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Work Life Integration Challenges and Psychological Well-Being of Women in India’s Gig Economy: A Critical Review for HRM and Platform Management Strategies

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Abstract

The gig economy has become a growing employment pattern in India, providing flexible work opportunities through digital platforms and freelance agreements. The flexible work hours, work from home options, and income generation opportunities have helped to drive a significant increase in women's participation in the gig and platform-based economy. Despite this, women gig workers still face a range of issues linked to work–life integration, income insecurity, absence of social protection, work insecurity and psychological stress. This review paper critically explores the notion of work–life integration, the nature, and the characteristics of gig work in India, and the role of women in gig work through platforms. The paper also explores the potential of Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies and platform management practices for better employee wellbeing and women-friendly work settings. Secondary data has been used to conduct the study, which was gathered from research articles, reports, and academic literature on the gig economy and involvement of women in the workforce. The results show that supportive HRM policies, safety measures, social security benefits and gender sensitivity in HRM are fundamental to ensure psychological well-being and sustainable employment for women gig workers in India.

Keywords; Gig Economy, Work–Life Integration, Psychological Well-Being, Women Gig Workers, Human Resource Management.

INTRODUCTION

The gig economy has revolutionized the nature of employment globally, especially in developing nations like India. The gig economy is the term used to describe a type of labour market that is made up of short-term, flexible, freelance and platform-based jobs that are paid for by completing a task or project. The development of digital services and platforms, including ride sharing, food delivery, e-commerce, freelancing and home services, has created new job prospects for millions of people. The expanding internet penetration, the availability of smartphones, and the rapid digital payment system in India has fueled the growth of platform-based work [1]. Women have seen a significant rise in their involvement in the gig economy over the years, which offers flexibility and autonomy. Many women prefer gig employment because it enables them to balance professional responsibilities with household duties, childcare, and caregiving responsibilities. Flexibility of working time and place provides women with increased chances of financial independence and employment [2]. Despite these benefits, there are many difficulties for women gig workers with work–life integration, job insecurity, irregular income, lack of social protection, and psychological stress. Unemployment benefits like health insurance, paid leave, maternity benefits and pension do not always exist for women workers in platform-based work, which makes them more vulnerable. Furthermore, algorithmic management, long working hours, customer pressure, workplace discrimination and safety issues have adverse effects on their psychological state. The problems of work-life integration intensify as a result of the double burden of work with domestic responsibilities, which women face in Indian society [3], [4].

Concept of Work–Life Integration in the Gig Economy

Work–life integration is the process of making a balance between work and family and personal and social responsibilities in a way that minimizes conflict and improves overall well-being. Traditionally, the term work–life balance is used to refer to having separate lines between work and life, whereas work–life integration involves flexible integration and coordination of several responsibilities [5]. With the gig economy, work – life integration has become a more pertinent topic as platform-based work is less traditional. Gig work refers to jobs that allow individuals to work when, where, and on what tasks they wish, based on their convenience. This flexibility can be seen as an advantage to women, particularly those who must tend to their family's needs, look after children, and provide care for others. For some women who work in the gig economy, freelancing, ride sharing, food delivery, online teaching, cosmetics, or e-commerce provides jobs to help them earn money without sacrificing family duties [6].

The flexibility of gig work, however, also has a downside as it can lead to a blurring of boundaries between work and leisure. For many women, work hours are irregular, income is unpredictable, workload high and their digital connectivity is constant, which can lead to stress and emotional burn-out. This job to be available for platform work can diminish the amount of time available for rest and personal activities [7]. Moreover, lack of organizational support systems and formal employee benefit further makes work–life integration challenging for women gig workers. A successful work–life integration is a key to better psychological health, job satisfaction, productivity, and career sustainability. As a consequence, supportive HRM practices and worker-centred policies need to be integrated to provide healthy work environments for women in the gig economy [8].



Figure 1: Work Life Balance in the Gig Economy

Nature and Characteristics of Gig Work in India

India's gig economy is a rapidly expanding job market that is being propelled by the advent of technology, digital platforms, and the evolving structure of the Indian labor

market. Gig work is a new type of employment characterized by temporary, task-based, flexible, or freelance arrangements that pay the worker for particular tasks instead of permanent positions within an organization [9]. Gig work in India is typically related to domains like transportation services, food delivery, e-commerce logistics, online freelancing, home services, beauty and wellness services, and digital content creation. Flexibility of hours and place of employment is one of the important features of gig work. Gig work allows workers to choose the work they do based on their availability and preferences, which is appealing to students, women, and part-time workers. A key attribute is reliance on digital platforms and mobile apps for job assignments, communication, remuneration and overseeing performance. Algorithmic management systems are popular for monitoring worker productivity, customer ratings and the efficiency of service [10].

Although gig jobs provide opportunities for work in India, they can also be unpredictable in terms of wages, job security, and lack of formal employee benefits. Most gig workers are not provided with any health insurance, paid leave, retirement or social security protection. The amount of earnings is often determined by customer demand, incentives from the platforms, and performance ratings, leading to financial uncertainty [11]. Gig work is also highly competitive and performance-oriented. The number of hours worked, job-related stress and the need to keep customer ratings high are common stressors for workers. Safety, transportation, workplace harassment, and society's expectations are also obstacles to women's engagement in gig work. As a result, the gig economy model in India exemplifies both avenues for economic engagement and pronounced issues of labor rights and welfare [12].

Table 1: Major Characteristics of Gig Work in India

Characteristics	Description
Flexibility	Workers can choose working hours and assignments
Platform Dependency	Work is managed through digital applications
Temporary Employment	Short-term and task-based employment structure
Income Variability	Earnings fluctuate depending on demand and ratings
Lack of Social Security	Limited access to insurance, leave, and retirement benefits
Algorithmic Monitoring	Worker performance tracked digitally
Customer Rating System	Ratings influence incentives and job opportunities
High Competition	Large workforce competing for platform tasks

Participation of Women in India's Gig and Platform-Based Economy

The participation of women in India's gig and platform-based economy has increased significantly over the past decade due to digitalization, flexible work opportunities, and the expansion of online service platforms. Gig jobs have become a viable means of livelihood for women who look after their families, care for the sick, and have social responsibilities and need flexibility in their working hours. Online tutoring, beauty and wellness, food delivery, handicraft shops, content writing, digital freelancing and home-based entrepreneurship are becoming more and more popular careers for women [13]. Flexibility of work schedules is one of the main reasons for women's involvement in the gig economy. Many women choose to work on a gig basis because they are able to balance their family responsibilities with their work. In addition, digital platforms have also provided employment opportunities for women in semi-urban and rural areas without their need to move to metropolitan cities. Platform-based work is further supported by the advent of smart phones, internet connectivity, and digital payment systems that have enhanced the ability of women to get involved in platform work [14].

But women gig workers still have a number of structural and social issues to address. Women's employment experiences are greatly influenced by gender discrimination, unequal pay, restricted career development opportunities, employment insecurity, and absence of maternity support. Women are also limited in some sectors, like ride-sharing and delivery, due to safety issues during travel and when dealing with customers [15]. Moreover, women suffering from dual burden of domestic work and work outside the home contributes to physical and mental stress. While still grappling with these challenges, the gig economy has offered opportunities for the economic empowerment and financial independence of women. With proper HRM support, gender-sensitive policies, and social protection mechanisms, the participation of women in India's platform economy can contribute significantly to inclusive economic development [16].

Table 2: Opportunities and Challenges for Women in India's Gig Economy

Opportunities	Challenges
Flexible work schedules	Income instability
Work-from-home opportunities	Lack of social security
Financial independence	Gender discrimination
Digital entrepreneurship	Safety and harassment concerns

Skill development opportunities	Work-life conflict
Access to online marketplaces	Psychological stress

HRM Strategies for Improving Employee Well-Being in Gig Work

HRM is vital in enhancing the psychological health, job satisfaction, and performance of gig workers. Even though gig workers are not formally considered to be employees, worker-centred HRM practices are becoming more important for platform organisations to pursue in order to maintain sustainable workforce management. Strategies for HRM can be adopted to lower stress, facilitate integration into the work-life balance, and promote a positive work culture for women gig workers [17]. An effective HRM policy is the use and establishment of flexible scheduling systems to enable employees to develop a balance between professional and personal obligations. Platforms should also have mental health support programs, counselling services, and stress management initiatives to tackle the psychological problems of gig workers. Conducting training and skill development programs can enhance the confidence, digital literacy skills, and future employability of workers [18].

Another crucial HRM strategy is to implement equitable compensation plans, clear incentive schemes and grievance resolution processes. Timely and equitable compensation for gig workers can be a significant driver of good worker satisfaction, as income uncertainty is a high-stress issue for gig workers [19]. There is also a need to prioritise diversity, inclusion and gender equality as an objective of HRM practices in platform-based employment systems. Providing occupational safety measures, maternity support, health insurance, and social security benefits can further enhance worker well-being. HR managers and platform organizations need to foster participatory communication and worker engagement to grasp employees' concerns. These practices can help to build trust, mitigate attrition risks, and foster sustainability in gig economy organizations [20].

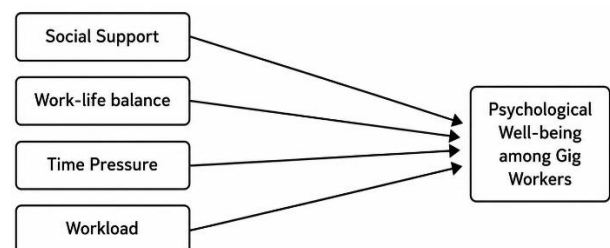


Figure 2: Psychological Well-Being among Gig Workers

Platform Management Practices for Women-Centric Work Environments

The management of platforms can also contribute to establishing an inclusive and supportive working environment for female gig workers. Platform management aimed at women means adopting gender-sensitive organizational policies and operational practices to ensure safety, equality, flexibility and well-being. Gender-specific issues surrounding mobility, workplace harassment, work-life integration and caregiving responsibilities create unique challenges for women workers, and require specific management strategies in the digital workplace [21]. Enhancing safety and security measures is one of the key best practices. Platforms should have in place emergency support systems, GPS tracking, identity verification process and quick redressal mechanism of grievances to ensure protection of women workers during service delivery. Other schemes of flexible working, such as flexible working hours or flexible working placements, may also support women in managing family responsibilities better [22].

The platform organizations should encourage equal opportunities in recruitment, task distribution, incentives and career development. Inclusive workplace cultures can be promoted through gender-sensitive training programs, leadership development initiatives and awareness campaigns. Algorithmic management systems that are transparent are also needed to minimize bias and discrimination in worker rankings and evaluations. Moreover, the platforms should have access to health insurance, maternity benefits, counselling support and financial assistance programs. Building female support groups or peer groups may further enhance emotional health and social support of employees. Good platform management practices help to improve psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction and the diversity of the workforce, organizational sustainability, and inclusive economic development [23].

Table 3: HRM and Platform Management Strategies for Women Gig Workers

Strategy Area	Recommended Practices
Flexible Work Policies	Adjustable schedules and remote work opportunities
Mental Health Support	Counseling services and stress management programs
Safety Measures	GPS tracking, emergency helplines, identity verification
Financial Security	Transparent payment systems and fair incentives
Social Protection	Health insurance and maternity benefits

Skill Development	Digital literacy and professional training
Inclusive Workplace Culture	Gender equality and anti-discrimination policies
Worker Engagement	Feedback systems and grievance redressal mechanisms

LITERATURE REVIEW

(N, 2026)[24] Due to employment insecurity, unpredictable scheduling, and tremendous algorithmic stress, gig workers have greater levels of anxiety, sadness, and poor work-life balance than typical workers. This contingent work paradigm offers flexibility, but it also comes with a lot of stressors, such as fierce competition for jobs and unstable employment. Studying the factors influencing stress levels among gig economy workers is the primary goal of the current research. The study's sample consisted of 810 gig economy workers in Bangalore. The data was gathered via secondary data sources and a structured questionnaire. In order to determine the substantial influence on gig workers' stress levels, linear regression was employed as a statistical tool for data analysis. The findings showed that Bangalore city gig workers' stress levels are influenced by both psychological demands and physical amenities.

(Kukreti et al., 2026) [25] Examine the gig economy's prospects and the human resource issues related to managing gig workers in India. Primary as well as secondary sources of data are used in the descriptive research design of the study. Selected gig workers provided primary replies. "Academic literature, labour reports, policy papers, and industry publications" were all used as secondary evidence. Thematic analysis, comparison review, and percentage analysis were used to analyze the results. According to the survey, gig labor provides choices for supplemental income, flexibility, and rapid earning chances in the labour market. However, the industry is also characterized by excessive worker turnover, insufficient social security, limited worker protection, and weak legal protection. In the areas of engagement, communication, training, and grievance management, many platform firms' human resource systems are still underdeveloped.

(B & S, 2026) [26] investigates how the gig economy affects women's employment, with a focus on the Coimbatore district. Women now have more options to enter the workforce because to the quick development of digital platforms and flexible work schedules. Freelancing, ride-sharing, online services, and home-based digital employment are examples of gig economy platforms that have made it possible for women to earn money while taking

care of their families. The study examines how many women participate in gig labor, as well as the advantages and difficulties they encounter. The results show that the gig economy offers women financial freedom, flexibility, and earning options. Income instability, job insecurity, and inadequate social protection continue to be significant concerns. To increase women's involvement in the gig economy, the report recommends skill-development initiatives and regulatory assistance.

(Sharma & Sharma, 2025) [27] Examine the dynamic interaction between the gig economy and employment development, paying particular attention to employment prospects, work-related issues, and policy consequences in the changing convenience era. With chances for contract labor and freelancing, the gig economy is reinventing work. For the purpose of gathering data from gig workers, this study employed a non-probability qualitative research technique. 23 gig workers in Delhi, India, participated in semi-structured interviews for this study. Using NVivo 12.0 for thematic coding, seven important factors influencing their work experience were identified. The study's conclusions add to the body of knowledge in the fields of "labor economics, digital employment platforms, and alternative employment arrangements". In addition to offering a foundation for further gig economy research, this paper makes strategic suggestions for policymakers and managers of digital platforms.

(Batra, 2025) [28] The gig economy, which is defined by temporary, flexible work arrangements, has become a powerful force in the worldwide labor market. The purpose of this essay is to investigate the psychological effects of gig work on people, looking at both advantages and disadvantages. This study identifies important psychological outcomes such as psychological satisfaction, stress, anxiety, and total life satisfaction by combining current literature and empirical data. The study also examines the ways in which work-life balance, a lack of social support, and job instability affect these results. It also looks into how individual characteristics, such as coping mechanisms and personality factors, might mitigate these impacts. The results emphasize the necessity of organizational support and legislative changes to lessen the negative psychological effects on gig workers and foster a better workplace.

(Janardhan & Hans, 2025) [29] The digital gig economy, gig economy, and changing labor market dynamics have all contributed to the gig economy's explosive growth in India in recent years. This study investigates the gig economy's growth trajectory in India, looking at its sectoral distributors,

regulatory environment, and socioeconomic effects. Women's involvement in gig labor is given particular attention, emphasizing both structural issues and opportunities. The gig economy presents important issues with relation to job security, salary equity, digital literacy, and access to social safety, even while it gives women flexible employment and income-generating opportunities. With the use of new statistics, case studies, and policy changes, the paper critically examines how gendered norms and structural impediments impact women's engagement in gig employment. Recommendations for inclusive policy frameworks and actions targeted at guaranteeing fair and sustainable growth of the gig economy in India are included in the study's conclusion.

(Usha & Rao, 2025) [30] As stressed in the Sustainable Development Goals for the empowerment of women and girls, gig labor is opening up new opportunities for women to enter the workforce, which is essential for achieving gender equality. The gender age gap caused by occupational segregation, which shows that women are frequently found in particular sectors and industries that are economically devalued, is one of the causes that encourages women to participate in the gig economy. The purpose of the study is to investigate the idea of the Gig Economy and how women participate in it. It also discusses the potential and difficulties faced by women in this field. In order to improve comprehension of the gig economy, this conceptual paper covers a variety of research studies. The report highlights how important it is to acknowledge the importance of women in the gig economy, the challenges they face, and possible solutions.

(Priyanka & Arora, 2025) [31] The purpose of this study piece is to comprehend the gig economy and the position of women workers in it. It examines the challenges and opportunities facing India's gig economy. According to several research, women workers are more inclined to engage in gig labor because of the flexibility it provides in balancing their home and professional lives. Nonetheless, social insecurity is thought to be a serious problem that may be fixed with the right laws. The poll indicates that more public and government support is required to implement measures that would benefit women workers and stimulate the economy. In order to support their families, women employees in the gig economy encounter challenges and obstacles, according to the report. In addition to providing answers for the gig economy's continued expansion in India, it discusses the significance of understanding the role of women workers and the difficulties they face.

(Singh & Singh, 2025) [32] examines how major companies are impacted by the gig economy in India and how it affects HRM practices. The gig economy's noteworthy increase in India has been largely attributed to the development of online platforms, shifting labor options, and technical improvements. The gig economy's primary implications on HRM practices in India include talent acquisition and recruiting, workforce planning and management, legal and regulatory challenges, flexibility and cost optimization, innovation and specialized skills, and workforce diversity and inclusion. Thus, in order to manage the workforce in this new paradigm, HRM practices have had to adapt. HR departments must adjust their hiring practices, employ flexible workforce management techniques, and take care of crucial legal issues in order to adapt to the gig economy. Large companies can benefit from the gig economy in terms of cost savings, worker variety, and creativity, but they must also deal with the difficulties brought on by this changing labor market.

RESEARCH GAP

The only existing research on gig economy explores flexibility in working hours, digital platforms, and the economic opportunities of gig workers. There are several studies that have looked at the surge of gig economy growth, the role of women and the psychological effects of platform work. But the interplay of work–life integration challenges and the psychological health of women workers in gig economy in India has not been explored in a comprehensive manner. However, previous studies have also neglected in developing supportive and women-friendly work environments the role of HRM strategies and platform management practices. In addition, there is limited research on gig workers' specific needs, such as social protection, safety, emotional health, and stress associated with gig work in the Indian context, which remains unintegrated and based on reviews. With this in mind, the current review paper aims to address the above gap by critically appraising the issues of work–life integration, psychological issues and HRM and platform management strategies to foster the welfare of women gig workers in India.

OBJECTIVE

- To study the concept of work–life integration in the gig economy.
- To study the nature and characteristics of gig work in India.
- To study the participation of women in India's gig and platform-based economy.

- To study the HRM strategies for improving employee well-being in gig work.
- To study the platform management practices for women-centric work environments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a review based qualitative research method. All the data used in the research is secondary data taken from different academic or scholarly sources related to the gig economy, women workforce participation, work–life integration, and psychological well-being. Information was collected from research articles, journals, books, conference papers, government reports, policy documents and online databases. The literature was thoroughly reviewed to find out the problems of women workers in gig and platform economy in India. It also reviews HRM strategies and platforms management practices to enhance the employee well-being and to facilitate women centric work environment. The findings from the previous studies were interpreted by using descriptive and analytical approach. The methodology aids in the identification of key themes, research gaps and policy implications of the role of women in the gig economy and psychological well-being.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the review clearly show the gig economy has created employment opportunities for women on an unprecedented scale in India, offering flexible and platform-based work options. There is a growing trend among women to work in various sectors including online freelancing, digital services, food delivery, beauty and wellness services, and e-commerce. Given these opportunities, women gig workers still face significant issues of work–life integration, job insecurity, non-salary earnings, lack of social protection, and occupational stress. They suffer from the dual burden of work and domestic responsibilities which has a negative impact on their mental health and job satisfaction. The literature also indicates that inadequate HRM practices, lack of formal organizational support, and algorithmic management systems can lead to employees' feeling of emotional exhaustion and insecurity. Implementing HRM practices like flexibility, mental health support, skill developmental initiatives, and grievance redressal systems can have positive impact on workers' wellbeing. In the same way, a platform-based management system geared towards the needs of women, emphasizing safety, equality, social security, and inclusion, is crucial to building sustainable and supportive work environments in the gig economy.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the gig economy has emerged as a significant avenue for women's employment and economic inclusion in India, driven by its flexibility and accessibility facilitated through digital platforms. It has provided women from different social and economic groups with the opportunities of economic independence, entrepreneurship, and labour participation. Women gig workers, however, still experience considerable work–life integration, psychological stress, job insecurity, lack of social protection and workplace discrimination. The review results indicate that flexibility is not enough to keep staff healthy, and the organization's and institutions' support systems need to be put in place. Effective HRM practices like fair wages, flexible working hours, care for mental health and training are crucial to enhancing employee satisfaction and lowering stress. Furthermore, policies and practices implemented in platforms, such as safety, inclusion and gender equality and social security, can contribute to establishing workplaces that are women-centered. Hence, a concerted action of the policymakers, digital platforms, and the human resources field becomes essential to ensure sustainable, inclusive and psychologically healthy job conditions for women in the gig economy in India.

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