



Gig Economy Challenges Through the Lens of Sustainable Development Goals - A case of Gigs in transport and food deliveries in Pune city

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The “Gig economy involves the exchange of labour for money between individuals or companies via digital platforms that actively facilitate matching between providers and customers, on a short-term and payment-by-task basis”.

- ▶ A Gig worker is a person who engages in income-earning activities outside of a traditional employer-employee relationship, as well as in the informal sector (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2020a). When Gig workers use platforms – i.e., websites or apps like Ola, Uber, Dunzo, Zomato, Swiggy or Urban Company – to connect with customers, they are called platform workers (OECD, 2019).

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India – with its demographic dividend of half-a-billion labour force and the world’s youngest population, rapid urbanisation, widespread adoption of smartphones and associated technology – is the new frontier of this revolution.

- The current estimation for Gig economy jobs in India is at 8 to 18 million, which is projected to increase to over 90 million jobs in the non-farm sector in the next eight to ten years. (Niti Aayog Report, 2022)
- For India, four industry sectors can be identified as the ones with the highest potential to produce “gigable” jobs in the future — Construction, Manufacturing, Retail, and Transportation and Logistics.
- As per the NITI Aayog Report ‘India’s Booming Gig and Platform Economy’ (June 2022), in terms of industrial classification, about 2.7 million gig workers were involved in retail trade and sales, and about 1.3 million were in the transportation sector.

➤ It's a growing segment, bringing economic benefits of productivity and employment. (Urban Employment Guarantee scheme)

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➤ But it also raises questions of workers' protection/ social security.(E-shram portal and schemes for the informal labour force.)

➤ The Indian states face the choice between treating gig work at par with the Indian informal labour force. Interventions should be considered carefully to balance the legitimate need for better work conditions but also, to not kill the golden goose.

➤ Trade-off between education and employment.

➤ Flexi time and task based payment- good for women workforce, elderly and physically challenged groups.

➤ Women labour force participation is another form of assessment. (The current urban women's LFP is only 8%, while the overall LFP is 37.5%).



Research Objectives


In the light of SDGs such as Good health and wellbeing (goal 3), quality education (goal 4) and decent work and economic growth (goal 8), we attempt to deal with the following research objectives


- To look at the challenges of the Gig workers in Pune with reference to food and transportation sector
- To look at the possibilities of reaping the Demographic Dividend through Gig economy

This research paper mainly focused on retail trade and sales in case of food (Swiggy and Zomato) and transportation sector (Ola and Uber) of this Gig economy with the help of primary data collection. The main responses are analysed with the answers from the respondents.

Based on observations from the collected data, we want to draw the attention on some serious concerns about these Gig workers when seen from the SDGs 3,4 and 8 and demographic dividend angle. The major concerns are: Food Delivery Gigs in Pune

- ▶ The SDG 3 focus on Good health and wellbeing and SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. In case of these gig workers from the two segments mentioned above, the health issues are registered by the respondents as back pain, sleep related issues and weakness along with the traffic congestion and pollution would definitely affect the health of these workers in the long run. This would adversely impact their efficiency and productivity in the light of no or very poor health insurance and other social security measures. Again the question of decent work is not addressed well for these gig workers due to the informal nature of their employment.

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- SDG 4 focus on quality education. Looking at the education standards of these gig workers in the sample, majority of them have the education just of 12th standard. Investment in education has to take place in case of quality education that would reap better earnings in future. But these gig workers are interested to earn with a greater opportunity costs in terms of ending up their education. This is the forgone benefit due to the easy entry of these less educated labourers in the labour force at an early age.

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- ▶ Looking from the angle of demographic dividend that India can reap in coming two/three decades, if the flexible working hours and relatively better earnings with which more than 50% of these workers are happy, the issue of reaping such demographic dividend by this youngest group of labour force seems blur. This is because, the skill enhancement in terms of labour productivity gains and then from their earnings either through quality education or through skill development is not accorded the needed priority by them.
 - ▶ Another observation from the sample that the gig work has 100% bias against the female members of the labour force too is disturbing. On a positive note if females are attracted towards these activities, the issue of low rate of female labour force participation can be sorted out.

Concluding Remarks

- We do understand the need of earnings especially in case of under-privileged young population, they should not go for the trade-off between education and work. In fact we believe that the Gig platforms are the best options/opportunities for such young crowd who can opt for earn and learn simultaneously. We strongly recommend the promotion of such a culture even by these platforms. Completing formal education would help them in acquiring various skills which would further give them better employment options. It would surely help our country to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend. The example of the contract signed between the Indian and Israel government about the provision of Indian labourers (42,000) for certain skilled works in the war affected Israel is self-depicting of the opportunities our youngest labour force would be able to grab against the labour shortages elsewhere in the world. Overall a positive attitude/approach towards the Gig platform will work as a stepping stone towards fulfilling the SDGS 3, 4 and 8.