

## **CAREER PROSPERITY OF GIG WORKERS IN CHENNAI WITH REFERENCE TO UBER, OLA AND RAPIDO DRIVERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The gig economy's growth in India has completely changed traditional employment structures with the platforms like Uber and Ola providing flexible job opportunities. Although this approach offers independence and financial prospects, concerns regarding its sustainability and impact on long-term career prosperity still exist. The career path, financial security, work satisfaction, and socioeconomic difficulties faced by Chennai-based Uber, Ola and Uber drivers are all examined in this study. 150 gig drivers were interviewed and given a structured survey to obtain their opinions. The results show that whereas gig driving provides short-term financial independence, the lack of job stability, social benefits, and possibilities for professional advancement makes long-term career prospects remains uncertain. The report makes recommendations for enhancing gig workers' well-being and standard of living.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The global expansion of the gig economy has caused a significant change in employment trends. Freelancers, employees of online platforms, independent contractors, on-call employees, and other temporary contractual workers are all included in the gig economy. The advent of tech-enabled platforms, the need for flexible work schedules, and an emphasis on skills are the main drivers of the gig economy. India ranks fifth in the world for flex-staffing, after the United States, China, Brazil, and Japan, according to the India Staffing Federation study (2019)<sup>31</sup>. According to the research, the flex-staffing business is expected to expand at a rate of 22.7%, reaching 6.1 million workers by 2021. In India, the gig economy is common among blue-collar jobs like Uber, Ola drivers, and UrbanClap, but there is also a growing need for gig workers in white-collar industries like project-specific consultants and web and content designers. The absence of social security benefits for this group of workers (such as provident fund, sick leave, etc.) has been a significant issue in the Indian context, notwithstanding the gig economy's cost-effective arrangements for businesses. By allowing gig economy workers to receive social security benefits, the Code on Social Security (2020) advances the cause. The employment situation in the nation appears promising in the upcoming years due to the numerous government initiatives, including capital expenditure pushes, employment generation schemes, and skill development programs, as well as the significant growth in the job market in emerging sectors, the emergence of the gig economy, and the general post-pandemic economic recovery.

The gig economy has been a major influence on how people work today. Many people in big cities like Chennai are now working in flexible, temporary service positions as a result of the growth of app-based services like Ola and Uber. However, worries about long-term work stability, social security, and financial planning are frequently eclipsed by the promise of flexibility and rapid income. The purpose of this study is to determine the elements that affect the economic and social well-being of Chennai-based Uber and Ola drivers as well as the degree to which they attain professional success.

## **II. EVOLUTION OF GIG ECONOMY IN INDIA**

The introduction of both domestic and international app-based platforms in the early 2010s gave the gig economy in India a boost. It was first well-liked in the freelancing and IT sectors, but it has now spread to domestic, delivery, and transportation services. Gig labour was formally recognised by the Indian government in the 2020 Code on Social Security. Workers are at risk since the gig economy is not formally recognised by labour rules, despite its increasing involvement. Uber and Ola are now the main employers for thousands of people in Chennai, particularly among migrants, semi-skilled youngsters, and those looking for an additional income.

## **III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Kässi & Lehdonvirta (2018):** Highlighted the global rise of online labor platforms and their influence on traditional job structures. **ILO Report (2021):** Identified gaps in social protection and income stability for gig workers. **FICCI & NITI Aayog (2022):** Emphasized the potential of gig work in addressing unemployment but cautioned against informalization. **Sundararajan (2016):** Argued for regulatory reforms to protect digital platform workers. **Local studies (Chennai-based):** Focused on income satisfaction but noted concerns over long hours, commission charges, and stress.

## **IV. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

The gig economy as it now stands has the potential to create a new class of unprotected workers if it is not controlled. If structural improvements are not implemented, gig workers may eventually become economically insecure. In order to maintain social fairness and the stability of urban employment, it is imperative that this population be given the opportunity to succeed professionally. This study is crucial since it looks at an expanding workforce in an unregulated sector. Understanding the possibilities and challenges faced by gig workers, who comprise a significant share of Chennai's urban labour market, helps shape public policy, inform stakeholders, and foster fair growth.

## **V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To examine the socio-economic profile of Uber and Ola drivers in Chennai.
2. To assess the income levels, work satisfaction, and financial security of drivers.
3. To evaluate the long-term career prospects of gig driving.
4. To identify challenges faced by drivers in the gig economy.
5. To offer recommendations for improving career prosperity and welfare of gig drivers.

## **VI. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

There are many gig workers emerging and existing in the city. The study confined with the gig Drivers of Ola, Uber, and Rapido who are in North Chennai city. The survey questions are asked and collected opinion only from the gig workers who are willing to and able to reply properly. The survey questionnaire contains the statements that shows the career prosperity of gig drivers, their level of job satisfaction and the challenges faced by them.

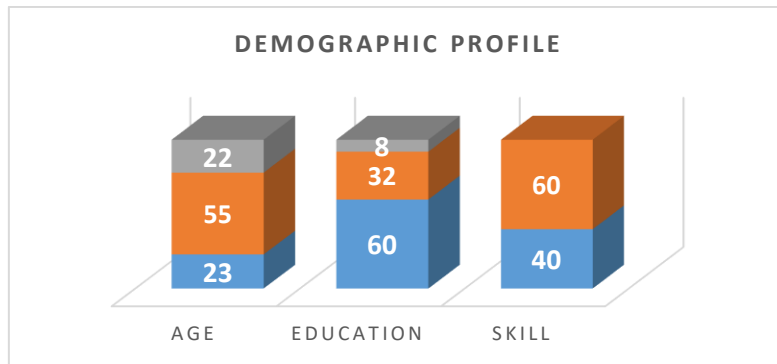
## **VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this descriptive study, the primary data is collected through the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire includes demographic variable and the respondents were asked to rate their opinion on a five point Likert scale. The questionnaires were given to gig workers in Chennai city. There are 150 gig drivers responded for the questionnaire which forms a sample size of the study. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS package with tools like percentage analysis and chi-square test

## **VIII. DATA ANALYSIS**

First the demographic characteristics of the statistical sample were investigated in the form of descriptive statistics and then the research hypotheses were investigated through the inferential statistics

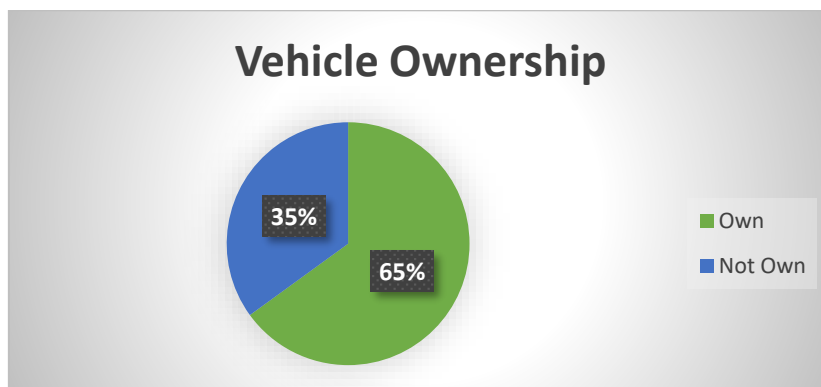
### **1. Demographic Profile**



From the data collected, it is noted that the majority respondents are aged between 25–45 years. With regard to qualification of the respondents, 60% of them with high school level education, 32% with UG degree and 8% of them with PG degree. With regard to previous occupation of the of respondents, 40% of them from unskilled labour sectors.

## 2. Income Level

The Average monthly income of the respondents lies between ₹25,000 and ₹35,000 per month for their average daily working hours of 11 hours.



## 3. Career Satisfaction



Around 45% of the drivers have reported moderate satisfaction with regard to their current position considering the fuel costs, platform commission, competition and time they could spent for themselves and family.

#### 4. Social Security

The major issues that is to be addressed for this kind of gig drivers is about their social security. About 85% of the sample drivers have not covered under health or life insurance. And it very sad to say that no retirement or pension benefits for them.

#### 5. Future Aspirations

Around 50% of the sample respondents are unsure about career path after 5 years and it is noted that 30% of the respondents are wish to leave the platform if better options arise.

#### 6. Gig workers' education level and their career path

To test the hypothesis, chi-square tool is applied as follows

**Table 1:**

**Chi-square test for an association between Education Level and Career path**

Factors	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Education Level * Career Growth	9.756 <sup>a</sup>	6	0.135
Education Level * Job Stability	13.427 <sup>a</sup>	6	0.037
Education Level * Income Satisfaction	5.218 <sup>a</sup>	6	0.516
Education Level * Scope for Promotion	14.983 <sup>a</sup>	6	0.020
Education Level * Skill Utilization	7.361 <sup>a</sup>	6	0.289

*Source: Computed from primary survey*

It is observed from the above table that the p-values for "Job Stability" (0.037) and "Scope for Promotion" (0.020) are less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant association between education level and these career path factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected for these factors. This implies that gig workers with different education levels perceive job stability and promotion opportunities differently. However, for career growth, income satisfaction, and skill utilization, the p-values are above 0.05, so no significant relationship is observed, and the null hypothesis is accepted for these.

#### IX. FINDINGS

- ✓ The majority of gig drivers see their work as a temporary solution rather than a long-term profession.
- ✓ It is noted that the income is relatively stable in short-term, but unpredictable over time.
- ✓ The risks in this profession are job security and lack of health coverage.
- ✓ There is no proper saving mechanism among them
- ✓ Despite the flexibility, many drivers report feeling stressed and physically exhausted.

- ✓ Drivers opined that they have not been supported by platform management and Government.

## **X. SUGGESTIONS**

- The government should regulate gig platforms to ensure minimum salaries, safe working conditions, and reasonable working hours for gig workers.
- Gig workers must be provided with mandatory insurance, health benefits, and pension schemes to ensure their long-term welfare.
- Training programs should be introduced to help gig workers with job transitions, skill development, and financial literacy.
- Companies like Ola, Uber and Rapido should adopt fair commission policies and implement transparent incentive systems.
- Strengthening driver organizations is essential to provide them with collective bargaining power and to advocate for improved working conditions.

## **XI. CONCLUSION**

The gig economy plays an important role in the development of Indian economy. The gig economy has significantly expanded the service sector and thereby contributing to GDP growth. Gig platforms rely heavily on digital tools and mobile apps, thereby accelerating digital services across the country. Sectors such as transport, logistics and home services have seen rapid growth. It provides flexible work options for people who are excluded from formal employment thus promoting inclusive growth. From the above study it is noted that though Uber, Ola and Rapido have transformed urban mobility and created thousands of jobs in Chennai, the nature of gig work presents significant limitations to long-term career prosperity. The absence of formal employment structures leaves gig drivers exposed to financial and health risks. A combined effort from policymakers, platforms, and civil society is necessary to safeguard and improve the livelihoods of this growing workforce.

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