a significant influence on their perception of work-life balance.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The primary objective of this study was to examine the relationship between work-life balance and productivity among gig workers in online food delivery platforms and to investigate potential gender differences in work-life balance perceptions. Our findings reveal that work-life balance is a significant predictor of productivity, which aligns with existing literature emphasizing the importance of maintaining a balanced work-life relationship for enhancing job performance. Specifically, the moderate positive correlation between work-life balance and productivity ($R = 0.389$) supports the notion that improvements in work-life balance are likely to lead to increased productivity among gig workers.

However, contrary to expectations, our analysis did not reveal significant gender differences in perceptions of work-life balance, as evidenced by the independent sample t-test results (t-value = 0.357, p-value = 0.730). This finding suggests that gender does not play a significant role in shaping gig workers' perceptions of their work-life balance. The lack of gender differences may reflect the specific nature of gig work in the online food delivery sector, where job conditions might equally affect all workers regardless of gender.

These findings have practical implications for organizations operating in the gig economy. To enhance productivity, employers should consider implementing strategies that promote better work-life balance, such as flexible scheduling and mental health support. Additionally, since gender does not appear to influence work-life balance perceptions, interventions aimed at improving work-life balance should focus on universal solutions rather than gender-specific approaches. This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design prevents the establishment of causality between work-life balance and productivity. Furthermore, the study's focus on gig workers in online food delivery platforms may not generalize to other gig economy sectors or employment types. Future research could employ longitudinal methods to explore causative relationships and extend the study to a broader range of gig economy workers to validate these findings.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of work-life balance as a factor influencing productivity among gig workers, while also highlighting that gender differences may not significantly affect perceptions of work-life balance in this sector. These insights contribute to the ongoing discussion about effective management practices in the gig economy and suggest avenues for future research to explore the nuances of work-life balance across diverse work environments.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to address a gap in the existing literature by investigating the work-life balance of gig workers, specifically those in online food delivery platforms. Utilizing descriptive analysis, regression analysis, and an independent sample t-test, the study contributed empirical insights to this under-researched area. The findings bear significant implications for the gig economy, which has become a prominent sector in the Indian economy, accommodating evolving lifestyles and personal needs.

The study's recommendations are pertinent to enhancing the work-life balance and productivity of gig workers. Introducing flexible working hours could effectively mitigate the challenges of balancing personal and professional lives, potentially reducing stress and burnout while enhancing job satisfaction and productivity. Moreover, ensuring adequate rest breaks for delivery personnel during shifts can sustain high levels of alertness and efficiency throughout their workday. Health and wellness initiatives, such as stress management workshops and fitness programs, are also crucial in promoting overall well-being and productivity among gig workers.

Additionally, incentive structures that reward productivity while supporting employee well-being could serve as motivational tools. For example, bonuses tied to performance and attendance records could incentivize workers to manage their work-life balance effectively. Ongoing training and development opportunities, including modules on time management and personal well-being, are essential for equipping gig workers with the skills needed to balance their professional and personal lives effectively.

Lastly, establishing robust feedback mechanisms enables gig workers to voice concerns and provide suggestions regarding work-life balance policies. Active utilization of this feedback can facilitate continuous improvements in organizational practices and policies, thereby fostering a supportive work environment for gig workers. In conclusion, this study not only contributes to the academic discourse on work-life balance in the gig economy but also provides actionable recommendations for improving the well-being and productivity of gig workers in online food delivery platforms. Future research should further explore these recommendations and their effectiveness across different sectors of the gig economy to enhance the understanding and support of gig workers in varying work environments.

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