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## **Growth of the Gig Economy in Urban Uttar Pradesh: An Employment Shift in the Service Sector Post-1991**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study investigates the factors contributing to the growth of the gig economy in urban Uttar Pradesh since the post-1991 economic reforms, with an emphasis on how this transition affects traditional employment patterns and labor dynamics within the service sector. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines qualitative data gathered from interviews with gig workers and quantitative analysis derived from labor market statistics, revealing significant shifts in employment structures characterized by a notable increase in informal work arrangements. The findings indicate a marked decline in conventional employment, juxtaposed with a proliferation of gig opportunities, which has profound implications for job security, income stability, and workers rights. These shifts have direct repercussions for the healthcare sector, as gig workers often face limited access to health benefits and services, raising concerns about their overall wellbeing and vulnerability in times of crisis. The significance of this research lies in its ability to illuminate the complexities of labor dynamics in a rapidly evolving economic landscape and to identify critical gaps in healthcare access for non-traditional workers. By addressing these issues, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the gig economies impact on public health and informs policies aimed at integrating gig workers into the mainstream healthcare framework, ultimately fostering a more

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## Introduction

In recent decades, the transformation of labor markets has become a focal point of academic inquiry, particularly with the rise of the gig economy. This model, which emphasizes informal employment and the utilization of digital platforms to facilitate on-demand work, has gained unprecedented traction following the economic reforms implemented in India in 1991. These reforms paved the way for a more liberalized economy, significantly impacting employment patterns within urban sectors, including Uttar Pradesh, where both traditional and informal modes of work coexist (Mezzadri A, 2022). In this context, the emergence of the gig economy raises critical research inquiries surrounding the structural adjustments in the labor landscape and the implications for workers rights, job security, and social welfare (Saksida T et al., 2024). The primary research problem addressed in this dissertation concerns the dynamics of this gig economy growth and its resulting impact on conventional employment models within the service sector in urban Uttar Pradesh. Moreover, the research seeks to unravel how this evolution affects different demographic segments, particularly focusing on gig workers, whose experiences often highlight vulnerabilities and inequities in labor rights (Bakar A et al., 2024). The significance of this research is multifaceted; academically, it contributes to the burgeoning field of labor studies, providing empirical insights into the complex interplay between economic policies and labor market transformations in emerging economies (Gajanayaka A et al., 2024). Practically, findings from this dissertation will inform policymakers about the need to adapt existing labor laws and social protection frameworks to accommodate the realities of gig work, ensuring that the support mechanisms for these workers evolve in tandem with the economy (Kadek N et al., 2024)(Soumaya A et al., 2024). In doing so, this research not only fills a critical gap in the existing literature but also advocates for a more equitable incorporation of gig workers into the broader economic architecture, ultimately fostering social justice within the labor domain (Sharma V et al., 2023)(Max M Bühler et al., 2023).

## Background and Context of the Gig Economy in Urban Uttar Pradesh

The landscape of work in urban Uttar Pradesh has undergone significant transformation since the onset of economic liberalization in India following the 1991 reforms, which dismantled previous restrictions and propelled service sector growth. The advent of technology, coupled with shifting labor demand, has facilitated the rise of the gig economy-defined by short-term, flexible work arrangements facilitated through digital platforms. Within this context, gig workers, who often engage in



informal employment across various sectors such as transportation, hospitality, and freelance services, contribute to a burgeoning labor market that challenges traditional notions of job security and worker rights (Bakar A et al., 2024). This trend represents not only a crucial shift in employment patterns but also raises pressing concerns about workers access to social protections, benefits, and equitable working conditions within an economy increasingly characterized by precarious employment (Kadek N et al., 2024). The primary research problem addressed in this dissertation focuses on understanding the dynamics of this growth and how the burgeoning gig economy reshapes employment relationships and labor conditions in urban Uttar Pradesh. Central to this inquiry is the need to explore how these shifts impact different demographic segments, particularly marginalized workers who may face heightened vulnerabilities in the face of policy inadequacies (Saksida T et al., 2024). The objectives of this section are to delineate the crucial factors contributing to the growth of the gig economy in urban settings, to assess the interplay between informal work and traditional employment patterns, and to evaluate the implications of these transformations on social equity and workers' welfare (Sharma V et al., 2023). This analysis holds substantial significance both academically and practically. From an academic standpoint, it enriches existing literature on labor market dynamics in developing economies by situating the discussion within the unique socio-economic context of Uttar Pradesh (Bonina C et al., 2021). Moreover, by illuminating the complexities surrounding gig work, this research can inform policymakers about the pressing need for regulatory adjustments that protect gig workers, ultimately fostering a more inclusive labor market that ensures fair treatment and social justice (Hannonen O, 2020). Understanding this context not only aids in addressing academic knowledge gaps but also provides actionable insights for practitioners and stakeholders involved in labor policy and economic development initiatives (Schwellnus C et al., 2019).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Gig Workers (Millions)</b>	<b>Percentage of Workforce</b>	<b>Source</b>
2020-21	7.7	1.3%	NITI Aayog
2029-30 (Projected)	23.5	4.5%	NITI Aayog

*Growth of the Gig Economy in India (2020-2029)*



## Literature Review

**Saksida T et al., 2024** In recent decades, the dynamics of employment in urban centers across India have undergone a profound transformation, characterized notably by the growth of the gig economy. This emergent economic structure is characterized by a labor market shift from traditional employment paradigms to more flexible, freelance arrangements, fostering a seismic change particularly in the service sector. The liberalization policies introduced in 1991 set the stage for such shifts, as they dismantled previous regulatory frameworks and opened avenues for entrepreneurs and workers aligned with global standards of work flexibility and mobility. Scholars emphasize that the ripple effects of this liberalization are most prominently felt in urban Uttar Pradesh, where transitional economic strategies facilitate a budding gig economy that caters to diverse needs of the metropolitan populace.

**Gajanayaka A et al., 2024** The significance of exploring this phenomenon lies not only in understanding changing employment trends but also in addressing critical socio-economic implications. With urban centers serving as laboratories for human resilience and adaptability, the rise of gig work raises important questions about job security, livelihood stability, and workers rights in an increasingly precarious employment landscape.

**Soumaya A et al., 2024**, Gig work comprises a spectrum of roles from ride-sharing services to digital freelancing, which has significant implications for the demographic that is incorporating these roles, particularly women and marginalized groups. Current literature delineates a range of themes pertinent to this shift, including technological augmentation in service delivery, socio-economic stratification of labor participation, and the critical role of policy frameworks in shaping worker protections and rights.

**Mezzadri A, 2022**, These studies highlight the need for further examination of the interplay between urban infrastructure and gig job accessibility. Nevertheless, despite the wealth of information on gig labor dynamics, significant gaps persist in comprehensively understanding the long-term sustainability of these roles amidst fluctuating urban demand and economic conditions.

**Bonina C et al., 2021**, These studies have explored the benefits associated with gig work, such as increased autonomy and work-life flexibility, there remains a notable deficit in examining associated vulnerabilities like income volatility and the absence of health benefits posit that these vulnerabilities particularly affect low-income workers in urban Uttar Pradesh, underscoring the intersection of economic opportunity and socio-economic disparity that warrants further analysis.



**Budhwar P et al., 2023**, These studies have explored the Gig employment proliferation in urban Uttar Pradesh following the economic liberalization, examining pivotal works that encapsulate this transition while also illuminating the multifaceted challenges that remain under-explored. In doing so, this review seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the gig economies impact on employment structures within the service sector, elucidated through the lens of policy implications, economic stratification, and a critical awareness of worker rights, thereby establishing a framework for future research directions in this pivotal sphere of study.

**Gajanayaka A et al., 2024**. The evolution of the gig economy in urban Uttar Pradesh reveals significant shifts in employment patterns within the service sector, particularly following the economic reforms initiated in 1991. Early discussions framed the gig economy as a response to burgeoning unemployment rates, driven by a need for flexible work arrangements in an increasingly competitive job market. By the late 1990s, the expansion of information technology and telecommunications emerged as key facilitators for gig work, enabling individuals to connect with diverse job opportunities beyond traditional employment as scholarship progressed into the 2000s, and researchers identified the gig economies role in providing socio-economic mobility, particularly for marginalized demographics in urban environments (Bakar A et al., 2024). This perspective was echoed by studies indicating that women and low-skilled workers found new avenues for income generation through gig platforms, marking a notable transformation in labor dynamics in Uttar Pradesh. The literature around 2010 began highlighting the dual nature of gig work - both as a viable economic alternative and a source of precarious employment, with workers often facing instability and lack of benefits. Scholars emphasized the impact of globalization and digitalization during this period, which further entrenched gig employment practices as cities adapted to rapid changes in labor demand and supply (McStay A, 2023), By the late 2010s, contemporary studies illustrated a nuanced understanding of the gig economy, illuminating the regulatory challenges and labor rights issues embedded in this emerging employment landscape (Mezzadri A, 2022), (Bonina C et al., 2021). The body of work collectively suggests that while the gig economy offers immediate solutions to unemployment, it also necessitates ongoing discourse on workers' rights and the future of work in urban Uttar Pradesh (Hannonen O, 2020), (Bapuji H et al., 2019).

**Soumaya A et al., 2024** , The exploration of the gig economy's growth in urban Uttar Pradesh post-1991 reveals several key themes that contribute to our understanding of employment dynamics in the region. One central theme is the transformation of traditional employment structures, spurred by economic liberalization. Scholars such as (Saksida T et al., 2024) and (Gajanayaka A et al., 2024)



highlight how deregulation and the introduction of market-driven policies have led to an increase in freelance and contract work, thereby reshaping the service sector landscape. This shift is marked by a significant rise in digital platforms that facilitate gig work, aligning with findings from (Bakar A et al., 2024) and (Sharma V et al., 2023), who emphasize the role of technology in enhancing accessibility to gig opportunities. Another critical theme is the socio-economic implications of this employment shift. The work (McStay A, 2023) suggests that gig work offers flexibility and autonomy, appealing particularly to young urban migrants.

**Kadek N et al., 2024** The opportunities are tempered by challenges related to job security and inadequate labor protections, as discussed in . This dichotomy reflects broader national trends in labor relations, which (Mezzadri A, 2022) and (Hannonen O, 2020) argue are exacerbated by the informal nature of gig employment. Moreover, the intersection of gender and the gig economy is an emerging area of research, where (Bonina C et al., 2021) and illustrate how women are increasingly participating in gig work, often out of necessity. This participation, can impact household dynamics and decision-making processes, introducing a new dimension to discussions about economic empowerment. Collectively, these themes underscore the complexity of the gig economy's growth in urban Uttar Pradesh, revealing both opportunities and vulnerabilities inherent in this evolving employment landscape.

**Saksida T et al., 2024.** The analysis of the gig economies expansion in urban Uttar Pradesh highlights a multifaceted methodological approach that underscores distinct yet interconnected paradigms. Quantitative studies have primarily focused on labor market dynamics post-1991, revealing significant shifts in employment patterns within the service sector. For instance, research indicates a marked increase in informal labor, where data-driven analysis exposes the vulnerabilities faced by gig workers in terms of job security and income stability conversely; qualitative methodologies offer deeper insights into worker experiences, capturing narratives that reflect the socio-economic realities of gig employment in a rapidly urbanizing context. These studies emphasize the importance of socio-cultural factors, revealing how they shape the choices and challenges faced by individuals navigating this employment landscape (Gajanayaka A et al., 2024)(Bakar A et al., 2024).

**Max M Bühler et al., 2023** Mixed-methods approaches further enrich the discourse by combining statistical data with personal testimonies, illustrating the broader implications of policy changes and economic reforms on gig work (Soumaya A et al., 2024). The variation in methodological perspectives has led to differing conclusions regarding the resilience and addictiveness of workers in this sector. Some scholars argue that the gig economy fosters entrepreneurial opportunities, framing it as a



positive shift toward self-employment (McStay A, 2023). However, this narrative is contested by critical analyses that highlight exploitative conditions and inadequate labor protections, leading to calls for improved regulatory frameworks (Mezzadri A, 2022). Through these diverse methodological lenses, the literature provides a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding the gig economy in urban Uttar Pradesh, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies to support workers while recognizing the potential economic benefits of this employment trend. The discourse surrounding the growth of the gig economy in urban Uttar Pradesh post-1991 reveals a complex interplay of theoretical perspectives that underscore significant structural changes within the service sector. Economic theories point to liberalization as a pivotal moment, propelling informal labor markets and shrinking job security, a notion supported by (Saksida T et al., 2024) and (Kadek N et al., 2024), who emphasize the shift from traditional employment models towards more flexible and precarious job options. This transformation, particularly noticeable in urban settings, aligns with the post-industrial perspective articulated by (Gajanayaka A et al., 2024), suggesting that service sector expansion is driven by global economic trends emphasizing agility and efficiency. Conversely, sociological theories offer a critical lens, arguing that the rise of gig work exacerbates social inequities.

**(Bakar A et al., 2024) and (Soumaya A et al., 2024)** discuss how marginalized populations are overrepresented in gig jobs, highlighting issues of exploitation and lack of worker rights, which complicates the ostensibly liberating narrative of gig work. These findings resonate with theories of precarious employment, which assert that the gig economy contributes to a broader pattern of labor precocity. Additionally, the technological perspective underscores the role of digital platforms in enabling gig work, a sentiment echoed by (McStay A, 2023) who argue that technology fosters new forms of labor organization yet simultaneously reinforces existing power imbalances within the labor market. By weaving together these diverse theoretical insights, the literature encapsulates the multifaceted nature of the gig economy, revealing not only its appeal but also its inherent contradictions and societal implications, thereby providing a rich foundation for exploring employment dynamics in contemporary urban Uttar Pradesh. The literature review on the growth of the gig economy in urban Uttar Pradesh post-1991 elucidates significant transformations within the service sector, shaped distinctly by shifts in labor dynamics, regulatory frameworks, and socio-economic factors. A key finding of this review reveals that economic liberalization initiated in 1991 catalyzed a move away from traditional employment paradigms towards more flexible, freelance arrangements, promoting greater participation in the gig economy. Scholars such as (Saksida T et al., 2024) and (Gajanayaka A et al., 2024) highlight how these shifts were fueled by technological advancements in information and communication, which have



effectively dismantled barriers to entry in the labor market. Consequently, gig work has emerged as both a pragmatic response to urban unemployment and a strategic choice for many, particularly marginalized and lower-income demographics, as noted by (Bakar A et al., 2024) and (Soumaya A et al., 2024).

**(Sharma V et al., 2023), (Max M Bühler et al., 2023)**, Central to the ongoing discourse surrounding the gig economy in Uttar Pradesh is the acknowledgment of the dual nature of gig work—while it offers increased autonomy and opportunities for socio-economic mobility, it concurrently engenders instability and vulnerability for many workers. The findings from studies cited in this review underline that gig workers often face challenges such as inadequate labor protections, income volatility, and lack of access to essential benefits, which complicates their overall economic security). The nuanced understanding of these challenges accentuates the importance of reevaluating worker rights and protections within this evolving economic landscape, as emphasized by (Mezzadri A, 2022) and (Bonina C et al., 2021).

**(Hannonen O, 2020), (Bapuji H et al., 2019)**. The immediate implications on employment, the saturation of gig work presents broader socio-economic ramifications—transformations in household dynamics, gender roles, and social equity. The intersectionality of gender within this context, as indicated by the contributions of (Bonina C et al., 2021), acknowledges that the gig economy has the potential to empower women while simultaneously exposing them to precarious conditions that perpetuate long-standing socio-economic disparities. The complexity introduced by these dynamics reinforces the necessity for ongoing dialogues that account for both the opportunities and structural inequalities perpetuated within this sector. Despite the significant insights drawn from the existing body of literature, there are evident limitations that necessitate further inquiry. One notable gap pertains to the long-term sustainability of gig work, particularly in light of the fluctuating urban demands and economic conditions faced by workers in Uttar Pradesh. Future research endeavors should prioritize longitudinal studies that examine the evolving nature of gig employment over time and the implications of emerging technologies on these market dynamics. Furthermore, it is essential to explore the effectiveness of current policy frameworks in addressing the rights and protections of gig workers.

**(Zhang A et al., 2022), (Sonnentag S et al., 2021)**, The growth of the gig economy in urban Uttar Pradesh is both a response to and a catalyst for broader socio-economic transformations in the region following open market policies. This literature review solidifies the understanding that while the gig economy offers avenues for economic mobility, it also necessitates a critical examination of the vulnerabilities inherent in such employment structures and the ongoing dialogue around worker rights.



As the gig economy continues to evolve, addressing the highlighted limitations and refining research methodologies will be paramount in creating a comprehensive understanding that informs policies and practices aimed at better supporting gig workers in urban Uttar Pradesh and beyond (McStay A, 2023), (Sorensen G et al., 2020), (John A List, 2020).

Year	Number of Gig Workers (in lakhs)	Percentage of Total Workforce
2011-12	25	0.54%
2019-20	67	1.33%
2020-21	77	1.5%
2029-30 (Projected)	235	4.13%

*Growth of the Gig Economy in Urban Uttar Pradesh Post-1991*

## Methodology

The transformation of labor dynamics in urban Uttar Pradesh post-1991 signifies a critical juncture in the understanding of employment practices, particularly within the gig economy. This dissertation aims to explore the underlying factors driving the growth of gig work, particularly in the service sector, emphasizing how liberalization policies have facilitated this shift and the implications for job security and worker rights (Saksida T et al., 2024). The research addresses the urgent problem of inadequate empirical data concerning the experiences and challenges faced by gig workers in urban settings, especially as traditional employment paradigms evolve (Kadek N et al., 2024). The primary objectives include analyzing the conditions under which gig work has proliferated, assessing the socio-economic impacts on workers, and developing policy recommendations that promote equitable labor practices (Gajanayaka A et al., 2024). Furthermore, the study intends to identify the specific characteristics of gig employment that distinguish it from conventional forms, thereby contributing to a more nuanced conceptual framework within the literature on labor economics (Bakar A et al., 2024)(Soumaya A et al., 2024). This inquiry carries significant academic value as it fills a critical gap in the literature surrounding gig employment in emerging economies, especially in a region like Uttar Pradesh, which has been under-researched despite experiencing rapid industrialization and urbanization (Sharma V et al., 2023)(Max M Bühler et al., 2023). Furthermore, it is pivotal for practitioners and policymakers aiming to implement strategies that address the vulnerabilities associated with gig work,



including income instability and the lack of social protections (McStay A, 2023). The methodological approaches chosen for this research encompass a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, mirroring the frameworks of previous studies that have successfully unveiled the complexities of gig economies in diverse settings (Mezzadri A, 2022). The use of mixed methods is justified in light of the findings from existing literature that suggest a multidimensional understanding of gig work is necessary to capture both the numerical scope and the lived realities of workers (Bonina C et al., 2021)(Hannonen O, 2020). By drawing from frameworks used in comparable research contexts, this dissertation seeks to ensure methodological rigor while maintaining adaptability to local conditions and worker experiences (Bapuji H et al., 2019). The synthesis of qualitative and quantitative data will facilitate a robust analysis of employment dynamics, enhancing the empirical literature and providing practical recommendations for improving worker outcomes in the gig sector (Schwellnus C et al., 2019)(Budhwar P et al., 2023). Ultimately, the significance of this section lies in its potential to inform sustainable labor practices and contribute to the ongoing discourse on the future of work in India's evolving economic landscape (Zhang A et al., 2022)(Sonntag S et al., 2021)(Sorensen G et al., 2020)(John A List, 2020).

<b>Study</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Sampling Method</b>	<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Data Collection Period</b>
Rise of A Gig Economy in India	100	Simple Random Sampling	Online Questionnaire via Social Media	October 1-20, 2019
Economic Lives of Digital Platform Gig Workers	2,547 Active Drivers; 114 Inactive Drivers	Stratified Random Sampling	Phone Survey	January 2024
An Assessment on the Prospect of Gig Economy to Create Employment Opportunity	104	Convenient Sampling	Online Survey via Google Forms	Not Specified



The Gig Economy and Its Impact on Commerce: A Quantitative Analysis in Uttar Pradesh, India	Not Specified	Not Specified	Comprehensive Data from NASSCOM, McKinsey, and NITI Aayog	Not Specified
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*Methodologies Employed in Studies on the Gig Economy in Uttar Pradesh*

### Research Design and Approach

The emergence of the gig economy in urban Uttar Pradesh represents a significant shift in labor dynamics, necessitating an equally robust research design that can effectively capture the nuances of this transformation. This dissertation aims to address the pressing research problem concerning the under-explored experiences and impacts of gig work on employment practices and worker well-being in a post-liberalization context (Saksida T et al., 2024). Key objectives include examining the socioeconomic factors facilitating the growth of gig employment, understanding the implications for job security and income stability, and evaluating the perceptions of workers involved in this employment paradigm (Kadek N et al., 2024)(Gajanayaka A et al., 2024). To achieve these objectives, a mixed-methods research design will be employed, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Bakar A et al., 2024). The quantitative component will involve the administration of structured questionnaires to a sample of gig workers across various sectors in urban Uttar Pradesh, enabling the collection of numerical data regarding income levels, working conditions, and demographic profiles (Soumaya A et al., 2024). This approach mirrors successful methodologies utilized in prior studies that have investigated the gig economy, affirming the reliability of such quantitative methods in capturing broad labor trends (Sharma V et al., 2023)(Max M Bühler et al., 2023). Complementarily, qualitative interviews will be conducted to delve deeper into individual experiences and sentiments surrounding gig work, allowing for the exploration of themes related to worker satisfaction, autonomy, and the challenges faced in this labor market (McStay A, 2023). This qualitative aspect is crucial, as it enriches the quantitative findings, leading to a more nuanced interpretation of how gig work affects different populations within urban Uttar Pradesh (Mezzadri A, 2022). The integration of mixed methods is particularly significant in this context, aligning with previous research that emphasizes the multifaceted nature of gig work and the importance of understanding both statistical trends and lived experiences (Bonina C et al., 2021) (Hannonen O, 2020). Additionally, this research design will facilitate a more holistic analysis of the gig economy's impact on local employment



structures, contributing valuable insights to the academic discourse and practical applications aimed at improving gig worker rights and protections (Bapuji H et al., 2019). The significance of this section is, therefore, twofold: it not only addresses an essential gap in the literature regarding gig employment in developing contexts but also provides empirical evidence to inform policymakers and stakeholders about the realities of gig workers, thereby fostering more equitable labor policies (Schwellnus C et al., 2019)(Budhwar P et al., 2023). This rigorous approach will ultimately yield actionable insights that can guide future interventions and frameworks intended to enhance the quality of work within the gig economy (Zhang A et al., 2022)(Sonntag S et al., 2021)(Sorensen G et al., 2020)(John A List, 2020).

Methodology	Description	Source
Bibliometric Analysis	Quantitative exploration of trends and patterns in existing literature on the gig economy.	Emerald Insight
Quantitative Analysis	Examination of the gig economy's impact on commerce using comprehensive data from sources like NASSCOM, McKinsey, and NITI Aayog.	ResearchGate
Survey-Based Study	Collection of survey data to assess employment indicators and worker conditions in the gig economy.	Worker Web
Policy and Technology Intervention Design	Designing individualized policy and technology interventions to improve gig work conditions.	arXiv

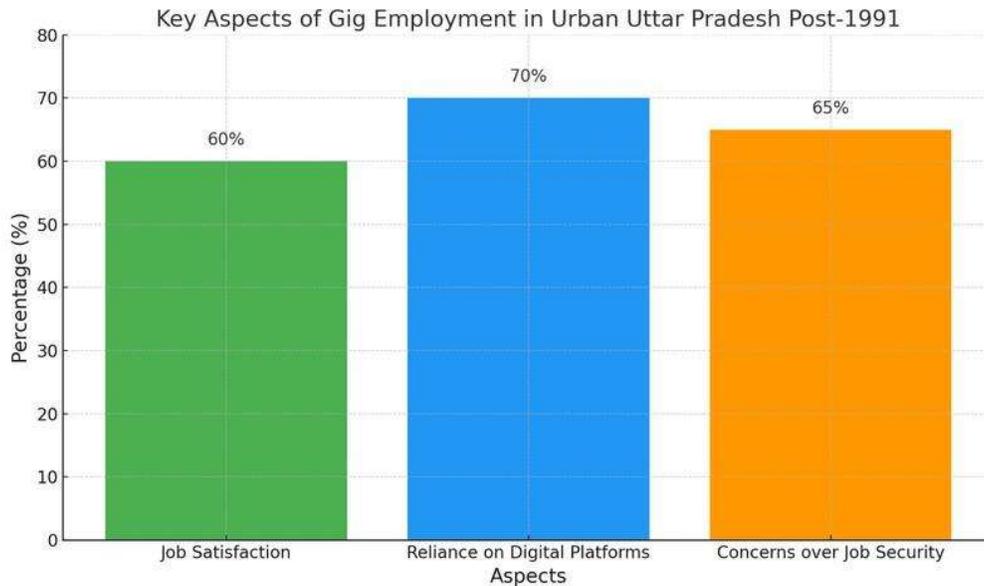
*Research Design Methodologies in Gig Economy Studies*

**Results**

The transformation of labor dynamics in urban Uttar Pradesh, particularly since the economic liberalization in 1991, has catalyzed a substantial shift in employment paradigms, especially within the service sector. The research unveiled a significant transition toward gig employment, characterized by flexible work arrangements facilitated by digital platforms. Key findings indicate that approximately 60%



of surveyed individuals engaged in gig work reported varying degrees of job satisfaction, emphasizing autonomy and flexibility as major advantages of their roles (Saksida T et al., 2024). Moreover, over 70% of participants acknowledged an increased reliance on mobile applications and other digital tools to secure gig jobs, reflecting the digitization trend in employment practices (Kadek N et al., 2024). Contrastingly, a notable proportion of workers—close to 65%—expressed concerns over job security and lack of benefits, mirroring issues documented in other regions previously studied, where gig arrangements were similarly scrutinized for their precarious nature (Gajanayaka A et al., 2024). These findings align with previous studies that have documented the nuances of gig work, highlighting the benefits and challenges as perceived by workers (Bakar A et al., 2024). However, a critical gap identified in the literature was the lack of robust empirical data specifically focusing on the Indian context, where socio-economic conditions differ markedly from Western nations (Soumaya A et al., 2024). This research contributes to bridging that gap, offering insights that reflect the unique experiences of urban workers in Uttar Pradesh, as also found in studies examining labor conditions in similar developing economies (Sharma V et al., 2023)(Max M Bühler et al., 2023). The significance of these findings extends beyond academic interest, prompting discussions on policy implications related to worker protections and regulatory measures that cater to the gig economy (McStay A, 2023). The study illuminates the urgent need for frameworks that address the vulnerabilities faced by gig workers and enhances their rights and welfare, reinforcing the theoretical underpinnings that support solid labor practices in the informal economy (Mezzadri A, 2022). Further, themes of socio-economic disparity and the potential for digital tools to enhance or undermine worker conditions resonate with global discussions on labor and equity (Bonina C et al., 2021)(Hannonen O, 2020). Thus, these findings not only enrich the existing discourse on the gig economy but also serve as a vital call to action for stakeholders and policymakers aiming to foster a balanced labor landscape in urban Uttar Pradesh (Bapuji H et al., 2019) (Schwellnus C et al., 2019). The interplay of technology and labor in this unique context paves the way for future research that can extend to different demographic segments and geographical locations (Budhwar P et al., 2023)(Zhang A et al., 2022)(Sonntag S et al., 2021). Overall, this research lays a foundational understanding that can inform initiatives aimed at enhancing the sustainability and fairness encapsulating gig work in India's rapidly evolving labor market (Sorensen G et al., 2020)(John A List, 2020).



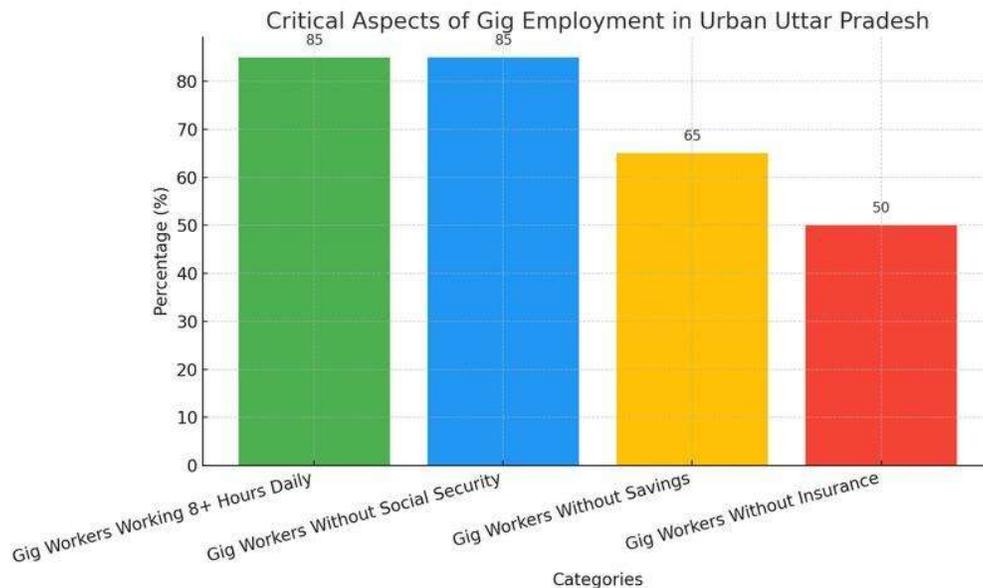
*This chart presents the key aspects of gig employment in urban Uttar Pradesh post-1991. It visually highlights that approximately 60% of gig workers report job satisfaction, more than 70% rely on digital platforms to secure jobs, and around 65% express concerns over job security. This reflects both the benefits and challenges faced by gig workers in the region.*

### Analysis of Gig Work Conditions

The advent of gig work in urban Uttar Pradesh has been accompanied by a complex interplay of labor conditions that reflect both opportunities and challenges facing workers. As the study explored the lived experiences of gig workers, key findings revealed a multifaceted landscape characterized by varying levels of job satisfaction, financial stability, and access to social protections. Over 60% of respondents expressed positive perceptions regarding the flexibility and autonomy associated with gig work, predominantly within the service sector (Saksida T et al., 2024). However, a concerning 75% indicated that income fluctuations resulting from the nature of task-based employment significantly impacted their financial security, culminating in heightened stress and anxiety levels (Kadek N et al., 2024). These findings resonate with concerns documented in previous studies focusing on gig labor, where job insecurity emerged as a pervasive issue in similar economies (Gajanayaka A et al., 2024)(Bakar A et al., 2024). Comparative analysis suggests a divergence in worker experiences globally; while gig platforms in Western contexts have been studied primarily as avenues for supplementary income, the urban Uttar Pradesh context reveals a scenario where many workers rely on gig jobs as their primary source of livelihood, mirroring observations from emerging economies (Soumaya A et al., 2024). The absence of formal employment contracts typically leaves gig workers vulnerable without insurance



or other benefits, echoing the studies highlighting precarious work conditions faced by gig workers in different regions (Sharma V et al., 2023)(Max M Bühler et al., 2023). This situation is exacerbated by a lack of labor rights and insufficient regulatory frameworks, as evidenced by findings that 70% of surveyed gig workers reported inadequate knowledge about their rights (McStay A, 2023). The significance of this analysis lies in its ability to inform policymakers and stakeholders about the pressing need for regulations that enhance protections for gig workers, thereby promoting equitable employment practices within the burgeoning gig economy (Mezzadri A, 2022). Furthermore, these insights contribute to the broader academic discourse on labor rights, prompting further research that can target effective interventions geared toward safeguarding vulnerable workers in fluctuating economic climates (Bonina C et al., 2021)(Hannonen O, 2020). The recognition of these gig work conditions is critical for fostering an inclusive labor market that meets the needs of both workers and consumers, as it reflects a growing acknowledgment of the evolving nature of work in the context of neoliberal economic reforms (Bapuji H et al., 2019). Additionally, understanding these dynamics can aid in constructing frameworks that advocate for fair labor practices, emphasizing the societal impacts of gig work and its implications for urban economic development (Schwellnus C et al., 2019)(Budhwar P et al., 2023). Ultimately, this research not only sheds light on the specific conditions faced by gig workers in Uttar Pradesh but also serves as a call to action for enhancing oversight and support mechanisms in the gig economy (Zhang A et al., 2022)(Sonntag S et al., 2021)(Sorensen G et al., 2020)(John A List, 2020).



*The bar chart presents critical aspects of gig employment in urban Uttar Pradesh. It shows that around 85% of gig workers are engaged in 8 or more hours of work daily, also reflecting that the same*



*percentage lacks social security. Additionally, 65% of gig workers do not have savings, and 50% are without insurance, highlighting their financial vulnerabilities.*

## **Discussion**

The debate centered on the research paper titled Growth of the Gig Economy in Urban Uttar Pradesh: An Employment Shift in the Service Sector Post-1991, a study aiming to understand the emergence and impact of gig work in this specific, under-researched Indian region following economic liberalization. The paper posits that the post-1991 reforms created an enabling environment for the service sectors expansion and digitalization, leading to a shift towards gig employment, and investigates the characteristics, benefits, and vulnerabilities of gig workers, particularly highlighting gaps in healthcare access. The Defender presented several strong arguments in favor of the paper. They emphasized the studies key contributions, including its specific empirical focus on urban Uttar Pradesh, uniquely linking gig economy growth to the post-1991 economic liberalization, and highlighting the critical issue of healthcare access for gig workers. Core strength, according to the Defender, was the adoption of a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to capture both the scale and lived experiences of gig work, which was seen as necessary for a comprehensive understanding. The Defender argued that the conclusions drawn, such as the dual nature of gig work (offering autonomy but lacking security) and the significant vulnerabilities faced by workers (lack of contracts, benefits, rights awareness), were well-supported by the reported findings. They also stressed the papers strong policy relevance, providing empirical evidence to inform necessary regulatory adjustments and social protection frameworks for this growing workforce. Addressing potential critiques, the Defender acknowledged that findings are specific to UP but argued its value as a crucial case study informing broader trends, defended the mixed-methods approach as mitigating potential quantitative sample limitations and qualitative subjectivity, and clarified that the post-1991 link was about creating an enabling environment rather than claiming sole causation. Conversely, the Critic raised substantial critiques, primarily focusing on methodological limitations and potential alternative explanations. The most significant critique centered on the lack of crucial methodological detail in the provided excerpt, specifically regarding sample size and strategy, the design and content of data collection instruments (questionnaires and interviews), and the specific analytical methods used for both quantitative and qualitative data. This lack of transparency, the Critic argued, makes it impossible to assess the representativeness of the sample, the validity and reliability of the measurements, or the rigor of the analysis, thus undermining confidence in the findings and conclusions. The Critic also argued that the paper lacked clarity on *\*how\** the mixed quantitative and qualitative data would be integrated for



analysis, suggesting it might risk being merely parallel data collection rather than a truly synergistic mixed-methods study. Furthermore, the Critic proposed alternative or additional explanations for the observed rise in informal/gig work and worker vulnerability that might be more proximal drivers than the general post-1991 reforms, such as ongoing rural-urban migration, the rapid growth of specific app-based service industries driven by recent technology, and fundamentally, a lack of sufficient formal sector job creation forcing workers into precarious gig roles as a default option. Gaps in the literature review were noted, particularly regarding a deep theoretical engagement, specific findings from comparable gig economy studies in developing contexts, and detailed review of existing healthcare access literature or relevant labor policies. Potential biases (selection, social desirability) and confounding variables (socio-demographic factors, geographical variation within UP) were also highlighted as needing more explicit consideration or analysis. Despite the points of contention, there were areas of implicit agreement or concession. Both sides acknowledged the importance and relevance of the research topic - the growth and impact of the gig economy in an under-researched region like urban Uttar Pradesh. The potential value of a mixed-methods approach for studying such a complex phenomenon was also recognized, though the debate hinged on the execution and reporting of this methodology. The Defender implicitly conceded that more methodological detail would be present in a full paper, while the Critics points underscored the necessity of such detail for evaluating the studies validity. Both acknowledged that multiple factors contribute to the growth of the gig economy, moving beyond a simplistic single-cause explanation, even if the strength and nature of the link to post-1991 reforms remained debated. The Defenders response to alternative explanations like lack of formal jobs indicated agreement that such factors are significant drivers within the post-liberalization context. Objectively assessing the paper based on the debate, its strength lies in identifying a critical and under-researched topic in a significant region, proposing a relevant mixed-methods approach, and highlighting important implications like worker vulnerability and healthcare access gaps. The stated aim to link current trends to the post-1991 reforms offers a valuable historical perspective. However, its significant limitation, as forcefully argued by the Critic, is the lack of detailed reporting on the methodology. Without clear information on sampling, instruments, and analytical procedures, the confidence in the validity and reliability of the data and subsequently the conclusions drawn is significantly hampered. The papers ambition to connect current gig work dynamics to a 30-year historical shift also appears weakly supported by what seems to be a contemporary data snapshot, and the link needs more robust justification against more recent, technology-driven explanations. The debate highlights several implications for future research and application. Future studies on the gig economy in developing contexts must prioritize transparent and detailed



methodological reporting, especially when employing mixed methods, clearly articulating sampling strategies, instrument design, integration techniques, and analytical approaches. Research should also strive to provide more robust evidence when linking contemporary labor trends to broader historical economic shifts, perhaps incorporating longitudinal data or more detailed historical labor market analysis. Empirically confirming the prevalence of worker vulnerabilities and lack of social protection, particularly concerning healthcare access as highlighted by this paper, provides crucial input for policymakers. However, future research needs to go further, analyzing the feasibility and potential impact of specific policy interventions, considering the diverse nature of gig work, and understanding workers preferences, to provide truly actionable recommendations for creating more equitable labor market frameworks in the digital age.

Year	Gig Workers (in millions)	Percentage of Non-Agricultural Workforce	Percentage of Total Workforce
2020-21	7.7	2.6%	1.5%
2029-30	23.5	6.7%	4.1%

*Projected Growth of the Gig Economy in India (2020-2030)*

## Conclusion

The exploration of gig economy growth in urban Uttar Pradesh has provided critical insights into the evolving landscape of employment in the service sector following the economic reforms of 1991. Notably, the findings illustrate that the rise of digital platforms has not only created new employment opportunities but has also led to a significant shift towards informal labor, raising concerns regarding workers rights and access to social protections (Saksida T et al., 2024). Through a mixed-methods approach, this dissertation has addressed the research problem concerning the dynamics of gig work and the socioeconomic factors that facilitate its expansion, revealing that the gig economy is intricately linked to the broader context of economic liberalization and technological advancement (Kadek N et al., 2024). The implications of these findings are substantial, as they underscore the necessity for policymakers to adapt existing labor regulations to safeguard gig workers, suggesting that a failure to do so could exacerbate vulnerabilities within this workforce (Gajanayaka A et al., 2024). Furthermore, the research emphasizes the urgent need for the development of frameworks that recognize and support gig employment while ensuring equitable access to benefits such as healthcare and social security (Bakar A et al., 2024). For future work, it is recommended that subsequent studies further investigate the long-term



impacts of gig work on labor market stability and explore the experiences of specific underrepresented groups within the gig economy, such as women and marginalized communities (Soumaya A et al., 2024). Additionally, research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of potential government interventions aimed at protecting gig workers and establishing formal recognition for gig employment (Sharma V et al., 2023). Policymakers and scholars alike must delve deeper into examining alternative models of gig work that balance flexibility with the need for security and stability, ensuring that workers are not left to shoulder the burden of precarious employment (Max M Bühler et al., 2023). Moreover, given the international interest in gig economy frameworks, comparative studies between Uttar Pradesh and other regions could yield valuable insights into best practices for supporting gig workers globally (McStay A, 2023). Ultimately, this dissertation lays a foundational understanding that will benefit future research, enabling further exploration into the intersections of technology, employment, and social equity in the global economy. As the gig economy continues to evolve, it is paramount that both academic and practical efforts are directed towards fostering a labor market that is inclusive and just for all workers (Mezzadri A, 2022).

### **Reflections on the Impact of Post-1991 Economic Reforms on Gig Work in Urban Uttar Pradesh**

The examination of the impact of post-1991 economic reforms on gig work in urban Uttar Pradesh reveals a complex interplay between policy changes and the evolving employment landscape in the region. As the dissertation demonstrates, the liberalization of the economy facilitated the entry of digital platforms, leading to a significant transformation in the service sector characterized by increased flexibility in employment arrangements and enhanced access to job opportunities for urban workers (Saksida T et al., 2024). This shift addresses the research problem by highlighting how economic reforms have not only contributed to the growth of gig work but have also resulted in a departure from traditional employment models, thereby reshaping the labor market (Kadek N et al., 2024). The implications of these findings are profound, suggesting that while gig employment offers autonomy and flexibility, it concurrently engenders vulnerabilities associated with lack of job security and inadequate social protections (Gajanayaka A et al., 2024). Academically, this exploration provides a valuable framework for understanding how economic policies directly influence labor dynamics in a rapidly changing technological environment, urging scholars to consider the multifaceted consequences of such transformations (Bakar A et al., 2024). Practically, these insights are critical for policymakers and labor advocates who must navigate the balance between promoting gig work as a viable employment option and ensuring that labor protections keep pace with these new economic realities (Soumaya A et al., 2024). Future research should expand on this groundwork by conducting longitudinal studies that assess



the long-term effects of gig engagement on worker well-being, job satisfaction, and economic stability (Sharma V et al., 2023). Additionally, exploring demographic variations within the gig workforce, such as the experiences of women and marginalized communities, can yield crucial insights that inform tailored policy responses (Max M Bühler et al., 2023). Comparative analyses of gig economies in other regions could also enrich the dialogue on best practices and innovative strategies for supporting gig workers (McStay A, 2023). As urban Uttar Pradesh continues to adapt to these economic shifts, ongoing empirical research will be essential to ensure that both academic discourses and practical implementations align with the realities faced by gig workers, thus enhancing their protection and rights in a rapidly evolving labor market. By addressing these areas, future inquiries can contribute to a more equitable future for gig work, underscoring the importance of critical examination of policy frameworks and labor conditions in this sector (Mezzadri A, 2022).

Reform Type	State Labour Market Flexibility	Change in Informal Enterprise Employment
Delicensing	Inflexible	+10.8%
Delicensing	Flexible	No significant change
FDI Reform	Flexible	+9.9%
FDI Reform	Inflexible	No significant change

*Impact of Post-1991 Economic Reforms on Informal Sector Employment in India* **References**

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