

**A STUDY ON JOB SATISFACTION LEVELS OF WORKERS IN GIG ECONOMY IN
GUJARAT**

A SYNOPSIS SUBMITTED TO
GUJARAT TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.)

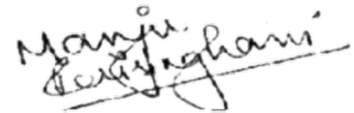
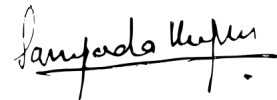
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BRANCH: MANAGEMENT

December 2025



Index

Sr. no.	Title	Page
1.	Abstract	3
2.	Brief Description	4
3.	Definition of problem	8
4.	Objective and Scope of work	9
5.	Original Contribution by Thesis	10
6.	Methodology of Research & results	11
7.	Recommendations with respect to objectives	13
8.	Conclusion	14
9.	References	16
10.	Annexure 1 & 2 – Copy of research publications	

1. Abstract

The gig economy has experienced exponential growth in India, particularly in Gujarat, with a large workforce employed through digital platforms. Despite its flexibility, job satisfaction among gig workers remains inconsistent due to lack of employment security, variable income, minimal social protection, and limited organizational support. Existing studies remain fragmented, mainly sector-specific, and do not comprehensively evaluate socio-organizational antecedents of gig workers' job satisfaction in Gujarat.

This study empirically validates the influence of Employee Well-being & Engagement (EWE), Employee Support & Development (ESD), Employee Performance & Mental Health (EPMH) and Employee Rewards & Organizational Culture (EROC) on job satisfaction based on a primary sample of 629 gig workers from Gujarat associated with delivery services, logistics & transportation, professional services, IT & ITES and others. Using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the results reveal that all four constructs significantly and positively influence job satisfaction. Among them, EROC ($\beta=0.7298$) and ESD ($\beta=0.6292$), EPMH (0.37) demonstrate the strongest impact, while EWE ($\beta=0.1549$) shows the weakest. Additionally, significant industry-wise and motivational differences reflect varied satisfaction patterns.

The study reinforces the need for structured support frameworks, reward transparency, mental well-being provisions, and targeted sector-specific policies for sustaining a productive gig ecosystem in Gujarat.

2. Brief Description on the state of the art of the problem:

The gig economy has emerged as a rapidly expanding labour model that restructures traditional employment relationships through short-term, flexible, and platform-mediated work arrangements. Unlike conventional full-time employment, gig work relies on digital platforms that match workers with customers for on-demand tasks or services (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2018; Abraham et al., 2018). Although there is no universal definition, scholars generally describe the gig economy as involving independent contractors, freelancers, or temporary workers who are compensated per task or project rather than through stable salaried arrangements (Mastercard & Kaiser Associates, 2019). This work model represents a shift from standardized jobs to fragmented, individualized labour exchange mediated through technology and algorithmic systems (Donovan, Bradley, & Shimabukuro, 2016).

The development of the gig economy is strongly associated with technological innovation, platform capitalism, and changing workforce preferences. Digital platforms such as ride-hailing, delivery services, freelance service marketplaces, online education, and IT-based task systems have enabled a structured yet flexible marketplace for short-term labour supply and demand (Istrate & Harris, 2017). Key characteristics of the gig economy include autonomy over work timing, freedom in task selection, digital mediation of work, and temporary contractual arrangements rather than permanent employment relationships (Schwellnus et al., 2019). These work arrangements often involve a triangular relationship among the worker, the platform, and the customer, generating unique employment dynamics and regulatory complexities.

In recent years, the scope and scale of gig work have expanded globally. The global gig economy is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 16.2% between 2023 and 2028 (World Bank, 2024). Parallely, organizations increasingly rely on independent labor, with an estimated over 77% of companies worldwide using freelancers or contract-based workers (Deloitte, 2024). India represents a significant growth context, currently holding the world's second-largest gig workforce. According to projections, India may employ up to 23.5 million gig workers by 2030, contributing approximately 1.25% to national GDP (NITI Aayog, 2022). The sector has been

particularly propelled by increasing internet penetration, youth employment trends, and digital consumption behaviours (ILO, 2024).

The landscape of gig work in India has evolved significantly, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemic-driven disruptions accelerated the adoption of remote work, digital business models, and flexible earning opportunities (EY, 2021). Gig work increasingly became a secondary income source for individuals seeking financial stability and work-life balance during economic uncertainty (Morgan Stanley, 2021). The period also witnessed a surge in migrant workers and new entrants turning to platform-based work as traditional employment sectors contracted. Increased societal acceptance and the proliferation of new digital platforms have further normalized gig work as a mainstream employment model rather than an informal backup option (Business Standard, 2025).

Despite its economic benefits, the rise of the gig economy presents regulatory and social challenges. Policymakers in India have begun acknowledging gig workers within formal protections through initiatives like the Code on Social Security (2020), aiming to extend insurance, accident coverage, and long-term benefits to platform-based workers (Government of India, 2020). However, debates persist regarding worker rights, job security, fair wages, algorithmic transparency, and bargaining power—raising questions about the sustainability and ethics of platform-based labour markets.

Despite the absence of traditional employment benefits such as paid leave, health insurance, and legal protections, multiple global surveys indicate that gig workers often report satisfaction levels equal to or even higher than full-time employees. This trend suggests that job satisfaction in the gig economy is influenced less by traditional employment security and more by alternative work values such as flexibility, autonomy, and perceived work-life balance. Evidence from surveys conducted by Morning Consult (2019), INSEAD (2018), Gallup (2018), McKinsey (2016), and MBO Partners (2020) consistently reinforces this pattern. These findings highlight that satisfaction in the gig workforce is multifaceted and shaped by intrinsic factors rather than purely compensation-based incentives.

A review of large-scale surveys across the U.S., Europe, and Asia reveals significant insights into the attitudes and well-being of gig workers. For instance, the Morning Consult survey (2018) found that approximately 80% of gig workers expressed satisfaction with their jobs, reporting similar levels of satisfaction with pay, autonomy, work hours, and benefits when compared to traditional employees. Meanwhile, INSEAD's 2018 study demonstrated improved mental health outcomes, including reduced stress and increased confidence among self-employed gig workers in the UK. Research among digital nomads in Bali by Haking (2017) further emphasized high overall satisfaction driven by lifestyle flexibility, creativity, and innovation despite challenges such as loneliness and lack of organizational support. McKinsey's 2016 global survey echoed these findings, noting significantly higher satisfaction among workers who voluntarily chose gig work compared to those who entered the sector out of necessity.

Several factors appear to influence job satisfaction among gig workers. Studies suggest that gig workers value flexibility, autonomy, skill development opportunities, and work-life balance more than traditional job security and benefits. Independent contractors often report a stronger sense of personal productivity, creative freedom, and control over workload. However, certain challenges coexist with these benefits, including technostress due to rapid digital tool requirements, inconsistent income, and limited professional support networks. Still, satisfaction tends to be higher among those who pursue gig work by choice, and even increases with age as workers achieve improved income stability, health, and work-life alignment.

The willingness to continue gig work is strongly linked to satisfaction drivers such as autonomy, flexibility, and perceived future opportunities. Findings from BCG (2019), Morning Consult (2018), and Noble House (2019) show that a significant majority of gig workers intend to continue working independently rather than return to traditional employment structures. Flexibility — particularly relating to family responsibilities, educational commitments, or lifestyle preferences — emerges as the dominant motivator. Additionally, many respondents reported choosing gig work as a pathway to pursue passion projects, earn supplemental income, or gain professional experience for long-term career goals.

Demographic variables also appear to influence satisfaction and participation levels in the gig economy. Age, gender, experience, dependency status, education level, and family size

have been reported to shape motivations and perceived work outcomes. Younger workers often emphasize autonomy and skill growth, while older workers prioritize flexibility and balance. Research also suggests that income levels and satisfaction vary significantly across regions — for instance, Indian metros such as Bengaluru and Pune have reported higher satisfaction due to better platform infrastructure when compared to Tier-2 cities. Furthermore, global reports from the World Bank (2024) and ILO (2023) indicate that over half of gig workers now rely on platform work as their main source of income, demonstrating growing normalization of gig-based livelihoods.

Building on these demographic dynamics, research further highlights the influence of structural and psychosocial factors such as job security, work–life balance, and psychological safety on gig worker satisfaction. Job security in the gig economy is uniquely shaped by fluctuating demand cycles, customer ratings, and algorithmic evaluation systems. Studies show that job security is positively related to turnover intentions, and this relationship is significantly mediated by job satisfaction, suggesting that dissatisfaction may amplify the desire to exit platform-based work (Duijnhoven, 2018). Individuals who experience higher job insecurity or lower satisfaction levels are also more likely to consider alternative forms of employment when they possess stronger career exploration tendencies (Xinxin, 2021). These findings indicate that job satisfaction plays a pivotal buffering role—where satisfaction can partially offset the negative effects of insecurity.

Motivational factors also exert substantial influence on worker attitudes and satisfaction in platform-mediated work environments. Independent work motivation, financial benefits, opportunities for networking, and continuous development have been found to significantly contribute to higher job satisfaction among gig workers (Karlsson & Wranne, 2019). However, platform management systems often prioritize efficiency and standardized task execution—reflecting Taylorist control principles—which may undermine intrinsic motivators such as autonomy, creativity, and recognition (Karlsson & Wranne, 2019). Drawing on Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, recent studies argue that achieving long-term job satisfaction in the gig ecosystem requires a balance between hygiene factors (fair pay, safety, transparency) and motivators (appreciation, autonomy, and growth opportunities) (Mukhopadhyay, Rick & Chatwin, 2020). When hygiene factors are insufficient or motivators are absent, satisfaction levels tend to decline, even when flexibility remains a core benefit.

In addition, the quality of digital platforms and the type of industry significantly affect job satisfaction outcomes. Platform quality—defined by perceived technological efficiency, system usability, information clarity, and support responsiveness—has been shown to positively influence gig workers’ autonomy and satisfaction (Kim, Marquis, Pierce, Alamad & Robert, 2018). Satisfaction also varies across industry segments. According to the ILO (2024), workers in delivery and transportation sectors report some of the lowest satisfaction levels globally, primarily due to physical strain, unpredictable income dependence on peak hours, and limited scope for autonomy. In contrast, IT and IT-enabled service freelancers demonstrate notably higher satisfaction, attributed to skill-based autonomy, task discretion, and the ability to negotiate working terms more freely (ILO, 2024).

3. Definition of the problem

The rapid rise of the gig economy has reshaped employment structures globally, yet the understanding of what drives job satisfaction among gig workers remains limited and inconsistent. While existing research acknowledges that factors such as autonomy, platform design, perceived fairness, work–life balance, and income stability may influence satisfaction, the evidence base is fragmented and highly context-specific. Most available studies have been conducted in Western economies and often focus on a single platform or occupation, limiting generalizability. Globally, there is still no established framework that comprehensively explains the determinants of job satisfaction within gig work, reflecting a major conceptual and empirical gap.

Existing studies on the gig economy have predominantly emphasized structural and economic aspects such as income security, flexibility, and autonomy, often overlooking psychosocial and organizational constructs. While flexibility and autonomy have been linked to job satisfaction in gig work, research also indicates significant concerns regarding job security, well-being, and the psychological consequences of gig work arrangements (Klein, 2024). Empirical research focusing specifically on Gujarat — a rapidly developing industrial state — remains scarce. Sector-wise variation in satisfaction also remains underexplored. Moreover, psychological and social dimensions such as engagement, organizational support, and broader well-being outcomes have received comparatively less empirical attention, especially in the context of non-Western settings (Usman Khan et al., 2025; Salmah et al., 2024). Therefore, there remains a critical need for a validated multi-

construct measurement model that integrates psychosocial and organizational drivers of job satisfaction among gig workers in Gujarat. Therefore, there exists a critical gap for a validated multi-construct measurement model assessing job satisfaction drivers among gig workers in Gujarat.

This study fills the gap by:

- ✓ Developing a validated structural model using EFA, CFA & SEM
- ✓ Assessing multi-construct influence on job satisfaction
- ✓ Comparing inter-industry and motivation-based satisfaction variations
- ✓ Providing policy-relevant insights specific to the Gujarat gig ecosystem

4. Objectives and Scope of Study:

The primary purpose of this study is to explore and evaluate the key factors influencing job satisfaction among gig workers in Gujarat. While gig work research is growing globally, empirical studies assessing gig worker satisfaction—especially in the Indian context—remain limited, and no prior structured investigation exists at the state level. This study focuses on platform-based gig workers and examines workplace-related dimensions, demographic influences, and motivational aspects shaping job satisfaction.

The scope of the study is limited to gig workers operating across various platform-driven industries in Gujarat, including delivery, logistics, IT/ITES, professional services, and other platform-mediated roles. The study adopts a quantitative research design, using survey-based primary data and employing Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to validate the proposed conceptual framework and test hypotheses.

Research objectives:

- To identify the key determinants influencing job satisfaction among gig workers in Gujarat through EFM and CFM
- To examine the impact of Employee Well-being & Engagement (EWE), Employee Support & Development (ESD), Employee Performance & Mental Health (EPMH), and Employee Rewards & Organizational Culture (EROC) on Job Satisfaction using SEM

- To analyse the demographic variations in gig workers' job satisfaction across gender, education, family size, and number of dependents, industry/sector and location/city of work
- To assess the relationship between motivational factors (choice vs. necessity for joining gig work) and job satisfaction of gig workers
- To check whether gig workers are satisfied with the pay offered to them?

Primary Hypothesis:

1. **H1:** Employee Wellbeing & Engagement (EWE) positively influences gig worker's Job Satisfaction.
2. **H2:** Employee Support & Development (ESD) positively influences gig worker's Job Satisfaction.
3. **H3:** Employee Performance & Mental Health (EPMH) positively influences gig worker's Job Satisfaction.
4. **H4:** Employee Rewards & Organizational Culture positively influences gig worker's Job Satisfaction.
5. **H5:** The proposed structural model provides a good fit to the observed data.

Secondary Hypothesis:

6. **H6:** Job satisfaction differs significantly across gender.
7. **H7:** Job satisfaction varies significantly across educational levels.
8. **H8:** Income level significantly influences job satisfaction.
9. **H9:** Family size and number of dependents significantly influence job satisfaction.
10. **H10:** Job satisfaction significantly differs across sectors and geographic location.
11. **H11:** There is a significant difference in satisfaction between those who joined gig work by choice and those who joined out of necessity.
12. **H12:** Gig workers are satisfied with the pay offered to them.

5. Original contribution by thesis:

This thesis offers original contributions at theoretical, methodological, empirical, and practical levels. The research proposes and validates a new conceptual model of job satisfaction specific to gig workers, addressing a major gap in existing literature where

traditional job satisfaction frameworks have not been tested in platform-based labour environments. Methodologically, the study advances the field by applying a structured EFA-CFA-SEM approach using a large primary dataset from diverse gig sectors in Gujarat, a region for which no prior empirical models exist. Empirically, the findings highlight unique patterns relating to demographics, motivations, and satisfaction drivers, contributing new insights to Indian and global gig economy research. Practically, the results present actionable policy recommendations to improve worker experience, retention, and regulatory frameworks, supporting ongoing national conversations around gig worker welfare.

6. Methodology of Research and Results:

a. Methodology of research:

This study follows a conclusive, descriptive, and causal research design aimed at examining and validating the factors influencing job satisfaction among gig workers in Gujarat. A quantitative approach was adopted to analyse workers' perceptions and statistically test predefined hypotheses.

The target population comprised gig workers operating across Gujarat, including independent and platform-dependent workers. The sample included workers from sectors such as transportation and delivery, IT & ITES, professional services, and other emerging gig categories. A purposive non-random sampling method was used, resulting in 629 usable responses collected from major cities including Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot, Gandhinagar, Mehsana, Kutch, Vidyanagar, and Surendranagar.

Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data were collected through an online and offline structured questionnaire developed from literature and expert input. The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions, work-related items, and 20 statements measuring job satisfaction using a 7-point Likert scale. One additional question assessed workers' intention to continue gig work. The instrument was pre-tested and refined following pilot testing and expert suggestions.

The study included four independent constructs—Employee Well-being and Engagement (EWE), Employee Support and Development (ESD), Employee

Performance and Mental Health (EPMH), and Employee Rewards and Organizational Culture (EROCC)—and one dependent variable, Job Satisfaction (JS). All variables were operationalized using Likert-scale items reflecting perceptions of workplace experience.

Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega, with all scales demonstrating acceptable internal consistency. Validity was assessed through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to confirm construct structure and ensure convergent and discriminant validity.

For analysis, SPSS 26.0 was used for descriptive statistics and reliability tests, while SEM (Jamovi) was employed to validate the measurement and structural model and test hypothesized relationships.

b. Results:

The results of the study are based on responses from 629 gig workers in Gujarat, representing multiple sectors including transportation and delivery, IT/ITES, education, professional services, and miscellaneous freelance work. Descriptive findings show that a large proportion of respondents relied on gig work as their primary income source, although most reported the absence of formal contracts or employment security. The majority worked multiple gigs simultaneously, indicating economic dependence and flexibility-driven participation.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) confirmed the suitability of the dataset and validated the conceptual structure of the instrument, resulting in four major dimensions influencing gig workers' job satisfaction: Employee Well-being and Engagement, Employee Support and Development, Employee Performance and Mental Health, and Employee Rewards and Organizational Culture. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega indicated high internal consistency, while convergent and discriminant validity tests supported measurement adequacy.

Further analysis using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) established that all four independent variables significantly influenced job satisfaction, with Employee Rewards and Organizational Culture emerging as the strongest predictor, followed

by Employee Support and Development, and Employee Performance and Mental Health. Employee Well-being and Engagement, while significant, showed a comparatively smaller effect size. The model demonstrated acceptable goodness-of-fit values, supporting its suitability for explaining job satisfaction among gig workers.

Inferential analysis also revealed that specific demographic indicators — such as education level, income, dependents, family size, and motivation for joining gig work — significantly influenced satisfaction outcomes. In contrast, variables such as gender and geographic location did not show significant differences. Notably, individuals who entered gig work out of choice rather than necessity reported higher satisfaction, whereas workers from transportation and delivery services showed comparatively lower satisfaction levels.

Overall, the analysis indicates that job satisfaction in the gig economy is multidimensional, shaped not only by work autonomy and flexibility but also by organizational support systems, performance recognition, and perceived fairness in rewards. These findings highlight clear gaps between expectations and workplace realities, especially for necessity-driven workers, and demonstrate the relevance of structured support mechanisms within gig platforms.

7. Achievements with respect to objectives:

The study successfully achieved all outlined research objectives through systematic data collection, analysis, and empirical validation. The primary objective of identifying determinants of job satisfaction among gig workers in Gujarat was addressed through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which confirmed the presence of four major influencing dimensions: Employee Well-being and Engagement, Employee Support and Development, Employee Performance and Mental Health, and Employee Rewards and Organisational Culture. These constructs were statistically validated and demonstrated reliable measurement properties, thereby achieving the first major research objective.

The second objective, which involved analysing the impact of these workplace-related factors on job satisfaction, was addressed through SEM results showing that all four

variables significantly contributed to job satisfaction. Among them, Employee Rewards and Organisational Culture emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by Support and Development, and Performance and Mental Health, while Well-being and Engagement demonstrated a positive but comparatively weaker effect. This confirmed the proposed conceptual relationships and fulfilled the hypothesis-testing requirement linked to the second objective.

The third objective focused on examining demographic and contextual variations in job satisfaction. Inferential statistical tests demonstrated significant variation in satisfaction levels across education, income groups, sector, dependents, and motivation for entering gig work. In contrast, no significant differences were observed in relation to gender and geographical location. Additionally, the assessment of pay satisfaction and continuation intent provided further insights into worker expectations versus lived experience. Thus, the objective related to comparative analysis across demographic variables and motivational patterns was achieved.

Overall, the study successfully met its intended objectives by developing and validating a conceptual framework, empirically testing relationships between variables, and generating new evidence on satisfaction patterns within a previously underexplored population of gig workers in Gujarat. These outcomes offer a foundation for further academic research, platform-level strategic improvements, and policy-level considerations supporting gig workforce welfare and sustainability.

8. Conclusion:

This study explored the key factors influencing job satisfaction among gig workers in Gujarat and validated a structural model through statistical analysis. The results show that job satisfaction is shaped by multiple dimensions, with Employee Rewards and Organisational Culture and Employee Support and Development emerging as the strongest predictors. Although flexibility and independence are perceived benefits of gig work, satisfaction levels are also influenced by demographic factors, work motivations, and industry type. Overall, the findings highlight that emotional, structural, and developmental factors are equally important as financial considerations in determining satisfaction in the gig ecosystem.

The study is limited to gig workers in Gujarat and relies on cross-sectional self-reported data, which may restrict generalizability and longitudinal comparison. Additionally, the absence of qualitative insights limits deeper understanding of lived experiences and worker narratives.

Future studies may extend this research to other states or conduct comparative national and international analyses. Longitudinal and mixed-method approaches would provide richer insights into evolving gig work dynamics. There is also scope to examine specific platform sectors or policy interventions to support worker well-being and long-term sustainability in the gig economy.

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