



Unveiling The Potential: The Gig Economy Beyond Last Mile

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Abstract:

The gig economy has emerged as a groundbreaking force in India, characterized by its reliance on short-term contracts and freelance engagements facilitated through digital platforms. This abstract synthesizes recent literature to delve into the multifaceted its opportunities, challenges, and future prospects and quantitative analysis of gig workforce prospects in India.

India's gig economy thrives amidst widespread smartphone adoption, a vibrant young workforce, and bolstered by strategic government initiatives like Skill India and Digital India. This fertile environment has nurtured a diverse spectrum of gig work spanning digital marketing, software development, e-commerce, services and transportation. The allure of gig work lies in its promise of flexibility and autonomy, particularly, appealing to India's burgeoning millennial population- the largest in the world.

Introduction:

Beyond individual empowerment, the gig economy promises substantial economic impact & job creation. Projections indicate significant contributions to India's GDP growth and the creation of numerous jobs, especially benefitting urban centers and mid-skilled workers. Traditional industries are adapting, leveraging digital platforms and technological advancements to foster inclusive economic development & drive innovation.

However, India's gig economy faces formidable challenges. Regulatory frameworks struggle to keep pace with the dynamic nature of gig work, resulting in gaps in worker protection, benefits, and ethical concerns such as data security and intellectual property rights. Gender Disparities persist with women gig workers encountering obstacles related to pay equity and establishing credible online profits.

Looking ahead, effective regulation that balances innovation with robust worker protections is essential. Initiatives focusing on upskilling income stability, and social safety nets are critical to sustaining the momentum of India's gig economy. By addressing regulatory gaps and fostering a

culture of inclusive growth, India can fully harness the transformative potential of its gig economy- a catalyst for economic prosperity and advancement in the digital age.

India's gig economy makes a revolutionary shift in labour market dynamics, offering unparalleled opportunities amidst regulatory challenges. As digital platforms redefine work paradigms and democratize access to opportunities, India stands poised at the forefront of a new era- where innovation, flexibility, and inclusivity converge to shape a resilient and dynamic workforce for the future.

Literature Review:

The gig economy, a dynamic realm where work meets innovation and flexibility, has emerged as a transformative force in India's labour landscape. Defined by short term contracts and freelance engagements facilitated through digital platforms, this sector is not merely a trend but a pivotal contributor to economic growth & job creation. This literature review delves into gig economy impacts on workforce dynamics, economic paradigms, and societal trends.

The rise of gig work: Opportunity Galore

In the heart of India's bustling cities and sprawling digital platforms, a revolution is underway. Fueled by rapid technological advancements and a burgeoning young workforce, the gig economy has swiftly carved out a niche across diverse sectors. From Digital Marketing mavens to software virtuosos, and from e-commerce trailblazers to nimble-footed ridehailing drivers, gig work spans a spectrum of skills and services (Kutty & Sundararajan).

The allure of gig work lies in its promise of flexibility and autonomy, attributes that resonate deeply with India's millennial workforce- the largest in the world. Enabled by ubiquitous smartphone penetration and bolstered by government initiatives like Skill India and Digital India, gig workers are not just embracing new opportunities but also reshaping traditional notions of employment. (Joshi & Majumder)

Demographic Insights: Youthful energy & Gender Dynamics

A pivotal demographic trend underpins the gig economy's ascent in India: Youth. Overwhelmingly populated by individuals under 30, this workforce cohort thrives on the freedom to choose when, where, and how much they work. (Kutty & Sundararajan). Yet, amidst this surge in participation, gender disparities persist. Women, despite comprising a significant portion of gig workers face barriers such as lower wages and challenges in building robust online reputations. (Roy & Shrivastava)

Economic Impact: Fueling growth & job creation

Beyond individual empowerment, the gig economy wields transformative potential for India's economic landscape. Forecasts predict substantial contributions to GDP growth and the creation of millions of jobs, particularly in urban areas and among mid-skilled workers. (Joshi & Majumder) As traditional industries adapt and digital platforms proliferate, the gig economy emerges as a catalyst for inclusive economic development, fostering innovation and expanding the contours of labour participation.

Navigating Challenges: Regulatory Hurdles and Ethical Considerations

Yet, amidst the promise lies a tapestry of challenges. Regulatory framework struggles to keep pace with the rapid evolution of gig work, leaving gaps in worker protection and benefits. (Roy & Shrivastava) Issues of data security, intellectual property rights, and the ethical implication of “Ethics dumping”- where lower labour standards are exploited across jurisdictions- loom large. (Joshi et al)

Future Horizons: Charting a path forward

Looking ahead, the trajectory of India’s gig economy hinges on strategic interventions and forward-thinking policies. Effective regulation, tailored to safeguard worker rights while fostering innovation stands paramount. (Roy & Shrivastava) Initiatives aimed at upskilling the workforce, ensuring income stability, and promoting social protection are imperative to sustain the gig economy’s momentum. (Joshi & Majumder)

Isourse’s Observation of Gig workforce beyond last mile

In the context of the Indian economy, the horizon of the gig workforce extends much further than that of last-mile delivery drivers. This concept is particularly impressive due to its broad and long-term implications.

The gig economy in India encompasses a wide range of sectors beyond just delivery services. It includes freelancers, independent contractors, and platform-based workers across industries such as IT, media, e-commerce, and services like transportation and healthcare.

In Bollywood, actors operate akin to a gig workforce model, where they sign contracts for specific roles or projects with significant flexibility in their work arrangements. This alignment with gig economy characteristics underscores several compelling aspects of the industry.

Firstly, Bollywood actors are not bound by long-term commitments to any single studio or production house. Instead, they navigate their careers through a series of contractual engagements, much like freelancers in other industries. This allows them the freedom to choose roles that align with their artistic aspirations and career trajectories.

Secondly, the gig economy nature of Bollywood enables actors to explore diverse genres and collaborate with various directors and production teams. This dynamic flexibility fosters creativity and innovation within the industry, leading to the creation of a wide array of films that cater to diverse audience preferences.

Moreover, like gig workers in other sectors, Bollywood actors often rely on personal branding, networking, and reputation to secure roles and maintain marketability. This entrepreneurial approach not only drives individual success but also contributes to the overall dynamism and competitiveness of the industry.

Furthermore, the advent of digital platforms and streaming services has expanded opportunities for Bollywood actors, allowing them to reach global audiences and participate in international collaborations. This globalization aspect enhances the exposure and recognition of actors, further enriching their careers in the gig economy framework.

In essence, **the Bollywood industry embodies the essence of the gig economy through its flexible contractual engagements, creative autonomy, entrepreneurial spirit, and global outreach.** This paradigm not only defines how actors operate within the industry but also underscores Bollywood's role as a dynamic and influential force in the global entertainment landscape.

In the realm of insurance sales, LIC India agents exemplify a dynamic gig workforce model, characterized by their entrepreneurial approach and earnings structure tied directly to the number of insured individuals they serve. This professional cadre, akin to proficient doctors, navigates their careers through a series of client engagements, where each interaction represents an opportunity to provide tailored insurance solutions.

Much like freelancers in diverse sectors, LIC agents operate with a high degree of autonomy, leveraging their expertise and network to build trust and secure new clients. Their success hinges on a deep understanding of insurance products and a commitment to personalized service, ensuring that every policy sold meets the unique needs and preferences of their clientele.

Moreover, LIC agents embody the entrepreneurial spirit by actively managing their client portfolios, nurturing long-term relationships, and adapting swiftly to market dynamics. Their role transcends mere salesmanship, encompassing advisory services that empower individuals and businesses to safeguard their futures through comprehensive insurance coverage.

In an era increasingly defined by digital innovation and customer-centric solutions, LIC agents stand at the forefront of the insurance industry's evolution. Their ability to navigate regulatory landscapes, harness technology for client engagement, and deliver value-driven outcomes underscores their pivotal role as pillars of financial security and stability in the lives of millions across India.

Thus, **LIC India agents epitomize the essence of the gig workforce, embodying professionalism, adaptability, and a steadfast commitment to ensuring the well-being of their clients through personalized insurance solutions.**

Observations:

MGNREGA and Promotion of Gig Workforce Economy

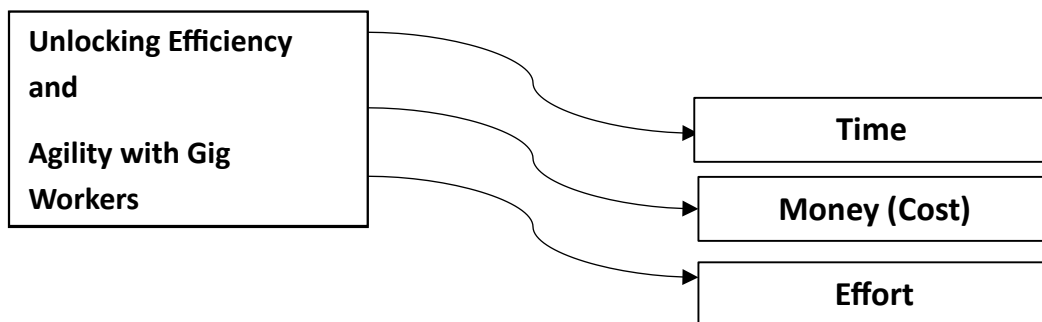
The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of the government of India, while primarily designed to provide rural employment and enhance livelihood security, intersects with the gig economy in several significant ways, albeit security.

Key elements of MGNREGA relevant to the Gig Economy:

Employment Generation: MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of wage employment per year to rural households, focusing on unskilled manual work. This has been crucial in providing a safety net and stabilizing income for rural populations during lean agricultural seasons or economic downturns. While MGNREGA jobs are predominantly in agriculture, infrastructure development, and Natural Resource Management, they indirectly contribute to the workforce's stability and economic base, potentially influencing the gig economy.

Financial Inclusivity: MGNREGA ensures timely payment of wages for 100 days work directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts, which is very much aligned to the nature of Gig economy. This infrastructure can facilitate easier integration of rural workers into digital platforms or payment systems associated with the Gig economy.

Unlocking efficiency and agility with gig workers



Time: Embrace flexibility & Speed

Adaptability on Demand: Imagine effortlessly scaling the business workforce in sync with business needs, without the typical delays of traditional hiring processes. Gig workers provide the agility to swiftly ramp up or down, ensuring that your business always has the right team size for every project phase.

Swift Access to Specialized Skills: From digital wizards to creative mavens, gig platforms house a treasure trove of specialized talent just a click away. Say goodbye to lengthy recruitment cycles and hello to instant access to top-notch skills that propel your projects forward at lightning speed.

Rapid Turnaround: In the gig economy, speed is a virtue. Freelancers thrive on tight deadlines and quick turnarounds, ensuring your projects are completed promptly and efficiently. No more waiting around- get results faster and stay ahead of the competition.

Money (Cost): Maximize savings & efficiency

Cost- Effective Solutions: Cut down on overheads and avoid long-term financial commitments. With gig workers, firms only pay for the services they need, freeing up their budget for strategic investment that drives growth.

Competitive Pricing: Access top-tier talent at competitive rates. Gig workers often offer services at a fraction of the cost of traditional hiring models, allowing corporates to optimize their spending while maintaining high standards of quality and expertise.

Predictive Budgeting: Say goodbye to budget surprises. By engaging gig workers on a project-by-project basis, business gain predictable cost management and financial stability.

Effort: Focus on what matters most

Streamlined Operations: Delegate non-core tasks to gig workers and refocus your team's efforts on innovation and strategic initiatives that move the needle. Streamline your workforce and amplify productivity by tapping into a flexible workforce that handles the details while you focus on the big picture.

Effortless Administration: Simplify business workload with gig platforms that handle administrative headaches- from contracts to payments- leaving you with more time to nurture client relationships and drive business growth.

Scalable Expertise: Expand business's horizons with diverse perspectives and specialized skills from gig workers.

Methodology

This study aims to identify and profile gig workers in India, utilizing methodologies akin to those outlined in the government of India's labour force data.

Data Source

The primary data source used in this study is the India Labour Force Survey (LFS) conducted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). This survey collects comprehensive demographic and labour force information across India.

In the absence of dedicated surveys focusing on gig workers, this study creatively utilizes the 2021 Indian Labour Force Survey (LFS) by MoSPI. This comprehensive survey captures demographic and labour force details from households nationwide, ensuring a broad and representative sample.

Identification of gig workers

Status in Employment: Gig workers are identified across different employment statuses, including employees and own-account workers. (self-employed without paid employees)

Hours worked: Both full-time & part-time employment statuses are considered to capture gig workers engaged in various occupations.

Occupation Categories: Occupations traditionally associated with gig work, such as freelancers (e.g., app-based drivers and delivery riders), are identified using classification systems like the National Classification of Occupations (NCO).

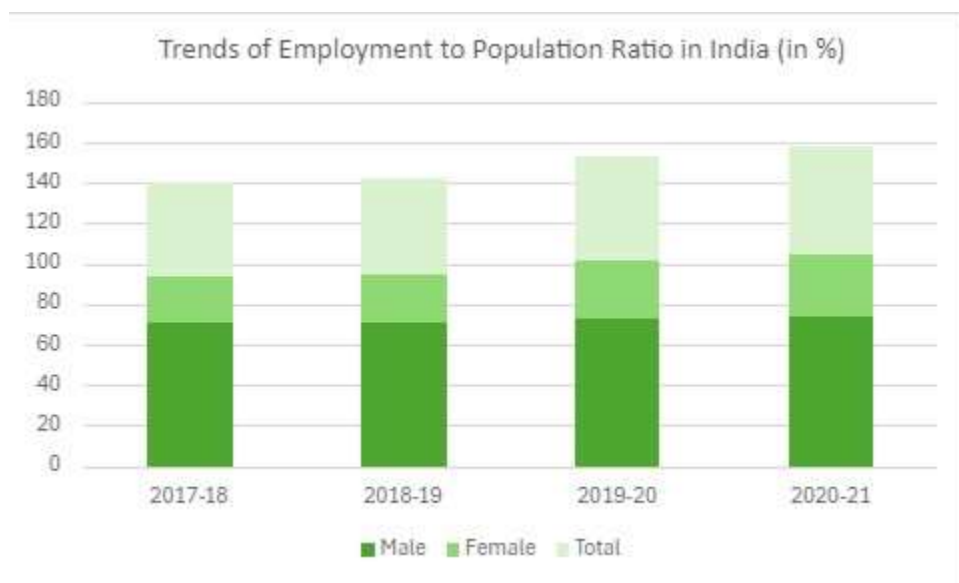
Insights & Challenges

The study acknowledges the evolving nature of gig work, where traditional survey methodologies may not fully capture its breadth & diversity. By leveraging insights from 2021 LFS data, it identifies 211 unique gig-related occupations across various industries, underscoring the dispersed nature of gig workers within the Indian Economy.

Results

The Employment-to-Population ratio (EPR), also known as Worker Population Ratio (WPR) is the proportion of a country's employed population.

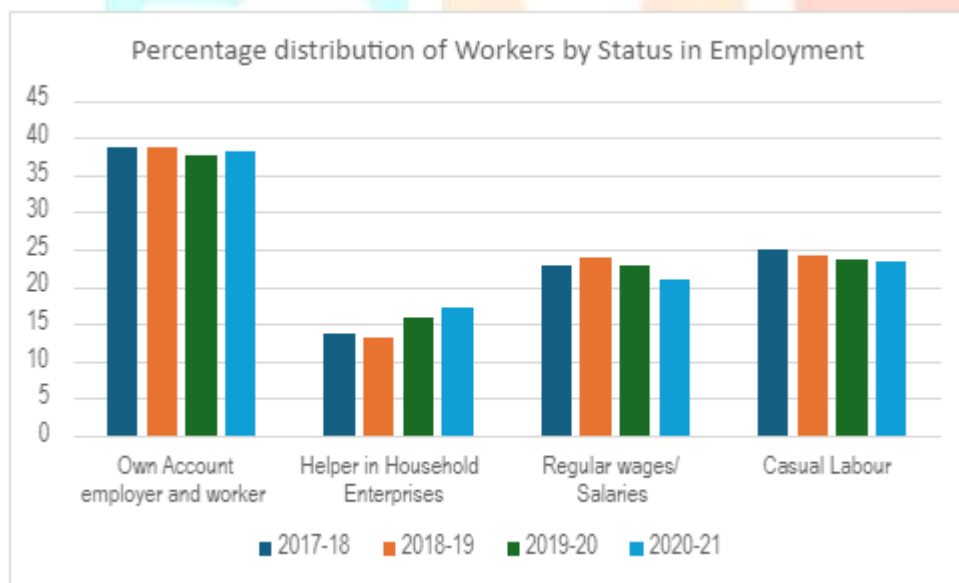
Figure 1: Over the period from 2017-18 to 2020-21, there has been a discernible trend in India's employment to population ratio for individuals aged 15 years and older. This data also underscores gender disparities in workforce participation. In 2020-21, the overall Employment-to-Population ratio in India rose to 52.6%. Specifically, the ratio for females was 31.4%, while for males it stood at 73.5%.



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey, MoSPI (Fig 1)

Status in Employment

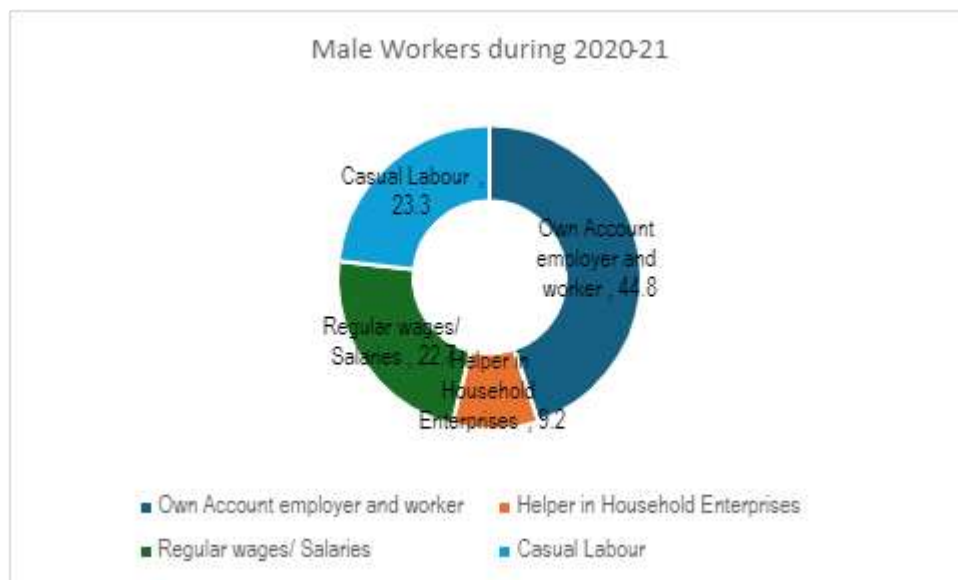
Figure 2 shows the percentage distribution of workers by status in employment for the period 2017-18 to 2020-21.



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Reports, MoSPI (Fig 2)

In 2020-21, the proportion of self-employed workers (including own-account workers and helpers in household enterprises) among all workers increased to 55.6%, up from 52.2% in 2017-18. Self-employed individuals often lack formal work arrangements, which translates to challenges like inadequate social security and limited workplace representation. This group is classified as 'Vulnerable Employment'. In contrast, wage and salaried workers, along with employers, constitute 'Non-Vulnerable Employment'. Globally, nearly half of the employed population is in vulnerable employment, a figure that rises significantly in many low-income countries.

Figure 3 and Figure 4 shows the percentage distribution of male and female workers according to status in employment during 2020-21



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Reports, MoS (Fig 3)



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Reports, MoS (Fig 4)

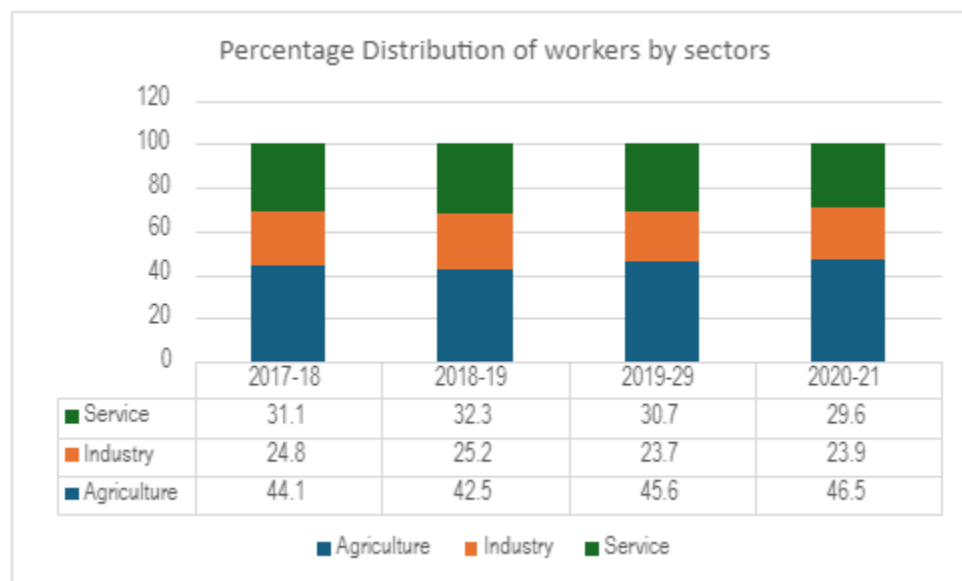
In 2020-21, the data reveals distinct patterns in employment engagement between genders. Females are prominently involved as helpers in household enterprises, accounting for 36.6%, followed by casual labour at 23.2%. Meanwhile, males are predominantly engaged as own-account workers and employers, comprising 44.8%, with regular wage and salaried positions at 22.7%.

Contributing family work, a type of labour often unpaid but contributing indirectly to household income through production for the market, is notably prevalent among women. This is particularly observed in households where other members are involved in selfemployment, such as managing family businesses or agricultural activities.

The primary sector encompasses activities related to agriculture, forestry, and fishing, while the secondary sector includes mining, quarrying, manufacturing, construction, and public utilities such as electricity, gas, and water supply. The tertiary sector comprises wholesale and retail trade, restaurants,

hotels, transport, storage, communications, finance, insurance, real estate, business services, and community, social, and personal services.

Figure 5 depicts the percentage distribution of workers across these sectors from 2017-18 to 2020-21, agriculture remains the largest employer in India, employing approximately 46.5% of the workforce in 2020-21. Agriculture, along with its allied sectors, constitutes the predominant source of livelihoods in the country.



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Reports, MoSPI (Fig 5)

Employment by Occupation

The indicator for employment by Occupation comprises statistics on jobs classified according to major groups as defined in National Classification of Occupation (NCO-2004) and distinguishes in the major groups:

Segment 1: Legislators, Senior officials and Managers

Segment 2: Professionals

Segment 3: Technicians and Associate Professionals

Segment 4: Clerks

Segment 5: Service workers and shop & Market sales workers

Segment 6: Skilled Agriculture & fishery workers

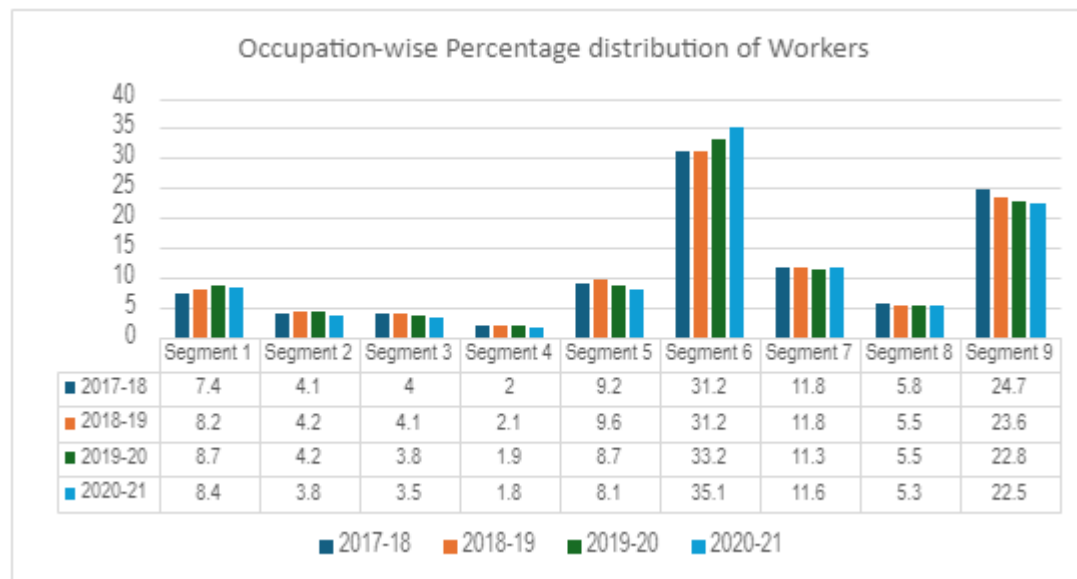
Segment 7: Craft and Related trades workers

Segment 8: Plant & Machine operators & assembles

Segment 9: Elementary operations

Occupational statistics are essential tools for policymakers to craft and execute economic and social policies effectively. They are instrumental in monitoring the implementation and progress of these policies, particularly in labor planning, educational strategies, and vocational training initiatives. At the enterprise level, managers rely on occupational statistics to formulate personnel policies and ensure optimal working conditions. These statistics also play a crucial role in analyzing the evolution of occupational distribution within an economy, providing insights into its developmental stages. Figure

6 illustrates the percentage distribution of workers across occupations from 2017-18 to 2020-21, offering valuable insights into these trends.



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Reports, MoSPI (Fig 6)

Hours of Work

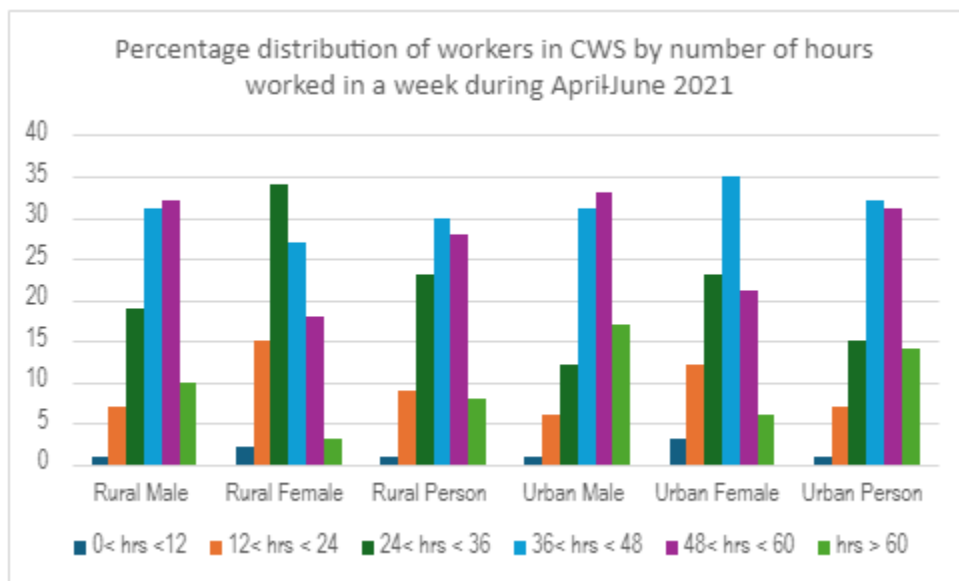
The issue of working hours has become a focal point amidst shifts in the labour market due to global economic challenges. Household surveys primarily provide statistics on the percentage of individuals based on their employment status and employees categorized by hourly bands. In the periodic labour force survey (PLFS), data on weekly work hours were collected based on availability for additional work during the reference week among household members engaged in economic activities. Estimates reflect both the average hours worked and availability for additional work among those employed during the reference period.

The number of hours worked significantly impacts the health and well-being of workers. Many individuals in both developed and developing economies who work full-time have voiced concerns about the effects of extended working hours on their personal and community lives. Additionally, hours worked affect worker productivity and operational costs for businesses.

"Excessive" working hours become problematic when individuals exceed what is considered a standard workweek, often due to insufficient earnings from their current job(s). This situation, referred to as "over-employment," occurs when individuals work more hours than desired, resulting in reduced income. Long working hours can be voluntary or imposed by employers.

The concept of "over-employment" is less commonly measured in many countries, making it challenging to determine how many individuals wish to work fewer hours. The number of hours worked varies widely across countries and is influenced by factors beyond personal preference, such as cultural norms, real wages, and economic development levels.

To provide a comprehensive overview of time devoted to work activities, data categorize workers based on their weekly hours worked, using categories such as less than 12 hours, 12-24 hours, 36-48 hours, 48-60 hours, and 60 hours or more. These statistics are further analyzed by gender and rural-urban distinctions.



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Reports (Fig 7)

The analysis of weekly working hours reveals significant differences between rural and urban populations. Approximately 32% of rural males and 33% of urban males worked between 48 to 60 hours per week. In contrast, about 10% of rural males exceeded 60 hours weekly, whereas a higher proportion, 17%, of urban males worked these extended hours. Regarding females, the majority of rural females (34%) worked 24 to 36 hours weekly, whereas 35% of urban females worked between 36 to 48 hours. Moreover, a considerable portion of the workforce, approximately 36% in rural areas and 45% in urban areas, were classified as "Over employment," defined as working more than 48 hours per week.

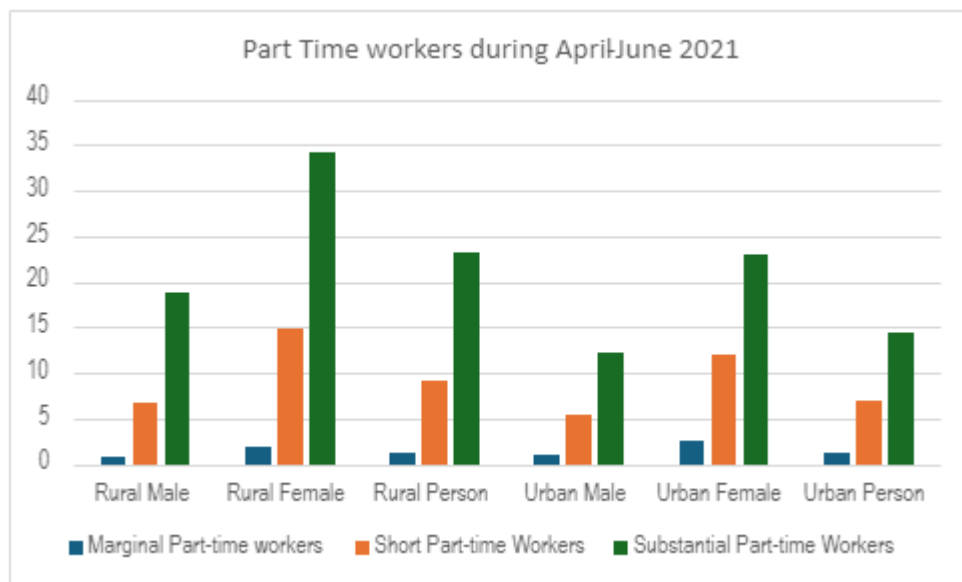
Part-time Workers

The measure of part-time workers focuses on individuals whose weekly working hours fall short of full-time employment standards, relative to total workforce participation. Part-time employment is recognized as a strategic means to bolster labor force availability. It offers flexibility that accommodates individuals seeking a balance between professional commitments and personal obligations, making it particularly appealing to those preferring shorter work hours and greater autonomy over their time.

Globally, there is no universally agreed definition of full-time work due to varying national interpretations. Consequently, individual countries determine their own thresholds, with many setting limits such as 25 hours per week or two-thirds of standard full-time hours to define part-time employment. For statistical consistency, however, part-time status generally applies to those working fewer than 35 or 30 hours weekly.

Over recent decades, part-time work has not only grown in prevalence but has also diversified into categories like "substantial part-time" (21–34 hours per week), "short parttime" (20 hours or less), and "marginal part-time" (fewer than 15 hours weekly). This type of employment is notably common among women, who constitute 57% of all part-time workers despite comprising less than 40% of total employment in many countries. Gender disparities in part-time work are particularly pronounced in nations like the Netherlands, Nordic countries, India, Japan, Niger, and Switzerland, with significant variations in marginal part-time employment observed across regions.

Part-time employment serves as a vital avenue for individuals with caregiving responsibilities to enter or remain in the workforce, and it also accommodates those pursuing educational or vocational pursuits alongside their careers. The distinction between full-time and part-time work varies globally, typically being set at 30 or 35 hours per week, although specific thresholds differ among countries such as the United States (less than 35 hours), Germany (less than 36 hours), and Canada and the United Kingdom (typically 30 hours).



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Reports, MoSPI (Fig 8)

Regarding India, the definition of part-time workers aligns with those working less than 36 hours per week based on data from the PLFS report, categorizing them further into "Substantial part-time" (24–36 hours per week), "Short part-time" (12-24 hours per week), and "Marginal part-time" (less than 12 hours per week). Recent findings indicate that 33.5% of rural and 22.7% of urban workers are classified as part-time. Notably, female part-time employment surpasses that of males in both rural and urban areas, with 51.1% of rural female workers and 37.7% of urban female workers engaged in part-time work during April-June 2021.

Empowering the Gig Economy: How Isourse Drives Innovation and Opportunity

“Isourse - Empowering Dreams, Engineering Success: Isourse Innovates the Future”

The gig economy in India is a burgeoning force, driven by digital platforms and characterized by its flexibility and diverse employment opportunities across sectors like IT, media, ecommerce, and transportation. As the landscape evolves, there's a growing need for robust software solutions to streamline operations and empower gig workers.

Software requirements must cater to the unique challenges and dynamics of the gig economy. Firstly, platforms need to facilitate seamless connectivity between freelancers, clients, and projects, ensuring efficient communication and collaboration. This connectivity is crucial for optimizing productivity and meeting the dynamic demands of gig work.

Secondly, payment integration systems are essential to ensure timely and secure transactions, addressing concerns related to income stability and financial management among gig workers. By

providing transparent and reliable payment solutions, software platforms can enhance trust and reliability within the gig economy ecosystem.

Thirdly, analytics and performance tracking tools play a pivotal role in assessing productivity, quality of work, and overall job satisfaction. These insights not only empower gig workers to improve their skills and efficiency but also enable businesses to make informed decisions in managing their workforce and enhancing service delivery.

Moreover, compliance management tools are crucial to navigate regulatory complexities and ensure adherence to legal frameworks concerning gig work. By automating compliance processes, software solutions can mitigate risks and support sustainable growth within the gig economy.

Isourse, with its expertise in supply chain and e-commerce solutions, stands at the forefront of empowering the gig workforce through innovative software solutions. By leveraging over 24 years of domain mastery, Isourse is uniquely positioned to address the specific needs of gig workers and businesses alike.

At Isourse, we believe in transforming aspirations into achievements by providing tailored software solutions that foster efficiency, reliability, and scalability. Our journey is guided by a commitment to innovation and dedication, ensuring that every business idea has the tools and support needed to thrive in the competitive landscape of the gig economy.

In conclusion, as India's gig economy continues to expand, the role of advanced software solutions cannot be overstated. Isourse offers a comprehensive platform to channelize the potential of gig workers, enabling them to excel in their careers while meeting the evolving demands of modern business.

Future Prospects

The future prospects for gig workers hold promise as the evolving landscape of the gig economy begins to integrate more comprehensive support systems. As this sector expands, so do the opportunities to create ecosystems that provide essential benefits like insurance coverage, healthcare options, travel allowances, and avenues for continuous learning.

One of the significant challenges faced by gig workers has been the lack of traditional employment benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans. However, with the increasing recognition of the gig economy's contribution to the overall workforce, there's a growing momentum towards ensuring these workers have access to essential protections. Governments, businesses, and platforms are beginning to explore and implement solutions that cater to these needs.

Insurance Facilities: Gig workers often operate without the safety net of employer provided insurance. However, there are initiatives to offer group insurance plans tailored to the gig economy, covering areas like health, disability, and liability. This not only protects workers but also stabilizes the workforce, enhancing overall productivity.

Healthcare: Access to healthcare is crucial for all workers. Efforts are underway to extend healthcare benefits to gig workers through platforms or collective bargaining arrangements. This could include partnerships with healthcare providers or subsidies to enable affordable access to medical services.

New Learning Avenues: The gig economy thrives on innovation and adaptation. Continuous learning and upskilling are essential for gig workers to remain competitive. Platforms are increasingly offering training programs, workshops, and certifications that enhance skills and expand opportunities within the gig ecosystem.

In conclusion, while challenges persist, the future prospects for gig workers are increasingly optimistic. The expansion of the gig economy presents opportunities to create robust ecosystems that provide essential benefits and support systems. By addressing these needs through collaborative efforts between governments, businesses, platforms, and workers themselves, we can ensure a more sustainable and equitable future for all participants in the gig economy.

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